Health and safety in schools - exploring the perceptions of HSE's communications to promote and support sensible risk management

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This research was commissioned to explore the viewpoints of school staff responsible for managing day-to-day health and safety in schools. This study explored what guidance schools use to support their management of health and safety and, in particular, examined how HSE's education-specific materials were used.

The study found that HSE is not the primary source of information and guidance used by the schools. Instead, the primary sources are the Local Authorities (LAs) or other bought-in health and safety advisory services.

Participants reported using a wealth of HSE and non-HSE information and guidance to inform their health and safety decision making. HSE is considered to be a trusted and authoritative source of health and safety advice, which is valued by schools, but not always used directly.

Bureaucratic burdens and paperwork were not described by school staff as posing a barrier to sensible and proportionate risk management in schools.

Although not all schools in this study have used HSE's education-specific health and safety resources those that have used them find them very useful. Schools that subscribe to a membership subscription service use it as their main point of access for health and safety guidance and information about school trips.

HSE Books

Acknowledgements

KEY MESSAGES

- Schools that took part in this study are not deterred from taking part in school trips and other potentially higher risk activities. The activities undertaken by these schools appear to be driven by sensible and proportionate risk management and do not seem to be unduly influenced by misguided interpretations of health and safety requirements.

- Bureaucratic burdens and paperwork are not described by the members of school staff who are responsible for health and safety as posing a barrier to sensible and proportionate risk management in schools. It is acknowledged that although paperwork can be seen as a burden it is also a necessary part of a school's health and safety system and can provide a useful record of good practice and compliance. Workload/time issues and staff compliance may pose a barrier to sensible and proportionate risk management in schools.

- HSE is not the primary source of information and guidance used by the schools in this study. Instead, the primary sources are the LA or other bought-in health and safety advisory services. The schools that employ such advisors tend to trust and rely upon them to interpret health and safety requirements for the school's specific context. Schools appear to assume that service providers are an intermediary service that distils information and guidance sourced from HSE.

- The findings suggest that HSE is considered to be a trusted and authoritative source of health and safety advice, which is valued by schools. The schools in this study give no indication that they find fault with HSE resources for employers generally. In fact, they find them to be a reliable source of definitive assurance when schools want to check that they are doing the right thing with respect to health and safety. One source referred to HSE as providing "the one point of truth".

- Although not all schools in this study have used HSE's education-specific health and safety resources (i.e. guidance on school trips, asbestos risk management and classroom activities), those that have used them find them very useful. They are perceived as being useful or potentially useful even by those schools that have not yet used them.

- Schools that subscribe to a membership subscription service use it as their main point of access for health and safety guidance and information about school trips. Subscribers to EVOLVE say that it provides a step-by-step guide through the school trips risk assessment process.

- One suggested improvement to HSE's communications with schools is for an email bulletin to be sent out by HSE. It would need to be succinct, relevant and pitched at the right level. It is also suggested that schools would find it helpful to speak to HSE advisors via a helpline or call centre; to have access to an on-line document library/forum; and to attend face-to-face awareness-raising activities.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

Misinterpretation of health and safety requirements may lead to schools being deterred from undertaking valuable educational activities, such as school trips. If schools do not take a sensible and proportionate approach to risk management, too much emphasis may be placed on completing unnecessary paperwork and focussing attention on trivial rather than real risks. In order to avoid possible misinterpretation, and disproportionate approaches to managing risk, it is important that health and safety information and guidance is communicated effectively.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) wishes to ensure its available resources will have the most impact on improving sensible and proportionate risk management in schools. This research was commissioned to explore the viewpoints of school staff whose role it is to manage day-to-day health and safety in schools. This study explored what guidance schools use to support sensible risk management and, in particular, examined how HSE's education specific materials for education were used. These materials included school trips case studies; a 'School Trips and Outdoor Learning Activities' statement; and risk assessment checklists for asbestos and the classroom.

METHOD

A qualitative approach was adopted to enable exploration and understanding of schools views and risk management practices. Sample selection was based on a series of criteria of interest to HSE, the key ones being the employer relationship (e.g., Local Authority (LA); independent and fee paying; academies and free schools), type of school (primary or secondary) and national location (England, Scotland and Wales). Staff in twenty schools were interviewed. Interview data were analysed in line with Government Social Research standards, using a framework approach developed by the National Centre for Social Research. Interview findings are reported under each of the key research questions.

FINDINGS

Information and guidance on risk management used by schools for organising school activities, and where they get this from

Participants reported using a wealth of HSE and non-HSE information and guidance to inform their health and safety decision making. There was a notable variation in the extent to which participants reported using HSE resources, such as the HSE website. At one extreme participants said they referred to it regularly and as a matter of course; whereas at the other, there were participants who had difficulty recalling if they had used HSE's resources or not.

The majority of participants' responses indicated that HSE guidance was not their primary source of information. Schools that paid for LA services reported that they tended to rely on the guidance and information received from the LA. Other schools, such as academies, paid for health and safety advisory services. Where advisory services were paid for, they were perceived to be reliable, professional and authoritative, with some participants believing that the advice, information and guidance received from service providers was informed by HSE's guidance and information. Where HSE guidance and information was not used as the main source, it was used by some participants to find authoritative answers and provide them with reassurance.

How schools use HSE and other information and guidance to inform activities in three specific areas – school trips, asbestos risk management and classroom activities

Some participants were aware of HSE's education specific resources in these three activity areas and others reported that they were not aware. Not all participants that were aware of them had used them in their health and safety activities. Four schools reported having used at least one of these materials for school trips, asbestos management and ordinary classroom activities.

There were strong similarities in the systems and processes, which schools reported using to risk assess school trips. The majority of participants said that they used EVOLVE, an on-line subscription resource that guides the trip planner through a step-by-step process and allows risk assessments to be signed off. Those schools that did not use EVOLVE used HSE and other guidance and information combined with existing sources of knowledge and experience in the school.

With reference to guidance and information on the management of asbestos, several schools cited using specialist asbestos advice services provided by the LA or specialist contractors. Several schools also described how they had used HSE's information and guidance for awareness raising or to help with staff training. One participant said they had purchased an asbestos manual from HSE and also kept up to date by regularly checking HSE's website.

Participants acknowledged in their responses that classrooms were a low risk environment and also recognised the need for risk assessments and checks to be in place to help maintain a safe environment. Participants reported using information, guidance and generic risk assessments from health and safety service providers (including the LA) and information that formed part of the school's existing health and safety policies and procedures. One participant described being aware of HSE's classroom checklist, saw it as a useful tool, and planned to use it.

HSE communication and guidance that schools find most useful/helpful and why

The four schools from across different school types that had used HSE's education specific resources provided positive feedback. They perceived that the guidance and communication came from a trusted and authoritative source and that it is a useful source of factual information, which provides schools with reassurance that they are doing the right things. Many of those who had not yet used HSE's resources indicated that they had plans to use them, believing them to be useful in helping to take a sensible approach to risks.

Many of the participants were not aware that HSE produced an education bulletin, although a few mentioned it as a useful source of information. One part of a HSE bulletin that was specifically mentioned by participants was HSE's 'Myth Busters', which had been used for awareness raising about sensible risk practices.

There was generally no indication from schools that they found fault with HSE's education-specific health and safety resources or with HSE resources for employers generally, only that they found them to be very useful. An exception to this was one participant who felt HSE's website was too bland and 'wordy' and might be improved by including more pictures and hyperlinks.

Barriers and enablers to sensibly managing health and safety risk in schools

When asked about what gets in the way of sensibly managing health and safety risk in schools, participants tended to focus more on what helped than on the barriers. However, two issues in

particular were raised more than once: time and workload pressures; and staff compliance. Specifically, teachers' inability to make sufficient time available was believed to get in the way of sensible management of health and safety risk in schools. With respect to staff adoption of good health and safety practices, a couple of schools mentioned that it could be difficult to get all staff fully on board. Two further potential barriers to sensible management of health and safety, cited less commonly by participants, were negative media headlines and unclear information sent by the LA.

Paperwork and bureaucracy were not identified by participants as barriers to sensible and proportionate risk management. It was reported that the LA may take care of this on behalf of some schools. Whilst paperwork was described by some as being a burden it was also described as being a necessary part of a school's health and safety system. The responses from the majority of schools did not focus on insurance and litigation as being barriers to sensible health and safety management. All of the schools ran trips and there was evidence that these included higher risk activities, such as climbing sea cliffs.

Good teamwork and communications were said to contribute positively to sensibly managing health and safety risk in schools, including meetings, audits and committees. Other positive contributing factors that were reported included: having a health and safety management system in place; supportive managers/senior management/governors; clear responsibilities and involvement of all staff; audits; having the right culture in the school; pupil involvement; support from health and safety advisory services and support from an insurance company.

Suggestions for improving HSE's messages and communications with schools

The majority of participants suggested that receiving a targeted email bulletin from HSE, which is easy to digest, succinct (e.g., containing hyperlinks), factual and focused on what they need to do, would be their preferred improvement to HSE's messages and communications. They suggested that an email that was clearly identified as being sent from HSE would receive appropriate attention. A bulletin was said to be preferable to a newsletter (as newsletters were viewed as being less succinct). Other possible suggested communication vehicles included hard copy printed documents and features in publications such as education magazines.

Other suggestions from participants included: a helpline or call centre for education-specific health and safety; a targeted health and safety support and advice service for schools; a shared online health and safety library/forum; and face-to-face awareness raising, for example at education shows, training sessions and advisory visits from HSE inspectors.

There were mixed viewpoints from participants about how well HSE's website worked as a communication portal and, therefore, a range of suggestions were made about how it might be improved. Participants' views included: not being aware that the website provided education-specific resources; not knowing how to search on it; believing the information was too high level; and that it was a good communication vehicle for HSE, providing sufficient information and guidance for users' needs.

Opinions were also provided about what would not be helpful in improving HSE's messages and communications. These included using social media, tweets and texts; having information pitched at the wrong level; and producing long documents and newsletters.

CONCLUSIONS

The schools in this study found it easier to describe the health and safety procedures and process they followed, than to specify where these originated from. This makes it difficult to

determine the extent to which HSE's messages and communications are reaching schools. Schools may be directly informed by HSE's resources, or indirectly informed by them through their health and safety advisors.

A wealth of information and guidance was used to inform how schools organise school activities. These were obtained via HSE, LAs, health and safety advisory services and attendance at health and safety training courses. Schools that paid for health and safety services (LA or commercial) tended to primarily rely on those services for their information and guidance.

There was a general lack of awareness among the schools that volunteered for this study of HSE's information and guidance on school trips, managing asbestos and classroom activities. Consequently, limited evidence was obtained about the use of these HSE resources in the education sector. An opportunity exists to raise awareness among school health and safety representatives of what HSE information and guidance is available and how to access it.

The schools in this study used a number of information sources when planning school trips and many subscribed to the EVOLVE system. Schools also used their own experience of trips, information and training from professional bodies, and information from HSE and their LA. Whilst the HSE website had been used to help with managing asbestos, the main source of information and guidance schools used tended to be specialist asbestos contractor services. A generic risk assessment was used by many schools for classroom activities, with more focus being placed on the physical classroom environment in instances where school premises are ageing. Audits were seen by participants as being helpful for highlighting issues that required attention, and it was suggested that the HSE classroom checklist may lend more authority to the audit process.

The schools in this study found HSE information and guidance useful for providing re-assurance that they are doing the right thing and when they are faced with new or unfamiliar circumstances. Regardless of whether schools used HSE's resources or not, there was a perception that they are useful. Those who used them found them to be a useful source of factual information, which is authoritative and trusted. They were said to be useful for confirming and reinforcing knowledge and providing those that use them with confidence that they are doing the right thing. Those who became aware of them due to taking part in the study showed an interest in using them in the future.

Time and workload pressures were said to get in the way of effective communication about sensible health and safety. Unclear information from LAs and media reporting were also mentioned. In general, participating schools indicated paperwork, bureaucracy, management structures and litigation did not get in the way of sensible health and safety management. Good teamwork, communication, and support for health and safety from the management team were the main things that made a difference to sensibly managing health and safety risks in schools. Pupils, auditors and health and safety advisory services were also thought to have a role to play.

Suggested ways in which HSE might improve its health and safety messages and communications include sending succinct, factual and targeted email bulletins to schools; clearly identified as being from HSE. Information for schools needs to be factual, contain relevant information and be pitched at the right level. Useful ways of communicating with schools may include a HSE helpline or call centre; HSE advisors; an on-line document library/forum; and face-to-face awareness-raising activities. Social media; tweets and texts; information pitched at the wrong level; long documents; and newsletters were considered by participants to be less helpful.

CONTENTS PAGE

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1　　　BACKGROUND

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) commissioned this research to gather evidence that will help HSE best promote and support sensible and proportionate risk management in schools, including those that are Local Authority (LA) managed, academies and independent.

This research focussed on activities that HSE have found to present a perceived or real risk in schools; including school trips and visits, science and technology teaching and practices relating to asbestos. HSE aims to use its resources in a way that will have the most impact on improving sensible risk assessment. Promoting a sensible and proportionate approach to risk includes encouraging sensible leadership (see Appendix 1), banishing myths and changing counter-productive behaviours with respect to health and safety in schools, such as the 'jobsworth' approach and fear of litigation. At the HSE customer's request, this study primarily considered schools' use of HSE's current online materials for education (available since 2011-12) which included five school trips case studies and a 'School Trips and Outdoor Learning Activities' statement, together with risk assessment checklists for asbestos and the classroom (see Appendix 2).

It is important that health and safety requirements are communicated and interpreted in the right way. Schools are relatively low risk premises and misinformed interpretation of health and safety requirements can lead to risk aversion, a preoccupation with unnecessary bureaucracy and being deterred from undertaking valuable educational activities. Evidence from reviews including Löfstedt (2011)[1] and the House of Commons Science and Technology Committee (2011)[2] have highlighted some problems with over-cautious interpretation of health and safety legislation. Further, the HSE customer is aware of anecdotal evidence to suggest that responsible school staff can be over-zealous about trivial risks whilst serious risks are overlooked, and that preventable accidents have taken place during school activities. A Department for Education study (2011)[3] looked at the bureaucratic burdens on teaching and the findings indicated that more in-depth exploration of the health and safety issues, by obtaining views from school staff, would be useful.

It is HSE's intention that the evidence gathered in this research will be used to evaluate and inform the way it communicates health and safety messages to schools.

1.2 RESEARCH AIM

The aim of the research is to gather evidence from a sample of schools to inform HSE about how it can best promote and support sensible and proportionate risk management in schools through effective communications.

1.3 OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The objectives were to explore the viewpoints and opinions of school senior managers and school leaders on health and safety, especially in the context of the influence of HSE's messages and communications. The specific objectives were to:

1. find out if HSE's messages and communications are reaching their target audience;

2. explore how effective HSE's messages and communications are in promoting sensible health and safety practices;

3. explore what gets in the way of communications on sensible health and safety working as well as intended (i.e. to identify the barriers to the adoption of sensible risk management); and

4. recommend in what ways HSE's messages and communications could be improved.

Research Questions:

The research questions were:

1. what information and guidance on risk management do schools use for organising school activities[a] (where do they get this from);

2. how do schools use HSE and other information and guidance to inform activities in three specific areas – school trips, asbestos management and classroom activities;

3. which HSE communication / guidance do schools find most useful / helpful (why);

4. what gets in the way of sensibly managing health and safety risk in schools; and

5. in what ways could HSE's messages and communications be improved (in order to promote sensible and proportionate risk management in schools and make the best use of HSE's resources)?

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[a] *The term 'activities' is used in this proposal to represent school activities that present a perceived or real risk.*

2. METHOD

2.1 STUDY DESIGN

A qualitative design was used to allow in-depth discussions with schools' senior managers/school leads with responsibility for health and safety and facilitating risk management in their schools. The aim was not to obtain numerical data (i.e. to identify what and how many), but to explore views, practices and use of resources by schools (i.e. to explore and obtain understanding). The National Centre for Social Research advocates that qualitative research should be reported to reflect the range, rather than the number, of participant views and opinions. However, in reporting the findings for this study some quantitative terms (such as a few, some, many, the majority and all) have been used in places, in order to provide an indication of the extent of opinion and viewpoints across the sample. Except in the case of 'all', these terms should not be taken to represent specific numerical values. Again, to demonstrate weight of opinion, in instances where there was either only one view or a very small number, this has been stated to aid the reader's interpretation.

Qualitative studies do not require large sample sizes (typically between 3 and 30 participants), and robustness of the findings is obtained via careful selection of participants and systematic analysis and reporting of the data.

2.2 SAMPLING STRATEGY

Purposive sampling was used in order to select schools where participants could provide a range of views and opinions on risk management. The purpose was to select schools according to criteria that were discussed and agreed with the HSE customer, and based on knowledge and experience of factors that influence the management of health and safety in schools.

The first sampling criterion of interest was the employer relationship, as the employer is legally responsible and accountable for health and safety[4,5,6]. This can be divided into three categories:

1. LA maintained (including voluntary controlled, voluntary aided, community and foundation);
2. academies and free; and
3. independent and fee paying.

Section 6 contains a glossary of the different school types.

HSE perceives that LAs are one of the biggest influences on how schools manage risk and this can also be the case when schools have converted to academy status, e.g. if they maintain their links with LA. Where possible, LA maintained schools were chosen from different LA areas. It was believed by the HSE customer that this may help to provide some insight into the influence that different LAs might have on schools' approaches to sensible and proportionate risk management.

The other two criteria that were of interest to the HSE customer with respect to the sampling strategy included the school type (primary or secondary) and national location (England, Scotland or Wales). The selection of different geographical locations within England, Scotland and Wales did not form part of the sampling criteria, as the HSE customer did not perceive that this was likely to be a distinct or significant influencing factor on how schools manage risk.

The third stage of the purposive sampling strategy was based on a number of additional characteristics of interest to HSE (such as background characteristics related to the school; see Figure 1 and Appendix 3).

The strategy was to obtain as wide a range of views as possible, within the normal practical and resource constraints of the study, and not to compare and contrast schools based on all of the different criteria within the sample.
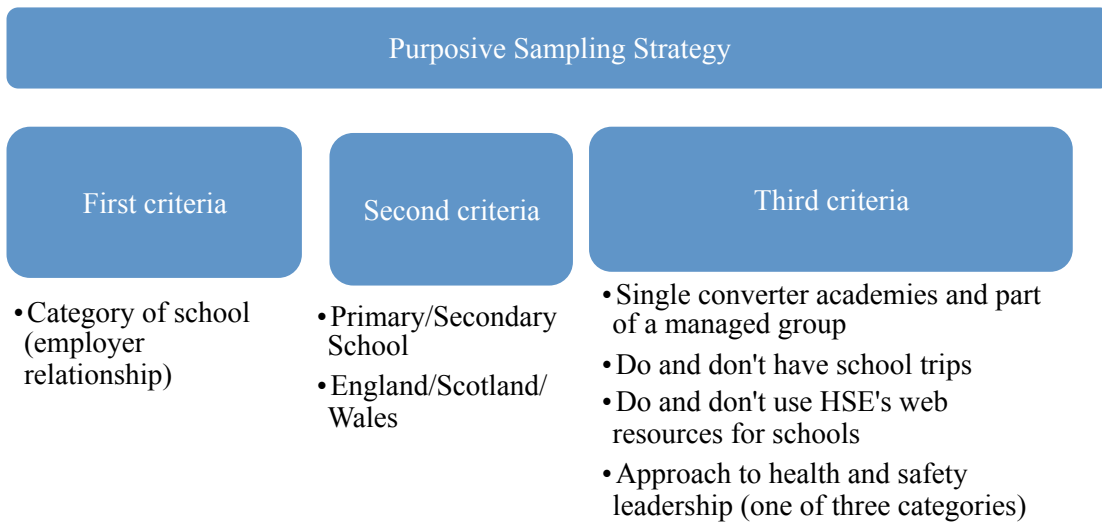
Figure 1 Purposive sampling strategy

2.3   RECRUITMENT PROCESS

Data on employer relationship, type of school and location were extracted from the available lists of English, Welsh and Scottish schools (accessed via relevant registers of schools[b]). These data were grouped by county and put into a random (rather than alphabetical) order within each county.

The list was used by Health and Safety Laboratory (HSL) researchers, and a research recruitment company, in order to make telephone contact with 214 schools, and to select the required sample (See Appendix 3 for the telephone recruitment script).

Ninety three of the schools that were contacted agreed to provide background information over the telephone. Data were collected to provide background characteristics of the potential study participants. Schools were asked to confirm the following background characteristics that correspond to the purposive sampling criteria (Figure 2): school type; if the school arranges school trips; and if they have used HSE's web resources for schools (see Appendix 3).

During the recruitment phone calls, schools were also asked to identify the right person to be contacted and potentially interviewed at a later date; and if they would be willing to complete information to indicate the health and safety leadership approach adopted by the school. Forty schools supplied this information and, of those, 27 volunteers were willing to be interviewed and 13 withdrew or were not contactable within the recruitment period. Twenty volunteer participants were selected - based on the purposive sampling criteria and interviewee

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[b] *www.education.gov.uk/**edubase**/home.xhtml*; *http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/scottishschoolsonline/.*

availability - to take part in a face-to-face interview with the researchers. They were informed about the time commitment involved, that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time.

2.4   THE SAMPLE

The sample consisted of 20 interviews (Table 1). The majority of the sample was drawn from secondary schools (as the health and safety risks are believed to be greater than in primary schools), from LA maintained schools (as LAs are believed to be the biggest influence on how schools manage risk) and from England (where the majority of schools are located).

Table 1 Sample composition according to first and second sampling criteria

	Sample Groupings		
	LA Maintained/Supported **(Found in England, Scotland and Wales)**	**Locally Managed i.e. Academies and Free Schools** **(Found in England only)**	**Independent & Fee Paying** **(Found in England, Scotland and Wales)**
	11 interviews	7 interviews	2 interviews
Sample Breakdown (number of interviews)			
Type of School:	Secondary (9) Primary (2)	Secondary (6) Primary (1)	Secondary (2) Primary (0)
Location:	England (8) (6 Secondary; 2 Primary) Scotland (1 (Secondary)) Wales (2 (Secondary))	England (7) (6 Secondary; 1 Primary) Scotland (N/A) Wales (N/A)	England (1) (Secondary) Scotland (1) (Secondary) Wales (0)

(Numbers of interviews are shown beside each sample grouping in brackets)

Further details on the sample composition are available in Appendix 4.

The 11 LA schools were selected from 11 different LA areas, as follows: Manchester, Rochdale, Bury, Staffordshire, Warrington, Trafford, Derbyshire, East Riding of Yorkshire, Fife, Wrexham and Flintshire (one school from each LA).

The third set of criteria was intended to be used as a guide for incorporating further diversity of views within the sample, i.e. the intention was not to find schools that fitted all possible combinations of the criteria. Table 2 shows the spread of the sample across these criteria.

Table 2 Overview of sample composition (n=20)

Type of School	Single managed Academy	Group managed Academy	School Trips Yes	Use HSE's Web Resources Yes	Use HSE's Web Resources No	Leadership Approach Category		
						Not Doing Enough	Doing Too Much	Getting It Right
Primary	1	0	3	2	1	0	2	1
Secondary	3	3	17	10	7	0	12	5
Total	4	3	20	12	8	0	14	6

The final sample of 20 schools included 11 LA maintained/supported; seven academies (of which four were single managed and three were group managed, as shown in Table 2) and two independent and fee paying schools.

All of the schools in the sample organised school trips; it was not possible to recruit any that did not organise school trips. The sample included schools that did (n=12) and did not (n=8) use HSE's web resources.

In order to obtain an indication of the health and safety leadership approach adopted by schools, an exploratory research tool was developed, called a Situational Judgement Test (SJT). This tool was informed by HSE's existing resources on sensible health and safety leadership which categorise schools into one of three leadership approaches (see Table 3), along with HSE's knowledge and experience of practices within schools. The SJT is based on an approach reported in the academic literature and is described in Appendix 5. All of the schools in the interview sample completed an SJT and, according to the SJT categories; none of them were failing to reach a sensible leadership standard ('Not Doing Enough'); 14 were 'Doing Too Much'; and 6 were 'Getting It Right'.

The sample limitations (e.g. selection bias) are discussed in the conclusions section of this report.

Table 3 Schools' health and safety leadership approaches

Type	Category
Going beyond sensible leadership	Doing Too Much
Sensible leadership	Getting It Right
Failing to reach a sensible standard	Not Doing Enough

All of those who participated in the interviews had day-to-day responsibility for health and safety management and fulfilling health and safety responsibilities on behalf of the school's senior leadership team and the employer. The range of job roles is shown in Table 4.

Table 4 The participants' roles within the schools

Role	N
Bursar	1
Business Manager	10
Deputy Head Teacher	1
Estates Manager	2*
Facilities Manager	1
Head Teacher	1
Health and Safety Coordinator	1
Health and Safety Manager	1
Human Resources (HR) Director	1*
Maintenance Technician	1
Teacher	1
Total	21

*For one school two interviewees shared the health and safety role – HR Director and Estates Manager

In order to confirm the extent to which the sample reflected a spread of schools with different levels of performance, where available, education inspectors' report grades (such as those issued by Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) e.g., Ofsted[c]) were located. Schools that had received HMI inspections and reports (i.e. all except the two independent schools and two recent academy converters) had overall report grades that ranged from Outstanding (the highest grade) through to Requires Improvement (the lowest grade), as follows: Outstanding/Excellent (n=3); Good (n=7); Satisfactory (n=1); Requires Improvement (n=5). It should be noted that the inspection scores may not have been recently issued. In addition, as far as the researchers could ascertain, there is no established link between inspection status and health and safety practices.

2.5 INTERVIEW DATA COLLECTION

A semi-structured interview topic guide (Appendix 6) was prepared following discussion and agreement with HSE.

The job roles of suitable interviewees included head teacher, school governor with lead for health and safety, school business manager or school bursar. Data were collected from school staff with day-to-day responsibility for health and safety management and who fulfilled health and safety responsibilities on behalf of the school's senior leadership team and the employer. Table 4 shows the range of roles represented among the interviewees, which included school senior managers/school leaders for health and safety who have first-hand experience of running school trips, teaching science and technology, running higher risk outdoor activities and supervising children during sporting activities (such as water sports).

All interviews took place on school premises. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed with the participants consent. Participants were advised that any opinions and quotes used in the report would not be attributable to individual persons or to the schools. The interviews lasted on average 46 minutes.

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[c] *Ofsted is the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills; http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/*

2.6   DATA ANALYSIS

The interview data were analysed using a systematic approach as advocated by the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen). This approach develops, refines and modifies an analytic (or thematic) framework, into which every piece of data is then systematically and consistently analysed[7,8]. The research objectives, research questions and key issues to emerge from the interview data informed the analytical framework.

In line with the nature of the research questions, the interpretation stage involved descriptive analysis (that is describing the data within a series of themes). The report presents the depth and range of views given by participants as evidence for decision making. The relevant caveats associated with qualitative research of this type are detailed in Appendix 7.

The findings of qualitative studies are not intended to be representative of a wider sample, although the HSE customer is at liberty to infer from the findings of this study and other sources of evidence how schools in general may view HSE's communications and guidance. Where the study findings and conclusions are discussed in this report and reference is made to schools or roles/organisations associated with those schools, these terms always pertain to the schools that took part this study and, in line with the principles of the chosen method (stated above), are not assumed to be representative.

3. FINDINGS

This section presents the findings from interviews with schools under each of the five research questions (Sections 3.1 to 3.5). The findings provide an in-depth understanding of the participating schools' practices with respect to sensible and proportionate risk management, and about the information and guidance that is used to inform their decision making. Differences in practices are discussed, where appropriate. Quotes from the interviews are used throughout the sections in order to illustrate key findings. The unique participant identification number (e.g. p_21) and type of school are shown after each quote.

To summarise the characteristics of the volunteer sample (n=20) that took part in interviews:

- 20 reported having school trips;
- 12 reported using HSE's web resources;
- 4 reported using HSE's education specific resources (for school trips, asbestos risk management and/or classroom activities); and
- 14 were 'Doing Too Much', according to the SJT leadership approach categories, and 6 were 'Getting It Right'.

3.1 WHAT INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE ON RISK MANAGEMENT DO SCHOOLS USE FOR ORGANISING SCHOOL ACTIVITIES? (WHERE DO THEY GET THIS FROM?)

The interview sample included schools that did and did not use HSE's web resources for schools (see Section 2.2).

HSE information and guidance

Schools that volunteered to take part in interviews reported using a wide range of guidance and information to inform their health and safety practices; there was variation in how prominent a part HSE's guidance and information was said to play from one establishment to another. Five quotes have been selected (below) to demonstrate the variation in responses, ranging from a participant who would use HSE as their first port of call for information and guidance through to one who was unsure if they had ever used HSE.

Some schools said they use HSE materials regularly, as demonstrated by this quote:

"HSE itself is [the first port of call]…I've managed plenty of working environments in the past and if I did need any sort of guidance on it, you know, the website is normally the first port of call to get something to say what's the guidance…if it's not known between the HR Director, the Head and other people, I have referred to the HSE website plenty of times just for guidance on stuff, yes." p_21 Secondary LA, England.

Some participants used a blend of resources from their health and safety service provider (LA or commercial) and HSE, depending on their needs and requirements, e.g.:

"*We also go online and print off local government, Local Authority health and safety advice and also the HSE itself because you can get publications from them...For instance, your risk assessments, things like that; we get that all from HSE direct and just download the publications.*" p_13 Secondary Academy, England.

Some participants recalled making occasional use of HSE resources when they wanted to obtain specific useful materials, e.g.:

"I do occasionally [use HSE], yes, I've been on their website, I might print off posters. I think it was the Health and Safety Executive who did the posters about standing on chairs, putting up displays" p_15 Secondary Academy, England.

There were also some participants who could not recall ever having used HSE's website, or had used it very rarely, as shown in these two examples:

"I can't say that I'm very familiar with the HSE website; I don't think I've ever used it...I think the only time I have is accessing the schools fire risk document ... [and]...to find out a question relating to RIDDOR, I think I have used it for that and it did answer my question. so in that respect I've used it a couple of times." p_23 Secondary Academy, England.

"No, to be honest. I haven't used it [HSE's website]. Not to say I won't though in the future. Just because I've not been aware, to be honest. Because most things are covered with the LA, I've never had to go to something else but it's not that I wouldn't want to or anything. Perhaps it's something that I could start looking at?" p_06 Primary LA, England.

Use of HSE's general information and guidance for employers (not specifically aimed at the education sector)

In the initial telephone recruitment discussion, 12 of the 20 participants who volunteered for interviews reported using HSE's web resources, i.e. general information and guidance for employers which was not specifically aimed at the education sector. It was not specified whether that included HSE's education pages or more general resources.

For those participants that took part in face-to-face interviews and that reported using HSE's information and guidance, the scope of what was used could be very broad and covered far more aspects of workplace health and safety than that aimed directly at the education sector. Many of the participants described how their enquiries related to general health and safety advice for employers. The following areas were mentioned:

- general health and safety policies (to download);
- fire and evacuation procedures (including people with disabilities);
- fire risk document;
- maintenance and building work;
- working at height;
- safe use of sports equipment, (e.g., trampoline);
- risk assessments for pregnant staff;
- DSE workstation risk assessment;
- DSE free eye tests;
- safe practices for large crowds;
- COSHH information (e.g., for cleaning agents used on site);
- RIDDOR reporting requirements;
- producing a risk register;
- first aid requirements;
- flu vaccinations;
- car parking;
- use and storage of medicines;
- legislation for fume cupboards;

- the employer's liability poster (new version);
- 'Shattered Lives' campaign posters to raise awareness of slips and trips hazards; and
- catering health and safety.

The participants described a very broad range of situations, all connected with the day-to-day running of the school's health and safety system that led to them requiring this information. Some of the situations described were practical ones, such as the purchase of a new piece of equipment and others were more management based such as writing/updating policies.

Although it was not a specific area of questioning in this study, four of the schools mentioned creating or maintaining a risk register. One school referred to using HSE's website in this respect but did not find the information that was needed, as follows:

"*To be honest I did have a look, a little brief look [at HSE's website]. It wasn't that specific about the elements which you needed to go in there [i.e. in the risk assessment] from what I'd been given direction by the chair of governors.*" p_27 Secondary Academy, England.

Non-HSE information and guidance

In addition to the HSE information and guidance, the respondents used a variety of sources to ensure that all the various aspects of health and safety were covered. The non-HSE sources of health and safety information and guidance that interviewees told us they used included the following:

- LA (website and advisors);
- bought in health and safety advisory services (including EVOLVE[d] and AURA[e]);
- membership subscriptions to trusted advice sources (e.g., newsletters, magazines and bulletins, e.g., bought-in health and safety services provider publications, Health and Safety Adviser Magazine[f]);
- free subscription bulletins (e.g., LA, Education Funding Agency);
- discussion forums (e.g., for school business managers);
- health and safety guidance that is attached to curriculum information for science and technology lessons (e.g., Hamilton Trust[g]);
- Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH; e.g., for staff welfare guidance);
- legal firm health and safety updates;
- Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH);
- GMB Union (for asbestos related health and safety);
- Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA);
- Independent Schools Association;
- books (e.g., health and safety at work titles); and
- unions.

Schools that were LA maintained demonstrated in their responses that they relied on the LA for health and safety. This was reported to be their trusted source which meant that they often did

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[d] *EVOLVE (online visit and trip activity planning, processing, monitoring and reporting tool for LAs, schools, academies, colleges) http://edufocus.co.uk/evolve.html*
[e] *AURA (facilities management services) http://www.auranortheast.com/our-services/asset-and-facilities-management/school-services/*
[f] *http://www.agorabusiness.co.uk/health-and-safety-adviser/*
[g] *Hamilton Trust (curriculum services for primary schools) https://www.hamilton-trust.org.uk/*

not feel any need to look anywhere else for definitive advice or information. The LA schools reported that they would receive and act upon bulletins received directly from the LA and were able to call on the LA service (by phone or email) for any *ad hoc* advice that was needed at any time. For example one school explained that:

"We would go to County first [for guidance and information, before HSE] because we pay for their services so we may as well use their services ... As I say, the first port of call is the Local Authority...and if they don't know they will point you in the right direction anyway. But more often than not [advisor's name removed] is very, very knowledgeable and she knows exactly what's going on. " p_28 Secondary, LA School, Wales.

It was also reported that the LA conducted health and safety audits (e.g., annually) and required some health and safety documentation to be reported to them, such as copies of RIDDOR reports. It was mentioned that LA audits could also provide a focus for providing relevant guidance and information.

Schools that had previously been LA maintained but had converted to academy status also said they used LA sources of guidance and advice where they had access to such materials and considered them to be fit for purpose. Health and safety information and guidance could be purchased by academies from the LA. A perception was also expressed by several participants (academy or LA maintained) that the information they access via their LA would have originated from HSE:

"A lot of the guidance we receive comes from the Local Authority who in turn, I think, would get it from HSE." p_23 Secondary Academy, England.

Welsh and Scottish authority run schools expressed the same opinions as participants from English LA schools about how they relied on the LA for information and guidance. For example, the Health and Safety Representative and School Business Manager from this Welsh school demonstrates a very similar viewpoint (to that stated in the quote above) that the LA on the whole meets his information needs:

"*I've looked on the website a few times. It does seem easy enough to navigate around. I haven't had that much information from it, I must admit.   The information I get from the Local Authority, as I've said, comes via HSE so I don't think there's anything I'd improve on.*" p_19 Secondary LA, Wales.

The only difference that was apparent in a Scottish LA school was that the participant stated that HSE's information and guidance was geared towards the English health and safety system. This meant that the interviewee needed to interpret any requirements and guidance accordingly. No particular views about doing things differently in Scotland were voiced by the Scottish Independent School's representative in this study.

Some academy schools stated that they relied on bought-in health and safety advisory services, either from a commercial organisation or from an LA.   These participants reported that these services were utilised whenever needed and were relied upon as a trusted source, as the advisors had first-hand knowledge of the school, from personal visits and audits. This meant that participants felt they could rely upon them to give targeted and appropriate advice based on a good knowledge of the schools location, management and facilities.

Participants in schools that used bought in health and safety services, whether from the LA or otherwise, shared a perception that the service provider sourced information and guidance on

their behalf, from the HSE, and other sources, and translated it into the educational context. They conveyed a sense of assurance that paying for these services would help to ensure that a school's health and safety responsibilities would be fully covered. The trust and reliance on provider services is described in this quote:

"I don't really recall any communications coming to me directly about health and safety from the Health and Safety Executive ... health and safety is just a tiny part of my job, and it's finding time, I suppose, to fit everything in that you need to do in a day ... we don't go on their [HSE's] website very often, I have to admit. But we do have our advisors who obviously do know all the legislation inside and out, you know, and they would advise us on various other aspects ... We rely really on our [LA] advisors to tell us if there's anything that we're not doing, that we should be doing, and advise us of any changes in legislation that affect us" p_04 Primary, Academy, England.

Those interviewees that did not use HSE's messages and communications regularly or routinely worked on the assumption that they received the essentials in a distilled form from other trusted sources such as LA/advisor. For example, this academy reported that they use health and safety provider services from both the LA and a commercial organisation, and didn't see HSE communications as a driver for their health and safety management:

"*The HSE doesn't really drive my work within health and safety at the moment... I use the HSE website as a tool to see what I should be doing, maybe. I don't [get my direction from HSE]... The direction comes from other places, from the chair of governors or from the head teacher or from audits which come about and I just basically use...[the HSE website]... as the information base or one of the information bases.*" p_27 Secondary Academy, England.

Several schools made reference to using the EVOLVE website, particularly with reference to planning school trips. The EVOLVE service offers a commercial tiered subscription service which individual institutions or entire LA areas subscribe to. The perceived benefits of using this service are described by this user:

"We use a system that we buy into through the Local Authority called EVOLVE. That's an online system and the main benefit of that is that somebody at the Local Authority who's adequately experienced will question and challenge and provide comment in relation to that risk assessment [about the trip] which we find really helpful" p_23 Secondary Academy, England.

Other important influences on health and safety practice mentioned by the participants in this study, that are not guidance, information or membership *per se:* included learning from experience (including previous job roles either within or outside education), learning from colleagues/school leaders/governors and taking note of news headlines about children taking part in school activities and trips that have resulted in serious accidents and fatalities.

Information Relating to Specific Educational Activities

Some of the health and safety information and guidance used by the interviewees was provided as part of supporting or curricular information for specific educational activities, such as science lessons or school trips. The following sources were mentioned (with the exception of COSHH these are not HSE sources):

- EVOLVE;

- CLEAPSS[h];
- Hamilton Trust; and
- COSHH.

Information and Guidance Gained from Health and Safety Training

Some participants obtained certain information and guidance they used when they undertook formal health and safety training courses. The LA, IOSH and the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work were mentioned in this respect. One respondent, a full time health and safety manager in an independent school, said that she was a chartered member of IOSH.

Primary sources of information and guidance used by participants

There was evidence that HSE's guidance and information was used to varying extents by the participants in this study, although it was not generally cited as their default primary source. For those participants that did not use HSE information and guidance, or used it infrequently, the primary source tended to be the LA or a commercial health and safety services provider. The rationale behind why HSE was not the primary source in these cases is reflected by the following viewpoints, the first of which describes how a health and safety service provider is the primary source for an academy:

"*That's who the HSE really is, they come up with the laws, they come up with the requirements - it's how that is communicated down to schools. They've [the HSE] got to recognise that we are not trained necessarily in health and safety at work. Now, unless I'm constantly looking at the HSE site, nothing gets sent down to me, so we've got this organisation now [a health and safety provider organisation] who are going to ...find [anything which is relevant to us] which we are required to do. ... So they are going to do it for us...because they're trained health and safety professionals. They're going to pass that onto us and make sure that we're keeping our policies up to date.*" p_27 Secondary Academy, England.

Two participants (from LA schools) said they would primarily turn to the LA service provider, e.g:

"*My first port of call would be the LA ... if I've got a problem I'll talk to... [colleague's name removed] in the office [who] will then give them a ring*" p_06 Primary LA School, England.

One of them explained that this negates the need for direct or regular reference to HSE's guidance and information:

"*I have used the [LA] health and safety website but it's not very often, it depends what happens and do you need further assistance, do you need further help? And the Health and Safety Executive website actually gives you quite a lot of information. But... I think I've used it once in the last 12 months, I can't remember what it was for either. I can't remember.*" p_28 Secondary LA, Wales.

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[h] *http://www.cleapss.org.uk/*

3.2 HOW SCHOOLS USE HSE AND OTHER INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE TO INFORM ACTIVITIES IN THREE SPECIFIC AREAS – SCHOOL TRIPS, ASBESTOS RISK MANAGEMENT AND CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Use of HSE's education sector-specific guidance and information

Participants were asked which of HSE's education sector-specific guidance and information they had used, from the available options on: school trips; management of asbestos; and classroom activities (see Appendix 2). Four out of twenty participants reported using this specific HSE guidance and information. Participants also described what other sources were used and these are also reported in this section.

Health and safety information and guidance used for school trips

There were strong similarities between each of the schools involved in the study regarding how school trips were risk assessed. Experienced members of staff in the schools, such as the teacher organising a school trip, were said to be responsible for preparing the risk assessments for a trip which would then be signed off by the head teacher or another member of the senior management team. People fulfilling this role had often received formal training, or would be assisted by a trained member of staff, such as a bespoke Educational Visits Co-ordinator, or training would be passed on by a colleague who did the role previously. The information put into a trip's risk assessment was generally said to include a risk assessment from the trip/activity provider company or the accommodation provider. Schools often returned on the same trips year after year and revised previous risk assessments as required.

According to many of the participants from all parts of the sample, one of the primary resources used for planning the health and safety aspects of a school trip was the EVOLVE online system[i]. This was described as providing a systematic, prescriptive and documented process and provided the facility for documents to be submitted/downloaded and signed off. One of the school users of EVOLVE described the basic advantages of the system as follows:

"*We use the EVOLVE process… it's idiot proof and it's brilliant…every member of staff knows if you're lead in a visit you do your EVOLVE form so it's that staff member's responsibility to fill in all the details and…everything to set it up...directly into the system. And it won't let you submit it until you've done everything and it basically holds the hand*" p_24 Secondary LA, England.

The EVOLVE system is also subscribed to, through the LA, by academy schools, as this participant explained:

"*We have a trips procedure…Every trip has a proposal form that comes to me which I then discuss with other members of the senior leadership team. At that stage there isn't a full risk assessment carried out. Once the trip is approved, at that stage a full risk assessment is prepared. If it's a day trip it's simply a paper document which comes to me or my colleague...to put on file…If it's a high risk activity or a residential activity we use a system that we buy into through the Local Authority called EVOLVE. That's an online system and the main benefit of that is that somebody at the Local Authority who's adequately experienced will question and challenge and provide comment in relation to that risk assessment, which we find really helpful.*" p_23 Secondary Academy, England.

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[i] for EVOLVE web reference see Section 3.1

The majority of schools who mentioned EVOLVE, and also some schools that didn't use that system, also mentioned that one of the considerations it incorporated into the planning of school trips was children with special needs. The quote that follows describes how EVOLVE is used to ensure a trip is planned and authorised systematically. It also mentions how special needs are incorporated into the checks made before a trip:

"[The EVOLVE system asks] if we've completed a standard risk assessment. If it's something like a ski trip...we'd need a risk assessment from the organisation we're going to or the centre...then you can log on there [EVOLVE] for a list of the pupils, any special needs that need to be taken into account, so it's a good checklist really...Once the teacher's authorised everything they then send it through to either myself [the health and safety representative] or the deputy head to sign-off before it goes to the head for final sign-off. And if all the parts aren't completed then it will get returned to the teacher so we've got security that everything's been covered." p_19 Secondary LA, Wales.

None of the schools involved in this study described the involvement of children with special needs as posing a barrier to specific educational activities or to sensible and proportionate risk management.

The majority of schools that volunteered to take part in an interview used the EVOLVE system. Those participants that did not subscribe to EVOLVE said they used their own experience, accumulated in the school over many years, combined with information and training from other bodies (such as from IOSH and the National Geological Association, respectively). Two academies bought into the LA service provision and one independent school relied on information from HSE. The following quote describes how HSE's web resources were used by this participant for arranging the health and safety aspects of school trips, including staff training. This participant goes on to explain how the school is not risk averse with respect to school trips:

"There's loads of guidance on the [HSE] website...I look on the education micro-site and when I deliver my [staff] training I show them...[the] micro-site and talk to them about...the likelihood of harm happening on trips.. I've done a lot of training with the teaching staff, so they understand. I've rewritten our guidance....I've almost made a traffic light system so that...a one-off trip to the local mosque is 'green.' 'Go': it's fine. [However,] we need to make sure everything's in place for outdoor pursuits in Peru, okay,...[and] I've just [rewritten our guidance] like that because it's easier for them to understand...They're not risk adverse, they're quite proactive...they go everywhere. All the languages, they all go to countries all over...Moscow...Berlin...Florence...Paris." p_30 Independent School, England.

When made aware of the HSE guidance and case studies for school trips by the researcher, a typical LA school participant (a Business Manager) responded that they would turn first to the LA guidance, as follows:

"A lot of them, these standard operating procedures that the Local Authority have put together, I would access them first because they seem to cover most of what I'm doing. Again,... the Local Authority have introduced the EVOLVE process for visits and that covers all of this [information covered in HSE information and guidance]; so I've been on the EVOLVE training." p_15 Secondary Academy, England.

Health and safety information and guidance used for management of asbestos

Schools involved in this study had premises that were of varying ages and in varying states of repair. Some were brand new and others were scheduled to be rebuilt within the year. The

physical state of the school had a strong influence on the approach the respondents had taken to asbestos. Participants' responses demonstrated that all school health and safety representatives seemed to be fully aware of the health risks of asbestos. Participants from all schools said that they were aware of their schools asbestos status and the professional assessments and exposure controls that were required.

Several schools cited their specialist asbestos contractor (contracted by the school or provided by the LA), or the survey reports/asbestos register, as being a primary source of information and guidance regarding asbestos. A number of the academy schools had gained most of their guidance and information previously, whilst they were part of the LA. Since leaving the LA, they continued to use that historical knowledge and also kept up to date via specialist asbestos contractors and, in one example (quoted below), monitoring the HSE website for updates.

For instance, one participant, a health and safety coordinator, said he had purchased an asbestos manual from HSE that was said to be available as either a paper copy or downloadable PDF. He also used the HSE website to make sure the academy was up to date:

"*We've used the HSE website to get the up-to-date information of what we should do…[to keep]…our documentation up to date…As I say, because I go on the HSE website regularly…and, obviously, if there's a change in asbestos regulations I would click on it to read what the change was; whether it affected the school or not would then be my decision or, if it was…[unclear]… I would consult the chairman of the Health and Safety Committee and the head as to whether we needed to go further into it.*" p_14 Secondary Academy, England.

Two other participants mentioned making use of HSE's website for general asbestos information and guidance; one site manager participant said that he used the HSE website and information from the GMB Union, as well as the asbestos register and a site manager colleague, in the context of asbestos health and safety:

"*The HSE website has fantastic resources. I'm never scared of getting onto that website and looking at things that I don't know about. The [HSE]publications and the one-to-one stuff that you can get - that you can actually download - to use yourself and print out for yourself. It's just the most useful tool.*" p_07 Secondary Academy, England.

HSE's regulatory role was cited as having made a difference to asbestos management in one school, as described in the following quote:

"*There was an incident that we were prosecuted for about five or six years ago and there were a lot of recommendations from the HSE afterwards that we had to put into place in every council building. So, it led to a much tighter and more extensive asbestos register that is definitely updated.*" p_25 LA Secondary, Scotland.

A health and safety manager said that she used a trusted contractor and would also use the HSE asbestos tool with staff:

"*If we're doing any demolition or anything, we always use this contractor, because he's very good... if I'm talking to anybody…[for example,]… I'm just going to do some asbestos awareness refresher training with them - I'm using that HSE tool to do that.*" p_30 Independent School, England.

Colleagues were also mentioned as a source of information on asbestos and one LA school mentioned having a Premises Governing Body Committee who had collective knowledge.

Health and safety information and guidance used for classroom activities

All interviewees acknowledged that the ordinary classroom was a low risk environment and that risk assessments and training were required to maintain this. As described in this quote:

"*You will appreciate that a lot of the classroom activity is low risk. So, say if it's a maths lesson, it's fairly low risk because there is very little equipment that can go wrong and it's children sitting at desks and, you know, apart from bags under tables or leaving their, you know, coats where they are left, there's very little risk in that respect.*" p_09 Secondary Academy, England.

Most respondents referred to using generic written risk assessments for classrooms. In those schools where the premises were ageing or in need of repair the interviewees comments indicated that more attention was (necessarily) given to assessing the physical classroom environment compared with other types of risk. Two participants mentioned that they had needed to consider how to accommodate children with special needs in risk assessments that related to the classroom or movements around the school premises. It was generally noted by the participants that the risk assessment arrangements were audited termly or annually (e.g., by the head teacher, governors, health and safety coordinator, or a commercial/LA service provider).

On participant, a Health and Safety Coordinator, describes how the risk assessment process works in his school and how the annual audit is helpful:

"*We've done the classroom risk assessment forms, probably around 12 months ago now, and asked all the individual teachers to complete those based on their own classroom areas. We collated the responses from all the risk assessment sheets that people filled in and then put that into a report, which our caretakers worked through to see if there was anything that they needed to fix, any risks. On another side as well, our premises governors they do two inspections of the buildings per year, one internal one external…The governors…[using their premises experience] come up with a lot of information for us.*" p_19 Secondary LA, Wales.

Another participant describes how the annual audit helps to highlight issues that need attention:

"*I think what does help is our consulting firm,[name removed], when they come and do a general risk assessment every year, they go in every single room, every single classroom…so that highlights things as well.*" p_12 Secondary Academy, England.

All interviewees said that day-to-day responsibility for classroom health and safety rests with class teachers. For example, if a classroom risk assessment said that students' bags must not be stored on the floor, it is the teacher's role to ensure that this happens. Some participants pointed out that the written risk assessments were accompanied by 'visual checks' or a 'dynamic risk assessment' performed by the teacher at the start of each lesson.

When asked what sources of information and guidance were used to assess the risks in ordinary classrooms, participants referred to: the school's own policies and guidance; the LA; and commercial health and safety provider services. In many cases the interviewees found it easier to describe what procedures and processes they followed, rather than where these had originated, perhaps because the generic risk assessments were a relatively long standing feature of the school's documentation.

One participant, a health and safety coordinator, described how they intended to use HSE's checklist for the first time to assist with his annual classroom risk audit:

"This year, we're using the HSE classroom checklist… having looked at that I thought, yes, that saves me designing one! It does cover the sort of questions that I would like to ask the teachers… I'll be going round with them [teachers] and going through this new form [the HSE classroom checklist] and saying, well, you know, "Let's have a look at this form together in your rooms and see what we need to do." p_14 Secondary Academy, England.

The same respondent added that they saw the use of a HSE checklist as lending more authority to the audit process:

"It's got slightly more clout if it's got HSE on the top than if it's got my name on it…if it's got HSE on they would definitely listen…HSE are obviously very knowledgeable, but it reassures you as well that you haven't missed anything." p_14 Secondary Academy, England.

Use of HSE information and guidance for reliable guidance and reassurance

Respondents who primarily relied on health and safety guidance and information sources other than HSE said that they may also refer to HSE information as a 'belt and braces' back-up in order to provide absolute reassurance that they were doing the right thing. For example, one respondent wanted to be sure that the school's policy used the correct dates and another wanted to identify what the definitive requirements were, rather than relying on hearsay:

"One of the things...I've used the HSE website for, is to check that…[in the school's H&S policy] we are talking about the most up-to-date version of [the law], because, you know, regulations do change and have we got the right one? We've amended the wording … to the latest amendment [of the regulations] rather than putting all the dates in." p_14 Academy Secondary, England.

"*From my point of view, you can go onto other websites but you never know whether it's the truth or not...I use HSE as, if I am in doubt…I use it as the one point of truth. So…you might go on a forum and people say, 'we do this.' And somebody else says, 'we do this.' And you're not really sure what the answer is. That's how I use HSE, to confirm what the requirement is."* p_09 Secondary, England.

Use of HSE information and guidance for addressing new challenges

There were respondents who felt they had the benefit of good existing knowledge and effective policies and procedures in place for managing health and safety. Although these persons expressed a confident approach they would still, at times, opt to defer to HSE's information and guidance when faced with new or unfamiliar health and safety challenges.

"If anybody comes to me with a question...if they see something or they're organising something that's new, they will talk to me first. And if I don't know the answer my first port of call is the HSE website. I use the HSE website regularly. Some months it's a lot, other months it's not very much. Depends on what's going on in the school, but I use the website to get a definitive position on something ." p_14 Secondary, Academy, England.

At the end of the interview participants who had said they were not aware of HSE's education specific materials were shown printed copies of the materials. In many cases on seeing the material the participants were interested to learn more and expressed an interest in using the materials in future.

3.3 WHICH HSE COMMUNICATION / GUIDANCE DO SCHOOLS FIND MOST USEFUL / HELPFUL? (WHY?)

Use of HSE education-specific resources

With respect to participants' awareness of HSE's education-specific health and safety resources: some participants reported that they were aware of them and others reported that they were not aware. Not all participants that were aware of HSE's education-specific health and safety resources had made use of them in their health and safety activities. Four participants (from different school types) reported having each used at least one of HSE's education-specific health and safety resources to guide and inform activities in their school. On this basis they were able to provide more detail about what aspects they found most and least useful.

Responses from participants who had used HSE's education-specific health and safety resources and from those who were aware of them, but may not have used them, are reported in this section.

Most Useful

The four schools that used HSE's education-specific health and safety resources provided some very positive feedback about them. These participants' views conveyed overall that HSE is considered to be a trusted and authoritative source. For instance, one such participant mentioned that it formed *"the basis for all our policies and procedures."* With reference to HSE's education-specific health and safety resources, this respondent went on to say that they provided a useful source of factual information and reassurance to double-check policies and procedures against:

"It's making sure that people think before they act, basically. And that information from the Executive reinforces that at all times. I think it's always good to refer back to them [HSE's guidance and information] to make sure that custom and practice hasn't changed the procedure really and [to check if] you were missing anything. And, you know, something like an asbestos checklist is always useful so that we can do it and know when to call people in. But yes, I have seen those type of forms [i.e. HSE's guidance and information]." p_31 Primary LA, England.

One academy that had used the HSE Classroom Checklist for teachers described how they found it helpful to carry out classroom risk assessments and had adapted it for teachers to use in between the academy's standard health and safety assessments:

"I'm using that safety checklist [i.e. the HSE Classroom Checklist] in conjunction with [name of bought-in health and safety services provider removed]; we've come up with our own model [adapted for this academy] which encompasses everything you've got there plus more that we want to do. We're using that as a way for teachers to risk assess their own classroom - although we do it four months a year anyway letting them do it so they're aware. So, that came in useful." p_12 Secondary Academy, England.

Some of those participants that were aware of but had not used HSE's education-specific health and safety resources expressed an intention to make more use of those resources in the future. Several participants who had not been aware of the existence of HSE resources before being involved in the interview expressed an interest in using them after they were shown them at the end of the interview. For others who were already aware of the resources, but had not yet used

them, the adoption of HSE's resources was already planned. For example, this Health and Safety Coordinator describes his school's plans to start using HSE's Classroom Checklist:

"*The new classroom checklist is one where we'll probably change our risk assessment system. We won't change risk assessing, but the system that we've used…rather than just, 'Well, what's wrong in this room?' [we'll] say 'right, here's a tick list of what's right in this room as well'…yes, that will change our methodology. It won't change any of the ethics and it won't change any of the final system, but it will change the methodology of producing the risk assessments. For the better, I have to say.*" p_14 Secondary Academy, England.

An Estates Manager from an independent school who had read some of HSE's education-specific guidance and information but hadn't used any specific materials described how the information is potentially useful:

"*It shows up things that you might not instantly think about. You think about trips; there's maybe things that you don't always think about. Just to make sure that everybody's got the same information, I suppose they're handy. I don't know…not that I've used [HSE guidance specifically]. I've read through quite a few but I haven't actually used any. The information is certainly handy to have to hand if anybody asks any questions.*" p_22 Independent School, Scotland.

Many of the twenty interview participants were not aware that HSE produced an education bulletin, although a few participants volunteered to mention it as a useful source of information. One aspect of information received in HSE bulletins that three participants picked out was HSE's 'Myth Busters'. This had been used as a way of light-heartedly raising awareness of sensible risk practices with staff and countering disproportionate or nonsensical 'elf and safety' actions. The latter use is described by this participant:

"*Sometimes, I must admit, I use the Myth Busters to shut people up on occasion … People say, 'Oh, it's health and safety.' No, it isn't. But I do find it [frustrating], you know, if it isn't health and safety; don't use it as an excuse.*" p_14 Secondary Academy, England.

Least Useful

Whether they used HSE's education-specific health and safety resources or not, the responses of the twenty participants involved in this study did not indicate that they particularly found fault with these resources or with HSE resources for employers generally. Some described them as being very useful. This example demonstrates a commonly voiced response:

"*I've not found anything particularly unhelpful or... Everything I've looked at has been of use or has just reinforced my knowledge.*" p_14 Secondary Academy, England.

"*[HSE guidance I find least useful:] Not really, no…They just confirm your knowledge and back you up and give you self-confidence really. There's nothing startling or new in them.*" p_27 Secondary Academy, England.

For the majority of the 16 schools that had not used HSE's resources, the reason stated for this did not relate to any perceptions that they may not be useful. The majority of participants said that they perceived them as being useful, even if they did not use them. For example, this academy relied on their health and safety advisory service and also took the view that HSE guidance and information would be useful to help schools take a sensible approach to risks:

"I don't think anything that I've ever looked at of theirs [HSE] is unhelpful. I think it's all helpful, but you know, that sort of… I think the message that I think they're giving out… that document [school trips statement] you've got to take a common sense approach to these things and, you know, life's a risk, isn't it, at the end of the day? You can't [rule out all risk]."
p_04 Primary LA, England.

One participant described how they did not find HSE's website to be particularly user-friendly:

"I just found… it doesn't… it's not as user friendly as it could [be]….it's very technical and it's quite bland to look at, it's quite sort of wordy and I just like it broken up a little bit. Despite being a history teacher I'd like to see more break up with pictures and hyperlinks and stuff. So, it's okay." p_27 Secondary Academy, England.

3.4 WHAT GETS IN THE WAY OF SENSIBLY MANAGING HEALTH AND SAFETY RISK IN SCHOOLS?

The twenty participants involved in this study were asked specific questions about what gets in the way of sensibly managing health and safety risk in schools. However, answers that pinpointed the barriers were not typically provided and the participants tended to place more emphasis on what helped instead. Two issues that were raised more than once were time and workload and staff compliance. These are detailed below, followed by participants' perceptions of what does not get in the way and what helped.

Participants' perceptions of what gets in the way: time and workload

One issue that was seen by a few participants in this study to get in the way of sensible management of health and safety risk in schools was time and workload, particularly teachers' time. This issue was not identified by any one particular school type in the sample. An academy health and safety coordinator summed the issue up in this quote:

"The only, the only thing that can get in the way is just a workload thing... just sheer volume of work of other members of staff... I get an increment of salary because of this work, [so] I make time [But] sometimes you want to see somebody about a health and safety issue and they've got a full five-day, five-period teaching day. They may well have something on at lunchtime because there's a lot of extra-mural activities." p_14 Secondary Academy, England.

Participants' perceptions of what gets in the way: staff awareness, compliance and ownership of health and safety

A couple of schools mentioned that it could be difficult to get all staff fully on board with good health and safety practices, such as taking proportionate actions on health and safety issues. A Finance Manager with responsibility for health and safety provided this example of staff good at enforcing children's good behaviours with respect to health and safety but who did not take individual responsibility for their own health and safety issues:

"Staff wise they're very good at [discipline and controlling pupils' unsafe behaviour] ...but it's trying to get them [staff] to [take responsibility]…[For example, turning up at my desk and saying 'I've got trailing wires. Fix it.' And when I go and investigate the trailing wires [I say], 'Why don't you change your filing cabinet with your desk and you'll have no trailing wires?' [and they respond] 'Oh, that's a good idea!' It's not taking ownership... I can't say that

everybody does [take ownership] at the moment here....It's just a nightmare." p_24 Secondary Academy, England.

This Facilities Manager mentions an accident that was caused by a teacher who did not take responsibility and did not act on advice that would have avoided an accident taking place:

"People's attitudes… as regards accidents…and just the way people behave sometimes. They don't think about the health and safety…I mean, for instance, there was a supply teacher in the staff room, she had a laptop plugged in the wall but she trailed the lead across the floor to where she was sat… then somebody came in the door right next to it and tripped on the lead. And the thing is, I actually walked past and said, 'you need to pull that out because it's a bit dangerous.' But, obviously she didn't...that's the thing: that really people just don't think about it until it happens." p_13 Secondary Academy, England.

Participants' perceptions of what gets in the way: other issues

Two schools referred to 'media hype' and negative headlines (e.g., about student fatalities) being a further factor that had got in the way of sensible health and safety management, in their experience. One participant mentioned that information sent by the LA had not been clear enough and another said it could possibly lead to over-zealous interpretations by other schools. In both cases the respondents said careful reading and interpretation was needed in order to take the right action.

Participants' perceptions of what does not get in the way

Paperwork, bureaucracy, management structures and litigation were not generally identified by participants as posing a barrier to sensible health and safety management. Special needs were mentioned by a few schools as being a consideration for activities and risk assessments (e.g., school trips) but this was not reported to get in the way.

With reference to paperwork and bureaucracy, the majority of participants' responses gave the message that paperwork is viewed as a necessary burden and does not get in the way of sensible health and safety management. As stated in this example:

"No. It doesn't get in the way. It's just burdensome at times, that's all. There's a lot of it. It's finding the time to do the paperwork." p_22 Independent School, Scotland.

An academy bursar described a large volume of health and safety paperwork she has to keep on top of, but also made the point that she thinks this could provide necessary evidence and said that any perceptions about the burden of paperwork would never prevent activities from taking place in her academy, as follows:

"I mean, we do have a lot of paperwork. I must have five files for health and safety in the office and, you know, you have to have evidence that you've done things [correctly]…It doesn't [get in the way here] It doesn't stop you doing it...[e.g.,]… 'We can't do that because we'd have another file.' No, we sort of go, 'How can we get round that or how can we make that happen safely?' And that's what we do. So, I suppose it's a 'can-do' type [of] culture as well." p_04 Primary Academy, England.

This academy bursar went on to say that to maintain the right perspective in line with HSE's guidance, the risks are the key thing she focuses on, not the paperwork; and for her, the ultimate focus is on protecting the children. As follows:

"Well, I think the message in HSE's guidance is it's good for children to go on school trips. You need to make them safe as far as you can, but you need to focus on the risks not the paperwork. You see, I think [the main concern for me is]… if we had a child who'd died on a school visit, and it was because we hadn't done something first, I think it would be just horrendous to live with." p_04 Primary Academy, England.

On the subject of paperwork, the majority of participants stated that it did not present a barrier to health and safety management for them. In fact, one of the LA participants said that the LA take care of health and safety paperwork for her school:

"We don't do a lot of paperwork with health and safety, the Local Authority do it all for us. The only thing we do have paperwork [for] here is, like, the first aid instances. And if something does go wrong that we need to actually inform the Local Authority, we'll take advice from them; that's what they're there for." p_28 Secondary LA, Wales.

One participant said that reduced paperwork had improved how people approach health and safety in recent years and another mentioned that moving to electronic form submission was helping a school to reduce paperwork. However, one participant (a Finance Manager) did say that they would welcome a reduction in paperwork:

"All the rules and regs, the papers…I do find it tiring and I'm not very good at paper[work], I'm not very good at filing and stuff like that. I have found I end up with a pile of it which takes me all summer to file. I think if it could be made simpler it would be brilliant." p_24 Secondary LA, England.

The majority of schools did not focus on insurance and litigation as being barriers to sensible health and safety management in the responses they supplied. The LA schools in particular said they did not need to be concerned with litigation. Most claimed they were covered by the LA insurance, and any claims they mentioned were against the LA with some input required by the school. A couple of academy school participants also said that they had never had to consider litigation. A few participants from all across the sample mentioned cases that were underway or had taken place in the past.

This academy Business Manager describes how knowledge of a legal case that began ten years ago (where a student sued the LA) has raised awareness amongst school staff but has not detracted from the need for sensible health and safety practices, as described in the following quote:

"He trapped a finger between two tables and sued the Local Authority...It took nine years but the…[claimant won and received financial compensation]… just for trapping one end of one finger. Teachers need to think more about that. But then it comes back to being sensible; if you can't ask four students to get a normal desk and just put them together, I mean, what can you do? You're going to end up wrapping them in cotton wool; it doesn't get anybody anywhere does it?" p_12 Secondary Academy, England.

Two participants, one from an academy and one from an LA school, mentioned that they would not allow a fear of litigation to affect sensible health and safety management, in their experience:

"*I learned [in a previous legal job] not to be afraid of litigation because it's a normal part of life and, therefore, if something lands on my desk - because it has done - we've had a teacher sue us...we had some parents take legal action about a broken leg. And when that lands on my desk it doesn't panic me.*" p_23 Secondary Academy, England.

"*We've got one [legal case] going through insurance at the moment. So, if I've got everything in place and I know it's in place, as long as they're following what they're doing, I don't have that much of a fear.*" p_24 Secondary LA, England.

The schools in this sample all ran trips and did not shy away from higher risk activities. For example, this primary school describes the adventurous activities the children undertake on a school trip:

"*We're taking our Year 6 (age 10-11) soon to Anglesey, to [an activity centre: name removed], which is run by the Local Authority and they do canoeing there and they do climbing sea cliffs and, you know, that kind of thing. So, it's all adventurous stuff, but, you know, obviously, the centre themselves have got risk assessments in place and a way of working. And, you know, we've looked at those and we agree that the way they're doing them is the safest way that it can be done. But otherwise, you wouldn't have people doing them.*" p_06 Primary Academy, England.

A Health and Safety Manager described how trips, even potentially higher risk activities in far flung destinations, were positively encouraged:

"*Water polo [team] go to Hawaii; cricket [team] go to the West Indies; the girls go on the World Challenge; we have an outdoor pursuit centre in the Lake District - they all get up there at some point each year. We have a 60 foot yacht that circumnavigates the country...We've very proactive in encouraging them to embrace a little bit of risk in a controlled way.*" p_30 Independent School, England.

In another example a Health and Safety Coordinator described how his school's proactive approach to managing risks enabled stage shows to be produced despite the fact that they presented an array of risk factors for the crew and actors, as described in this quote:

"*For example, we did a show, it was a nightmare as far as health and safety was concerned because ...there were wires all over... It had a band on stage, which doesn't help; wires all over the place, and one of the characters was on roller skates! Well, we sorted it, because I was involved at a very early stage and, in fact, I spent a whole Sunday here just watching the... two dress rehearsals; one from ground level and then one from [the] gallery room.*

We did Romeo and Juliet, 'What are we going to do about the balcony?' 'Oh, we want her to come down some steps. What sort of steps do we use?' 'Well, if you use those, no matter what you use, she's got to wear flats. She can't wear high heels', which was fine because she was about six inches taller than Romeo anyway! But I was involved at the beginning. I was there when the drawings for the proposed set were on the table. This was five months before the

show. We've got that sort of ethos within the school; people will ask in advance." p_14 Secondary Academy, England.

This participant also asserted how the prevailing ethos or culture in the school is a positive influence that enables them to take on and persevere with the management of high risk activities, as follows:

"That comes down to the culture of your school really…I believe I have a role to play in making sure it's sensible and proportionate and we don't shy away from risky activity. So…[for example,] I've had no end of issues over trampolining. No long term serious injuries, but issues including things like moving the trampolines and all the risks associated with them. But we wouldn't stop doing it for that reason." p_23 Secondary Academy, England.

Participants' perceptions of what helps

Good communications and teamwork

Participants described how various facets of good teamwork and communications contributed positively to sensibly managing health and safety risk in schools. Their responses highlighted a range of factors that they believed to be important, including the following key areas:

- good communications;
- involvement of everyone/everyone working together;
- staff awareness, ownership and responsibility;
- all staff involved;
- staff attitudes and compliance;
- parental involvement and understanding;
- knowledge accrued by staff and management over time;
- encouraging reporting of incidents and near misses;
- prompt action; and
- common sense.

Meetings, audits and committees were used widely as communication vehicles for health and safety. Health and safety messages and updates were conveyed through specific health and safety meetings and activities and were also a standing item on some routine meeting agendas, e.g., governors meetings or those of science and technology departments.

Also on the communications theme, several schools mentioned how they use internal email to notify staff of health and safety issues and that this is also a good method of rapid notification that reaches everyone:

"Yes, I occasionally will cascade something out to everybody on the intranet. We have an intranet here, an email system within the school which is... quite useful. It's quite heavily used. If anything cropped up that was, say, an urgent dissemination of information about something, then I would just do an email and because of the way it's set up...everybody on the system will get it. p_14 Secondary Academy, England.

Many participants mentioned that staff in their school made a strong and positive contribution to sensible health and safety management. For example, this participant provided an example of staff setting a good example and prompt reporting:

"I would expect to see all my staff following the rules and doing what they should do and not standing on swivel chairs to change light bulbs. Issues are picked up straight away. Staff members, give them their dues, they are aware. And I do have people, now that they're aware that I am health and safety, and they come to me with their issues. I think having the support of my leadership team does make a difference." P_24 Secondary LA, England.

Good management approach to health and safety

Having a good management approach to health and safety was another factor that was reported by the participants as being a major factor in sensibly managing health and safety risk in schools. The following aspects were raised as being a positive influence:

- health and safety management system in place;
- supportive managers/senior management/governors;
- clear responsibilities, all staff involved;
- audits;
- having the right culture in the school; and
- insurance company support.

All participants were able to describe the formal structured health and safety system that operated in their schools. These were all variations on a cascading/hierarchical system with different degrees of responsibility at different levels of the hierarchy. The school governors, head teacher and senior management team would normally carry the main responsibility for health and safety with other nominated individuals having delegated responsibility for specific duties, such as day-to-day risk management. The perceived importance of the head's influence on health and safety is shown in this quote:

"[We've] got fantastic leadership, very forward thinking headmaster who puts - and quite rightly so - puts the children first and has no problems if we see something wrong and if it does imperil anybody, then we're going to stop it." p_07 Secondary Academy, England.

This participant describes how leadership from the head teacher and senior management team makes a positive difference to the school's culture and to sensible risk management:

"It shouldn't be risk averse ...I mean, children need to be exposed to some level of risk, but just in a controlled way ...it comes from the top in the school, from the head, who is...he's very clear that...we can't be risk-averse. [We] don't want to do anything unsafe but children have got to...evolve and grow, have got to have experience of things...I write a risk report every term for the governing body. The chairman of the governors is the one who signs off our health and safety policy. Parents only tend to get involved if there's an accident, apart from one very zealous parent we have who is a HSE inspector." p_30 Independent School, England.

In general, parents were not thought to be a significant part of the system, although they were mentioned by a few schools as having a supportive role to play. As explained by one LA school, it was thought that parents didn't need to be involved because they should be able to

trust that the school staff and leadership were handling things on their behalf, as shown in this quote:

"*I've got a very, very good, you know, members of staff here so they're really good and, of course, we've got very good contractors…parents really…I don't think, have anything to do with the health and safety - because we make sure it's right before they get here, so it doesn't affect them.*" p_28 Secondary LA, Wales.

As with good communications and teamwork, everybody having a role was also important in good leadership, e.g.:

"*I think it's making sure that everybody's aware of their responsibilities, being alert to the work areas. and when they're walking around the school, being able to identify risks and notify people as appropriate...There's certainly all the senior staff, all the teaching staff, they're all on duty throughout the day...pupils know there's people to go to...They [pupils] are also aware of where to go - should they notice anything untoward - they will come and report it to people. That's important.*" p_19 Secondary LA, Wales.

Pupils were mentioned by a few schools across the sample as having a role in the health and safety system, such as following procedures and reporting potential hazards, but not all schools identified a clear role for pupils. This did not appear to be associated with the age of the children as some primary age children were also said to have a role in the system. As this example illustrates:

"*For instance, you know, children might go and get out a yellow sign if the floor's wet. You know, they don't wait for somebody in authority to do it. They'll do it themselves because they know...[a hazard warning sign]...should be there, because they've seen it there. Or they'll come and say, 'Mrs [Teacher's name removed], the mat's got a break in it and it looks like somebody could trip over it', you know, so they do report things to me regularly*" p_06 Primary LA, England.

Audits were also said to play a part in sensible risk management, and in this case the auditor provided a fresh perspective on the risks, which was seen as helpful, as follows:

"*In fact, as an academy, we have what's called a Responsible Officer who does, like, an internal audit, and he recently looked at health and safety as part of his brief and he was looking at it in quite a different way than I. I look at it from the point of view [that] I don't want the school to be sued and I want the children in it to be safe. But I feel that our responsibilities end at our boundaries. Whereas he was looking further than that. He was, sort of, talking about the end of the school day, when the children leave the school.*" p_04 Primary Academy, England.

Advisory services (LA or commercial provider) and insurance company

The health and safety advisory service, whether it is supplied by the LA or a commercial provider, was said to play a positive supporting role for some schools that would refer their queries about what constitutes proportionate and sensible risk management to the advisor. In the following example the advisor is relied upon as a trusted and absolute authority for consultation and guidance and is also presumed by the school to provide a conduit for HSE's advice and guidance:

"*[We refer to] our own health and safety person at County…the first point of call is to ring [advisor's name removed] at County and just say, 'look, this has happened, what do you think?' or 'what do you think we need to do?' And she will advise us in the correct way of doing it. I'm presuming what the [Local] Authority give me is what the HSE would give to the Authority because I'm taking what [advisor's name removed] says to me as gospel, kind of thing. I don't say, 'Oh you're not supposed to do it that way, HSE say do it this way.' I'm presuming she knows everything.*" p_28 Secondary LA, Wales.

An insurance company's risk management services were also found by one school to provide a further positive steer about sensible and proportionate risk management, as this quote describes:

"*We've got a very good insurance [firm]…that's another source of information. They offer some risk management guidance as well…you get a day or two days. We've had some fire warden training. So, there are a number of options for what you can access out of their risk management services.*" p_23 Secondary Academy, England.

3.5 PARTICIPANTS' THOUGHTS AND SUGGESTIONS ABOUT HOW HSE'S MESSAGES AND COMMUNICATIONS COULD BE IMPROVED (IN ORDER TO PROMOTE SENSIBLE AND PROPORTIONATE RISK MANAGEMENT IN SCHOOLS AND MAKE THE BEST USE OF HSE'S RESOURCES)

The communication options suggested by participants are detailed in this section under the following sub-headings: email bulletins; website; health and safety services (e.g., helpline/advisory service/community of users); face to face awareness raising and training sessions. There is also a section on what participants suggested would not be helpful.

Email bulletins

The majority of respondents suggested that receiving a targeted email bulletin from HSE would be their preferred improvement to HSE's messages and communications. The responses indicated that people would prefer such a communication to be easy to digest, succinct, factual and focus on what they need to do. The respondents that mentioned it said they would like to sign up for such a service from HSE. It was also said that an email that was clearly identified as being sent from HSE would not be ignored and would receive appropriate attention. The participants in favour of this thought that such updates from HSE would help to keep them abreast of relevant updates to requirements and changes to health and safety law, e.g.:

"*[Say] if the law changed or there were issues that you had to suddenly become aware of…it would be great if they [HSE] could provide you with…an email ... because all schools have sort of general email addresses…maybe [they do and] it's just because I haven't signed up to it, I don't know. Or is there part of the site that you could go on just to get that information on a regular basis…maybe there is?*" p_26 Secondary LA, England.

Several participants stated that a bulletin would be more likely to be read by people in schools than a newsletter. The following quote from a Health and Safety Coordinator provides a typical example of someone saying they would be keen to sign up for an email bulletin:

"I go on the website every couple of weeks anyway… [and]…if there was an email mailing list then I would certainly put myself on it. I think that would be a good way of doing it. So, yes, I mean...if there was an email…'this has happened' or 'we've just produced a new document for schools', you click on the link or go to find it or whatever, then I'd be very happy with that. I think if we got an email prompt that would just speed up the process, as far as I'm concerned…I think, newsletters tend not to get read, whereas, "this is new" [a punchy headline]…keep it simple. [When it comes to] a newsletter, [you think] "Oh yes, I'll read that later" and then you never do." p_14 Secondary Academy, England.

Several participants mentioned that they had found out late about the requirement for a new health and safety employer's liability poster (e.g., some stated they had been notified late by their LA service provider). This participant thought that timely email bulletins could help people to quickly click on hyperlinks to relevant updates, as follows:

"So maybe a bulletin, you know, there's loads of bulletins because you get to the point where you just click…[don't] you? So, something targeted, but maybe a brief one. Or, you know first of April 2014 you need your new [e.g., requirement/document etc. and] this is the link where you buy it from." p_24 Secondary LA, England.

One participant who was in favour of this suggestion also made reference to existing bulletins that are received as an example of communications which are targeted and succinct. This participant also made the point that one bulletin would be sufficient to cover primary and secondary schools, as follows:

"Something brief like the bulletin we get from the Education Funding Agency and LA would be helpful…something like that, that's school specific from the HSE would be really good and it could be for the primary and secondary sector at the same time; you wouldn't need separate ones. Again, neither of those bulletins is sector specific so the primary schools and the secondary schools get the same bulletin because we share a lot of the same issues." p_23 Secondary Academy, England.

This LA school made the point that they didn't currently receive communications and messages direct from HSE but they thought that relevant materials were probably passed on to them indirectly from the LA. This view was shared by other schools that used LA or commercial service providers e.g.:

"We don't get much from the HSE but County probably do but then feed it to us. So, we think we're getting it from the Local Authority, which [it] probably isn't; we're probably getting it via a second source from HSE (to County) to us. So, it's probably happening behind the scenes but we don't see it." p_28 Secondary LA, Wales.

Further to comments about an email circular, a couple of participants also expressed a view that they sometimes preferred to receive hard copy printed documents and would find these useful e.g., if sent through to schools at the beginning of term. One participant also suggested that HSE could share or raise awareness of their resources for education by providing input into school-led publications such as education magazines.

Website

There was a mixture of different viewpoints from participants about HSE's website as a communication portal. This possibly reflects the different levels of awareness and usage that were reported. One participant described it as a centrally collated information source that is accessible to all. Several others thought it was suitable for HSE's communications and

messages in its current form. One LA school representative from Scotland thought that HSE's information and guidance would be improved if it could be given a more Scottish context. In the following example, a user of HSE's website, who obtained most of their information and guidance from the LA, thought that the website was already a good communication vehicle for HSE and that it provided sufficient communications for users' needs, as follows:

"*I mean it's got to be user friendly but factual, hasn't it really? And I think that's what we've got, we've got user friendly and factual and beyond that there's not really much more that we need because there's always, you know, the concern about any incidents that happen. I mean it's [health and safety, is] a bit like Ofsted really, you know, it's a constant concern when people are responsible for children and buildings, isn't it?* p_29 Secondary LA, England.

Conversely, there were also some individuals who did not find it wholly suitable and expressed views that they didn't know how to use it; how to search on it; that the information was too high level; or that they were unaware it provided education-specific resources.

Health and safety services (e.g., helpline/advisory service/community of users)

Several participants suggested that a helpline or call centre for education-specific health and safety would be a useful way of communicating. The participant who provided this quote acknowledges the extra expense involved but thinks this would avoid ambiguity in health and safety messages and provide absolute confidence:

"*I think…sort of a help centre. So, if you've got a query about an activity you're doing, they [HSE] could have somebody on hand to help us. And they could categorise that into educational visits; into fire risk assessment; [into] whatever they want to do. But that would be one-to-one. And this is me being a Luddite - a lot of organisations, a lot of companies rely on their website because of expense [i.e. cost saving] - whereas having a one to one discussion with somebody can iron out a lot of the problems and be more specific. Because again, looking at these…different [HSE] case studies…if you've got a specific activity you want to do, it might cut across two or three of these and then become contradictory. You want that sort of self-confidence, again, from talking to somebody.*" p_27 Secondary Academy, England.

This LA school participant shared this viewpoint:

"*I think it would be great to be able to phone somebody up and speak to somebody, I don't know whether you can do that, I think I tried to do it once and I did get hold of somebody. I think it's just that we do have a very good health and safety department at [our Local Authority] and certainly a helpline possibly [would provide a viewpoint that covers more schools than just the local LA]. p_26 Secondary LA, England.*

One participant thought that HSE could provide a targeted health and safety support and advice service for schools, especially those moving from LA to academy status, to help them better adapt to their new responsibilities. As demonstrated by this quote:

"*As more schools are becoming academies and they are accountable, they are looking for places to go to for good advice and I see HSE having that role. You know, as I say, we go to [a commercial services provider: name removed] or whatever but actually…there may be [an opportunity for] academies [to] also save money…[and] know that they are getting the right information [i.e. from HSE]…you know, okay, we still need somebody independent to come in*

and do the fire risk assessment, or whatever, but there could be some potential there to use HSE more." p_09 Secondary Academy, England.

An LA primary school participant offered a similar viewpoint. She was in favour of email alerts and also added that HSE could provide an external advisor's role for all schools to help HSE's messages and communications to have improved penetration:

"I think, you know, [thinking about] that external advisor's role: if the Health and Safety Executive could come up with that person for all the schools, that would be a good way forward... [I may not look at HSE's website because I use a health and safety advisor] yes, exactly. So I think probably that would be the best way, for us I think, of that message getting through. p_04 Primary LA, England.

It was suggested by one participant that HSE could maintain a shared online community or library where schools can interact to raise awareness of relevant communications and messages as had been done in a similar forum for academies. It was thought this could help to reduce duplication of effort, e.g.:

"The Education Funding Agency [maintains] a library of template documents that academies can access and… it's schools that have created those templates, it's not the EFA themselves. So, there's a library there that schools contribute to and that then is available to the other schools… I recognise that tax payers probably don't want to pay for a department large enough to actively monitor the health and safety in every school but I think that a community of collective risk assessments and handbooks and all of that sort of thing would save schools a huge amount of time and money." p_23 Secondary Academy, England.

Face-to-face awareness raising and training sessions

Some participants suggested that face-to-face awareness raising and training sessions would help to improve people's awareness and use of HSE's messages and communications. Having a stand at the Academies Show[j] was suggested by one individual, as the following quote demonstrates:

"I think [to improve HSE's communications and messages] you'd have to take the teachers out of the environment and in a specific half-day workshop that explains a little bit more in-depth; and probably [covers] roles and responsibilities and the after effects or the, you know, cause and effect of bad management of health and safety." p_07 Secondary Academy, England.

The idea of a health and safety conference for schools was also suggested by a couple of participants.

One participant suggested that they may benefit from having more face-to-face interactions with HSE inspectors, particularly from an advisory point of view, however, they were unsure how this had been affected by HSE charging fees for services:

"I know the role of the inspectors has changed but…I think…[inspectors are] not, kind of, dropping in to sites as they were in the past. They have to have a reason to call. Whereas before, it was a lot more come and go. So, I think… certainly…[HSE] publications are good. The website's good. At any time that I have needed to contact them, they're very helpful. It's

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[j] The **Academies Show** *is a dedicated free-to-attend event focusing on all aspects of converting and managing academy schools:.http://www.academiesshow.co.uk/*

always reasonably scary when they come out to interview you but, again, they're very helpful individuals. So yes; they're good." p_25 LA Secondary, Scotland.

What it was suggested would not help

In addition to making suggestions of what would help to improve HSE's messages and communications, participants also provided some pointers of things that, in their opinion, would not be helpful. These were:

- social media (as not used by participant);
- tweets and texts;
- information pitched at the wrong level;
- long documents containing many pages of information; and
- newsletters (as people do not find time to read them).

4. CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions are described under headings that relate to each of the research objectives. As stated in Section 2.6 of this report, in line with the principles that guide this type of research, no representativeness of findings should be assumed. Where schools are referenced in this section, the stated conclusions make reference to the schools and participants involved in this study, based on the evidence that they reported.

4.1 THE REACH OF HSE'S MESSAGES AND COMMUNICATIONS

A range of information and guidance was used to inform the health and safety decision making for school activities. This was obtained from HSE and a range of other sources; the main ones being LAs, bought-in health and safety advisory services and attendance at health and safety training courses. Whilst HSE's guidance and information was used to answer questions, seek reassurance and find definitive answers, in general it was not automatically considered as the primary source.

Those schools that purchased professional health and safety advisory services, either from the LA or from commercial companies, used the advisors as one-to-one experts, available on call. The participants conveyed a perception that bought-in services generally satisfied all the information and advice needs of the school.

4.2 EFFECTIVENESS OF HSE'S MESSAGES AND COMMUNICATIONS IN PROMOTING SENSIBLE HEALTH AND SAFETY PRACTICES

HSE's education-specific guidance and information materials were not used by the majority of the schools in this study, due to lack of awareness of them. This lack of awareness is likely to be influenced by the reliance schools placed on sources other than HSE, such as health and safety service providers; who schools assume are knowledgeable of HSE's guidance and information.

Many participants, including those who had not previously used the resources, were interested to learn more and possibly make use of HSE's education-specific guidance once they had been made aware of their existence. This demonstrates they are not averse to using HSE's materials *per se* and in many cases are keen to learn about anything that might help them. Regardless of whether schools had used HSE's resources or not, there was a general perception that they are useful.

When the participants in this study talked about risk assessing school trips, the EVOLVE tool was seen as the main ways of accessing information and guidance described: there was low awareness and use of HSE's resources for school trips. For asbestos management, specialist asbestos contractors contracted by the LA or by individual schools were the main source of health and safety guidance and advice that participants described. HSE materials were used by some schools in this study for training and awareness raising purposes.

The schools in this study tended to use generic risk assessments from their LA or from existing policies and procedures for ordinary classroom activities, and for this reason many were not aware that a HSE classroom checklist is available that could help schools to avoid duplication

of effort. More detailed assessments of the physical classroom environment may have been carried out in schools where the premises were ageing. Audits (e.g., carried out annually) were helpful in highlighting issues that needed attention, and there was a view that the HSE checklist may lend authority to the audit process. In some schools, risk assessments were accompanied by 'visual checks' performed by teachers at the beginning of each lesson.

Schools that used HSE's resources found them to be a useful source of factual information, which is authoritative and trusted. The resources were used to check schools' policies and procedures, and to carry out or support risk assessments. Ways in which the resources were useful included use in conjunction with other materials to develop approaches, using them to inform the revision of existing methods, and for reassurance that all necessary health and safety aspects were covered. They were also useful for confirming and reinforcing knowledge and providing schools with confidence about what they are doing to manage risk. Those who were aware of HSE's myth-busters saw it as a way of light-heartedly raising awareness of sensible risk practices.

4.3 WHAT GETS IN THE WAY OF COMMUNICATIONS ON SENSIBLE HEALTH AND SAFETY WORKING AS WELL AS INTENDED?

When responding to questions about what gets in the way, respondents in this study were more inclined to describe areas of good practice and to demonstrate the positive aspects of the approaches taken in their schools. However, time and workload pressures were said to get in the way of teachers having effective communications about health and safety. Whilst on the whole teachers take responsibility for the health and safety of pupils and themselves, good practice may not always be followed, e.g., with respect to some risks such as allowing trailing cables to present a tripping hazard. If information received from the LA was unclear there was a risk that it could have been misinterpreted by those responsible for actioning it in the school, especially if time pressures got in the way of careful reading and interpretation. Negative media reporting, such as headlines about fatalities, was an issue that may have got in the way of conducting sensible health and safety in schools.

In general, the participants in this study reported that paperwork, bureaucracy, management structures and litigation did not get in the way of communications on sensible health and safety management. Paperwork, however, was generally seen as a burden for the schools in this study, although the LA dealt with most of the paperwork for LA maintained schools. The schools that volunteered for this study were keen to stress that, although paperwork is a necessary part of an effective health and safety system, they were more focussed on the risks than on the paperwork itself. There was limited evidence that schools consider litigation; and fear of litigation did not affect sensible health and safety management.

4.4 PARTICIPANTS' THOUGHTS AND SUGGESTIONS ABOUT HOW HSE'S MESSAGES AND COMMUNICATIONS COULD BE IMPROVED

The schools that took part in this study want to be able to access information that is pitched at the right level for them. Suggested ways in which HSE might improve its health and safety messages and communications included sending targeted email bulletins to schools, which are succinct, factual and focus on what schools need to do. For example, these might flag up changes to requirements, when some new information is available or when HSE has produced a new document. The option for schools to receive hard copies of HSE documents and for HSE to raise awareness of their resources via education publications (e.g., magazines) for schools

may also be welcome. Overall, the website was thought to be a good communication vehicle; user friendly and factual, providing sufficient information for schools.

There were different levels of awareness and usage of HSE's website in the schools in this study and the findings suggest a general lack of awareness of HSE's education-specific resources. An opportunity exists to raise awareness, among school staff with health and safety responsibilities, of the HSE resources that are available and how they can be accessed.

The study participants suggested that a helpline or call centre for education-specific health and safety could be a useful way of communicating with schools. This could have benefits for schools such as providing a readily accessible port of call for queries and avoiding ambiguity, which could lead to greater confidence and reassurance. In particular, providing HSE support and advice for schools that are converting to academies, in an external advisory role, was suggested as a good way of helping HSE messages and communications to reach schools at an important stage in their administrative transformation.

On-line user-generated libraries/forums set up by HSE to share, discuss and exchange relevant communications and messages was another suggestion made by participants that could help save schools time and money (e.g., creating a user-generated library of template documents).

Face-to-face awareness-raising, for example at education shows, training sessions, a health and safety conference for schools and advisory visits from HSE inspectors would help to improve school's awareness, and use of HSE messages and communications.

Examples of what was not thought to be helpful for improving HSE's messages and communications for schools included social media, tweets and texts; information pitched at the wrong level; and long documents and newsletters.

4.5 LIMITATIONS

The findings and conclusions may have been affected by selection bias in the recruiting stage and positivity bias in the data collection (interview) stage.

Recruitment of schools was challenging, and the final sample consisted of those people who were willing and able to participate in the study within the timeframe available for data collection. As a consequence, whilst every effort was made to ensure that a range of views were gathered, the self-selection of participants meant that a degree of selection bias may be present. This is usual for research of this nature.

It was difficult to elicit evidence from many of the study participants about what gets in the way of communications about sensible health and safety management in schools. It is possible that some but not all of the study participants' responses were positively biased because - due to pride, loyalty and other factors - they wished to convey a positive impression of communications in their school.

However, the researchers were satisfied that a wide range and depth of insight into the research area was obtained, that common themes were identified across the sample, and that conducting additional interviews would be unlikely to have added any further insights[9, 10]. In addition, the order of the questions in the interview meant that questions about what information and guidance participants used was kept very general in the early stages of the interview and this was only narrowed down to HSE-specific information in the later stages, once information about use of HSE and other sources had already been sought. This was intended to mitigate

against bias in terms of participants wishing to seem compliant with or knowledgeable of specific HSE information and guidance materials.

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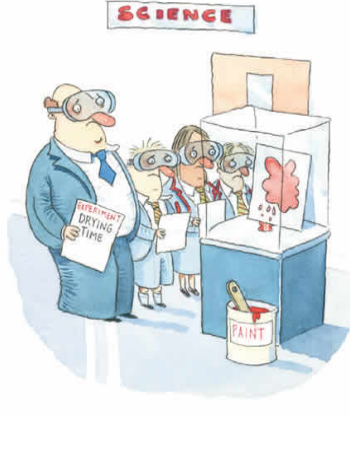
6. GLOSSARY

Description of the different types of school [11]

School Type	Description
Academies	Academies are independently managed schools set up by sponsors from business, faith or voluntary groups in partnership with the LA and the government Department for Children, Schools and Families.
Community schools	Community schools are run by the LA, which employs school staff, owns the land and buildings, and sets the entrance criteria (such as catchment area) that decide which children are eligible for a place).
Foundation and Trust schools	Foundation schools are run by a governing body which employs the staff and sets the entrance criteria. Land and buildings are owned either by the governing body or by a charitable foundation. Trust schools are similar, but are run together with an outside body - usually a business or charity - which has formed an educational trust.
Free schools	Free Schools are normally brand-new schools set up by teachers, charities, community or faith groups, universities and groups of parents where there is parental demand. They will be set up as Academies and will be funded in the same way, directly from central government. They also share with Academies a greater control over their finances, the curriculum, and teachers' pay and conditions.
Independent schools	Independent schools provide full-time education to five or more pupils of aged 5 and older, or one or more pupils who have a statement of special educational needs, or are in public care. Independent schools are all registered with the DfE. See Further information below for their details.
Specialist schools	State secondary schools often specialise, which means they have an extra emphasis in one or two subjects. Schools can specialise in: the arts, maths and computing, business and enterprise, music, engineering, science, humanities, sports, languages, and technology.

School Type	Description
State schools	There are four main types of state schools funded by local authorities (community, foundation and trust, voluntary-aided and voluntary-controlled). They all follow the National Curriculum and are inspected by Ofsted (the government's Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills).
Voluntary-aided schools	Voluntary-aided schools are religious or faith schools. Just like foundation schools, the governing body employs the staff and sets the entrance criteria. School buildings and land are usually owned by a charity, often a church.
Voluntary-controlled schools	Voluntary-controlled schools are a cross between community and voluntary-aided schools. The LA employs the staff and sets the entrance criteria, like a community school, but the school land and buildings are owned by a charity, often a church, which also appoints some members of the governing body.

7. APPENDICES

7.1 APPENDIX 1 SENSIBLE LEADERSHIP TEST - ARE YOU ACHIEVING A SENSIBLE STANDARD?

Going beyond sensible leadership	Sensible leadership	Failing to reach a sensible standard
• The school manager/ Senior management demand reams of paperwork and policies. • The Board of Governors adopt an overly cautious approach - insisting on written precautions for even the most trivial risks. • The safety culture aims to provide an environment of absolute safety where all risks are eliminated to provide a risk free environment. • Precautions are over cautious – sensible suggestions are dismissed. • Detailed risk assessments are required for each individual .classroom, cloakroom, office or corridor. • Paperwork becomes more important than the precautions. • Resources are wasted on managing difficult trivial risks while some serious risks are neglected.	• The school manager/ Senior management team understand the safety policy – they translate the policies practically to the real risks in the school. • Key staff have clearly established roles and responsibilities. • The real health and safety risks are identified, understood, and controlled. • The schools own paperwork is functional and concise, the significant hazards are identified, their risks adequately controlled and precautions clearly documented - the emphasis is on effectiveness not volume. • School leaders consult with staff including employee representatives/ trade union safety representatives – looking for practical solutions to health and safety issues. • Learning is enabled by supporting staff and ideas – and making proportionate decisions.	• No one leads or takes responsibility for health and safety – it is always someone else's job. • Important documents and records are not up to date. • There is a lack of understanding of the risks, priorities and about risk management. • Precautions for higher risk activities are not identified, such as caving, open water activities or work at height. • The senior management team are unaware of staff concerns - there is no engagement with staff on risk management. • Members of staff are left to deal with difficult decisions without the necessary skills and experience. • Key information about the risks in the school is not passed on, for example to contractors working at the site.

7.2   APPENDIX 2 HSE'S HEALTH AND SAFETY INFORMATION FOR SCHOOLS: AN OVERVIEW

The following education-specific health and safety materials are accessible via HSE's education pages, http://www.hse.gov.uk/services/education/:

School trips and outdoor learning activities (statement) - tackling the health and safety myths
http://www.hse.gov.uk/services/education/school-trips.pdf

School trips case studies
http://www.hse.gov.uk/services/education/case-studies.htm. These pages include five school trips case studies:

1. Managing transport risks on a day trip to London.
2. School visit to a sawmill.
3. Kaimes School trips to Holyrood Park.
4. Collegiate High School, Blackpool - sailing through my maths.
5. Making geography real - managing risks on advanced higher geography field trips.

Asbestos management - checklist for schools
http://www.hse.gov.uk/services/education/asbestos-checklist.pdf

Health and safety checklist for classrooms
http://www.hse.gov.uk/risk/classroom-checklist.pdf
http://www.hse.gov.uk/risk/classroom-checklist.htm

7.3　　　APPENDIX 3 RECRUITMENT: BACKGROUND QUESTIONS

Background Characteristics

The following set of background questions were used as part of the recruitment process. This information allowed the researchers to check that different types of school were included in the sample, as per the third sampling criteria (see Figure 1). These were as follows:

- single converter academies and part of a managed group;
- do and don't have school trips. If not, the reasons for this; and
- do and don't use HSE's web resources for schools.

The final characteristic of interest in the third sampling criteria was the approach to health and safety leadership (one of three HSE defined categories). The approach used to obtain this novel information about a school is described in Appendix 5.

Recruitment Script And Background Questions

Health and Safety in Schools and Academies - Exploring how HSE Communications can promote and support Sensible and Proportionate Risk Management

Telephone Script for Recruiting Interviewees

"Good morning/afternoon,

My name is ---- and I am calling from the Health and Safety Laboratory (HSL). HSL conducts research for the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). I've called you today because the HSE wishes to make its online communication with schools as clear, concise and useful as it possibly can be, and I would like to ask for your help with this. (If asked, can let the person know that the HSE's website provides information for schools to help them manage the risks that may arise in this industry).

Would you be able to speak with me briefly (for around 10 minutes) today? I would like to find out some background information about your school and to tell you more about this research, in case you would like to take part further.

If you are not the right person, could you let me know who is? Can you pass me through to her/him or let me know their number?

If yes, continue.

Just to reassure you, any information that you provide will be anonymised and collated in a report for the HSE. Individual schools will not be identified. Do you have any questions for me or are you ready to begin?

If yes, continue.

Name:　　　　＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

email address:＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

- Could you confirm the following to help us establish your specific type of school?

Primary ☐ Secondary ☐

Is your school funded/maintained by the LA? Yes ☐ No ☐

    If yes, is the school a:
        Community ☐ Voluntary controlled ☐ Voluntary Aided ☐ Foundation ☐

        FOR SCOTLAND ONLY[k]: there are only two types of school
        ☐ LA school ☐ Independent

    If no, is the school directly state funded:

        Academy ☐ Free school ☐
Is the school Independent/ Fee paying Yes ☐ No ☐

If the school is an academy, is the school a

Single converter ☐ Part of a managed group ☐

- Do you use the HSE's web resources for schools (e.g., HSE's education pages for schools)?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Prompt: the web address is http://www.hse.gov.uk/services/education/

- Could you tell me who leads on health and safety in your school?

Please state all those that are applicable in the ones that I am about to mention.
    a) The head or deputy head is the lead for health and safety ☐
    b) Another member of the teaching staff is the lead for health and safety ☐
    c) A member of the auxiliary staff is the lead for health and safety ☐
    If yes, please state her/his school role.

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[                                                                    ]
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    d) You buy in health and safety expertise from the private sector ☐
    e) You ask the Local Authority's safety advisers for advice ☐

Prompt (if explanation needed): this is a service that a community or voluntary controlled school would be able to buy from the LA via a SLA. This may also be an option for other types of schools to purchase in some LAs.
    f) Other. Please list.

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[                                                                    ]
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[k] *N.B. HSE's comment: In Scotland there are only two types of school – LA controlled and independent. The LA controlled schools in Scotland do not have the different name categories as in England/Wales'*

- Does your school arrange school trips?

Yes ☐ No ☐

a) *If no*, please could you suggest a reason why there are no school trips?

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│   │
│   │
│   │
└───┘

Thank you for answering these questions. Now I would like to ask if you would be willing to complete the next part of our research, which is to answer a number of short questions via email? This will take no more than 10 minutes and there are no right or wrong answers, we would just like to seek your opinion.

Yes ☐   No ☐

If no. Thank her/him very much for her/his time and finish the phone call.

If yes, confirm that s/he will be sent the email within the next 2-3 weeks (or state date if known). ***The email address from which s/he will receive the email is ------------------***

The email will be sent to you by early February and before the half-term break.

Inform them about the next stage and ask if they would be willing to participate in this.

We will invite some schools who complete the questions by email to take part in an interview in person with one of our researchers. It will take between one hour and one and one half hours and can be carried out at selected schools at a time that suits the participant. This interview is one of several that HSL is conducting and will help HSE to check the impact of its online communication with schools. Of course, the information that we collect will be confidential and anonymous. We will ask for your views on HSE's messages and communications, and cover a range of questions about health and safety practices and management of risk. You will be provided with further information prior to the interview; it is voluntary and you may withdraw from taking part at any time. Would you be interested in taking part?

Yes, willing to be interviewed ☐   No, not willing to be interviewed ☐

If yes:

Please can I have a phone contact number for you?...

What is the best way to contact you?...

When is the best time to contact you?...

We may not be able to interview everybody who is interested in participating. So we will contact you before the end of March to let you know whether or not we would like to interview you (as we are seeking to interview a range of different schools), or to thank you for your interest and to let you know that we will not be able to include you in the research.
Do you have any questions?

Thank you for your time today."

– end of telephone recruitment script -

7.4 APPENDIX 4 PROPOSED SAMPLE COMPOSITION

This appendix details the original proposed sample composition, explains how the interviews were apportioned across the sampling frame and the reasons for subsequent adjustments to the sample composition.

Proposed Sample Composition

Table 5 shows the original proposed sample composition, including how the sample would be divided into smaller sub-groups according to the first and second sampling criteria (as described in Figure 1).

Table 5 Proposed sample composition, indicative numbers of interviews and sample breakdown (numbers of interviews)

	Sample Groupings		
	LA Maintained/Supported **(Found in England, Scotland and Wales)**	**Locally Managed i.e. Academies and Free Schools** **(Found in England only)**	**Independent & Fee Paying** **(Found in England, Scotland and Wales)**
	12 interviews	6 interviews	2 interviews
Sample Breakdown (number of interviews)			
Type of School:	Secondary (10) Primary (2)	Secondary (5) Primary (1)	Secondary (2) Primary (0)
Location:	England (8) (6 Secondary; 2 Primary) Scotland (2 (Secondary)) Wales (2 (Secondary))	England (6) (5 Secondary; 1 Primary) Scotland (N/A) Wales (N/A)	England (2) (Secondary) Scotland (0) Wales (0)

Apportionment Of Interviews Across The Sampling Frame

The proportions in each of the secondary school and primary school sample grouping were based on HSE's view that the range and nature of risks is far greater in secondary schools than in the primary school environment. Therefore, there was thought to be a greater focus on sensible and proportionate risk management of activities in secondary schools, compared with primary schools. Secondary schools only (not primary schools) from Scotland and Wales were included in the sample.

The majority of schools are located in England, therefore HSE requested that the majority of schools/academies were selected from England with two each from Scotland and Wales, to provide some comparative insight into the use of HSE's information and guidance in Scottish and Welsh (devolved nations) schools, compared with English schools.

It was the HSE customer's view that LAs are the biggest influence on how schools manage risk. There are no academies in Wales or Scotland. As stated previously, HSE requested that the LA schools selected for inclusion in the study were from different LA areas, as it was anticipated that this would help the research to explore the range of influence of LAs. The proposed sampling plan in Scotland and Wales was to focus on LA run schools, although necessary adjustments were made to this during the data collection phase of the research (as described below).

Changes to the actual compared with proposed sample composition

It was agreed with the HSE customer that the sample may be adjusted during the initial data collection and analysis phase, if necessary, based on the findings that emerged and on any changes to the consent and availability of research participants. The minor changes that were made are as follows:

- the sampling strategy in Scotland and Wales, agreed with the HSE customer, was to focus solely on schools that are LA maintained/supported and only on secondary schools. However, challenges in obtaining volunteers within the time limitations of the data collection process meant that the sample needed to be adjusted (see Table 1 for final composition); and

- one Scottish LA school withdrew their participation during the data collection period, and gave the reason as time pressures for staff caused by exams. The limited availability of alternatives resulted in this school being replaced with a Scottish Independent school. As a result of this change, and to maintain the total number of independent schools at two, one English academy school was substituted for an English Independent school.

7.5   APPENDIX 5 SITUATIONAL JUDGEMENT TEST (SJT)

Rationale For Developing The SJT

The 'sensible leadership standard' developed by HSE (see Appendix 1) has three health and safety leadership approaches that can be categorised as: 'Doing Too Much'; 'Getting It Right'; and 'Not Doing Enough' (Table 3). As part of the third set of sampling criteria (Figure 1), schools who volunteered in principle to take part in an interview needed to be characterised under one of these leadership approach categories. The HSL researchers developed a new SJT tool for this purpose.

SJT's have been used as a method in different work-related situations for close to a century[12, 13, 14] and the bespoke approach developed for this study was based on design and method reported in the academic literature[15,16, 17.]

The behaviours outlined in HSE's 'sensible leadership standard' were translated into twelve fictional example scenarios that may occur in schools. The scenarios were designed to reflect some of the genuine situations that people with responsibility for managing health and safety in schools may experience. Of three possible options for each scenario the person completing the form was asked to choose which option was most likely and which was least likely. It was acknowledged that not every school would have experienced all of the situations, especially when considered from the primary or secondary school level.

The SJT statements were discussed and agreed with the HSE customer.

As it was a newly developed tool the SJT's potential for use had not been validated. Therefore, HSL conducted three pilot interviews with volunteer school representatives to allow the instrument to be tested and refined. These volunteers were not involved in subsequent interviews. Following the pilot it was agreed with the HSE customer that the tool was suitable to be used in this study to indicate a school's likely prevailing health and safety leadership approach.

The SJT presented in this report is colour coded for ease of reference:

- red shading is the action that indicates 'Not Doing Enough';
- amber shading is the action that indicates 'Doing Too Much'; and
- green shading is the action that indicates 'Getting It Right'.

It should be noted: **the version that was sent out to schools was not colour coded**. The results were not requested by or fed back to individual participating schools.

The Situational Judgement Test (SJT)

This form was sent out electronically (as an MS Word document) to schools that had volunteered in principle to take part in an interview.

Health and Safety in Schools
Typical Scenarios

Please read the following scenarios and for each scenario select **one** action that your school is most likely to do and **one** action that it is least likely to do. This means that within each scenario one action will be left unselected, as you are neither most likely nor least likely to do it.

There are no right or wrong responses. Please try not to spend too long thinking about each one, your first instinctive response is usually the most accurate.

Although you may not have encountered each specific scenario in your school, please think how you, or the appropriate member of staff, would most likely respond and also would least likely respond if such a situation did occur.

Scenario 1.
The Physical Education teacher has prepared a rota for students to set up and dismantle the trampoline before the physical education class.

The procedure in this school would be:

	Most likely to do	Least likely to do
To ensure that the students work in pairs when setting up and putting away the trampoline, are supervised and are aware of the importance of checking and working safely around the trampoline's hinges.		
To get approval slips from the students' parent(s)/legal guardian(s) before doing the task and brief the students each time they set up/dismantle the trampoline.		
To let the students get on with the task once they have been shown how to do it.		

Scenario 2.
The school organises several trips for students and needs a dedicated minibus driver.

The procedure in this school would be:

	Most likely to do	Least likely to do
To ensure that the school is a member of the Minibus Driver Awareness Scheme (MiDAS) and that the driver does a risk assessment each time s/he has to transport students.		
To brief the driver about the journey details and to allow him/her to decide on the route and appropriate safety procedures given s/he has done it before.		
To ensure that the driver has the required licence(s), is aware of the weight constraints of the vehicle and of the risks involved in the tasks.		

Scenario 3.

A contractor has been hired to do some minor repairs during the school day in term time and is most likely to be on site from 08:30 - 16:30.

The procedure in this school would be:

	Most likely to do	Least likely to do
To let the contractor get on with the repairs as s/he knows what is required and how to do the work and has worked at the school before.		
For a member of the school management team to speak with the contractor before starting the job about the busy periods in the school day, and how s/he will deal with any unexpected event/occurrence/activity.		
To ask for a written plan of work, check on the contractor's progress whilst they are on site and ask for updates on what is being done, how it is being done and how s/he is managing the risks.		

Scenario 4.

The school's caretaker has to change the time on the school's clocks due to the start of daylight saving time. Some of the school's clocks are at least three metres above the ground.

The procedure in this school would be:

	Most likely to do	Least likely to do
To allow the caretaker to get on with the job as s/he has done the job before without any incidents or accidents.		
For a member of the school management team to do a risk assessment for each individual clock and to recommend the procedures that should be followed, including wearing personal protective equipment and cordoning off a safe area around each clock.		
For the caretaker and other staff, as required, to do a risk assessment before changing those clocks at height and to check the integrity of the equipment before using it.		

Scenario 5.

The school's entrances and exits are directly off a main road and these can get congested at the beginning and end of the school day, especially if deliveries occur around the same time.

The procedure in this school would be:

	Most likely to do	Least likely to do
To set up a suitable traffic management system that takes into account the peak times during which vehicles are on site, the appropriate times when deliveries are likely to be made and the availability of suitable pathways for pedestrians and cyclists.		
To set up a traffic management system that allows the quickest drop off and pick up of students during peak times.		
To set up a traffic management system that takes into account peak traffic times, the scheduled deliveries by outside suppliers, the pathways for pedestrians and cyclists and one that is monitored weekly to ensure that no unexpected problems arise. Deliveries and staff vehicle movements are not permitted during peak times in order to relieve traffic congestion.		

Scenario 6.

The school's governing body has commissioned repairs to the school's windows. The contractor responsible for the repairs realises that some of the boarding around the windows may consist of asbestos containing materials. S/he informs the head teacher.

The procedure in this school would be:

	Most likely to do	Least likely to do
To commission a survey to determine if asbestos containing materials exist in the windows and in other parts of the school and how best to manage the risks that may arise from these. To liaise with the contractor to manage the work in accordance with regulations.		
To ask the contractor to remove the asbestos containing materials and replace these with safer materials, so they are not an issue when repairing the windows.		
To close the school and commission a full survey to confirm that the school has asbestos containing materials. To not reopen the school until all of the material has been removed and all risks have been removed or suitably controlled.		

Scenario 7.

The school requires some decorating to be done over the upcoming half-term break. The school management team decides to find someone to do the task.

The procedure in this school would be:

	Most likely to do	**Least likely to do**
To advertise the work and check with various certification boards on the qualifications and suitable credentials of each of the applicants before s/he is invited for an interview.		
To send a note to parents asking for those parents with expertise in this area to volunteer to do the work.		
To hire an external contractor for the task, ensuring that the appropriate checks are carried out before s/he is allowed to start the work.		

Scenario 8.

The school is planning a day trip to a city museum. This is a trip which has been undertaken for the last couple of years and will follow the same format.

The procedure in this school would be:

	Most likely to do	**Least likely to do**
To continue with the same arrangements (e.g., risk assessment) as in the previous years.		
To update the existing arrangements (e.g., risk assessment) to take account of this year's group, for example by talking to staff about what more, if anything, they think is necessary.		
To complete a new risk assessment taking account of the travel considerations, destination/venue, and activities to be undertaken.		

Scenario 9.

The school wants to ensure that health and safety is adequately considered as part of the school's procedures and as such is reviewing all of its policies.

The procedure in this school would be:

	Most likely to do	Least likely to do
To have detailed practical guidance and a requirement for written procedures and policies to be checked and/ or audited at regular intervals.		
For the procedures and policies to be site specific, practical and endorsed by the school's senior team.		
/To use the generic procedures and policies provided by the Local Authority/senior management as these are sufficient and do not need to be site specific.		

Scenario 10.

You are arranging some minor works to freshen up a classroom - one small job involves fitting a new shelf to an existing wall. This work needs to be funded and organised from the school's budget. The teaching staff are concerned that the work may expose them to asbestos.

The procedure in this school would be:

	Most likely to do	Least likely to do
For you to check the existing surveys to identify the types of asbestos containing materials that are present and where they are located. To have a plan to manage the risks of the presence of asbestos that has been used to guide the contractors doing the work from the outset. To double check the situation to reassure the staff.		
For you understand that it is important to manage the risks and feel the best way to do this is to remind the contractor that there may be asbestos in the classroom when s/he arrives to carry out the work. The contractor will know what to do to ensure staff are not put at risk.		
For you understand that it is important to manage the risks. As such, before any work is started you consult with your health and safety adviser and arrange for a refurbishment survey to be undertaken to identify if asbestos is present.		

Scenario 11.

The school wants to ensure that staff are adequately involved in health and safety policies and practices. In order to achieve this:

The procedure in this school would be:

	Most likely to do	Least likely to do
To bring in outside help; possibly appointing a consultant to improve the schools health and safety culture, policies and standards		
To consult staff about procedures and involve them in finding practical and sensible solutions.		
To rely on the health and safety lead to stay on top of the school's procedures.		

Scenario 12.

The school considers that it has a positive safety culture and this is due to its day-to-day culture. In order to achieve this:

The procedure in this school would be:

	Most likely to do	Least likely to do
To eliminate all risks and create an environment of absolute safety as this will ensure that the most positive safety culture is achieved.		
To allow students to experience risks in a managed way so that they will be able to learn about, identify and respond adequately to risks.		
To be safety conscious. Risks are managed on an ad hoc basis by the responsible member of staff (e.g., health and safety lead).		

Thank you for taking the time to respond to these scenarios. Your assistance is greatly appreciated.

Scoring The SJT

A numerical scoring system was used where a respondent's choices for each of the twelve scenarios received a score. The total additive score then provided an indication of their school's prevailing leadership style.

The respondents received the following marks based on their responses.

1.   +1 = Choose 'Getting It Right' response to indicate what they would be *most likely to do* and 'Not Doing Enough' as what they would be *least likely to do*.

2.   -1 = Opposite of the +1 choices: choose 'Getting It Right' response to indicate what they would be *least likely to do* and 'Not Doing Enough' as what they would be *most likely to do*.

3.   0 = Choose 'Doing Too Much' response to indicate what they would be *most likely to do* **OR** *least likely to do*.

The participants' final scores would indicate how the prevailing leadership style in their school fitted on a sliding scale between the maximum and minimum possible scores:

'Getting It Right': High understanding of taking proportionate actions to address health and safety risks in schools
         Highest score = +24

'Not Doing Enough': Low understanding of taking proportionate actions to address health and safety risks in schools
         Lowest score = -24

While the design of the tool makes it possible to score -24 or +24, the probability of this happening in this sample is low. It would not be expected that these participants would make 100% optimal or 100% suboptimal choices when answering the SJT. Although it is possible for participants to score as low as -24, in practice, this sample was purposively chosen to have a working knowledge of health and safety. Therefore the respondents would probably have sufficient knowledge to score within the positive rather than the negative range.

The more 'Getting It Right' responses that are selected would increase the total score, i.e. closer to +**24**.

The more 'Not Doing Enough' and 'Doing Too Much' responses that are selected would lower the total score, i.e. closer to **1**.

A median score of **+12** would indicate some understanding of taking proportionate actions to address health and safety risks in schools and falling into the bracket of 'Doing Too Much'.

Based on the scoring system outlined, the final scores allowed each respondent's school to be characterised as one of three health and safety leadership approaches:

Doing Too little   1 to 8 score
Doing Too much   9 to 16 score
Getting It Right   17 to 24 score

Piloting the SJT

In addition to the main sample, three pilot discussions were conducted with volunteers working within schools to test run and guide the development of the SJT. These schools were not otherwise involved in this research, i.e. they did not take part in research interviews. The pilot discussions were used to:
- test the SJT statements that had been developed to provide an indication of a school's prevailing health and safety leadership approach, i.e. Doing Too Much, Getting It Right, or Not Doing Enough;
- gauge also how 'realistic' the scenarios were within a school context;
- find out how long the SJT takes to complete;
- find out how difficult or easy school staff found it to answer the SJT questions and make their choices, taking into account the language used; and
- find out how difficult or easy it is for the researcher to apply the SJT scoring and how, if at all, it could be improved.

Other useful areas were covered in the pilot discussions, including:
- who would be the most appropriate person/job role to speak to regarding our research questions and topic areas; and
- when would be the most convenient time to conduct research interviews in order to fit the time required around the school day?

The pilot discussions were loosely structured and conducted on an informal basis. Three pilot discussions were found to be sufficient.

Three pilot discussions

The three schools used in the pilot were recruited from known contacts and were therefore considered a convenience sample. They were all from England and consisted of individuals from one primary school and two secondary schools. All three volunteers were teachers, who had sufficient knowledge to test the understanding and readability of the instrument.

Findings and adjustments made

All of the volunteers stated that the SJT did not take very long to complete (less than ten minutes), was easily understood; and that the language was at the right level. However, they felt that some of the scenarios were more relevant for secondary schools than primary schools, such as the ones with the trampoline and the minibus. There were suggestions to amend certain terms, such as from 'head teacher' to 'site manager' and 'high' to 'off the ground'. While, one volunteer noted that some schools might not use approval slips when planning a trip.

After this feedback, the SJT was reviewed and the scenarios adjusted (with respect to the specific points raised) prior to the SJT being agreed with the HSE customer and sent out to schools.

7.6 APPENDIX 6 INTERVIEW TOPIC GUIDE

HEALTH AND SAFETY IN SCHOOLS - INTERVIEW TOPIC GUIDE

Introduction

First of all, thank you for agreeing to take part in this interview.
Background: I work for the Health and Safety Laboratory (HSL) and we are gathering information on behalf of the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) to gain a better understanding about how HSE can most effectively communicate and promote sensible and proportionate risk management in schools. As part of this work, we are carrying out a number of interviews with schools/academies.
Aim of the interview: The aim of the interview is to explore schools' senior managers' and school leaders' views and experience of HSE's messages and communications.
Just to reassure you, there are no right or wrong answers. We are interested in your views and we just want to learn about your experience of managing health and safety in this school. This will allow us to provide HSE with a realistic picture of what happens in schools at the moment. This will help them to tailor their messages and communications in the way that is most helpful in this arena.
Anonymity and confidentiality: The interview should last one to one and a half hours. All the information that you provide will be anonymised. The findings will be summarised across all interviews and views and comments will not be linked to any specific individual or institution.
Voluntary: This interview is voluntary and you can withdraw at any time without giving any justification. If there are questions that you do not wish to answer, it is fine, please let me know.
Do you have any questions about this research before we start?
Permission to record the interview: With your permission, I would like to record the interview. We will use a transcript of the recording to carry out our analysis and no one outside of the HSL's research team will see the transcript. Are you happy for me to record our conversation? At any point, feel free to ask me to stop recording if you wish.
Do you have any questions about this before we start?
OK, then I will set the recorder running and begin with the first question….

<<Start recording>>

Background

I would first like to ask you a couple of **Background** questions, which will help put your answers into context…

1   Can you confirm the information we were given over the phone (previously) about this school it is a …….*(refer to details from recruitment form e.g., primary/secondary)*……..

2   Can you tell me a little bit about your role, particularly in relation to health and safety and how it is managed within the school?

3   In your experience, what would you say presents the most significant health and safety risks in this school (just to remind you, there are no right or wrong answers to these questions)?
3.1   *Probe*: and why?
3.2   *Prompt*: e.g., think about in the last 6-12 months.

Thank you. The next few questions are about **health and safety messages and communications**…

4   What work areas or activities come to mind when you consider health and safety in school?
    4.1 *Prompt:* What do you see HSE's role is in helping you achieve good health and safety?
    4.2 *Probe:* In which of these areas do you think HSE can help schools (and how best to do this)?

5   Can you talk me through how you (or the school) organise a school trip or other educational activity, with respect to the health and safety aspects? We would like to hear about the **information and guidance you use** for organising school activities to ensure the health and safety of students and staff?
    5.1 *Prompt:* Perhaps it would help to think about this in terms of when you last organised a school trip or other educational activity?
    5.2 *Probe*: Is there any other information or guidance you can think of?
    5.3 *Probe*: How did you learn what to do? (e.*g., talking to colleagues; written information/policy/guidance in the school; information sources outside the school; specific training; other sources?)*

6   Can you talk me through how the school manages asbestos? We would like to hear about the **information and guidance** you use for managing asbestos to ensure the health and safety of students and staff?
    6.1 *Prompt:* Perhaps it would help to think about this in terms of when this was last considered?
    6.2 *Probe*: Is there any other information or guidance you can think of?
    6.3 *Probe*: How did you learn what to do? (e.*g., talking to colleagues; written information/policy/guidance in the school; information sources outside the school; specific training; other sources?)*

7   Can you talk me through how you manage classroom activities, with respect to health and safety? We would like to hear about the **information and guidance you use** for classroom activities to ensure the health and safety of students and staff?
    7.1 *Prompt:* Perhaps it would help to think about this in terms of when you last assessed these risks?
    7.2 *Probe*: Is there any other information or guidance you can think of?
    7.3 *Probe*: How did you learn what to do? (e.*g., talking to colleagues; written information/policy/guidance in the school; information sources outside the school; specific training; other sources?)*

8   **Where do you get the** health and safety information you use (mentioned above) from?
    8.1 *Prompt*: Can you give me examples of where you would obtain the information and guidance you mentioned above?
    8.2 *Probe*: Is there anywhere else you can think of?

9   *(If HSE guidance is not mentioned above*): Do you use HSE's information and guidance? (Interviewer may want to give out this web link, if appropriate http://www.hse.gov.uk/services/education/)
    9.1 *Probe:* If not, could you tell me why that is?
    9.2 *Prompt*: Can you help me pinpoint which HSE information you have used, e.g., was it the specific Education pages? Or other pages on HSE's website?

10 Thank you. HSE is interested in finding out what impact /influence their information has had on H&S management arrangements in schools. So, can you tell me **how you use this information and guidance** in this school?

10.1 *Probe:* It would help here if you could give me one/more example(s) of how you have used this guidance in your school e.g., could you talk me through an example(s) from the last six months?

10.1 *Prompt:* What sort of information or guidance did you find most informative?

10.2 *Probe:* And why?

10.3 *Prompt:* What effect has the guidance had, e.g., has it led to a changed approach, or provided reassurance (if not why not)?

11 Again, from your own experience, how would you describe good management of health and safety in a school? What does this look like?

11.1 *Prompt*: For example, if the school is getting it right (i.e. HSE would refer to this as managing risks sensibly and proportionately), what effect does this have on pupils and staff in the school?

11.2 *Prompt*: Or conversely, if the school is not getting it right what effect does this have?

12 Which **HSE communications and guidance** (if any) do you find most useful or helpful? (By the way, I will ask you in a minute which you find least useful?)

12.1 *Prompt:* Why*?*

12.2 *Probe:* I can list some of the HSE publications here to jog your memory about what is currently available on HSE's education web pages. Could you tell me if you are aware of or have used any of these?

12.2.1   Five school trip case studies (e.g., daytrip to London, visit to a sawmill)

12.2.2   'School Trips and Outdoor Learning Activities' statement

12.2.3   Asbestos management resources (e.g., checklist)

12.2.4   Classroom checklist

13 *If not covered in Qu 4 & Qu 5):* What else, other than HSE guidance, have you found useful?

13.1 *Probe:* How have you used it/them?

14 Which **HSE communications and guidance** (if any) **do you find least useful or unhelpful**?

14.1 *Prompt:* Why?

14.2 *Probe:* Can you give me an example of the effect this has had at this school?

15 Aside from what we have already discussed about communications and guidance, is there anything else, in your experience, which helps sensible and proportionate risk management in this school?

15.1 *Prompt*: e.g., the way the school is run or managed? How do you think this compares with other schools of which you are aware?

15.2 *Probe (if required)*: Other factors might be e.g., assistance/advice received from colleagues, other professionals, governors or parents in relation to school trips or other activities?

15.3 *Prompt*: how does advice from the Local Authority or other safety advisers fit in with HSE's advice (or vice versa)?

16 Aside from what we have already discussed about communications and guidance, **is there anything else, in your experience, which gets in the way of sensible and well-balanced risk management in this school**?

16.1 *Prompt*: e.g., the way the school is run or managed;

16.2 *Prompt*: e.g., bureaucracy and paperwork, involvement of other people/professionals e.g., in relation to school trips or other activities?

16.3 *Prompt (if required)*: Has this changed over time (*i.e. improved or become worse*)?

16.4 *Probe (if required)*:e.g., insurance, litigation, the use of H&S consultants.

Thank you. Finally, returning to the topic of health and safety messages and communications; HSE wants to communicate about sensible risk management in schools in the way that is most effective and these interviews will help them to find out more about that from school staff. We would like to find out about any **improvements you think could be made**.

17 What (if any) **changes or improvements would you suggest to HSE's guidance and messages**?
    17.1 *Prompt*: What (if any), additional, novel or different communications would help to bring about sensible health and safety in schools?
    17.2 *Prompt:* What, if anything, do you think is HSE's unique role in communicating about H&S risks in schools?

18 Is there anything about the way HSE's guidance and messages are made available that you think could be improved (i.e. that would help staff make better use of them)?
    18.1 *Prompt:* What do you think would be the best way(s) for you to access guidance and information on the topic of health and safety in education?

19 Thank you for your time and for taking part in this study. That completes my questions. Before we finish, is there anything else/any other messages that you would like to pass on to HSE about their communications and messages? Anything else that we have not touched upon in this discussion?

7.7 APPENDIX 7 CAVEATS FOR QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Qualitative data analysis, unlike quantitative data analysis, is not concerned with statistical analysis, but with the interpretation of the data to provide insight and improved understanding as informative evidence for further action.

Qualitative research, unlike its quantitative counterpart, is not intended to provide a representative picture of a certain research population as a whole; rather it allows the researcher to report understanding and insight of the research area being explored that can be generalised to similar settings[18].

The sample sizes chosen for qualitative research are usually much smaller than those used for quantitative research. The aim is to achieve confident and dependable findings by seeking deep rather than broad knowledge. Deciding the sample size is an iterative process which depends very much on the topic and scope. The chosen sample size is individual to each study and there are no guideline prescriptive sizes. Sample sizes might typically range from 3-30 subjects and the size is dependent on and constrained by a range of factors. Some factors are intrinsic to the study, such as gaining a sufficient range of viewpoints on the topic to prevent gaps in the findings; whereas other factors are extrinsic, such as the time and the availability of resources and participants.

In most qualitative research the initial sample size is selected by the study team using reasoned judgement informed by experience. Ideally the sample size should be flexible. The researchers appraised the data early in the data collection process and revisited the proposed sample size as a clearer picture of the research findings emerged from the data.

Health and safety in schools - exploring the perceptions of HSE's communications to promote and support sensible risk management

This research was commissioned to explore the viewpoints of school staff responsible for managing day-to-day health and safety in schools. This study explored what guidance schools use to support their management of health and safety and, in particular, examined how HSE's education-specific materials were used.

The study found that HSE is not the primary source of information and guidance used by the schools. Instead, the primary sources are the Local Authorities (LAs) or other bought-in health and safety advisory services.

Participants reported using a wealth of HSE and non-HSE information and guidance to inform their health and safety decision making. HSE is considered to be a trusted and authoritative source of health and safety advice, which is valued by schools, but not always used directly.

Bureaucratic burdens and paperwork were not described by school staff as posing a barrier to sensible and proportionate risk management in schools.

Although not all schools in this study have used HSE's education-specific health and safety resources those that have used them find them very useful. Schools that subscribe to a membership subscription service use it as their main point of access for health and safety guidance and information about school trips.

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