

## **GL355 Using workshops, food rooms and art studios for alternative activities**

CLEAPSS is often asked about the use of D&T, food, art or IT rooms (and science labs) for registration or tutor group sessions and for other non-specialist activities during breaks (especially in wet weather). These rooms contain particular hazards and are recognised as being more dangerous than ordinary classrooms. For this reason, all current risk assessment advice is that workshops, etc, should be locked whenever they are not being used, and must be **actively** supervised whenever pupils are present.

This advice should be included within any D&T (etc) department's health and safety policy, and possibly also in the school's health and safety policy. CLEAPSS' fundamental advice is that non-D&T-related activities should not take place in practical spaces. However, it is not always possible to achieve this, especially in schools where space is at a premium and, under certain circumstances (e.g. in bad weather), these practical rooms may need to be used.

In these situations, it is important that steps are taken to minimise the risk of harm.

The risk of harm is reduced if the supervising teacher is a member of the D&T (etc) department who is familiar with the hazards and risks associated with being in the room in question.

### **Taking steps to reduce the risk of harm; non-D&T(etc) staff training**

If the supervising adult is not a D&T teacher (or not a teacher at all), the risk of dangerous accident or incident is likely to be increased.

Regulation 13 of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations, requires employers to *"in entrusting tasks to his employees, take into account their capabilities, as regards health and safety"* and

*"that his employees are provided with adequate health and safety training"*.

Non-specialist teachers (and non-teaching staff) must be provided with sufficient and appropriate training so that they meet the general requirement of being "aware of the hazards and how they can be avoided".

There are various ways that this kind of training can be provided.

Often the task of training is delegated to a member of the department who must, therefore, be given the time to prepare and deliver the training. The training should include identification of particular risks, such as those presented by fixed pieces of equipment, and furniture, such as immovable benches and vice handles. It should also cover what to do if something were to go wrong, if a pupil were to damage something, or an incident were to occur.

Non-specialist teachers and non-teaching staff must be familiar with the following rules for pupils when in a practical room:

- Pupils must wait outside the room for the supervisor to arrive.
- Pupils should leave at the end of the session before the supervisor, who will then lock the room.
- Rooms must be kept locked when not in use.
- Pupils must not be left unsupervised in the rooms.
- Pupils must not be allowed to interfere with: equipment, tools, power supplies, etc, display materials, windows, blinds, the white board, projectors and computers, private drawers and cupboards or any equipment on the teacher's bench.
- There **must** be no eating or drinking in the rooms. This is COSHH regulation (law) rather than guidance.
- There must be no running or general horseplay in the rooms, as equipment and benches are fixed rigidly to support the services and a pupil falling against the edge may sustain a serious injury.

## **Other issues which need to be considered:**

### **General**

- Check there is enough seating and adequate space for the group (most D&T rooms do not have facilities to seat full class size groups).
- Limit access to fixed machines and equipment by fixing guards in place, or rearranging furniture.
- Post warning signs on equipment, with clear advice to not touch.
- Lock all tool cupboards and other stores.
- Power to all fixed equipment must be locked off, including gas to heat treatment areas.
- Portable equipment, hand tools and materials must be removed from the room and stored securely.
- Floor areas should be checked for potential trip hazards.

### **For technicians**

- Non-D&T activities must not interfere with technicians' support for practical lessons.
- Technicians may have to set up equipment for the next lessons. Depending on the nature of the hazards and risks such equipment may have to be placed in locked cupboards in the room.
- Technicians cannot clear and clean all the rooms simultaneously.
- Technicians often plan to move equipment in and out of rooms and along corridors at times when pupils are not normally present because their presence causes additional risks.

### **For teachers**

- At the end of a practical lesson the teacher will need to make sure that equipment and materials are placed in locked cupboards. This will reduce teaching time.
- The teacher will need to ensure that all services are switched off. At the start of the next practical lesson these services will have to be switched back on.
- If required equipment has been placed in a locked cupboard, the teacher will need to obtain, and possibly set up, the equipment, again reducing teaching time.
- Pupils engaged in non-D&T-activities may leave litter or move furniture. If not cleared or restored before the next lessons then teaching time will be further eroded.

## **Summary**

If D&T rooms are going to be used for non-D&T activities:

- 1 Check the rooms have the capacity for the group.
- 2 Agree the logistics.
- 3 Train staff.
- 4 Set, and monitor, the rules.