

# WARDEN HILL PRIMARY SCHOOL

## *Warden Hill Primary School policy for health & safety in science and technology*

Member(s) of staff responsible	Headteacher
Governor responsible	Chair of curriculum committee
Sub-Committee responsible	Curriculum
Date agreed with staff	23 <sup>rd</sup> November 2011
Date discussed with pupils	N/A
Date agreed at Sub-Committee	
Date approved at Governing Body	July 2016
Frequency of policy review	3 yearly
Date next review due	July 2019

### Document Version Control

Issue Number	Issue Date	Summary of changes
1.0	2007	Original Issue
2.0	Nov 2011	Reviewed, updated to be in line with current best practices
3.0	July 2016	Reviewed, no changes

## **1 Scope of this policy**

This policy is concerned with health and safety when teaching science and technology. It has been produced with the approval of the school's governing body. It should be read in conjunction with the school's overall health & safety policy, and that of Gloucestershire local authority and other specific health & safety policies including the Policy for Field Trips and School Visits.

This policy is not concerned with the *teaching* of health and safety, although that is a requirement of the Programmes of Study for Science and Technology in the National Curriculum.

## **2 Duties of staff**

The employer, i.e. [the governing body of Warden Hill Primary school/ Gloucestershire local authority] has the ultimate responsibility to ensure the health and safety of employees and others at this school.

The task of overseeing health and safety in this school has been delegated by the employer to the head teacher.

Within science and technology this task has been further delegated to the Science and DT subject leaders.

It is the duty of all staff to take reasonable care for the health and safety of themselves and others who may be affected by their acts or omissions;

- to be familiar with this policy by periodic reference to it;
- to implement the provisions of this policy;
- to cooperate with the employer and with other members of staff in promoting health and safety.

## **3 Advice on health & safety matters in science and technology**

The local authority has a designated representative for giving advice on health & safety in teaching science and technology in primary schools.

Also, we have a subscription to CLEAPSS, Brunel University, Uxbridge UB8 3PH ( *Tel:* 01895 251496; *Fax:* 01895 814372; *E-mail:* science@cleapss.org.uk; *Web site:* www.cleapss.org.uk) for the purpose of obtaining risk assessments and for general advice on health & safety matters in science and technology.

About 3 or 4 weeks after the start of each term the CLEAPSS *Primary Science and Technology Newsletter* is despatched to schools by the local authority. The headteacher circulates a copy of the *Newsletter* amongst staff via the science subject leader. Back copies are also available on the members-only part of the CLEAPSS web site.

## **4 *Be safe!* booklet**

**We believe science and technology in primary schools to be a very safe activity and do not consider that the few, small risks justify excessive bureaucracy.**

This school's health & safety policy for teaching science and technology is largely contained within *Be safe! Health and safety in primary school science and technology*. A copy of *Be safe!* is kept in the staff room.

All teachers must check *Be safe!* from time to time and use it when planning their science and technology activities. Where relevant guidance cannot be found in *Be safe!*, staff should consult [CLEAPSS (see section 3)].

## 5 Risk assessment

It is the duty of the employer, under the *COSHH (Control of Substances Hazardous to Health) Regulations* to make a risk assessment before micro organisms (e.g., moulds) or hazardous chemicals (including some 'kitchen' chemicals) are used. Under the *Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations* the employer must make a risk assessment before hazardous activities are undertaken. As required by our employer, the governing body of Warden Hill Primary School and following guidance in the *Management Regulations Approved Code of Practice*, this school has adopted *Be safe!* as containing model risk assessments for the activities normally undertaken in teaching science and technology in primary schools.

A model risk assessment is just that - a model, which is broadly appropriate for most classes, in most schools, most of the time. Teachers should review the advice and consider whether further modification is needed for the special circumstances of their lessons with their classes. Professional judgement is needed. For example, pupils who are early bilinguals may not fully understand the instructions and pupils with special needs may need special consideration. An activity, which is perfectly safe on a Monday morning, may be less so on a Friday afternoon or following a wet play time! Teachers must also use common sense in organising their classroom in a healthy & safe manner, e.g. by avoiding trailing electrical leads, not allowing children to use construction kits just behind the door, etc.

If the proposed activities, chemicals or equipment are NOT covered by *Be safe!* so far as risk assessment is concerned, a Special Risk Assessment must be obtained by contacting CLEAPSS (see paragraph 3)

When drawing up schemes of work and lesson plans, staff should note down any relevant and important health & safety information extracted from *Be safe!* or elsewhere. This can be very brief comments and will only be necessary for a few topics but will satisfy the requirement that the "significant findings of risk assessment should be recorded" and demonstrate that individuals acknowledge the risk involved. Examples of this approach can be found in *A Scheme of Work For Key Stages 1 and 2: Science* (DfEE / QCA, 1998), although teachers may occasionally find that they want to note down more detail about particular techniques.

## 6 Close supervision

On some occasions, *Be safe!* states that an activity should be carried out "under close adult supervision". We interpret this as meaning that a small group of children (up to about 6) should have the undivided attention of the supervising adult. Such adults need not be teachers but, if they are parents, assistants etc, they must have been well briefed before

the activity on the nature of the risk by the teacher in charge and be aware of guidance in *Be safe!* etc.

## **7 Purchasing and storing resources**

When purchasing equipment or materials, and especially mains-powered electrical equipment, staff must ensure that it is safe and appropriate for use by children of the relevant age. CLEAPSS (see section 3) produces guides to particular types of equipment. The guides in print may change, but a list of those currently available appears on page 8 of its termly *Primary Science & Technology Newsletter* and on its web site, [www.cleapss.org.uk](http://www.cleapss.org.uk). CLEAPSS staff members are very willing to discuss other equipment, not at present covered by guides. Copies of relevant guides can be obtained, free of charge, by contacting CLEAPSS. Staff are expected to consult the relevant guide (or CLEAPSS itself) if they are considering purchasing mains-operated electrical equipment

Similar considerations apply when equipment, chemicals or other items are given to the school, eg, by parents, local companies, etc or brought in from home. They may not be sufficiently safe for school use. In general, our policy is **not** to accept such donations. Any mains-electrical equipment donated or borrowed from home must undergo a portable-appliance test before being used. Testing should be carried out in accordance with the employer's policy which in this school involves waiting until the regular check by the local authority contractor.

Equipment and materials must be stored safely.

## **8 Living organisms**

We believe that the responsible use of suitable animals, plants and micro organisms in the classroom not only enhances the curriculum, but also helps to promote respect for living things. Classroom uses of living organisms may raise issues about the health & safety of pupils and teachers (which are dealt with in *Be safe!* and other model risk assessments) and, in the case of animals, about their welfare and the need to care for them humanely. We follow advice given in CLEAPSS publications, eg, L52 *Small Mammals*, L56 *Housing and Keeping Animals*, L124 *Aquaria in Primary Schools: Electrical Safety*, L181 *Cold-Water Aquaria*, L190 *Studying Micro organisms in Primary Schools*, L197 *Giant African land snails*, L201 *Giant millipedes*, L206 *Tadpoles*, L227 *Stick Insects*, PS55 *Bringing Pets & Other Animals into Schools*.

## **9 Training**

From time to time we devote part of a staff meeting to reminding colleagues about this policy and the pivotal role of *Be safe!* We review the policy and consider if changes are needed.

When new staff, especially student teachers and newly-qualified teachers, joins the school, it is the duty of the head teacher / science subject leader / mentor to inform them about this policy.

## 10 Monitoring

From time to time the head teacher/ science subject leader monitors that this policy is being implemented. This will involve checking schemes of work and observing lessons. Minutes will be kept of staff meetings at which health & safety matters are discussed, as will notes of lesson observations.

## 11 Special restrictions

There are no special restrictions in teaching science and technology in this school. The head teacher and the local authority has decided that in addition to advice in *Be safe!* and relevant CLEAPSS publications, the following special restrictions will apply when teaching science and technology.

- Pupils at Key Stage 1 should not use expanded polystyrene, because of the risk that they may poke it into ears, etc, possibly requiring surgery to extract it.
- Thin plastic (polystyrene) cups from drinks machines should not be used to hold hot water, because of the risk that they may be easily knocked over when pouring the water or may soften and collapse, in either case spilling hot water on those nearby.
- Glass containers should not normally be used by pupils in Years R to 4, but may be used in Years 5 and 6 when the nature of the work means that there is no realistic alternative.
- Rechargeable batteries should not be used for circuit work by pupils, because they may become very hot if short-circuited (but they can be used in equipment, for example, in Roamer robots, Lego motors, etc).
- Where iron filings are in use for work on magnets, these should be enclosed in clear plastic containers, sealed plastic bags or similar. Where iron filings are needed for other purposes, eg, separation of mixtures, pupils should be warned about the dangers of rubbing eyes with their fingers and work should normally be confined to pupils at Key Stage 2.
- Scrupulous hygiene must be observed before and after cooking activities or handling animals, etc. Younger pupils should be supervised to ensure they wash their hands properly.