

Reviewed: August 2024
Next Review: August 2025
Reviewed by: Director of Finance and Operations (DFO)

The Governors of Bedford Girls' School are fully committed to promoting the safety and welfare of all in our community so that effective education can take place. Their highest priority lies in ensuring that all the operations within the school environment, both educational and support, are delivered in a safe manner that complies fully with not just with the law; but with best practice. Risks are inherent in everyday life. We need to identify them and to adopt systems for minimising them. Our students need to be educated into how to cope safely with risk.

WHAT IS A RISK ASSESSMENT?

A risk assessment is a tool for conducting a formal examination of the harm or hazard to people (or an organisation) that could result from a particular activity or situation.

- A hazard is something with the potential to cause harm (e.g. fire).
- A risk is an evaluation of the probability (or likelihood) of the hazard occurring (e.g. a chip pan will catch fire if left unattended).
- A *risk assessment* is the resulting assessment of the severity of the outcome (e.g. loss of life, destruction of property).
- *Risk control measures* are the measures and procedures that are put in place in order to minimise the consequences of unfettered risk (e.g. staff training, clear work procedures, heat detectors, fire alarms, fire practices, gas and electrical shut down points and insurance).

Accidents and injuries can ruin lives, damage reputations and cost money. Apart from being a legal requirement, risk assessments therefore make good sense, focusing on prevention, rather than reacting when things go wrong. Many cases simple measures are very effective and not costly.

Risk assessments need reviewing and updating regularly – higher risk departments are reviewed annually, lower risk departments are reviewed biannually. We are very aware that all staff and students need to receive training. A “library” of risk assessments is maintained by the Head of Health, Safety and Educational Visits and the Estates Manager on the school network and Eyrle for staff to refer to and use for themselves.

WHAT AREAS REQUIRE RISK ASSESSMENTS?

There are numerous activities carried out in Bedford Girls' School, each of which requires a separate risk assessment. The most important of these cover:

- Fire safety, procedures and risk assessments;
- Educational visits and trips;

But risk assessments are also needed for many other areas, including:

Educational

- Science experiments
- Design and Technology
- Food Technology
- Each Sport and PE activity including Rowing and Swimming
- Duke of Edinburgh award
- CCF (note: risk assessments undertaken by Bedford School for this activity)

- Art
- Music (including minimising the risk of hearing loss to staff)
- Drama & Dance (including the theatre back stage, stage, props room and lighting box)

At Bedford Girls' School we make use of model or generic risk assessments, for our non-venture and non-residential educational activities and visits. For Venture and Residential educational visits we base our risk assessments on BS8848, the British Standard for Venture Activities. The School's Educational Visits Coordinator advises trip organisers in the assessment of risk for their specific trip and apply the appropriate level of control given its specific circumstances. Trip risk assessments are signed off by the EVC and DFO as a pre-event approval check.

We subscribe to the CLEAPSS Advisory Service that provides model risk assessments for our lessons in Science and Design and Technology, as well as providing professional training courses for both teachers and technicians who work in Science and D&T.

The Head of Health, Safety and Educational Visits is Level 3 NEBOSH Trained in Health and Safety Management. This role provides advice and guidance to the DFO and SLT along with managing the day-to-day compliance aspects of H&S Management. All Heads of Department, Teachers and key Support staff receive training in risk assessments (currently via the iHASCO IOSH accredited course). The Head of Health, Safety and Educational Visits undertakes a rolling review of departmental risk assessments as well as focused assessment if there has been a significant accident or incident or if there has been changes in the environment of relevant legislation.

Each Head of Department carries out a termly Safety Inspection to review the risks, controls and residual risks against the departmental risk assessment of activities and provides that written return to the Head of Health, Safety and Educational Visits that nothing has changed or that something requires an action. The Head of Health, Safety and Educational Visits will allocate actions to the appropriate area (e.g. Estates) and will monitor completion.

Pastoral

The focus of our pastoral policy is to ensure that every student leaves as a confident, articulate young adult capable of keeping themselves safe on the streets, in the home and in all situations. Our PSHE programmes and assemblies are directed towards promoting an increasing understanding as the student develops, of the risks that exist in both the real and the digital worlds, and on sensible precautions that should be taken. Our Science lessons encourage students to conduct their own safety-related research into the potential hazards of chemicals, gas, electricity and flammable materials.

Medical and First Aid

The School's Nurses have risk assessments within their procedures for first aid and all other treatments and procedures. The accident reporting procedure is conducted through an online EVOLVE tool that is accessed through the school intranet (The Eyrie). These are monitored by the school nurses and the Head of Health, Safety and Educational Visits. All major issues are directed to the DFO and trends and issues are reported and reviewed termly by the School's H&S Committee.

The School's separate medical questionnaire policy explains the procedures that we would follow in the event of a medical emergency.

The DFO, in conjunction with the Head of Health, Safety and Educational Visits, is responsible for reporting any notifiable accident that occurs on school premises to a student, member of staff, parent, visitor or contractor to the HSE in accordance with the Reporting of Injuries Diseases and Dangerous Occurrence Regulations (RIDDOR).

Unsupervised Access by Students

Students do not have unsupervised access to potentially dangerous areas, such as the swimming pool, the science laboratories, the design technology rooms, etc. Doors to these areas are kept locked at all times when not in use. All flammables are kept securely locked. Students do not have access to the Grounds, Maintenance, Catering and Caretaking areas of the school.

Child Protection

Our Child Protection policies and training for all staff form the core of our child protection risk management. Safer recruitment policies and procedures ensure that the school is not exposed to the risk of employing staff who are barred

Bold

Imaginative

Reflective

from working with children, and are not allowed to work in the UK and comply with the prevailing legislation in this area – currently ‘Working together to Safeguard Children’, 2018, a guide to inter-agency working and ‘Keeping children safe in education’ Statutory guidance for Schools and Colleges, September 2023. By extending this regime to Governors, volunteers and by ensuring that everyone in our community receives regular child protection training, we manage this risk to an acceptable level.

Support Areas

- **Catering:** risk assessments and training is undertaken for every item of catering equipment, as well as for manual handling, slips and trips and the control of substances hazardous to health (COSHH). Induction and refresher training covers risk assessments, protective equipment and safety notices. All catering staff are food hygiene trained and certificated.
- **Cleaning:** the School’s cleaning team is outsourced to a third party who undertake H&S induction, training and have the appropriate policies and procedures in place for the School cleaning activities.
- **Caretaking and Security:** risk assessments cover every department in the entire school. Particular emphasis in training is given to minimising the risk of both fire and to security by adhering to good practice. Risk assessments also cover manual handling, working at heights, and asbestos. Induction and refresher training covers risk assessments, protective equipment and safety notices.
- **Maintenance:** risk assessments and training is required for every tool and item of equipment, as well as for manual handling, slips and trips, working at height, lone working, asbestos, control of contractors on site, electricity, gas, water, swimming pool maintenance and the control of substances hazardous to health (COSHH).
- **Induction and refresher training** covers fire safety, accident reporting, electricity, manual handling, driving, risk assessments, safe working practices, communication and health and safety notices and protective equipment.
- **Grounds:** risk assessments and training is required for every tool and piece of machinery, as well as for manual handling, slips and trips, working at height, lone working, use of pesticides, storage of flammables and COSHH. Induction and refresher training covers risk assessments, protective equipment and safety notices.
- **Office staff:** risk assessments are required for the display screen equipment and cables used by those staff (primarily office-based) who spend the majority of their working day in front of a screen.

CONDUCTING A RISK ASSESSMENT

There are several possible techniques; but at Bedford Girls School we use the model recommended by the HSE in its publication “Five Steps to Risk Assessment”.

Our policy at Bedford Girls’ School is not to carry out any high risk activity. Activities involving students are normally low risk. We undertake a few medium risk activities with older students, such as riding, rowing, skiing and orienteering; but only using specialist/qualified instructors.

Students are always given a safety briefing before participating in these activities, and are expected to wear protective equipment, such as mouth-guards or cycle helmets, and to follow instructions.

We will always employ specialists to manage higher risk tasks e.g. gutter clearance, roof work etc. All members of staff and students are expected to wear personal protective equipment (PPE) for tasks that have been assessed as requiring its usage.

Specialist Risk Assessments

The Estates Manager arranges for specialists to carry out the following risk assessments and servicing:

- Fire safety
- Asbestos
- Legionella
- Gas safety
- Electrical safety
- Lift Assessments
- Ladder Safety

Reviews

All risk assessments are reviewed and recorded, when major structural work is planned, or in the event of an accident. The separate policy on the management of health and safety describes the arrangements for regular health and safety audits of the fabric of the school, its plant, machinery and equipment, together with its arrangements for catering and cleaning and for pool and drinking water sampling.

Responsibilities of all Staff

All members of staff are given a thorough induction into the school's arrangements for risk assessments and health and safety. Specialist training is given to those whose work requires it. However, staff are responsible for taking reasonable care of their own safety, together with that of students and visitors. They are responsible for cooperating with the Headmistress, the DFO and other members of the SLT in order to enable the Governors to comply with their health and safety duties. Finally, all members of staff are responsible for reporting any risks or defects to the Head of Health, Safety and Educational Visits and/or the DFO.

ANNUAL H&S STATEMENT TO THE GOVERNING BODY

The School's H&S Committee minutes are considered in detail at the Finance and Premises Committee meeting of Governors and noted at the School Committee. Bedford Girls' School Committee makes an annual statement to the Harpur Trust Governing Body that H&S is actively managed safely and that there are no significant risks to report.

RISK REGISTER STATEMENTS

In addition, an annual School risk register is presented by the Head and the DFO to the Governors to approve as Trustees of the Charity at the same time that they review the audited accounts. This report analyses wider risks including the financial procedures and controls and the major risks to the school.

The measures taken to protect the school against such risks are allocated to the relevant sub-committees and the gross risk assessed, control measures implemented and their effectiveness considered and the residual risks reviewed at School Committee meetings by the Board of Governors.

The Trustees are invited to approve the compliance risk assessment annually and to endorse the insertion of a statement along the following lines (or a more detailed version thereof) in the school's annual accounts:

"The Trustees have assessed the major risks to which the charity is exposed, in particular those related to the operations and finances of the Trust, and are satisfied that systems are in place to manage our exposure to the major risks".