

HARRIS MIDDLE SCHOOL

**WORKING AT, AND
GAINING ACCESS TO HEIGHTS
POLICY**

SUMMER TERM 2009

CHAIR OF GOVERNORS: _____

MINUTED: _____

DATE OF REVIEW:- SUMMER TERM 2010

Harris Middle School

Working at, and gaining access to height Policy

Working at height should be avoided if practicable – however, the school acknowledges that many situations require staff to work at height. The headteacher has responsibility for this as the local safety coordinator, but the day to day tasks may be delegated to any suitable person who is sufficiently well informed to make decisions and authorised to take action.

Staff working at height and using access equipment should be competent.

The Headteacher should ensure that staff know how to use the equipment safely and how to check that it is in a suitable condition for use. Arrangements must be in place to ensure the equipment is stored properly, is secure and is maintained appropriately. A system for recording periodic inspections must also be in operation.

Where contractors are working on behalf of a premises manager, steps must be taken to ensure that the working practices are reasonably safe.

Contractors

Part of the assurance premises managers must have can be gained by the use of the [Form 13 procedure](#). This elicits the support of the Property Adviser who has specialist knowledge about construction work. However, for day-to-day supervision, the premises manager should consult the HSE booklet [Height Safe](#) very helpful as it provides useful, non-specialist advice.

In most circumstances premises managers (including headteachers) should not hire or provide access equipment (ladders, stepladders or any form of scaffolding) on behalf of any contractor. Contractors **MUST** provide this themselves. If the contractor is not properly equipped to do the job they are engaged to do, they should not be allowed to start work.

Risk Assessment

There is existing guidance on the [Portal](#) that can be accessed for general advice on risk assessment and for a suitable record form.

Access Equipment

Ladders (including stepladders)

Ladders and stepladders are frequently involved in incidents, many involving serious injury. Often, a job isn't expected to take very long and, as a result, the way the work is to be done is not properly thought through.

All too frequently, the job isn't planned properly, the ladder is not secured at the top or bottom, or the person climbed the ladder with a load, over-reached or over balanced.

Where access to a roof is regularly (say twice a year minimum) required a ladder fixing point can be installed, particularly where more a permanent means of access is not

possible or desirable. Installing a point like this will require a Form 13 to be completed but is not an expensive job.

Sometimes 'footing' a ladder (having someone hold the ladder at the bottom while the other person climbs) is considered an adequate precaution. However, it is very difficult to stop a ladder slipping or moving and it may be almost impossible for the 'footer' to do anything useful if the need arises.

Chairs or other furniture should not be used as a means of access to heights or as a working platform.

Before using a ladder or a stepladder, staff should follow these guidelines:

- **Never** use a damaged or defective ladder - report it **and** dispose of it or destroy it. **Do not attempt to repair the ladder.**
- Assess whether the ladder is for access only or if it is a working platform?
- Assess whether a ladder is the correct piece of equipment for the job or would a working platform such as scaffolding be more suitable?
- Ensure that the type of ladder is right for the job. **Don't make do!**
- Make sure the equipment is strong enough for the job – check the combined weight of any materials and the person using the ladder and be **very sure** the ladder will take the weight.
- Make sure it complies with the British Standard and that the kite mark is still clearly visible.
- Ensure the ladder is the right length for the job, ie, not too short or too long.
- Make sure you can maintain a secure handhold while you are working on the ladder.
- Ensure ladder can be securely fixed at the top **and** bottom, if possible. If that's not possible consider another means of access first. If the job is urgent and of short duration (less than 10 minutes, ensure ladder can be footed by a second person, but only if the ladder length is less than 3 metres.
- Stand ladder on firm, level base with both stiles on the ground.
- Ladder should be angled correctly – 4 up, 1 out is the simple reminder.

Ladders should be carried safely with front end above head height. 2 people should carry ladders over 3 metres long.

Care and Maintenance

Ladders and stepladders must be stored correctly and regularly examined. This must include a visual check before **EACH** use and a more formal check every 6 months or more.

Training - To be provided to ensure that employees are competent in working at heights.

Use of mobile scaffold towers

Whilst it is acknowledged that a mobile scaffold can provide a much more stable working platform at height than a ladder or a stepladder, no staff in school have been trained and assessed in this, so they are not able to be used in any circumstances.