

Get safe for work!

In December, IOSH is launching a new course for year 10 students. 'Workplace hazard awareness', designed and written by IOSH and the HSE, will help teachers give their students a basic grounding in hazard awareness before they start work for the first time.

All the teaching materials will be available to download free from our website, www.wiseup2work.co.uk, and students can go on to qualify for the Entry Level Award in Workplace Hazard Awareness (Entry 3).

The 'Workplace hazard awareness course' introduces students to the hazards they're likely to face at work, as well as why working safely is so important. The materials include an interactive presentation, detailed guide for teachers and a workbook for students to fill in. The course and assessment will take 8–10 hours, but can be organised in a series of sessions.

Ruth Doyle, IOSH's director of communications, said: "This is a great addition to the Wiseup2work resources, and one that we hope will give teaching health and safety awareness a real boost in the classroom."

IOSH also used National Wiseup2work Day, on 30 August, to start a lobbying campaign called 'Putting young workers first'. The campaign aims to raise awareness of the hazards to young people at work. With the message "Don't put young people in a workplace where you wouldn't put your own children", the six-point action plan covers:

- teacher training
- teaching health and safety in the classroom
- organising placements
- employers and supervision
- accident reporting
- making health and safety a priority for government funding.



IOSH took the plan to the last round of political party conferences to get support from politicians and influential organisations – it already has backing from the TUC.

- You can register your interest in the free course at www.wiseup2work.co.uk.

Download 'Putting young workers first' at www.iosh.co.uk/campaigns.

... and stay safe

Connexions Cornwall and Devon has produced a handy guide for young people who are starting work. *How to stay safe* was designed with the help of young people and aims to highlight the health and safety risks to young workers. Personal advisers have been helping young people get training in first aid, manual handling and becoming a fire marshal.

- *How to stay safe* is available at www.connexions-cd.org.uk/pdf/howto_health.pdf.

Anyone for team working?

Is anyone interested in sharing knowledge and good practice on risk assessments for work experience placements? As work experience co-ordinator for Lincoln Minster School, I've recently taken on the responsibility of assessing the risks for all my placements (150 this year), and I feel that pooling the resources of Education SG members could help others who want to go down the same route.

In the past, organisations like education/business partnerships have funded and supported these risk assessments, but with reduced funding, they're tending to pass on the costs to schools. Sometimes the school can find the funds elsewhere, but often the result will be a smaller range of options available to young people.

Our solution was for me to complete a NEBOSH Certificate as part of my professional development, so that I could do the risk assessments myself. Although this was a considerable investment, it's paid off – we have lots of links with new employers, and a flourishing work experience scheme. I also have the flexibility to decide when I need to redo a risk assessment – for some of our low-risk employers, I just need to give them a quick call to check that nothing's changed since their last placement.

If you have a similar scheme and would like to share what you've learned through *Education News*, please get in touch with Joanne Lewis at alfacilities@btinternet.com. If you'd like more information on the Lincoln Minster scheme, please email me at marcus.burnett@church-schools.com.

Marcus Burnett
Lincoln Minster School

Governors get to grips with safety

Monitoring how effective your school's health and safety policy is can be a nightmare. Schools generally have big sites with many different buildings – and that's even before you get on to the particular issues raised by children, visitors and contractors. It's not surprising that governors can sometimes feel daunted by the task. Julia Sykes of Barnsley MBC Education Services describes how her team has developed a free new package that gives school governors a structure to follow as they test their school's health and safety policy.

Health and safety in schools gets high profile media coverage these days, especially when things go wrong. So it's understandable that school governors are frightened of tackling it. Feedback we've had from governing body meetings shows that often the only involvement governors have in monitoring their school's policy is an occasional walk round the site with the head teacher.

To help encourage governors to take a more active role, we developed a package that goes through each of the 27 elements of the school's health and safety policy in turn. To make the task less overwhelming, we've split the elements into three groups of nine, and allocated one group to each school term. By following the three booklets, governors can be sure they regularly consider all the important areas of the policy.

Each section lists what information the governors need to verify, together with tick boxes to record the outcome. They can decide whether they need to get the details from the head teacher or whether they can gather the evidence by themselves – for example, spot-checking electrical equipment for a current PAT certificate or checking that visitor access arrangements meet the needs of the school's security policy.

At the end of each booklet there's a simple summary report, which the governors can take to the governing body meeting as a record of what they've monitored.

At the start of last school year, we visited all head teachers to brief them on the new scheme and tell them which issues were coming up in the first term. To ease schools and governors gently into the new scheme, we chose nine topics for the autumn term which governors were likely to know something about already and which were established parts of health and

safety management in schools, including accident reporting, school trips and premises inspections.

Although we told governing bodies they could use their own monitoring systems if they wanted, they've all chosen to follow our package.

We asked each school to nominate one governor to do the monitoring. We then trained this governor how to use the package. We've held 10 governor training sessions so far, and most schools have sent at least one of their governors on the course.

'Governing body monitoring' is a standard item on the agenda of all governing body meetings. Through the minutes we can monitor the progress of monitoring in each school, compare different governing bodies and offer help if it's needed. So far, the information we've gathered shows that most schools have been monitoring their health and safety policy. Schools have generally kept up with the timetable outlined in the package, although some have slipped behind.

Most schools have welcomed the new system – head teachers feel more

confident that their governors are taking on some of the responsibility for health and safety. At first, we had complaints from some schools that preparing the monitoring procedures for governors was taking a long time, but as they've got used to it, the difficulties have reduced.

The main positive outcome is that schools and governors have been spending more time on solving health and safety problems and putting management systems in place. Despite the occasional problems with time, most schools have kept up well and met the programme's requirements.

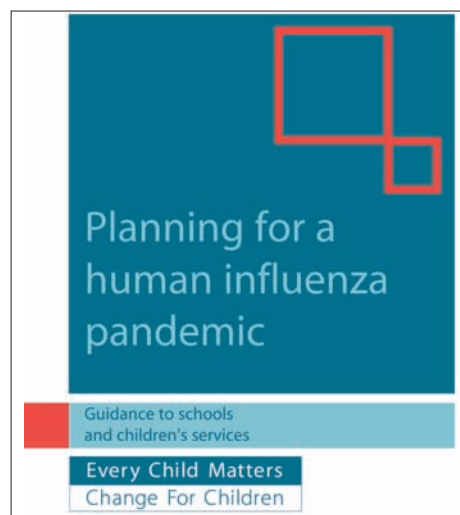
The scores for recent health and safety audits we've carried out in schools have been consistently higher than they used to be. We're confident that this improvement is due in part to the new programme to encourage governors to monitor health and safety.

- The three termly monitoring booklets are available in the 'Quick links' section at www.barnsley.gov.uk/bguk/Education_Skills/Schools/Governors.

Flu planning guides launched

No-one knows when the next flu outbreak will be, how severe it'll be or how long it'll last, but we can be sure that sooner or later it'll happen. Emergency planning is critical to protecting as many people as possible during an epidemic without causing too much disruption. The DfES has produced new guidance to help schools prepare for an outbreak.

The guidance is available at www.teachernet.gov.uk/emergencies/planning/flu/pandemic/index.html. You can get answers to specific questions by emailing the DfES's public enquiry unit at flu.planning@dfes.gsi.gov.uk.



School trips are worth the candle

School trips are a vexed issue these days. What if something goes wrong or someone complains? Isn't it just easier and safer to keep our children out of harm's way inside school buildings? James Hickish, head teacher of St Mary's Junior School in Ely, Cambridgeshire, firmly believes that there is a future for school trips, and offers some words of encouragement for anyone who finds themselves doubting it.

I am coming up to the end of my second year as head teacher at St Mary's and I still regularly make the same mistake at the beginning of morning assemblies – "We'll just wait for Year 3..." or "Miss So-and-so's class isn't here yet" – only to be reminded by my ever-patient staff that the children or class in question won't be back from, say, Stibbington Outdoor Education Centre, or the Fitzwilliam Museum or the Isle of Wight or France, for either hours, days or even a week.

Although educational visits do take place throughout the year, there is hardly ever a week in the summer term without some sort of trip taking place. This is the term for our 8–9-year-olds to visit York, our 9–10-year-olds to visit the Isle of Wight and our 10–11-year-olds to visit Normandy. And if there are children in each of these year groups who can't make the trips, they can take part in a week of school-based activities and educational day trips while their peers are away. Even our youngest pupils – 7–8-year-olds – take part in spring term day trips, so we certainly have a very busy experience-based curriculum.

Each of these experience-based activities must, of course, be risk-assessed to make sure that risks are controlled and properly managed to protect not only the pupils but the staff too. That's not to say that we try to remove all risks from activities involving our pupils. To do this would be counter-productive: it would seriously diminish the learning experience for the children taking part, as activities would become so 'sanitised' that the children wouldn't gain anything from them and we, as a school, would have to question their educational benefit.

We base our risk assessments on

what we know of the pupils – their age, knowledge and experience – and our knowledge of the area or the venue they're visiting and what they'll be doing. We have to factor in different levels of supervision, behavioural issues and special needs without diluting the overall educational experience.

According to what we regularly read in the press, "schools don't do this sort of thing any more". The truth is that, while we and our Ely partnership schools do emphasise the need for extra-curricular activities, many schools are finding it increasingly difficult to arrange

educational visits at all. Health and safety, finance and union guidelines all put obstacles in the way of what I feel is one of the most important and valuable parts of school life. It's not an easy task, but I and my staff believe that the educational benefits far outweigh the residual risks.

So, as I stand in a half-empty (or should that be half-full?) assembly hall, wondering where my missing children are, I should perhaps be wondering at the dedication of my staff and the support of our parents, who make a half-empty school, and the educational benefits that come with it, possible!

Award focuses on young people

Prizes for the College Champion Health and Safety Award will be presented later this month. This year's theme tied in with the European Week for Safety and Health and Work and focused on reducing risks to young people at work.

The Association of Colleges invited further education, sixth-form and tertiary colleges in the UK to outline what they've done to promote the effective management of health and safety for young people and to reduce the number of accidents they suffer.

The assessors were looking for projects which:

- encouraged colleges and employers to work together
- involved learners themselves and improved their learning experience
- included occupational health as well as safety
- promoted equal opportunities
- showed a sustainable approach.

This year, members of the Education SG committee were asked

to judge the entries. The winners will be announced at the Association of Colleges Annual Conference in Birmingham on 21–23 November.

Last year's winners were South Kent College, who involved students throughout the college in projects to raise awareness of the risks from noise at work.

Fire! Are you ready?

The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order came into force at the start of October, giving responsibility for fire risk assessments to employers rather than local fire authorities. To find out more, download 'Guide 5 – Educational premises' from the Department for Communities and Local Government's website, www.dclg.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1162101.

From the chair

Sensible risk assessment

It seems that the HSE is taking 'conkers bonkers' criticisms seriously. The new version of *Five steps to risk assessment* (INDG163REV2) explains that it's not possible to eliminate all risks. This is backed up in the latest HSE newsletter, which says: "The HSE doesn't ... want people wasting time and effort trying to manage risks that are trivial or about which they can do nothing – we don't want you to be excessively risk averse." This advice on sensible risk assessment will be especially welcome in the education sector, and we should do our bit to reinforce the message among our colleagues.

Views on design and technology

In August, a group of Education SG members met to offer comments on behalf of IOSH on the draft BS 4163 (design and technology in schools). We recommended that BS 4163 should have the status of an approved code of practice. We're fortunate to have members who are experienced in machinery guarding, ventilation, hazardous chemicals and other useful disciplines, who all contributed to our suggestions.

Rogue parking alert

There's growing concern about vehicles that park illegally outside schools to make deliveries or drop off children. Often they block gates and pavements completely, putting pupils and staff in danger as they have to walk in the road. I'd welcome any comments or ideas from members on how to tackle this problem.

As always, I'd like to thank everyone for their interest and support and to acknowledge the hard work of the committee – especially the vice-chair, Joanne Lewis – and our administrator, Petrina Beck.

David Chitty

New report gets tough on stress

The *School wellbeing report*, launched by the Teacher Support Network at the teachers' union conferences in April, highlights the importance of bringing together the various services that tackle teacher stress.

The report was produced with the backing of IOSH, Worklife Support, the HSE and Stress in Perspective, and emphasises the need to put teachers' wellbeing first. If support services work together to boost teachers' physical and mental health, they'll improve their effectiveness in the classroom as well.

The Teacher Support Network believes that healthy, resilient and motivated teachers will benefit society as a whole, by improving pupils' wellbeing, attainment and overall school performance.

Patrick Nash, chief executive of the Network, said: "We know that teaching is an increasingly challenging profession, with pupil behaviour, malicious allegations and government pressure to increase standards all making a serious impact on the wellbeing of teachers. By producing this report, we've started a discussion between teachers, occupational health practitioners, unions and other sources of support. Now it's time to share what we've learned – to communicate more effectively and work together to provide more support for teachers and improve their wellbeing."

- Download the report from the Network's website, www.teachersupport.info. If you want a hard copy, email enquiries@teachersupport.info with your postal address.



Teaching is an increasingly challenging profession

Got an idea? Spread the word

Have you got a good example of health and safety management practice that you'd like to share with other members? Send your contributions to *Education News* to Joanne Lewis, newsletter co-ordinator, at alfacilities@btinternet.com, or

Petrina Beck, SG administrator, at petrina.beck@iosh.co.uk.

Your article should be no longer than 750 words, and we may edit it. Please provide the text as a Word document if possible, and if you have pictures, please send them as JPEGs.