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Occupational Health and Safety for Schools

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Overview

- Education has similar health and safety concerns to other sectors
- Employers must manage safety
- Employers must prepare a safety statement
- Managers and staff have responsibilities
- Co-operation essential to create a safety culture in schools.

What is occupational health and safety?

It is :

- the promotion and maintenance of the highest degree of physical, mental and social well-being of employees and students
- the prevention of adverse health effects due to working conditions
- the protection of employees / students from risks resulting from factors adverse to health

What is occupational health and safety?

- the placing and maintenance of employees/students in an occupational environment adapted to physical and mental needs
- the adaptation of work to humans.

Occupational health and safety encompasses the **social, mental and physical well-being of workers**, that is the “whole person”.

The basics

All employers must:

- Actively manage safety and health
- Undertake a risk assessment
- Prepare a safety statement
- Comply with industry or task specific regulations
- Inform all employee of their health and safety obligations.

The basics

All employees must:

- Comply with the law
- Protect their own and the health and safety of others
- Co-operate with the Board
- Attend necessary training
- Not engage in improper conduct or other behaviour which could endanger own safety or that of others
- Make correct use of equipment
- Report hazards
- Not intentionally interfere with or misuse equipment.

The basics

General Principles of Prevention:

- Avoidance of risk
- Evaluation of unavoidable risks (risk assessment)
- Combating risks at source
- Adaptation of work to the individual especially with regard to design of places of work, the choice of work equipment and the choice of systems of work
- Adaptation of work to technical progress

The basics

- The replacement of dangerous articles, substances or systems of work by safe or less dangerous articles, substances or systems of work
- Priority of collective protective measures over individual protective measures
- Development of an adequate prevention policy which takes account of technology, organisation of work, working conditions, social factors and the influence of factors relating to the working environment
- Giving of appropriate training and instructions to employees .

Types of occupational hazards

- Chemical hazards
- Physical hazards
- Biological hazards
- Psychological hazards
- Hazards associated with the non-application of ergonomic principles
- Human.

Risk Assessment?

- Purpose: the identification of hazards and risks and the preparation of measures to overcome these before an accident occurs
- How? Analyse work activities; Identify hazards; Evaluate risks; Introduce protective/ preventative measures; Monitor and assess.

Hazard assessment is most beneficial when it is carried out by people who work in the area.

Safety Statement

- Reflects employers commitment to ensuring safety, health and welfare of all employees
- Action document – based on risk assessments identified in the workplace
- Must be a written document – in a language that is understood by all employees
- Details the health and safety provisions that exist within the workplace
- Highlights all potential hazards in the workplace
- Specifies what must be done

Safety Statement

- Outlines the measures that have been put in place to reduce hazards in the workplace
- Outlines emergency plans and procedures
- Must be brought to the attention of all employees
- Includes the names, job titles and details of anybody with assigned safety responsibilities
- Should be reviewed annually and must be revised if any significant change happens in the working environment or nature of the work
- Audits to ensure employee compliance and effectiveness of procedures.

Insured costs

- Covers civil liabilities only (compensation claims for injury, ill health and damage)
- Can cover legal costs
- Can cover interruption to work of school

Does not cover criminal liability or fines imposed by courts.

Claims cause insurance premiums to rise.

Uninsured (hidden) costs

- Costs to injured person or their family
- Treatment and lost teaching time costs
- Investigation costs, writing reports and filling forms
- Costs of finding/training suitable/qualified replacement
- Lower staff morale
- Negative publicity (local media, newspapers, HSA etc.)
- Costs to State (occupational injury benefit paid by taxes!!).

Human Costs

- Circa 60 fatalities per annum according to HSA
- Injuries that result in pain and suffering
- Loss of income
- Medical costs – doctors/prescriptions
- Inconvenience of trips to consultants, doctors, hospitals – having to be driven – disruption to other family members
- Potential for negative relationships with Board, Principal and staff
- Possibility of long term medical problems and inability to return to work.

Benefits to schools of good safety management

- Fewer accidents/injuries/lost time/claims
- Fewer disruptions to delivery of learning and teaching
- Protects welfare of staff and students
- Boosts morale/staff feel valued
- Lower or stable insurance costs due to fewer claims
- Ensures legal compliance and reduces liability of Board and individuals
- Happier and healthier working environment. Less absenteeism.

Reasons for poor safety systems in schools

- ❑ No appreciation of costs of accidents or injuries or the benefits of good health
- ❑ Fear of unknown
- ❑ Time! Time! Time! – competing pressures on all of us
- ❑ Lack of funding and support for safety changes
- ❑ Lack of knowledge of health and safety duties and responsibilities
- ❑ Jargon
- ❑ “Not my job” – extra hassle
- ❑ Lack of communication and listening

Reasons for poor safety systems in schools

- Poor leadership – fear of devolved or shared leadership
- Focus on students
- Inadequate involvement of staff
- Health and safety not planned in projects (i.e. purchasing of equipment; building projects)
- No understanding of hazards or risk assessments
- No competence within the school
- A culture of lack of trust and fear exists within school
- Not knowing where to start therefore **No Safety Culture.**

Safety Culture

What is a safety culture?

Culture is a combination of an organisation's:

- Attitudes
- Behaviours
- Beliefs
- Values
- Ways of doing things
- The other shared characteristics of a particular group of people.

Safety Culture

Successful companies hold the view that health and safety is a key value and way of life.

"The way we do things around here"

"Health and safety management protects people from harm and also contributes to business success"

"Most accidents are preventable"

Safety Culture Indicators

- Accidents
- Absenteeism
- Sickness rates
- Staff turnover
- Legislative compliance
- Staff complaints.

Creating a *Safety Culture* within schools

- Leadership and commitment from the top that is genuine and visible (“Walk the walk”)
- Conviction among staff that high standards of safety are desirable and achievable
- Identification and assessment of hazards and the creation of preventative systems
- Immediate rectification of identified deficiencies
- Health and safety a line management issue

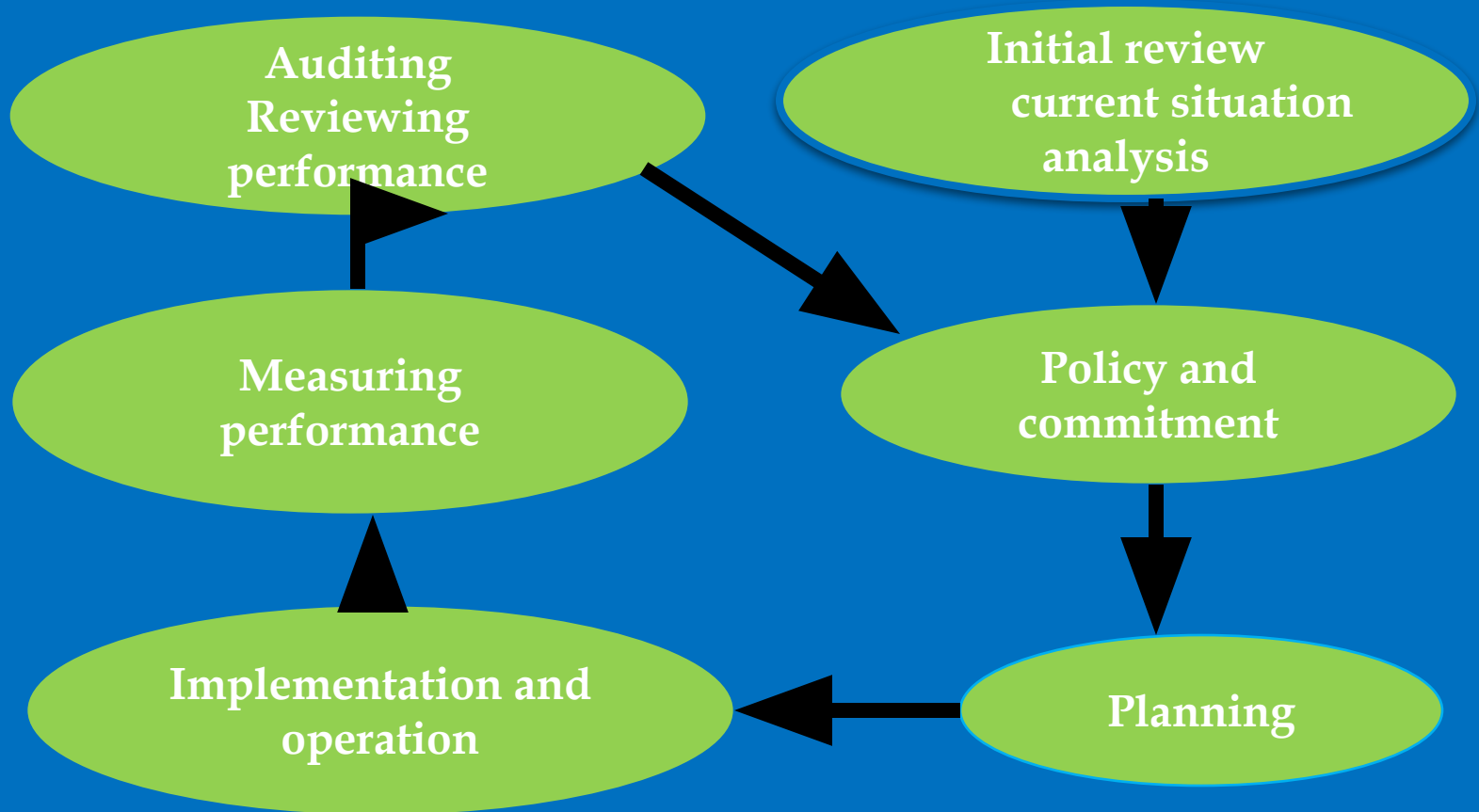
Creating a *Safety Culture* within schools

- Safety Policy sets out high expectations
- Comprehensive set of safety practices
- Setting of realistic and achievable targets that are monitored and measured
- Active participation by **all** employees in decision making
- “Ownership” of health and safety permeates all levels of the school – achieved through training, staff and student involvement and good communication

Creating a *Safety Culture* within schools

- All incidents are thoroughly investigated
- Safety behaviour embedded in school planning process
- Effective accountability systems – specific, measurable, achievable, reasonable, unambiguous
- Good safety behaviour is a condition of employment
- Existence of a continuous improvement culture
- Annual health and safety report.

Safety Management System



What is a safety management system?

Key elements:

- Policy and commitment
- Planning – objectives and targets
- Implementation and operation
- Measuring performance
- Monitoring
- Audit and review

Questions ??