

Guidance Note	Date of Issue: Nov 17
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Guidance Notes for Inspecting Low Hazard Areas

The guidance notes below are to be used as a prompt when undertaking the 6 monthly inspections of low hazard schools/departments. Please be aware that the notes are not exhaustive and these are not the only factors that should be considered. There may be factors that are specific to your particular work area.

Slips/trips

- Are there obvious slip or trip hazards? Consider uneven surfaces, trailing cables, edges of floor coverings, removal of waste products and water introduced from outside
- If personal belongings are present, are they tidied away – do they have to be in the work area?
- Do cleaning activities introduce a hazard?
- Are there understood processes and/or materials for managing spills?
- If there is a history of slipping accidents despite precautions, consider suitability of floor surfaces or footwear controls

Fire Hazards – Ignition Sources

- Are potential ignition sources identified and adequately controlled – heat sources and electrical equipment inspected and maintained?
- Is the use of extension sockets and loading of electrical sockets minimised to prevent electrical fire?
- Is the area secure to prevent out of hours and unauthorised access?
- Is smoking limited to more than 15 metres from the building?

Fire Hazards – Combustible Materials

- Are waste products regularly removed?
- Are combustible materials separated from ignition sources, i.e. electrical distribution boards and heating systems?
- Is storage of combustible materials avoided in protected stairwells or corridors?

Fire Hazards – Escape Routes

- Are staff, students and visitors aware of procedures to adopt in event of discovering a fire, or upon hearing the alarm?
- Are escape routes to the final exits clear of obstacles?

- Are fire extinguishers in their correct location, unobstructed, within their certificate date and not being used as door stops?

Chemical hazards

- Chemicals may be present in low hazard environments including printer and photocopier toner and cleaning agents
- If following manufacturer's instructions, then risks will likely be low
- Are there any other substances in use that present a hazard?

Non-powered hand tools

- Specific Regulations apply to any item of work equipment supplied, however adopt a common sense and risk based approach is advised – use of craft knives, *etc.* warrant attention, but office staplers and letter openers do not. Be aware of equipment that employees bring into the work place from home
- Is there use of tools or equipment that require risks to be assessed?

Work/storage at height

- Work at height is likely to be restricted to storage and retrieval of items
- Are heavy items stored lower down and lighter / less used items kept higher up? Consider alternative storage, reducing access at height if possible
- Is there an adequate number of kick steps or step ladders and are these [regularly inspected](#) in accordance with RGU guidance?

Vehicle Movements

- If encountered, refer to medium hazard inspection form guidance notes for further guidance

Electricity

- Hazards primarily arise from portable equipment *e.g.* projectors, photocopiers, laptops, fans, kettles, *etc.* Are these visually checked by staff and included within a scheme of portable appliance testing?
- Check for trailing cables, overloaded extension sockets, any obvious damage to cables or equipment or unauthorised and untested modifications
- If overloading of outlets and trailing cables are noted, are there sufficient electrical sockets provided? If more sockets are required, contact Estates & Property Services

Manual handling

- Not generally considered an issue in low hazard area, however a box of paper weighs approx. 12.5kg and a full water cooler bottle weighs approx. 18.5kg. Generally, routine handling tasks in low hazard areas will not require manual handling assessments, but significant tasks including 'one-offs' *e.g.* moving desks, filing cabinets, *etc.* will require assessing
- Are there any significant manual handling activities?

Environmental conditions

- Is the space, lighting, temperature and ventilation suitable for the activities?

Lone working

- Is there lone working or out-of-hours activities?
- The need for lone working should be minimised. If lone working is necessary, either out with normal working hours or out with building opening hours then the Lone Working / Out-of-Hours Policy and Procedure must be adopted

Display Screen Equipment

- If Display Screen Equipment (DSE) is present and staff use this for an hour a day or more, each day, has a DSE assessment been conducted by each employee?
- A self- assessment is to be conducted in the first instance and if there are issues that need clarification, then the OHES department should be contacted

First Aid and Box Contents

- A First Aid needs assessment is conducted on a building-by-building basis by OHES to establish the number of trained staff required. Any cases of low levels of First Aid trained personnel should be highlighted to OHES
- Are First Aid box contents checked on a monthly basis (using the [checklist](#)) and any expired or depleted items brought to the attention of the Senior Janitor?