

The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH)

School Advice Note

1. Under COSHH regulations every employer is required to assess, control and monitor worker exposure to “Substances hazardous to health”. The definition of “Substances hazardous to health” in the legislation is quite complex but in general they can be:
 - 1.1. Chemicals used in the office (hand sanitiser is an example);
 - 1.2. Cleaning Chemicals;
 - 1.3. Substances used in equipment maintenance;
 - 1.4. Welding fumes.
 - 1.5. Paints, varnishes, glues etc;
 - 1.6. Wood and MDF Board dust;
 - 1.7. Microorganisms such as Legionella etc;
2. By virtue of Regulation 6 of COSHH, no employer may carry out work, which is liable to expose anyone to a hazardous substance unless a suitable and sufficient assessment has been made of the risks created by that work.
3. COSHH assessments are now available centrally through the Corporate Health and Safety Service using a database system for assisting with COSHH assessment called SYPOL. This system has details of thousands of substances. It is regularly updated, and it is likely that most of the substances currently in use are already on this database. This is only part of the process of assessment, as firstly an employer should consider whether the substance really needs to be used at all. After an initial assessment, consideration should be given to using a safer COSHH free substitute, only then should the assessment of the product decided upon then proceed.
4. Copies of assessments should be held at the workplace to which they relate, so the information that they hold can be easily accessible. Assessments should be kept under review, in case anything in the working process changes.
5. Secondary School Science, Design and Technology departments have their own COSHH Assessment Files, which are provided via their CLEAPSS subscription and form part of this Policy.
6. It is an offence under COSHH regulation to use any substance to which the regulations apply without a valid COSHH assessment.
7. Further advice can be found in the following publications:
 - 7.1. [Southampton City Council Safe Working Procedure –Control of Substances Hazardous to Health \(COSHH\).](#)
 - 7.2. [School SYPOL COSHH Assessment file.](#) – please [email](#) the Corporate Health and Safety Services for login details and access to this database.