

Summary of guidance on first aid requirements in schools
(from DfEE good practice guide "Guidance on First Aid for Schools" 1998)

Introduction

Under health and safety legislation, employers have to ensure that there are adequate and appropriate equipment and facilities for providing first aid in the workplace. It is the schools and local education authorities to develop their own policies and procedures based on an assessment of local need. The Local Authority should provide advice to schools on drawing up a first aid policies and ensuring that they are meeting their statutory duties. First aid provision must be available at all times, while people are on school premises, and also off premises, whilst on school visits.

Health and safety legislation places duties on employers for the health and safety of their employees and anyone else on the premises. In schools this includes responsibility for the headteacher and teachers, non-teaching staff, pupils and visitors (including contractors). The employer is responsible under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 for making sure that a school has a health and safety policy. The policy should include arrangements for first aid, based on a risk assessment of the school, and should cover numbers of first aiders/appointed persons, numbers and locations of first aid containers, arrangements for offside and out of school hours activities.

It is the employer's responsibility to make sure that the statutory requirements for the provision of first aiders is met, that appropriate training is provided and that correct procedures are followed. The employer should be satisfied that any training has given staff sufficient understanding, confidence and expertise.

To comply with their health and safety obligations, the Local Authority should provide a policy statement and guidance on good practice to help county and controlled schools draw up their own health and safety arrangements, including first aid. Headteachers should also make sure that parents are aware of the school's health and safety policy, including first aid.

Teachers' conditions of employment do not include giving first aid, although any member of staff may volunteer to undertake these tasks. Teachers and other staff in charge of pupils are expected to use their best endeavours at all times, particularly in emergencies, to secure the welfare of the pupils at the school in the same way that parents might be expected to act towards their children. In general, the consequences of taking no action are likely to be more serious than those of trying to assist in emergency.

Employers must arrange adequate and appropriate training and guidance for staff who volunteer to be first aiders/appointed persons. The employer must ensure that there are enough trained staff to meet statutory requirements and assessed needs, allowing for staff on annual or sick leave, or those off-site.

First aid - what do schools need to do?

The Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981 set out what employers have to do. Employers must provide adequate and appropriate equipment and facilities and qualified first aid personnel. The regulations do not oblige employers to provide first aid for anyone other than their own staff, but employers do have health and safety responsibilities towards non-employees. The Health and Safety Commission guidance recommends that organisations such as schools, which provide a service to others, should include them in their risk assessments and provide for. In the light of their legal responsibilities for those in their care, schools should consider carefully the likely risk to pupils and visitors, and make allowance for them when drawing up policies and deciding on the numbers of first aid personnel.

How many first aid personnel are required?

There are no rules on exact numbers. Employers have to make a judgement based on their own circumstances and a suitable and sufficient risk assessment. Governing bodies and head teachers should consider the likely risks to pupils and visitors, as well as employees, when drawing up policies and deciding on the numbers of first aid personnel. The HSC provide guidance on numbers of first aid personnel, based only on employee numbers. As a general guide, they recommend a lower risk place of work (e.g. shops and offices), with 15 to 100 employees, should consider having at least one first aider. A medium risk place of work (e.g. light engineering), with 20 to 100 employees, should consider having at least one first aider in every 50 employees or part thereof was.

Schools will generally fall into the lowest category but some schools or areas of activity may fall into the medium risk category.

Schools should base their provision on the results of their risk assessment.

When considering how many first aid personnel are required, the governing body and headteachers should also consider:

- adequate provision for lunchtimes and breaks;
- adequate provision for offside activities, e.g. school trips;
- adequate provision of practical departments, e.g. science, technology, or physical education;
- adequate provision for out of hours activities e.g. sports clubs.

Unless first aid cover is part of a member of staff's contract of employment, people who agree to become first aiders do so on a voluntary basis.

The training and qualification of first aiders needed in schools

Schools assessment should identify the number of appointed persons needed. Arrangement should be made to ensure this cover is available at all times. Schools must consider what level of training and qualification is needed, that is appropriate to their circumstances. First aiders must hold a valid certificate of competence, issued by an organisation whose training qualifications are approved by the agency.

Training courses cover a range of first aid competencies. The terminology used by different training agencies varies widely, but the list below outlines the main levels of training and certification available:

1. **Appointed person** – an appointed person is someone who takes charge when someone is injured or becomes ill, looks after first aid equipment and ensures an ambulance or other professional medical help is summoned. An appointed person is not a first aider. They should not give first aid treatment for which they have not been trained. However, it is good practice to ensure that appointed persons have additional emergency first aid training/refresher training, as appropriate. These training courses do not require HSE approval. They normally last four hours and cover the following topics:
 - what to do in an emergency;
 - cardiopulmonary resuscitation;
 - first aid for the unconscious casualty;
 - first aid for the wounded or bleeding.

Additional emergency first aid training should help an appointed person cope with an emergency and improve their competence and confidence.

2. **Emergency First Aid** – this course provides 6-8 hours of training, and is the minimum recommended for school staff.

3. **Outdoor First Aid** – this course provides 16 hours of training and is the minimum required, for example, for Mountain Leaders and others working in remote outdoor settings.
4. **Standard First Aid at Work** – this is a 3-day HSE approved course for those people requiring full Health and Safety first aid training for the workplace. N.B. Standard first aid at work training courses do not include resuscitation procedures for children. An alternative one-day (6 hours) Emergency First Aid at Work course is now available for low-risk work environments such as schools.
5. **Paediatric First Aid** – this is a 2-day (12 hour) course that focuses on first aid for children and infants. It is a statutory requirement that Early Years/Foundation Stage establishments have at least one staff member with a current Paediatric First Aid qualification present at all times, whether on or offsite with groups of children

The employer should arrange appropriate training for their first aid personnel. Training organisations will often tailor courses specifically to schools' needs. Most first aid certificates are only valid for three years but annual refreshers are recommended so that staff remain competent and confident to deliver first aid. Employers should arrange for the renewal of qualifications before certificates expire. If a certificate expires, the individual will have to undertake another full course of training to become a first aider. However, the employers can arrange for first aiders to attend a refresher course up to three months before the expiry date of their certificate. The new certificate takes effect from the date of expiry. Schools should keep a record of first aiders and certification dates.