



# Unit 8

## Incident Reporting in Schools (Accidents, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences)

### Learning Outcomes

**By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:**

- ✓ Identify the responsible person in a school setting who takes responsibility for reporting to RIDDOR
- ✓ Differentiate between reportable and non-reportable accidents and injuries
- ✓ Understand how accidents and injuries that take place away from school premises are reported differently

## Unit 8

# Incident Reporting in Schools (Accidents, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences)

### What needs to be Reported?

RIDDOR requires employers and others in control of premises to report certain accidents, diseases and dangerous occurrences **arising out of or in connection with work**.

The information sheet includes examples of the incidents that sometimes result from schools' activities and are reportable under RIDDOR. The sheet contains three sections, which cover:

- Injuries and ill health involving employees
- Injuries involving pupils and other people not at work
- Dangerous occurrences.

### Who should Report?

The duty to notify and report rests with the 'responsible person'. For incidents involving pupils and school staff, this is normally the main employer at the school. The education pages on HSE's website at [www.hse.gov.uk/services/education](http://www.hse.gov.uk/services/education) provide information about who the employer is in different types of schools.

Some school employers may have centrally coordinated reporting procedures. In others, reporting may be delegated to the school management team. The health and safety policy should set out the responsibilities and arrangements for reporting in each school.

Incidents involving contractors working on school premises are normally reportable by their employers. Contractors could be, eg builders, maintenance staff, cleaners or catering staff.

If a self-employed contractor is working in school premises and they suffer a specified injury or an over-seven-day injury, the person in control of the premises will be the responsible person.

### Who do I Report to?

For incidents on school premises involving members of staff, pupils or visitors, HSE is the enforcing authority and you should submit your reports to them. HSE is also the enforcing authority for nursery provision provided and operated by local authorities. For privately run nursery schools, the local authority is the enforcing authority.

### What Records Must I Keep?

You must keep records of:

- Any reportable death, specified injury, disease or dangerous occurrence that requires reporting under RIDDOR;
- All occupational injuries where a worker is away from work or incapacitated for more than three

consecutive days. From 6 April 2012 you don't have to report over-three-day injuries, but you must keep a record of them. Employers can record these injuries in their accident book.

You must keep records for at least three years after the incident.

### **Section 1: Injuries and Ill Health to People at Work**

Under RIDDOR, the responsible person must report the following work-related accidents, including those caused by physical violence, if an employee is injured, wherever they are working:

- Accidents which result in death or a specified injury must be reported without delay (see 'Reportable specified injuries');
- Accidents which prevent the injured person from continuing their normal work for more than seven days (not counting the day of the accident, but including weekends and other rest days) must be reported within 15 days of the accident.

The responsible person must also report any case of a work-related disease, specified under RIDDOR, that affects an employee and that a doctor confirms in writing. You can find detailed guidance about RIDDOR reporting and online reporting procedures at [www.hse.gov.uk/riddor/report.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/riddor/report.htm).

If you are in control of premises, you are also required to report any work-related deaths and certain injuries to self-employed people that take place while they are working at the premises.

### **Reportable Specified Injuries**

These include:

- fractures, other than to fingers, thumbs and toes;
- amputations;
- any injury likely to lead to permanent loss of sight or reduction in sight;
- any crush injury to the head or torso causing damage to the brain or internal organs;
- serious burns (including scalding), which:
  - cover more than 10% of the body; or
  - cause significant damage to the eyes, respiratory system or other vital organs;
- any scalping requiring hospital treatment;
- any loss of consciousness caused by head injury or asphyxia;
- any other injury arising from working in an enclosed space which:
  - Leads to hypothermia or heat-induced illness; or
  - Requires resuscitation or admittance to hospital for more than 24 hours.

### **Physical Violence**

Some acts of non-consensual physical violence to a person at work, which result in death, a specified injury or a person being incapacitated for over seven days, are reportable. In the case of an over-seven-day injury, the incapacity must arise from a physical injury, not a psychological reaction to the act of violence.

Examples of reportable injuries from violence include an incident where a teacher sustains a specified injury because a pupil, colleague or member of the public assaults them while on school premises. This is reportable, because it arises out of or in connection with work.

### **Reportable Occupational Diseases**

Employers must report occupational diseases when they receive a written diagnosis from a doctor that their employee has a reportable disease linked to occupational exposure.

These include:

- Carpal tunnel syndrome;
- Severe cramp of the hand or forearm;
- Occupational dermatitis, eg from work involving strong acids or alkalis, including domestic bleach;
- Hand-arm vibration syndrome;
- Occupational asthma, eg from wood dust and soldering using rosin flux;
- Tendonitis or tenosynovitis of the hand or forearm;
- Any occupational cancer;
- Any disease attributed to an occupational exposure to a biological agent.

### Stress

Work-related stress and stress-related illnesses (including post-traumatic stress disorder) are not reportable under RIDDOR. To be reportable, an injury must have resulted from an 'accident' arising out of or in connection with work.

In relation to RIDDOR, an accident is a discrete, identifiable, unintended incident which causes physical injury. Stress-related conditions usually result from a prolonged period of pressure, often from many factors, not just one distinct event.

### Section 2: Incidents to Pupils and Other People Who are not at Work

Injuries to pupils and visitors who are involved in an accident at school or on an activity organised by the school are only reportable under RIDDOR if the accident results in:

- The death of the person, and arose out of or in connection with a work activity; or
- An injury that arose out of or in connection with a work activity and the person is taken directly from the scene of the accident to hospital for treatment (examinations and diagnostic tests do not constitute treatment).

The lists of specified injuries and diseases described in Section 1 only apply to employees. If a pupil injured in an incident remains at school, is taken home or is simply absent from school for a number of days, the incident is not reportable.

How do I decide whether an accident to a pupil 'arises out of or is in connection with work'?

The responsible person at the school should consider whether the incident was caused by:

- A failure in the way a work activity was organised (eg inadequate supervision of a field trip);
- The way equipment or substances were used (eg lifts, machinery, experiments etc); and/or
- The condition of the premises (eg poorly maintained or slippery floors).

So, if a pupil is taken to hospital after breaking an arm during an ICT class, following a fall over a trailing cable, the incident would be reportable. If a pupil is taken to hospital because of a medical condition (eg an asthma attack or epileptic seizure) this would not be reportable, as it did not result from the work activity.

This means that many of the common incidents that cause injuries to pupils at school tend not to be

reportable under RIDDOR, as they do not arise directly from the way the school undertakes a work activity. Remember, in all these cases, you only need to consider reporting where an accident results in a pupil's death or they are taken directly from the scene of the accident to hospital for treatment. There is no need to report incidents where people are taken to hospital purely as a precaution, when no injury is apparent.

### **Accidents to Pupils during Sports Activities**

Not all sports injuries to pupils are reportable under RIDDOR, as organised sports activities can lead to sports injuries that are not connected with how schools manage the risks from the activity.

The essential test is whether the accident was caused by the condition, design or maintenance of the premises or equipment, or because of inadequate arrangements for supervision of an activity. If an accident that results in an injury arises because of the normal rough and tumble of a game, the accident and resulting injury would not be reportable. Examples of reportable incidents include where:

- The condition of the premises or sports equipment was a factor in the incident, eg where a pupil slips and fractures an arm because a member of staff had polished the sports hall floor and left it too slippery for sports; or
- There was inadequate supervision to prevent an incident, or failings in the organisation and management of an event.

### **Accidents to Pupils in a Playground**

Most playground accidents due to collisions, slips, trips and falls are not normally reportable. Incidents are only reportable where the injury results in a pupil either being killed or taken directly to a hospital for treatment. Either is only reportable if they were caused by an accident that happened from or in connection with a work activity.

This includes incidents arising because:

- The condition of the premises or equipment was poor, eg badly maintained play equipment; or
- The school had not provided adequate supervision, eg where particular risks were identified, but no action was taken to provide suitable supervision.

### **Physical Violence**

Violence between pupils is a school discipline matter and not reportable under RIDDOR, as it does not arise out of or in connection with a work activity.

### **Other Scenarios**

Injuries to pupils while travelling *on a school bus* if another vehicle strikes the school bus while pupils are getting on or off and pupils are injured and taken to hospital, this is normally reportable under RIDDOR.

However, you do not have to report deaths and injuries resulting from a road traffic accident involving a school vehicle travelling on the public highway under RIDDOR. These are classed as road traffic incidents and are investigated by the police.

Incidents involving pupils on overseas trips RIDDOR only applies to activities which take place in Great Britain. So, any incident overseas is not reportable to HSE.

Incidents to pupils on work experience placements if pupils are on a training scheme or work placement, they are deemed to be employees for the period of the placement. In these circumstances, the employer, as the responsible person, should report a death, injury or disease to a pupil, which arises out of or in connection with work. This means the wider range of reporting categories for employees is applicable.

### **Section 3: Dangerous occurrences**

These are specified near-miss events, which are only reportable if listed under RIDDOR.

Reportable dangerous occurrences in schools typically include:

- The collapse or failure of load-bearing parts of lifts and lifting equipment;
- The accidental release of a biological agent likely to cause severe human illness;
- The accidental release or escape of any substance that may cause a serious injury or damage to health;

An electrical short circuit or overload causing a fire or explosion.

Reporting requirements of other regulators

There may be other reporting requirements placed on schools by other regulators in the education sector. The requirements of these other regulators are separate to, and distinct from, the legal duty to report incidents under RIDDOR.

### **Further Reading:**

- ✓ Accident Log Book: Health & Safety Incident Report Book | perfect for schools offices and workplaces that have a legal or first aid requirement (trips, slips, falls and other hazards) Paperback – September 18, 2020 by Accident Log and Incident Report Book
- ✓ Incident Report Log Book: A Modern And Practical Book For Incident Reporting In Your Company. Health & Safety Record Accidents Paperback – September 6, 2020 by BRIAN WHEELER