

Risk Assessment Policy



Written by	Harriet Carter	August 2025
Next review due by		August 2026

Introduction

Health and safety legislation mandates that all employers conduct thorough risk assessments to identify potential hazards and evaluate risks to the health and safety of employees, visitors, and any other individuals who may be affected by work activities. While the law doesn't require the elimination of all risks, it does require employers to take all reasonably practicable steps to protect people from harm. Significant risks should be formally documented, and all staff should be made aware of them.

At Earley Springs, the Headteacher is responsible for ensuring that risk assessments are carried out. The actual assessment process may be delegated to other staff members.

Earley Springs is committed to the systematic identification and reduction of risk. To support this, all accidents, incidents and near misses must be reported, recorded and reviewed. A near miss is defined as an unplanned event that did not result in injury or damage but had the potential to do so. Recording and reviewing such events enables the school to identify emerging hazards, strengthen control measures, and prevent future harm.

What is a Risk Assessment?

A risk assessment is a careful examination of anything that could cause harm to people during a particular activity or within a specific situation. It helps determine the likelihood of harm and whether existing precautions are adequate or if further control measures are necessary to minimize the risk.

Definitions

- **Hazard:** Something with the potential to cause harm (e.g., hazardous substance, working at height, challenging behavior).
- **Risk:** The likelihood of potential harm occurring (e.g., ingesting a hazardous substance, falling from a ladder, physical assault). Risk is typically evaluated by considering the likelihood and potential severity of harm.
- **Control Measure:** Action taken to prevent harm (e.g., labeling and storing hazardous substances securely).

Incident and Near-Miss Procedures

All staff must report accidents, incidents and near misses as soon as possible, following the school's reporting procedures. Earley Springs maintains an Incident and Near-Miss Log in which events are documented, including details of what occurred, who was involved, contributing factors and immediate actions taken.

All incidents and near misses must be reviewed by the Headteacher (Risk Assessment Coordinator), who will determine whether further investigation is required. Findings from incident and near-miss reviews will inform updates to relevant risk assessments and the development of additional control measures where necessary. Lessons learned will be shared with staff through briefings, supervision meetings or policy updates.

Five Steps to Risk Assessment

1. **Identify the Hazards:** Observe the task or workplace and consult with staff to identify significant hazards.
2. **Identify Who Might Be Harmed and How:** Consider who might be affected by the hazards, including staff, pupils, contractors, visitors, and members of the public. Take into account individuals with specific needs who may be at higher risk.
3. **Evaluate the Risks and Decide on Precautions:** Consider existing procedures and controls, and determine if additional actions are needed to reduce the risk to a reasonably practicable level. Document all control measures in place for each hazard. Evaluate the likelihood and severity of harm to prioritize control measures and determine if the risk can be sufficiently reduced.
4. **Record Significant Findings:** Document significant hazards, who might be harmed, and the necessary precautions. This record should be easily accessible and reviewed regularly. Records must include any incidents or near misses associated with the activity, along with resulting changes made to control measures.
5. **Review and Update:** Risk assessments should be reviewed and updated regularly, especially if there are any changes in the workplace, procedures, or equipment.

Risk Rating System

The following risk rating system can be used to prioritize actions:

- **Very High:** Unacceptable risk - immediate action required. Do not proceed with the activity until further controls reduce the risk rating to medium.
- **High:** Risk reduction required - high priority. Activity may only proceed if effective control measures are implemented. A risk assessment must be undertaken and approved by the Headteacher (Risk Assessment Coordinator) beforehand.
- **Medium:** Medium risk - action required if practicable. If further risk reduction is not possible, weigh the risk against the benefit. A risk assessment is necessary and must be reviewed by the Headteacher.
- **Low:** Low risk - no further action required.

For Very High, High, and Medium risk activities, supplementary risk assessments must be completed.

Risk assessments should be suitable and sufficient, with the level of detail proportionate to the risk. The focus should be on significant hazards and establishing safe working practices. In most cases, a simple bulleted list of control measures will suffice. Staff should be involved throughout the risk assessment process, and completed assessments should be centrally filed and shared with all those affected (staff, contractors, etc.). The individual completing the assessment and the Headteacher should sign off on the completed risk assessment.

Review

Risk assessments must be reviewed regularly (at least annually), or whenever significant changes occur in the workplace, procedures, equipment or staffing. Risk assessments must also be reviewed immediately following any accident, incident or near miss, to evaluate

whether existing control measures remained effective and to identify any necessary adjustments. Any actions arising from incidents or near misses will be documented and implemented promptly, and relevant learning will be communicated to all staff.

Generic Risk Assessments in the Curriculum

Health and safety legislation requires the process of risk assessment and the documentation of significant findings. Following HSE guidance, Earley Springs may adopt model risk assessments developed by national bodies like CLEAPSS (Consortium of Local Education Authorities for the Provision of Science Services) when:

- The school is satisfied that the model risk assessment is appropriate for its work.
- The model is adapted to the school's specific work situations.

Simply referring to model assessments or published schemes is not sufficient. For curricular activities, it must be demonstrably clear that these assessments have been consulted, adapted as needed, and that the required protective and preventive measures have been implemented.

Risk assessment within the curriculum should involve comparing the model risk assessment and adapting it to local circumstances, such as room size, class size, and student behavior. This is best achieved by incorporating risk assessments into teaching materials and annotating resources used daily, such as schemes of work, lesson plans, and worksheets.

Any lesson with a **medium** risk assessment will have a corresponding risk assessment signed off by the Headteacher (Risk Assessment Coordinator).

Any lesson with a **high** risk assessment will be adapted to minimize the risk to a medium level, at which point a risk assessment will be conducted. No high-risk activities will take place in lessons.