

**ST VINCENT DE PAUL  
CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL**



# Work at Height Policy

*"We are called to be the hands and face of Jesus  
as we learn, love and grow together"*

**(HCC latest version:** Updates November 2020 V2: substantial review to previous content  
Next HCC update November 2022)

Document Date: Summer 2023

Review Date: Summer 2024

Reviewed by the Health and Safety Committee

Ratified at Full Governing Body meeting

Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J. Smith', written over a light blue horizontal line.

Chair of Governors

Date ratified: 4<sup>th</sup> July 2023





- c) where the risk of a fall cannot be eliminated further controls to minimise the distance and consequences of a fall should one occur.
14. A task specific work at height template is available to assist with the risk assessment process, along with some generic assessments these are not exhaustive and should be customised to suit the specific site and activity concerned.  
<https://www.thegrid.org.uk/health-and-safety-offsite-visits-premises/health-and-safety/risk-assessments/generic-risk-assessments>
15. As with all risk assessments these should be proportionate to the scale of the activities and level of risk involved, further advice is available from the Education Health and Safety Team if needed.
16. As a general guide the risk assessment should consider the following areas:
- **The task and activity involved**
    - How long will it take? (stepladders and ladders are only suitable for light tasks and short-term -less than 30 minutes duration)
    - What tools will be needed and will they increase the risks?
    - What manual handling will be involved – will the user be stable enough?
  - **The people (medical conditions etc.)**
    - Are they adequately trained to use the equipment?
    - Do they have any medical conditions that could affect their safety?
    - Are there any significant individual health issues i.e. epilepsy?
    - What is their general fitness – are they comfortable to work at height?
    - Are they competent to work at height?
  - **Equipment to be used including erection and dismantling**
    - Is the equipment of the correct size/length (tall enough so no over-reaching is necessary but not so long or flexible that sway or vibration could occur)?
    - Is the equipment of the correct design? (for ladders/stepladders, work within HCC should use EN 131 equipment – check the label. Class 3 'domestic' should be avoided unless risk assessment can justify that they are suitable for the task)
  - **The location (proximity to roads, overhead electrical cables etc)**
    - Is the structure against which the access equipment will be used strong enough and in good repair?
    - Is the surface which the access equipment will stand on or the area that will be accessed fragile or unstable?
    - Could pedestrian routes, overhead cables etc. be a hazard?
    - Can ladders be tied to the structure?
  - **The environment, poor conditions and slippery surfaces (weather, temperature etc.)**
    - Are surfaces slippery e.g. if the ground is muddy, could this be transferred to the equipment?
    - If outside, are weather conditions suitable (no high winds, heavy rain etc.)?
    - Are light levels adequate?
  - **The effect on others**

- Is there anyone on site who may be affected by the activity, such as pedestrians at risk from falling objects?

**Emergency arrangements** – including:

- Are any emergency plans needed, e.g. for rescuing or assisting people who are at height?

17. Once a risk assessment has been conducted it must be shared with all relevant person(s).
18. Where higher risk or specialist activities are contracted out then the contractor is responsible for ensuring a suitable risk assessment and method statement is undertaken. Those commissioning such work must satisfy themselves that the contractor selected has the appropriate competency and equipment to undertake the task safely.

### Selecting Equipment

19. In selecting appropriate equipment for working at height priority should always be given to collective protective measures to prevent falls (e.g. guardrails and working platforms) before other personal measures. (e.g. fall arrest equipment)
20. Access equipment should be selected which is appropriate to the nature of the work being undertaken, taking account of such factors as:
  - working conditions;
  - duration and frequency of use;
  - complexity of work;
  - distance and consequences of a fall.
  - the risks to the safety of others where the work equipment will be used.
21. Ladders and stepladders should be used only for light duty, short duration work (max 30 mins) which has been approved by the Site Manager. For example whilst a ladder may reach the workplace, if the task requires strenuous work, carrying bulky / heavy equipment or likely to take > 30 mins then an alternative means of access such as a tower scaffold or podium steps would be more appropriate.

### Use of work at height equipment

22. Schools should compile a register of such equipment (excluding kick stools), example [ladder register](#).  
  
Where there is more than one piece of equipment each should be indelibly marked with an identifying number.
23. Equipment for work at height, should be inspected prior to use (basic visual inspection) and by a competent person termly/6 monthly. The inspection will depend upon the complexity of the equipment. [Checklist for ladder inspections](#)
24. Where work equipment is hired to the user, it is important that both parties agree, in writing, exactly what inspection has been carried out and that this information is passed to those working at height.
25. In the case of tower scaffolds a competent person must inspect these prior to its first use and thereafter every 7 days that it remains in place.





- secure the ladder via eye bolts to areas frequently used to access the school roof.
- activity carried out only when weather conditions are suitable, i.e., not in high winds, heavy rain, ice and snow on the surface, poor light, or darkness.
- consider how will tools etc be carried i.e., tool belt or bucket and rope system?
- once on the roof, care must be taken to avoid approaching the roof edge, staff to move 2 metres away from the edge once on the roof. A push stick or similar item should be used to move or dislodge items close to the roof edge.
- if relevant Sky lights to be controlled via a visual barrier or a safe net system to be put in place. (There are products such as skylight fall prevention covers to prevent falls through fragile surfaces when working on roofs).

is there adequate communication in place in the event of an emergency i.e., mobile phone / walkie talkie.

35. See [Appendix 1](#) for additional advice on access to low roofs.

### **Fragile surfaces**

36. All fragile surfaces should be identified on site and suitable precautions be in place to prevent inadvertent access during access / works to such areas. i.e. barriers around sky lights or safety net systems (see <https://www.skylightsafetynet.co.uk/> as an example)
37. Warning signs should be fixed at the approach to fragile roofs where access is needed or foreseeable.  
Work should be arranged as far as possible to avoid working on or passing near fragile surfaces.

### **Information, instruction and training**

38. All employees required to work at height must be competent to do so and receive relevant information and instruction in the risks of working at height and specific training in the equipment that they will be using. The level of training required should be proportionate to the risk.
39. This does not necessarily mean they need to go on a training course. In many cases, simply ensuring staff are aware of the risk assessment and the safety advice within it might be sufficient, particularly for low risk activities using kick stools and small stepladders.
40. The HSE have produced simple practical advice for users on the safe use of steps and ladders (INDG45) (see Appendix 2) for staff involved in low risk activities (accessing storage, putting up displays at low height etc. Managers should talk through the expectations of the school policy and this guidance with staff and ensure that this is understood.
41. Providing the HSE guidance to staff and ensuring they are aware of the simple precautions to take when using ladders and stepladders would constitute a proportionate level of instruction for low risk activities.
42. A formal training course on working at height would be advisable for higher risk work such as:
- accessing unguarded flat roofs;
  - working on unguarded flat/fragile roofs;
  - cleaning out gutters;
  - cleaning windows which cannot be reached from ground level;

- Changing bulbs/florescent tubes at high level e.g. >3m;
43. Training in the safe use, selection and inspection of ladders are provided by the Education Health and Safety Team. Contact [healthandsafety@hertfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:healthandsafety@hertfordshire.gov.uk) for information.
  44. Members of staff who erect or use other access equipment (mobile tower scaffold, mobile elevated working platform (MEWPs) such as scissor lifts etc.) **must** have received specific training in the use of that equipment.
  45. A PASMA (Prefabricated Access Suppliers' and Manufacturers' Association) qualification is recognised in the construction industry for those operatives working at height on mobile access towers. The **training courses** are approved by HSE and the UK Contractors Group.
  46. School staff assembling / dismantling mobile towers should be PASMA trained, this proves that users have undertaken training to an accredited standard and combined with experience and technical knowledge demonstrates competency. See <https://pasma.co.uk/about/> & find a training centre nearby via <https://pasma.co.uk/directory/find-training-centre/>

## Further information and guidance

### Health and safety guidance and support

Education Health and Safety Team - 01992 556478

[healthandsafety@hertfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:healthandsafety@hertfordshire.gov.uk)



## APPENDIX 2 SAFE USE OF STEPLADDERS

*'Contains public sector information published by the Health and Safety Executive and licensed under the Open Government Licence'.*

When using a stepladder to carry out a task:

- Check all four stepladder feet are in contact with the ground and the steps are level
- Only carry light materials and tools
- Don't overreach
- Don't stand and work on the top three steps (including a step forming the very top of the stepladder) unless there is a suitable handhold
- Ensure any locking devices are engaged
- Try to position the stepladder to face the work activity and not side on. However, there are occasions when a risk assessment may show it is safer to work side on, e.g., in a retail stock room when you can't engage the stepladder locks to work face on because of space restraints in narrow aisles, but you can fully lock it to work side on
- Try to avoid work that imposes a side loading, such as side-on drilling through solid materials (e.g., bricks or concrete)
- Where side loadings cannot be avoided, you should prevent the steps from tipping over, e.g., by tying the steps. Otherwise, use a more suitable type of access equipment
- Maintain three points of contact at the working position. This means two feet and one hand, or when both hands need to be free for a brief period, two feet and the body supported by the stepladder.

When deciding whether it is safe to carry out a particular task on a stepladder where you cannot maintain a handhold (e.g., to put a box on a shelf, hang wallpaper, or install a smoke detector on a ceiling), the decision needs to be justified, considering:

- the height of the task
- whether a handhold is still available to steady yourself before and after the task
- whether it is light work
- whether it avoids side loading
- whether it avoids overreaching
- whether the stepladder can be tied (e.g., when side-on working)



Example where two hands need to be free for a brief period for light work. Keep two feet on the same step and the body (knees or chest) supported by the stepladder to maintain three points of contact. Make sure a safe handhold is available