

Staged Health and Safety Audits for schools

School Advice Note

The CHSS carryout Staged Health and Safety Audits across the authority and its schools.

Outlined below is the process that is followed and each stage of the audit process involving a school:

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) define health and safety audits as “the systematic examination to determine whether activities and related results conform to planned arrangements and whether these arrangements are implemented effectively and are suitable for achieving the organisation’s policy and objectives”.

Whilst an audit is used to assess Health and Safety management systems, it is important to view an audit as a positive – it’s a chance to highlight company successes, but also to assist managers identify any gaps so that appropriate controls can be put in place to reduce risks.

The Corporate Health and Safety Service (CHSS) will provide managers/head teachers with guidance and support in order to achieve positive outcomes. Overall, an audit demonstrates that the school management team and governing body are committed to the health and welfare of employees, pupils/parents and all other stakeholders.

Previously audits were carried out in the event of a serious incident/accident, a rise in incidents in general or a rise in RIDDOR reportable incidents, or due to the period of time elapsed since the previous audit or due to specific concerns being raised.

To ensure focus on the most significant areas of risk a staged audit process has been developed. Triggers for this will be based on; specific concerns being raised, accident-incident analysis identifying trends such as; lack of or over reporting, high levels of over 7 day or specified RIDDOR incidents, failure to update Manager’s Reviews, lack of engagement and/or information provided and non-completion of identified actions. The service manager – health, safety and employee wellbeing may also direct audits or act on requests from CMT or service leads.

In the event of a Stage 1 Audit being triggered, the head teacher will receive an email from CHSS requesting them to complete a Stage 1 Audit Questionnaire and provide associated evidence as appropriate. Further stages of the audit may be triggered as per the guidance below.

Stage 1

Stage 1 Audit Questionnaire QA and Incident Database Analysis (completed by the school)

QA process using a standard form, which automatically generates a percentage score. Primarily a question and answer process but examples requested where applicable to aid verification of scores entered.

Form completed by school with scores reviewed by H&S Officer based on responses given and evidence supplied.

- If positive responses – low risk assigned with recommended review period of 24 months, unless there is significant change (percentage 85% and above)
- If mainly positive responses but some minor areas of concern – medium risk assigned with recommendations for improvement provided and review period of 12 months recommended, unless there is significant change (percentage 75% and above)
- If several areas of non-compliance or major non-conformity identified – high risk assigned and stage 2 audit (Assurance Audit) to be scheduled (percentage below 75%)
- If no response received within a reasonable period (2 weeks), reminder to be sent and if still no response within a reasonable period (further 2 weeks), or insufficient evidence provided, escalation to a stage 2 audit.

Stage 2

Assurance Audit

This is mainly a desktop exercise carried out by a Corporate H&S Officer. There is no set 'formal' process for this as it will be based on issues or concerns raised via the Stage 1 audit and is likely to focus only on areas of concern resulting from the outcome of the self-audit where significant gaps in certain areas may have been raised, but no significant concerns are evident in other areas.

There may also be occasions when a Stage 2 audit is carried out as a result of trend analysis of incidents by the Corporate H&S Advisor or in the event of a serious incident occurring.

The audit will be based around reviewing documents provided by the service or school at the request of the Corporate H&S Officer, and will normally take place off-site. However, if there are concerns around premises, which cannot be adequately reviewed via documentation, then a brief site visit may be included.

Depending on the outcome of the Stage 2 audit, there may be a requirement for a further Stage 2 audit at a later date, when time for recommended actions to be put in place has passed.

Alternatively, in the event concerns cannot be adequately addressed through the Stage 2 process, the Corporate H&S Advisor may recommend a full Stage 3 assurance audit. This will be based on the below outcomes;

- If mainly positive responses but some minor areas of concern – medium risk assigned with recommendations for improvement provided and review period of 12 months recommended, unless there is significant change (percentage 75% and above)
- If several areas of non-compliance or major non-conformity identified – high risk assigned and stage 3 audit (Full Audit) to be scheduled (percentage below 75%)

Stage 3

Full audit of high risk operations/areas (Full school audit completed by H&S Officer)

Full audit and inspection carried out. Focused to identify specific areas of concern towards creating a gap analysis and action plan.

Note;

Cost are applicable when it is deemed necessary for a stage 2 or 3 audit to be carried out due to indicators identified above. Costs will vary depending on the size and nature of the school.

Schools who have signed up to the Enhanced SLA will receive a Stage 3 Audit annually and ongoing guidance and support as part of the SLA and therefore will not be subject to the staged audit process.