

# ADVICE NOTE

Information & advice for members of the  
Scottish Secondary Teachers' Association



## First Aid Provision in Schools

The following advice is based on Government guidelines. In the light of their legal responsibilities for those in their care, schools should consider carefully the likely risks to pupils and visitors, and make allowance for them when drawing up policies and deciding on the numbers of first-aid personnel. This should be in addition to employee provision. The local authority (or, in independent schools, the Board of Governors) should have procedures laid out for this. Employers should have 'appointed persons' to take charge in emergency situations, and it is a good idea to train them in first aid and indemnify them against any claims arising from carrying out their first aid duties.

The Head teacher should regularly review the school's first-aid needs (at least annually), and particularly after any changes, to ensure the provision is adequate. Where minimum numbers of trained first aiders are set, these should be monitored to ensure that these standards are being met. The Head teacher is responsible for putting the employer's policy into practice and for developing detailed procedures. The Head teacher should also make sure that parents are aware of the school's health and safety policy, including arrangements for first aid.

The employment conditions of teachers covered by SNCT National Conditions of Service do not include giving first aid, although any member of staff may volunteer to undertake these tasks. Teachers and other staff in charge of pupils are expected to use their best endeavours at all times, particularly in emergencies, to secure the welfare of the pupils at the school in the same way that parents might be expected to act towards their children ("Teachers have a responsibility to support the health, safety and well-being of young people in school." – SNCT Handbook). In general, the consequences of taking no action are likely to be more serious than those of trying to assist in an emergency.

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## 1. **Assessment of needs**

When assessing needs and deciding on the level of provision there are a number of factors to consider.

i. The size of the school:

The Head teacher needs to consider additional first aid provision if there is more than one building. They should consider how many first-aid personnel are needed to provide adequate cover on each floor on a split level site and outlying buildings, and on each site of a split-site school.

ii. The location of the school:

Is it remote from emergency services? It is good practice to inform the local emergency services, in writing, of the school's location and any particular circumstances that may affect access to the school. If the school has more than one entrance, emergency services should be given clear instructions on where or to whom they should report.

### Specific hazards or risks:

For example, hazardous substances, dangerous tools and machinery. Temporary hazards, such as building or maintenance work, should also be considered and suitable short-term measures put in place.

### Specific needs:

Are there staff or pupils with special health needs or with conditions covered by the Equality Act 2010? What age range does the school cater for? Different first-aid procedures may apply to pupils in primary and secondary schools. For example, the age of pupils may affect the type of first-aid procedures required, such as resuscitation techniques. This is particularly relevant in 'through-schools' ranging from nursery right through to secondary.

### Accident statistics:

Accident statistics can indicate the most common injuries, times, locations and activities at a particular site. These can be a useful tool in risk assessment, highlighting areas to concentrate on and tailor first-aid provision to.

## 2. **Number of first-aid personnel**

There are no rules on exact numbers. Employers have to make a judgement based on their own circumstances and a suitable and sufficient risk assessment. Head teachers should consider the likely risks to pupils and visitors, as well as employees, when drawing up policies and deciding on the numbers of first-aid personnel. Employers may provide guidance on this.

The HSC provides guidance on numbers of first-aid personnel based on employee numbers. As a general guide, they recommend that:

- i. a lower risk place of work (e.g. shops, offices, libraries), with fifty to one hundred employees, should consider having at least one first aider;
- ii. a medium risk place of work (e.g. light engineering and assembly work, food processing) with twenty to one hundred employees, should consider having at least one first aider for every fifty employees (or part thereof).

Schools will generally fall into the lower risk category, but some schools or areas of activity may fall into the medium risk category. Schools should base their provision on the results of their risk assessment. If there are parts of the school where different levels of risk can be identified, the Head teacher should consider the need to make different levels of provision in different areas/departments.

When considering how many first-aid personnel are required, the Head teacher should also consider:

- i. adequate provision for lunchtimes and breaks. It is good practice to encourage lunchtime supervisors to have first-aid training;
- ii. adequate provision for leave and in case of absences;
- iii. first-aid provision for off-site activities ie school trips. If a first-aider accompanies pupils off-site, will there be adequate first-aid provision in the school?
- iv. adequate provision for practical departments, such as science, technology, home economics, physical education;
- v. adequate provision for out of hours activities eg sports activities, clubs;
- vi. any agreements with contractors (e.g. school meals) on joint provision for first aid for their employees;
- vii. adequate provision for trainees working on site. They have the same status as staff for the purposes of health and safety legislation.

### **3. First-aider selection**

Unless first-aid cover is part of a member of staff's contract of employment, people who agree to become first-aiders do so on a voluntary basis. When selecting first aiders, Head teachers should consider the individual's:

- i. reliability and communication skills;
- ii. aptitude and ability to absorb new knowledge and learn new skills;
- iii. ability to cope with stressful and physically demanding emergency procedures;
- iv. normal duties. A first aider must be able to leave to go immediately to an emergency. This may have implications for teaching staff with class responsibilities.

#### **4. Clarity and knowledge of procedures**

Do all school staff know how to contact a first aider? Are there agreed procedures in place if an emergency occurs in an isolated area e.g. on the playing field?

Head teachers should consider how best to let everyone know the school's first-aid arrangements. Procedures need to be in place that are known, understood and accepted by all. Information should be given about the location of first-aid equipment, facilities and personnel. First-aid notices should be displayed which are clear and easily understood by all.

#### **5. Appointed Person or First Aider**

The Head teacher may decide, on the basis of the risk assessment of their first-aid needs, that a first aider is not necessary, although this is unusual. The minimum requirement is that an appointed person must take charge of the first aid arrangements. The school's assessment should identify the number of appointed persons needed. Arrangements should be made to ensure that this cover is available at all times while people are on school premises. The employer may have guidelines on this.

#### **6. Provision of materials and facilities**

Employers must provide the proper materials, equipment and facilities at all times. First-aid equipment must be clearly labelled and easily accessible. Every employer should provide at least one fully stocked first-aid container for each site. The assessment of a school's first-aid needs should include the number of first-aid containers. Additional first-aid containers will be needed for split-sites/levels, distant sports fields or playgrounds, any other high risk areas and any offsite activities. All first-aid containers must be marked with a white cross on a green background. The siting of first-aid boxes is a crucial element in the school's policy and should be given careful consideration. If possible, first-aid containers should be kept near to hand washing facilities.

#### **7. Maintaining first aid stock levels**

A school's first-aid procedures should identify the person responsible for examining the contents of first-aid containers. These should be checked frequently and restocked as soon as possible after use. There should be extra stock in the school. Items should be discarded safely after the expiry date has passed.

#### **8. Off-site activities**

Before undertaking any off-site activities, the Head teacher should assess what level of first-aid provision is needed. Transport Regulations require that all minibuses and public service vehicles used either as an express carriage or contract carriage have on board a first-aid container.

### **9. Medical room provision**

Employers must provide suitable and sufficient accommodation for first aid according to the assessment of first-aid needs identified. The School Premises Regulations 1967 require every school to have a suitable room that can be used for medical treatment when required, and for the care of pupils during school hours. The area, which must contain a washbasin and a WC should be appropriate for that purpose and readily available for use when needed. Schools should consider using this room for first aid, acknowledging that first-aid facilities may need to be made available quickly.

### **10. Record keeping.**

The employer must keep a record of any reportable injury, disease or dangerous occurrence. This must include: the date and method of reporting; the date, time and place of the event; personal details of those involved and a brief description of the nature of the event or disease. Employer procedures for recording incidents involving pupils should be followed.

### **11. Communication.**

In an emergency, the Head teacher/teacher in charge should have procedures for contacting the child's parent/guardian/named contact as soon as possible. It is also good practice to report all serious or significant incidents to the parents e.g. by sending a letter home with the child, or telephoning the parents.

It is the Head teacher's responsibility, taking advice from their employer, to ensure that current legal requirements are being met.

**The SSTA is principally focused on promoting and safeguarding the interests of teachers and is concerned to ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place for the health and wellbeing of teachers. If arrangements for care of pupils lead to an avoidable increase in teacher workload, or create additional stress, then members should contact the office for further advice.**