

Paxcroft Primary School

Working at Height Policy

Reviewed: February 2025

Next date of review: February 2027



Purpose

To ensure compliance with the following legislation, including but not limited to the following:

- The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.
- The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- The Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992.
- The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) 2013
- The Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998

This will be achieved by reducing, so far as is reasonably practicable, any risk associated with manual handling operations. This policy will be implemented in conjunction with the school's:

- Health and Safety Policy
- First Aid Policy

Scope

All employees, pupils, volunteers and employed agency staff are included within this policy. This policy takes into consideration the requirements for the movement of both objects and people (including children).

Rationale

Falls from height are a major cause of injuries at work, often where the work at height is of short duration and from heights of less than 2 meters. Common causes of such accidents include:

- overreaching or over balancing;
- climbing with loads;
- using inappropriate equipment such as desks / chairs;
- not securely fixing access equipment;
- placing access equipment on unsuitable surfaces;
- falls from roofs with unprotected edges;
- falls through fragile materials.

This guidance applies to all work situations from where a person could fall a distance liable to cause personal injury.

Reference to the safe use of ladders and stepladders is included in this guidance in recognition of the fact that after a risk assessment such equipment may be the only reasonably practical means of carrying out a task.

Legal Requirements

The Work at Height Regulations 2005 apply to all work situations from where a person could fall a distance liable to cause personal injury, or access to and from such a place, this includes work at ground level where there is a risk of falling into an excavation etc.

Responsibilities

Each establishment shall identify a nominated competent person responsible for all work at height activities on site. This person shall receive adequate training to complete the role and be named in the establishments Health and Safety policy.

Our nominated person is our school site manager: Paul Rapson

The nominated person shall ensure:

- all work at height is properly planned and organised;
- the use of access equipment is restricted to authorised users;
- all those involved in work at height are trained and competent to do so;
- the risks from working at height are assessed and appropriate equipment selected;
- a register of access equipment is maintained
- all access equipment is inspected and maintained;
- the risks from fragile surfaces is properly controlled.

Risk assessment for working at height

Work at height should never be considered as being incidental to the actual job to be undertaken. Thus for all activities involving work at height a risk assessment must be conducted and the findings recorded. This assessment should consider both the work to be done and the most appropriate access equipment to be used (not just what is available on site) to achieve a safe system of work.

There is a simple hierarchy of controls for work at height as follows:

a) avoid the risk by not working at height, for example by working from existing platforms, using long reach equipment etc. If it is not practicable to do the work safely in some other way then:

b) use work equipment or other measures to prevent falls; and

c) where the risk of a fall cannot be eliminated further controls to minimise the distance and consequences of a fall should one occur.

Generic assessments are provided on the Grid to assist with the risk assessment process, these are not exhaustive and should be customised to suit the specific site and activity concerned.

The detail of the assessment will depend on the level of risk involved, further advice is available from the Education Health and Safety Team if needed. As a general guide the risk assessment should consider:

- The task and activity involved
- The people (medical conditions etc.)
- Equipment to be used including erection and dismantling
- The location (proximity to roads, overhead electrical cables etc)
- The environment, poor conditions and slippery surfaces (weather, temperature etc.)
- The effect on pedestrians, falling objects

Selecting Equipment

In selecting appropriate equipment for working at height priority should always be given to collective protective measures to prevent falls (e.g. guardrails and working platforms) before other personal measures. (e.g. fall arrest equipment)

Access equipment should be selected appropriate to the nature of the work being undertaken, taking account of such factors as:

- working conditions;
- duration and frequency of use;
- complexity of work;
- distance and consequences of a fall.

Ladders and stepladders should be used only for light duty, short duration work which has been approved by the Headteacher.

For example whilst a ladder may reach the workplace, if the task requires strenuous work, carrying bulky / heavy equipment or likely to take > 30 mins then an alternative means of access such as a tower scaffold or podium steps would be more appropriate.

Use of equipment for working at height

Equipment identification / inspection

Where there is more than one piece of equipment each should be indelibly marked with an identifying number and entered into a ladder register (Site Manager's office).

Equipment for work at height, should be inspected prior to use and by a competent person termly/6 monthly. The inspection will depend upon the complexity of the equipment. Checklist for ladder inspections

Where work equipment is hired to the user, it is important that both parties agree, in writing, exactly what inspection has been carried out and that this information is passed to those working at height.

In the case of tower scaffolds the school will always use an outside company.

Using Ladders (including stepladders)

Ladders should not be used simply because they are readily available, the risk assessment should determine if a ladder or stepladder is appropriate for the task.

Ladders and stepladders should only be used for short duration tasks (less than 30 minutes), light duty tasks or where more suitable access equipment cannot be used due to existing features of the site which cannot be altered.

Only those staff members who have been trained to use ladders safely may use them and there must be another adult present in the room.

Appropriate footwear must be worn, no flip flops or loose footwear.

All ladders should be secured against unauthorised use.

Prior to use it should always be ensured that the ladder is in good condition and fit for purpose.

Where ladders are to be used to work from it should be ensured that:

- a) a secure handhold and support are available at all times;
- b) the work can be completed without stretching;
- c) the ladder can be secured to prevent slipping.

The HSE have produced simple advice for users on the safe use of steps and ladders.

Working from roofs

Precautions must be in place to prevent falling from an edge, where permanent edge protection is not available then temporary guard rails or similar barriers are required.

Specific work activities such as maintenance must be undertaken by a suitable contractor.

If access to flat roofs is required by site manager only

- Activity must be carried out by two persons; one person to access the roof, one to foot the ladder
- Activity to be carried out only when weather conditions are suitable, i.e. not in high winds, heavy rain, poor light or darkness
- Non-essential items (e.g. footballs and, if at all possible, pupils' belongings, such as shoes, bags etc.) to be retrieved on a planned basis (e.g. termly) as determined by the headteacher and Site Manager
- Suitable ladder for roof access to be used
- Ladder to be lashed or secured to eye bolts at appropriate roof access points beneath roofs where objects are most likely to be thrown by pupils
- Once on the roof, care must be taken to avoid approaching the roof edge. A push stick or similar should be used to move or dislodge items close to the roof edge

See Part B for specific advice on access to low roofs.

Fragile surfaces

All fragile surfaces should be identified on site and suitable precautions be in place to prevent inadvertent access.

Warning signs should be fixed at the approach to fragile roofs where access is needed or foreseeable.

Work should be arranged as far as possible to avoid working on or passing near fragile surfaces.

Information, instruction and training

All employees required to work at height must be competent to do so and receive information and instruction in the risks of working at height and specific training in the equipment that they will be using. The level of training required should be proportionate to the risk.

Training in the safe use, selection and inspection of ladders and the use of mobile tower scaffolds are provided by the Education Health and Safety Team.

The HSE have produced simple practical advice for users on the safe use of steps and ladders. For staff involved in low risk activities ie. accessing storage, putting up displays at low height etc. Managers should talk through the school policy and this guidance with staff and ensure that this is understood.

Further information and guidance

Detailed guidance on work at height is available from the HSE <http://www.hse.gov.uk/falls/index.htm> 8.2 Further advice on work at height or other topics covered by this guidance can be obtained from the Education Health and Safety Team on 01992 556478. csf.healthandsafety@hertsc.gov.uk

PART B

Low roofs

Access to low roofs

In addition to the work at height regulations, occupiers liability legislation requires the occupier of premises to ensure that it's safe for visitors both lawful and unlawful.

Low level, flat roofed buildings present a particular risk as people are able to easily gain access to a height where they are then at risk of falling off the roof edge or through fragile roof materials.

Low roofs – a definition

A low roof should be considered to be one which may be climbed onto by an individual without assistance from another person. This includes both low roof heights relative to ground level and those with an available foothold for climbing such as:

- low level structural features, porches, window ledges, drainpipes etc;
- fences, walls and railings adjacent / close to the building;
- trees or shrubs near the building;
- moveable objects (wheelie bins etc) nearby;
- items which may at times be located close to the building (e.g. parked vehicles).

Risk Assessment

The generic risk assessment can be used to assist establishments identify the risks associated with access to low, flat roofed structures.

In identifying the hazards, the following should be considered:

- are there locations providing easy access to roofs (examples are given in 2.1). particular consideration should be given to features located in more remote and thus less well supervised areas.
- is there any history or evidence that climbing has occurred at these locations e.g. worn areas on walls and fences, damage to trees, rubbish / graffiti on roof locations.
- are there any allurements, which may attract children to climb onto the roof e.g. access to a restricted courtyard or onto a higher level roof.
- are all fragile surfaces (glazing, roof lights, roofing) on site clearly identified, those where there is a risk of a person falling through must be assessed.

Control measures will generally fall into the following categories

Physical controls such as:

- the removal of climbing aids;
- use of anticlimb paint (only to be used above 2M high and with warning signs) on guttering, roof edging etc. identified as a potential climbing area;
- anticlimb fans around the top of drainpipes or locations identified as having easy access due to adjacent structures.

Management controls such as:

- areas for ball games located away from flat roofs;
- arrangements for safe retrieval of items from roof;
- supervision of potential climbing locations during lunchtime, breaks etc;
- an awareness of the need to minimise the potential for access to roofs offered by new structures / modifications e.g. installing walls, fences etc