

Working at Height



"We want our children to be happy and healthy today, fulfilled in the future and able to make their world an even better place."

Working at Height Guidance

Milton Road Primary School strongly discourages staff working at height as it may pose a safety risk to colleagues. The school has removed boards that are positioned particularly high around the school.

Staff are briefed to only use safety ladders when working at height and to avoid climbing on chairs. Staff must never put chairs on tables to work at height.

However, where this is not possible the following must be considered:

Your requirements

You must make sure:

- All work at height is properly planned and supervised
- Those involved in work at height are competent, and have the skills, knowledge and experience for the particular job
- The risks from work at height are assessed, and appropriate equipment is selected and used

You should also make sure the:

- Risks of working on or near fragile surfaces are properly managed
- Equipment used for work at height is properly inspected and maintained

What counts as working at height?

Work at height means work in any place where a person could fall a distance that's likely to cause them an injury. You are working at height if you:

- Work above ground/floor level
- Could fall from an edge, through an opening or fragile surface, or
- Could fall from ground level into an opening in a floor or a hole in the ground

Work at height **does not** include:

- A slip or a trip on the level
- Walking up and down a permanent staircase in a building

Who can work at height?

Anyone who works at height must be competent. What 'competence' means will depend on the type of task.

For low-risk, short duration tasks, competence might mean that the staff member has been trained to use a step ladder safely.

For example, a teacher can use a step ladder to put up wall displays if they have been appropriately trained.

More high risk and longer duration tasks should only be carried out by staff with specialist training, such as the caretaker or contractors.

For example, accessing the school roof to retrieve a ball requires a higher level of competence, as it requires more specialist equipment and is potentially more dangerous if something goes wrong.

Carry out a risk assessment

This will help you determine the level of risk involved in a task.

Use our [generic risk assessment template](#). It's designed to walk you through the process of identifying hazards and controlling the risks.

You should consider the:

- Height of the task
- Duration and frequency
- Condition of the surface being worked on

Your risk assessment should cover common tasks across the school, but you might need to update or complete a new risk assessment for any new tasks that carry a higher level of risk (for example, accessing a potentially fragile section of the school roof).

Control the risk

Follow the HSE's [step-by-step guide](#) to controlling the risks of work at height:

- **Avoid** work at height where it's reasonably practicable to do so
- Where work at height can't be easily avoided, **prevent** falls using either an existing place of work that is already safe or the correct equipment
- Where the risk can't be eliminated, **minimise** the distance and consequences of a fall by using the correct equipment

An example of putting this into practice might be putting up classroom displays. You could avoid this entirely by restricting the height of display boards. If this isn't possible, you can prevent or minimise the risk of falling by providing kick stools or ladders, and training staff how to use this equipment safely.

This Guidance aligns with the school's Health and Safety Policy

Figure 1 Step-by-step diagram

