

## The Association for Science Education

The ASE is an organisation of some 11,000 members, mostly teachers in primary, secondary and special schools and colleges, but also including laboratory technicians, education advisers and school inspectors, university lecturers and representatives of industry. It publishes a number of well-known journals, including *Education in Science*, *Primary Science*, *School Science Review* and *Science Teacher Education*.

Through its Safeguards in Science Committee it advises its members on health and safety matters in science. This may include personal correspondence and regular articles in the Association's journals, as well as via a number of booklets on health and safety including:

- *Safeguards in the School Laboratory* (11<sup>th</sup> edition, 2006)
- *Topics in Safety* (3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 2001)
- *Safety Reprints* (2005)
- *Safe and Exciting Science, An INSET Pack* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 2009)

For primary schools, the ASE has published:

- *Be Safe! Health and Safety in School Science and Technology for Teachers of 3- to 12-year-olds* (4<sup>th</sup> edition, 2011).

In-service training materials include:

- *Be Safe! INSET Pack for Primary Schools*

The web site has many additional safety resources, some available to the public.

The Association is frequently consulted on matters of health and safety by the Department for Education, the Health and Safety Executive, by publishers and manufacturers and by a variety of organisations and individuals. It collaborates closely with employers' organisations such as CLEAPSS and SSERC.

**Publications:** booksales@ase.org.uk  
**Safety Enquiries:** johnlawrence@ase.org.uk  
**Membership:** membership@ase.org.uk  
**Conferences:** conferences@ase.org.uk  
**General:** info@ase.org.uk

### For further details, please contact:

John Lawrence, Deputy Chief Executive  
The Association for Science Education  
College Lane, Hatfield, Herts AL10 9AA  
Tel: 01707 283000 Fax: 01707 266532  
johnlawrence@ase.org.uk www.ase.org.uk

## Other Sources of Advice on Health & Safety

*A Guide to the Law for School Governors*, DfES, 2006

*Health & Safety: Responsibilities & Powers*, DfES, 2001

*Health & Safety Guidance for Governors and Members of School Boards*, Education Service Advisory Committee, HSE Books, 1998

www.teachernet.gov.uk/management/healthandsafety

## CLEAPSS

CLEAPSS offers advice to employers on all aspects of practical science, especially health & safety and equipment provision. It is a consortium of local authorities with a duty to provide education and at the time of writing, all those in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and the off-shore islands are subscribers as are the great majority of foundation, voluntary aided and independent schools, academies and post-16 colleges.

The Gardiner Building, Brunel Science Park  
Kingston Lane  
Uxbridge UB8 3PQ  
Tel: 01895 251496  
Fax: 01895 814372  
E-mail: science@cleapss.org.uk  
Website: www.cleapss.org.uk

## The Scottish Schools Equipment Research Centre (SSERC)

SSERC performs a similar function to CLEAPSS for establishments in Scotland.

2 Pitreavie Court, Pitreavie Business Park  
Dunfermline KY11 8UB  
Tel: 01383 626070  
Fax: 01383 842793  
Email: sts@sserc.org.uk  
Website: www.sserc.org.uk

Both CLEAPSS and SSERC offer in-service training courses for teachers and technicians, partially based on materials originally developed by the ASE, including:

- *The Management of Safety for Heads of Science*
- *Health & Safety for School Laboratory Technicians*

# Health & Safety in Science in Secondary Schools and Colleges

*An information leaflet  
for Governors and Head Teachers*

*published by*

**THE ASSOCIATION FOR  
SCIENCE EDUCATION**

**The professional association for all  
science teachers and technicians**



2011

## Health & Safety in School and College Science Laboratories: The Role of Governors

In community, community special and voluntary controlled schools, and local authority nursery schools, the local authority is the employer. For all other schools and colleges, the governors are the employer and have the responsibility under the *Health and Safety at Work etc Act*, for the health, safety and welfare of their employees (e.g. teachers and laboratory technicians) and others who may be affected by their actions or in action (e.g. pupils, parents and visitors). Even where the local authority, as the employer, retains responsibility it is likely to have delegated at least some of the monitoring role to the head teacher and governors. The local authority health & safety policy should make the role clear.

Governing bodies fulfil a strategic role in school health & safety and are not expected to be involved in the day-to-day health & safety management of the school; that is the role of the school's senior management. The governors' role is to set the school's policy, monitor that health & safety systems have been implemented and ensure that the school is doing all that is reasonably practicable for the health and safety of employees, pupils and others affected by what goes on in the school.

The employer cannot fulfil its statutory duty unless it monitors how its policy is being complied with by the school(s). The employer must provide health & safety guidance and risk assessments for those school staff to whom health & safety tasks have been delegated, e.g. subject leaders and heads of department.

Where a governing body is the employer, it is unlikely that it will have the necessary competence and expertise to produce guidance and risk assessments for specialist areas such as science.

This is where the Association for Science Education (ASE) and its collaborators, CLEAPSS (or SSERC in Scotland), see back page, can be of considerable support to schools with risk assessments and guidance produced for science.

## Questions Governors could ask

The checklist below is intended to help Governors and other managers to monitor what is happening in school science departments. A list as brief as this cannot be comprehensive and often there will be sound reasons why some aspects of good practice cannot be implemented in a particular situation. The ASE, CLEAPSS, and (in Scotland) SSERC are all prepared to advise their members in cases of doubt. A more detailed checklist was produced for the ASE journal *School Science Review* in June 1995 – *How safe is your science department? A checklist for managers*.

**Monitoring New Legislation:** In schools not maintained by a local authority, who is responsible for watching out for the health & safety implications of new legislation?

**Health and Safety Policy:** Do the governors or local authority require the science department to have its own health and safety policy? If so, is it up to date and appropriate?

**Functions of Named Persons:** Do named individuals have health and safety functions related to particular courses, for the induction of new staff, etc?

**Health & Safety Induction:** Does the department have clear procedures for introducing basic health & safety rules, emergency plans and fire evacuation procedures to new staff, including support staff?

### Health & Safety Guidance, Training and

**Communication:** Are there appropriate rules for pupils, suitable guidance and training for staff and an effective mechanism for the communication and dissemination of health & safety information? Has the head of department had training in the management of health and safety? What induction is provided for new teachers, technicians and Teaching Assistants?

**Employer's Rules or Codes of Practice:** If required by the employer, are any Local Rules/Codes of Practice known by all staff and adhered to?

**Radioactive Substances & Ionising Radiations:** Is there a named teacher in charge of work on radioactivity and has the employer appointed a Radiation Protection Adviser? Are the legal requirements such as leak testing fully met?

**Risk Assessments:** Are risk assessments available for science practical work (such as those produced by ASE, CLEAPSS or SSERC), are they indicated in schemes of work and are staff using them in planning and preparing lessons?

**Emergency Procedures:** Are there clearly understood procedures for Immediate Remedial Measures and other types of emergency, e.g., fire, spills, chemical splashes in the eye etc?

**Health & Safety Check Logbook or File:** Does the science department have a file or logbook, showing when various checks/tests were carried out, by whom, and with what outcome?

**Fume Cupboards, Pressure Systems and Portable Electrical Appliances:** Is the testing or checking of fume cupboards, pressure vessels and portable electrical appliances (if delegated to the science department) carried out in accordance with the requirements of the relevant Regulations?

**Fire Extinguishers and Alarms:** Are there suitable extinguishers in the laboratories and prep rooms, are they checked annually and do staff know how to use them?

**Chemicals:** Are chemicals date-stamped on arrival, clearly labelled, and the condition of those liable to deteriorate checked regularly?

**Waste management:** Is waste being minimized and disposed of in a responsible and legal manner?

**Personal Protective Equipment and Other Safety Equipment:** Is eye protection, and other protective equipment, readily available, in good condition, and used whenever the risk assessment requires it?

**Condition of Laboratories, etc:** Is the condition and security of the science accommodation (including, where appropriate, safety signs) subject to regular systematic checks?

**External Health & Safety Audit:** It may be desirable to have a safety audit by someone external to the school; has this happened, with recommendations being acted upon?