Norfolk County Council

P611b Health and safety management system for school governors

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1. Introduction

Governing bodies are a key component of successful health and safety management within schools. This document seeks to provide a summary of the expectations and tools to support governors in their pivotal role.

2. Leadership influence

Governing bodies are equal partners in the strategic leadership of the school with the Headteacher and senior management team, driving improvement and future development by:

- Raising standards and planning for short- and longer-term expectations.
- Helping to keep the health and safety policy under review.
- Ensuring the effective and efficient use of resources to achieve priorities.
- Being involved with strategic development, not day to day management.
- Monitoring performance through reviewing and scrutinising the Headteacher's report, incident trends and health and safety inspection reports to check on achievements and progress over time. Amending plans where required.
- Recognising and celebrating the achievements of the school:
- Knowing where the school is not achieving as well as it could
- Providing support and encouragement to bring about improvement
- Understanding the processes that support Health, safety and wellbeing management by attending the relevant training, and ensuring those with responsibilities have also undertaken the relevant training for their role.

2.1 Ofsted and health and safety

Good health and safety performance is inextricably linked to inspection outcomes, whilst inspectors do not have set criteria for evaluating health and safety in schools, they will make checks to see if a school fulfils its statutory duties, responds to any hazards on the school site and has adequate safeguarding arrangements. An inspection may also look at 'the effectiveness of governors in discharging their core statutory functions', this is seen in the example grading below.

The grade descriptor for 'outstanding' states: '*Pupils are safe and feel safe at all times. They understand how to keep themselves and others safe in different situations and settings. They trust leaders to take rapid and appropriate action to resolve any concerns they have.'*

3. Essential principles (which lead to good culture and performance)

These are the core behaviours to successfully imbed a proactive health and safety culture.

3.1 Strong and active leadership from the top

Visible, active commitment; effective communication and management structures; integration of good health and safety management as part of the schools' decisions.

3.2 Worker involvement

Engaging the workforce in the achievement of safe and healthy conditions; effective 'upward' communication; providing high-quality training.

3.3 Assessment and review

Identifying and managing health and safety risks; accessing (and following) competent advice; monitoring, reporting and reviewing performance.

4. Leading in Health and Safety Performance

A leadership checklist is provided at appendix 1 to help you to review your school's arrangements. Once you have this information you will be in a good position to plan for improvement. This section details how to apply the following framework

4.1 Plan

Ensure that the direction for effective health and safety management is set. Senior management must imbed the health and safety commitments document P611s (part 1 and part 2) which details the school's commitment, assigns safety responsibilities, and details the arrangements which must be put in place in each school. These should be an integral part of school culture - its values and performance standards. These documents enable you to outline the school's commitment to health and safety. Health and safety objectives should be developed by senior management and the outcomes measured to ensure that objectives are met.

4.2 Do

Implement the plan and ensure delivery of good standards. Your school has a health and safety management system to assist, implementation will ensure that health and safety risks are identified and controlled.

4.3 Check

Monitoring and reporting are vital parts of a health and safety culture. Senior management must receive both specific (e.g., incident-led) and routine reports on the performance of health and safety policy. A strong system of monitoring will ensure good performance and that relevant events in the interim are addressed and known to senior management.

4.4 Act

A formal senior management review of health and safety performance is essential. It allows the senior management team and Board of Governors to establish whether the essential health and safety principles – strong and active leadership, worker involvement, and assessment and review have been embedded in the school. It tells you whether your system is effective in managing risk and protecting people.

5. Sensible Risk Management

School risks are wide ranging, for example: the use of machinery in design and technology; management of difficult and dangerous behaviour; premises related issues such asbestos and fire, finger traps, ponds and swimming pools, outdoor play equipment etc.
Other high-risk activities may occur less frequently such as the use of ladders, ground maintenance, potentially disturbing asbestos materials, contractors, e.g., in caretaking and construction / maintenance related activities.

Schools must take ownership of the risks they create and take proportionate steps to manage them so that attention is focused on those that cause injury and ill health, not the trivial or everyday low risks. To that end, a sensible approach means that the governor for health and safety should know their school's top risks and give those focus.

Day to day management is delegated through the management chain, Senior management should keep an overview of how lower risks are managed through the management chain, but focus must be given to the higher risks.

6. Your School's Health and Safety Management System

The Health, Safety and Well-Being team have provided a robust health and safety management system for schools to implement on HR Infospace (please note – you may need to obtain log in details from the Headteacher). Schools that implement this system effectively have a good safety record and the number of incidents that occur due to school's activities are relatively low. Supportive mechanisms also need to be in place to ensure that all members of staff are engaged in the implementation of good health and safety practice through their involvement and competency.

All the compliance codes, codes of practice, and guidance / support systems that schools need to implement to ensure a positive safety record and to provide wellbeing and physical support to their employees are provided. There is a comprehensive set of subject specific policies including:

- Curriculum Codes of Practice
- Caretaking and site management Code of Practice
- Play equipment
- Model Premises Risk Assessment F625a
- COSHH Assessment P610

- Premises Management Safety e.g., Fire, Asbestos and Legionella

NCC has a complete suite of compliance codes covering all relevant aspects, related to successful health and safety management. Many of the documents span across all NCC operations and do not need to be specific to a specific sector – e.g., Risk Assessment Compliance code P625.

As a starting point, the chair of governors and Headteacher must complete and sign the health and safety commitments document P611s (part 1 and part 2) which details the school's commitment, assigns safety responsibilities, and details the arrangements which must be put in place in each school. The templates for this can be found here P611s Part 1, P611s Part 2.

Having a health and safety management system is not enough in isolation, the success of whatever process or system is in place still hinges on shared attitudes and behaviours. It is good practice for schools to nominate a lead governor for health and safety who can give focus to the health, safety and well-being needs of the school.

7. Actions and Review

This section details how you can use your findings to:

- Establish responsibilities for monitoring and acting on information
- Celebrate your school's success
- Consider your ambitions for the future

7.1 Action Plans

Action plans can be used to set the direction for improvement where it is needed. Your leadership checklist findings (appendix 1) can be used to develop an action plan. The plan must be developed with the leadership team who will take ownership of it. The priority areas and timescales will depend on your findings.

Once you have completed and implemented your action plan, you can set key performance targets for the future.

7.2 Health and Safety Performance – Headteacher Report

A six-monthly report to the leadership team is essential in order to ensure that leaders are involved in performance. It is recommended that the following items are reported on (and where helpful, compared with the previous year's performance):

- Progress against targets detailed in your action plan (for example training, implementation of risk assessments, communications to staff, involvement of staff)
- Number of incidents reported, their severity and actions taken as a result
- Sickness absence, specifically work-related sickness absence
- New issues (for example, planned significant construction / maintenance work, installation of new equipment and introduction of new activities).

Relevant information should be shared with employees and their nominated safety representatives. This includes sharing and publicising successes.

8. Additional supporting/related documents

- P611s Part 1- (Schools) Health and Safety - our commitments,
- P611s Part 2 – (Schools) Organisation, roles and responsibilities
- G502g – Health and Safety Training Directory
- P611a – (NCC) Health and Safety – Our commitments

9. Changes since last revision

Date	Details of change	Approved by	Version number
19/07/2022	Documented completely updated and matched to revised school model documents P611s. Additional information added requiring training identification and implementation. References to compliance codes updated. Accessibility checked.	P Downer	

Appendix 1: Health and Safety Leadership Checklist

Step 1. Plan

Item	Y/N	Notes and comments
There is a health and safety governor who is the health and safety “champion” (ensuring the processes that support the school are robust)		
Health and safety is a regular agenda item at senior management meetings and appropriate board of governor meetings. Items include incidents (how often minor injuries occur and, their cause and opportunities for prevention, ensuring investigations are completed for serious incidents), current health and safety issues, training for identified roles, and new developments.		
A formal health and safety action plan is agreed, which addresses the top risks. Performance against the identified targets / focus areas are reported to the above meetings on a 6-monthly basis.		
Consideration is given to the impact on health and safety when strategic decisions are made. It is important to ‘design-in’ health and safety at this stage.		
Health and safety is adequately resourced (including premises and equipment maintenance, improvements, and staff training)		
Health and safety records are kept centrally, and arrangements are in place for continuity during sickness absence or staff changes.		
Leaders know the top risks that need to be managed closely.		

Step 2. Do

Item	Y/N	Notes and comments
Significant incidents and near misses are reported and acted on (leaders respond quickly)		
The actions identified in the health and safety monitoring report (from the Health, Safety and Well-Being Team) have been implemented.		
Health and safety responsibilities, expectations and required training, are detailed when recruiting and discussed with staff as part of induction.		
The Headteacher, lead governor and staff training needs are identified to ensure that they understand their health and safety requirements and responsibilities. (Including *H & S training (e-learning and tutor led – role specific)*, *Governor Training* and curriculum training)		
New Headteachers access the *Headteacher support Programme*		
Leaders support employee involvement in health and safety matters e.g., share information in the termly *health and safety message* to consider national and local health and safety issues, updates and news items, letters (InfoSpace and Ecourier) and, ask for input into how the school delivers its health and safety standards.		
The model health & safety commitments (P611s part 1) and organization, responsibilities and arrangements document (P611s Part 2) been completed with health and safety roles assigned to members of staff), signed and dated by the Headteacher and chair of governors and reviewed in the last 12 months		

Curriculum codes of practice, premise and activity based risk assessments, COSHH assessments, and the relevant compliance codes that apply have been implemented and are reviewed as required.		
Policy changes and safe working practices are effectively communicated.		

Step 3. Check

Item	Y/N	Notes and comments
Senior management teams and governors receive regular reports and act on health and safety performance including contractor performance, sickness absence and workplace health.		

Step 4. Act

Item	Y/N	Notes and comments
The health and safety governor and Headteacher gather information for formal reviews which includes talking to members of staff and actively checking that activities are carried out safely		

Appendix 2. Action Plan

Try to ensure that your actions for improvement can be measured, for example, all curriculum code risk assessments, premise risk assessments, activity risk assessments etc., are completed with by the relevant staff, mandated training completed, and outcomes communicated.

Item	Action required/desired outcome	Action owner	Completion required by	Progress update	Date completed

- When developing your plan, also consider the strategic direction of the school and longer-term plans
- Please ensure you have arrangements to ensure continuity for periods of absence or staff changes including keeping health and safety information centrally.