

## Workplace health, safety, and welfare standards (Council offices and schools)

### Document Control

|                        |                                  |
|------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Policy Area:           | Health and Safety                |
| Date Issued:           | November 2023                    |
| Version Number:        | 1.1                              |
| Owner:                 | Corporate Health and Safety Team |
| Date to review policy: | November 2026                    |

### Revision History

| Version | Date     | Author/Reviewer                | Notes                          |
|---------|----------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1.0     | Nov 2023 | Paul Lundy, County H&S Manager | Minor update and format change |

### Contents

### Page

|  |            |
|--|------------|
| <b>1. Purpose</b>                            | <b>2</b>   |
| <b>2. Scope</b>                              | <b>2</b>   |
| <b>3. Policy relevant legislation</b>        | <b>2</b>   |
| <b>4. Definitions</b>                        | <b>2</b>   |
| <b>5. Roles and responsibilities</b>         | <b>2</b>   |
| <b>6. Repairs and maintenance</b>            | <b>3</b>   |
| <b>7. Workplace standards</b>                | <b>4-7</b> |
| • Ventilation                                |            |
| • Temperature                                |            |
| • Thermal Comfort                            |            |
| • Lighting                                   |            |
| • Cleanliness and waste materials            |            |
| • Room dimensions                            |            |
| • Workstation and seating                    |            |
| • Traffic routes                             |            |
| • Falls or falling objects                   |            |
| • Windows and glazing                        |            |
| • Cleaning windows safely                    |            |
| • Doors and gates                            |            |
| • Sanitary conveniences                      |            |
| • Drinking Water                             |            |
| • Accommodation for clothing                 |            |
| • Facilities for changing clothing           |            |
| • Rest areas                                 |            |
| • Smoking and vaping                         |            |
| • Pregnant mothers                           |            |
| <b>8. Links</b>                              | <b>8</b>   |
| <b>9. Equality diversity and inclusion</b>   | <b>8</b>   |
| <b>10. Variation of policy and procedure</b> | <b>8</b>   |

## 1. Purpose

This procedure provides examples of minimum standards meeting the requirements of the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 (as amended). It does not form a complete specification for a workplace or guarantee compliance with the regulations.

Schools must also comply with requirements of the Schools Premises (England) Regulations 2012.

Refer to separate policies and procedures for the following:

- Fire Safety
- Asbestos Safety
- Water Hygiene (Legionella)
- Display Screen Equipment (DSE)
- Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH)
- First Aid

## 2. Scope

This procedure applies to most Council workplaces including offices and schools, except for some outdoor workplaces, construction sites and domestic premises.

## 3. Policy relevant legislation

Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974

Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 (as amended)

Schools Premises (England) Regulations 2012

## 4. Definitions

**Workplace:** any non-domestic premises made available to any person as a place of work including schools, offices, libraries, museums, depots, hospitals, day centres, converted dwellings and outdoor workplaces but not construction sites, fields, forests or vehicles although parts of the regulations sometimes apply to temporary work sites.

## 5. Roles and responsibilities

### Facilities Management/Governing Body:

- Ensure workplaces comply with the regulations and minimum standards set out in this procedure.
- Provide sufficient support and resources to assist Responsible Premises Managers in maintaining standards.

### Responsible Premises Managers:

- Managers must take account of the following key higher risk areas in managing the workplace, and when carrying out workplace risk assessments, to comply with the regulations.

- Carryout periodic workplace inspections to monitor and help ensure that standards are being maintained and any issues arising dealt with. (Refer to H&S Workplace Inspection Checklist)

## 6. Repairs and maintenance

The workplace and its equipment must be maintained in an efficient state, in efficient working order and in good repair. A suitable system of maintenance is required for equipment such as emergency lighting, guarding, window opening limiters, powered doors, lifts, escalators, fixed window cleaning equipment, safety harness anchorage points and ventilation systems. These items must be fit for purpose.

For corporate buildings Facilities Management are responsible for general repairs and maintenance. Contact the [FMServiceDesk@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:FMServiceDesk@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

As the local authority funding for repairs and maintenance has been delegated to schools within their devolved budgets, only capital expenditure is retained by the Council.

[Property compliance, repairs and maintenance | Oxfordshire Schools](#)

## 7. Workplace standards

### Ventilation

Workplaces must be effectively and suitably ventilated by windows or other openings or mechanical ventilation systems. Mechanical systems should be regularly maintained by a competent contractor including regular cleaning of ducting and filters.

### Temperature

The workplace must be adequately thermally insulated where necessary, having regard to the type of work being carried out and the physical activity required to carry it out. The excessive effects of sunlight on workplace temperatures must be avoided.

The indoor minimum is normally 16°C (13°C for very active work). There is no recommended maximum, but reasonable steps should be taken to achieve comfortable temperatures.

Thermometers must be available to measure temperatures throughout the workplace.

### Thermal Comfort

The term 'thermal comfort' describes a person's state of mind in terms of whether they feel too hot (heat stress) or too cold (cold stress). Thermal comfort involves more than just the temperature. It also involves environmental factors (such as humidity and sources of heat in the workplace) combined with personal factors (such as clothing you are wearing and the physical demand of the work). Suitable adjustments need to be made to manage thermal comfort in the workplace. These may include rescheduling work time and practice (e.g., very hot/cold weather).

Engineering controls should be the first choice to reduce or eliminate the hazard. This may include looking at a combination of environmental controls on the heating/air movement/air conditioning, as well as allowing employees to make behavioural adaptations.

### **Lighting**

Suitable and sufficient lighting preferably natural must be provided for the activity to be undertaken and to allow people to work and move about safely. Localised task lighting may also be required where necessary for detailed work and to prevent eye strain. Stairs should be lit in such a way as to ensure shadows are not cast over the main part of the tread. Automatic emergency lighting, powered by an independent source, needs to be provided where sudden loss of light would create a risk. Additionally, outdoor traffic routes used by pedestrians should be adequately lit taking account of numbers and environmental aspects.

### **Cleanliness and waste materials**

Every workplace and its furniture, furnishings, fittings and surfaces of floors, walls and ceilings must be kept sufficiently clean. The frequency of cleaning and the standard of cleanliness will vary according to the nature of the premises and the activities undertaken. No waste materials should be allowed to accumulate unless in suitable receptacles.

### **Room dimensions**

Every room where employees work must have sufficient floor area, height, and unoccupied space for purposes of health, safety, and welfare. Normally at least 11 cubic metres of unoccupied space per person is required. This figure does not apply to rooms being used for lectures, meetings, and similar purposes. The workplace design and workstation layout should ensure the ability to move with ease, in safety.

### **Workstation and seating**

Workstations need to be ergonomically designed giving due regard to the employee, activity, equipment or controls and freedom of movement. A suitable seat must be provided for each person where the work can or must be done sitting and this seating must be suitable for both the activity concerned and for each person doing it.

### **Traffic routes**

Externally, provision should be made to ensure that people and vehicles are adequately segregated and can circulate in a safe manner. This may entail restricting either vehicle or pedestrian movement at particular times and providing ramps, handrails, and barriers according to the environment.

### **Falls or falling objects**

Suitable and effective measures must be taken to prevent any person falling or being struck by falling objects. Materials and objects need to be stored and stacked in such a way that they are not likely to fall and cause injury.

## Windows and glazing

Glazing of windows and doors should be to the appropriate standard for the exact location and must be specified at the time of ordering in the event of the need for re-glazing. Applied safety materials (e.g. safety film) will have a finite life which needs to be noted and appropriately managed.

Windows, skylights, and ventilators must be capable of being opened, closed, or adjusted in a safe manner without risk to health or safety. Open windows, skylights or ventilators should not project into an area where persons are likely to collide with them.

## Cleaning windows safely

The design or construction of all windows and skylights must be such that they may be cleaned safely. Harness and anchorage points may be required. Control measures meeting the requirements of the Work at Height Regulations 2005 may need to be implemented.

## Doors and gates

Doors and gates must be suitably constructed to ensure the health and safety of those operating them or affected by their opening and closing. This may include fitting safety devices or viewing panels particularly in doors which open both ways and in doors on main traffic routes.

Power-operated doors and gates should have safety features to prevent people being struck or trapped and, where necessary, should have a readily identifiable and accessible control switch or device so that they can be stopped quickly in an emergency. Regular maintenance of the feature and the emergency control provisions is required by the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations.

## Sanitary conveniences

Suitable and sufficient sanitary conveniences, which are adequately ventilated and lit, kept in a clean and orderly condition and are separate for each sex (except a unisex toilet in a room capable of being locked from the inside), must be provided at readily accessible places. Disabled toilets are unisex.

Table 1: Minimum number of sanitary facilities for mixed use (or women only)

| Number of people at work | Number of toilets | Number of wash basins |
|--------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 to 5                   | 1                 | 1                     |
| 6 to 25                  | 2                 | 2                     |
| 26 to 50                 | 3                 | 3                     |
| 51 to 75                 | 4                 | 4                     |
| 76 to 100                | 5                 | 5                     |

Suitable and sufficient washing facilities in the immediate vicinity of every sanitary convenience and every changing room, with hot and cold, or warm, running water, must be provided. These should be adequately ventilated and lit, in clean and orderly condition, with liquid soap or other suitable means of cleaning and with towels or other suitable means of drying.

Note: If necessary, special provision should be made for any employee with a disability to have access to sanitary conveniences and washing facilities which are suitable for his or her use.

### **Drinking Water**

An adequate supply of wholesome drinking water with an upward jet or suitable cup needs to be provided. Bottled water/water dispensing system may still be provided as a secondary source of drinking water.

Where drinking water cannot be provided directly from mains supply refillable enclosed containers can be used. These should be refilled at least daily unless they are chilled water dispensers where the containers are returned to the supplier for refilling. All water dispensers should be regularly sanitised and maintained to ensure acceptable water quality.

### **Accommodation for clothing**

Suitable and sufficient accommodation must be provided for any employees' own clothing, not worn during working hours, and for special work clothing. Facilities should be provided to enable wet or damp work clothing to be dried before the start of the following work period.

### **Facilities for changing clothing**

Suitable and sufficient facilities must be provided for any employee at work to change clothing required for work. Facilities are to be easily accessible, of sufficient capacity and provided with seating and should provide for security of clothing. The accommodation should be clean, warm, dry, and well ventilated.

### **Rest areas**

Suitable and sufficient rest facilities, and areas for eating, must be provided in contamination free areas. Work areas can be counted as rest areas if eating facilities provided are clean and there is a suitable surface on which to place food.

### **Smoking and vaping**

Smoking and vaping are prohibited in all Council buildings. Smokers/vapers must use designated areas.

### **Pregnant mothers**

Facilities for pregnant women and nursing mothers to rest should be conveniently situated in relation to toilets and, where necessary, include the facility to lie down.

## 8. Schools

The School Premises (England) Regulations 2012 cover facilities for pupils rather than for employees or other workers and the Department for Education advice states:

*“The Education Act 1996 places a duty on the Secretary of State to prescribe standards for the premises of all maintained schools in England and Wales. Those for England are set out in The School Premises (England) Regulations 2012 (SPRs) and they apply to all existing and new schools maintained by a local authority.*

*There are fewer regulations than previously, and they are less prescriptive, allowing schools more flexibility in how they use their premises.*

*Many regulations state that provision must be ‘suitable.’ This is not precisely defined, but schools must take into account the age, number and sex of pupils, and any special requirements they have, when determining whether provision is suitable.*

*This guidance advises on how to meet the regulations. It also provides signposts to other, more general, premises related legislation and guidance of relevance to schools.”*

The regulations do specify that suitable toilet and washing facilities must be provided for the sole use of pupils and separate toilet facilities for boys and girls over the age of 8 must be provided.

Suitable accommodation for the medical and therapy needs of pupils must be provided which includes accommodation for medical examination and treatment and the short-term care of sick and injured pupils and include a washing facility and be near to a toilet.

Acoustic conditions and sound insulation of each room or other space must be suitable having regard to the nature of the activities normally taking place there. Internal lighting provision must be suitable for the nature of the activities taking place and external lighting must be provided to ensure that people can safely enter and leave the school premises.

Suitable drinking water supplies must be provided in areas separate from the toilet facilities. Toilet provision must have an adequate supply of cold water and washing facilities must have an adequate supply of both hot and cold water. Cold water supplies for drinking must be clearly signed as such and hot water at the point of use must not pose a scalding risk to users.

Suitable outdoor space for curriculum physical education must be provided together with space to enable pupils to play outside.

### **School Premises (England) Regulations 2012**

[Microsoft Word - uksi\\_20121943\\_en.doc \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

### **Advice on standards for school premises**

[DfE advice template \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

## **9. Links**

[Workplace health, safety and welfare - HSE](#)

[Workplace health, safety and welfare - L24 \(hse.gov.uk\)](#)

## **10. Equality diversity and inclusion**

The council will regularly monitor and review the impact of this policy and procedure.

The council needs to consider the equality, diversity and inclusion impact of its HR policies and procedures on its employees and in some cases, a formal EIA (Equality Impact Assessment) may not always be appropriate. For any queries on this, please contact the HR Policy Manager in the first instance or email [equalities@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:equalities@oxfordshire.gov.uk).

## **11. Variation of policy and procedure**

This policy and procedure are subject to ongoing review and may be varied by the council from time to time. Examples of variation include the need to comply with new legislation or best practice guidance.