

Whole school risk assessments

SSERC has worked with Aberdeenshire Council to create some whole school risk assessments for nursery, primary and secondary schools. These are now on our website under *Health and safety > Whole school Guidance > Risk Assessments - whole school*.

A model risk assessment (RA) is no use unless you:

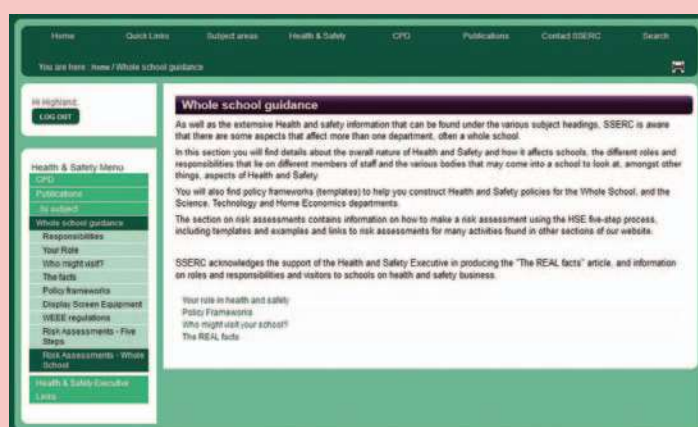
- Read it and modify it according to your own circumstances.
- Pass on information to users (pupils, teachers, support staff).

With respect to modifying the risk assessment according to your own circumstances, it is likely that rather than adding additional control measures, you will remove ones that don't apply. The model risk assessments have to cover all ages and abilities. Take the example of the litter-picking one. For younger children, it is entirely appropriate that somebody should check the area for broken glass and dog mess. For older students, they can simply be warned to avoid it or be instructed on how to deal with it safely.

When tailoring a risk assessment, consider:

- Who will be involved in the activity? What are their ages, abilities and behaviours?
- Where will the activity take place? Do you have the same facilities mentioned in the model RA?
- What resources are available for the activity? Do you have the equipment described in the model RA?

We strongly advise that you don't simply leave a risk assessment unmodified, thinking that it might be a bit over the top but at least it covers everything. Our experience with science risk assessments is that if hazards that are trivial for a particular age group are included, users become frustrated at what they rightly see as unnecessary measures. This can lead to health and safety not being taken seriously and a focus on the trivial can lead to big issues being overlooked.



Risk assessments and protocols

Some risk assessments refer to other documents designated as "protocols". This is to avoid extensive duplication. Rather than include the same manual handling advice in several risk assessments, for example, these risk assessments simply make reference to a manual handling protocol. Please note that the SSERC website www.sserc.org.uk has extensive information on health and safety in science and technical classes. This is referred to, but not duplicated, within the whole school risk assessments.

And finally...

Aim to be risk aware, not risk averse. If you want to do something, there's usually a safe way to do it. ◀