

Annual Health & Safety Report

Covering the year 2018-19

December 2019



Walsall Council

Document information

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1. Introduction

It is best practice for local authorities and other large organisations to summarise their health & safety performance in an Annual Report. This is Walsall Council's third annual report since they were reintroduced in 2017.

The report summarises how Walsall Council manages health & safety and gives key performance data for the reporting period.

Health & safety legislation requires employers to have competent health & safety advice and appropriate systems in place to manage health & safety. In Walsall, we have a small central team of advisers consisting of a health & safety manager, two health & safety advisers, a fire safety adviser, and a part-time health & safety support officer based in Human Resources. In addition, we have a health & safety training officer (also based in HR) and a health & safety/training manager based in Clean & Green (Economy & Environment).

2. Corporate management

The council's health & safety management system is aligned to HSE's guidance "Managing for health & safety" (HSG65) and follows the **Plan, Do, Check, Act** approach to management.

The council has a Health & Safety Policy in place that is reviewed every three years (last revised Feb 2019, published Sep 2019); in addition, there is a suite of 31 Safety Management Standards (SMSs). These are reviewed on a rolling programme (see appendix 1).

The council's main health & safety forum is the Corporate Health & Safety Board that meets three times per year; the Board is chaired by the Executive Director of Adult Social Care (the "nominated director" for health & safety). Following each Board, a report is taken to Corporate Management Team (CMT) outlining the main issues discussed at the Board and any learning points. Each directorate and recognised trade union is represented at the Board and it is supported by the health & safety team.

Each directorate has established a Health & Safety Committee that meets three times per year; committees are chaired by the directorate's "lead officer" who is also their representative at the Board and sits on their Directorate Management Team (DMT). Committees consist of both management and trade union representatives, with support from a member of the health & safety team.

The Board/Committee meeting cycles are designed to feed into each other and help ensure effective communication. The links between the Board/CMT and Committees/DMTs are also designed to help monitor health & safety and ensure that key information is considered at the right level.

We have a range of active and reactive measures in place to help monitor health & safety performance. On the active side, we have a programme of health & safety audits and fire risk assessments (FRA) of all corporate establishments, including council schools – generally, premises have an audit and FRA every two years.

On the reactive front, the Board and Committees receive regular reports on our accident, near misses, and aggressive incidents, and directorates are expected to take appropriate remedial action to help prevent recurrence.

3. Regulatory intervention

This year has seen no regulatory intervention from either the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) or the Fire Authority, and no notices have been served on the council.

If we receive any regulatory intervention, CMT and the Board would be notified and informed of the implications for the council, including what actions are required to address the issues.

4. Communication

Directorates are charged with ensuring that they take ownership of health & safety issues and communicate corporate initiatives and learning points effectively to their staff. Over and above this, the health & safety team ensures that the policy, SMSs, and a range of guidance and tools are available on the council’s intranet site [Inside Walsall](#). A comprehensive range of clear, up to date, school related guidance and tools is also available on the schools’ intranet [Walsall Link](#) (access to the traded pages requires user name and password).

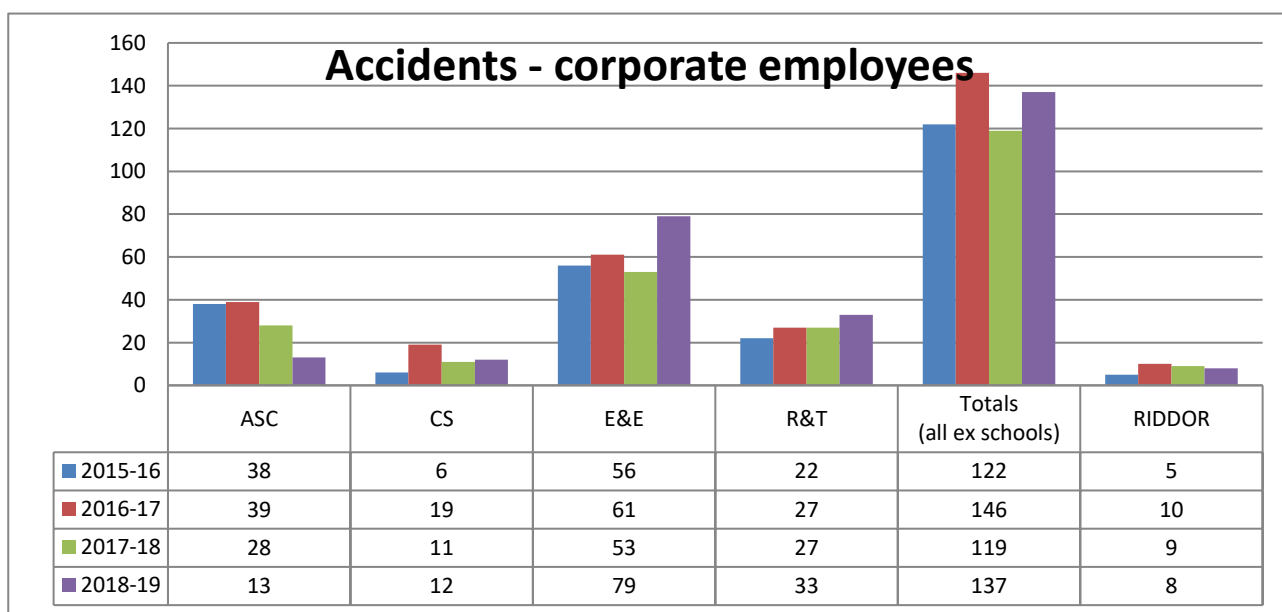
In addition, key health & safety messages and changes in procedures are communicated via Core Brief, Weekly Bulletin, and other communication channels as appropriate.

5. Statistical information

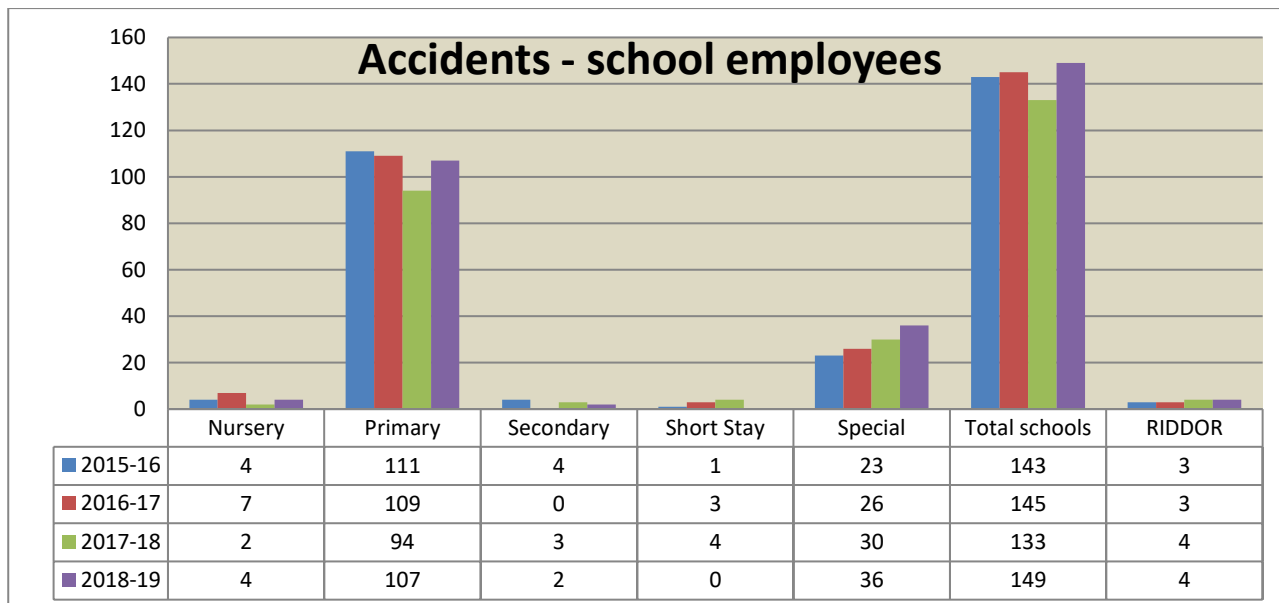
Key statistical information on accidents, aggressive incidents, and work-related liability claims, along with an overview of auditing activity and fire risk management are included in this section. For clarity, we split accident/incident data for schools from the overall corporate data.

Please note; during the year we became aware of a number of incident reports that had been going to a redundant email address we had no access to. We have addressed this and have spent some time inputting historic information onto our accident database; this has resulted in some adjustments to older datasets/incident rates – particularly for non-employee accidents in Economy & Environment; and these are reflected in the charts/tables that follow.

5.1 Accidents – employees



There has been a slight rise in accidents to employees; however, we should not read too much into small changes¹, and we note that there has been a slight fall in accidents reportable under RIDDOR².



The number of employee accidents in schools have risen slightly; however, the small change is probably not significant over the short term. It is interesting to note the upward trend in accidents in special schools; we will monitor this for any underlying causes.

Annual accident incident rates

The following table provides incident rates (per thousand FTE employees, excluding casuals)

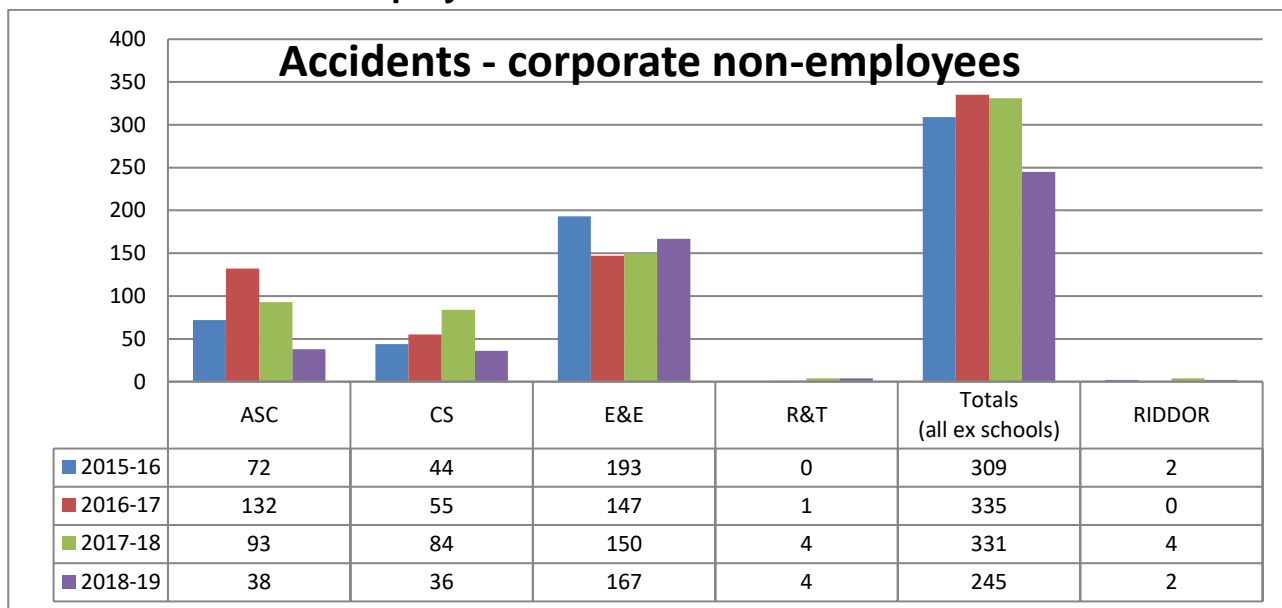
Directorate	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Adult Social Care	65.9	80.1	63.9	29.7
Children's Services	8.2	30.7	18.0	19.6
Economy & Environment	44.7	77.1	68.5	102.1
Resources & Transformation	30.7	30.3	31.7	38.8
Overall (exc. schools)	37.2	52.3	44.5	51.2
Note: we only calculate incident rates for schools where the council is the employer				
School employee accident rate	36.7	45.4	46.4	52.0

Two rates show significant change – the drop in Adult Social Care and rise in Economy & Environment. We believe that the closure of Hollybank may have influenced the incident rate fall in ASC (see also non-employee accidents). With E&E we note that a number of Near miss/Damage incidents were reported; these reports are welcome as learning opportunities, but we have clarified with E&E what should be reported to the H&S team and what only needs recording locally, since some reports received were not always health & safety related.

¹ Accident/incident trends and significant incidents are discussed at both the Board and H&S Committees

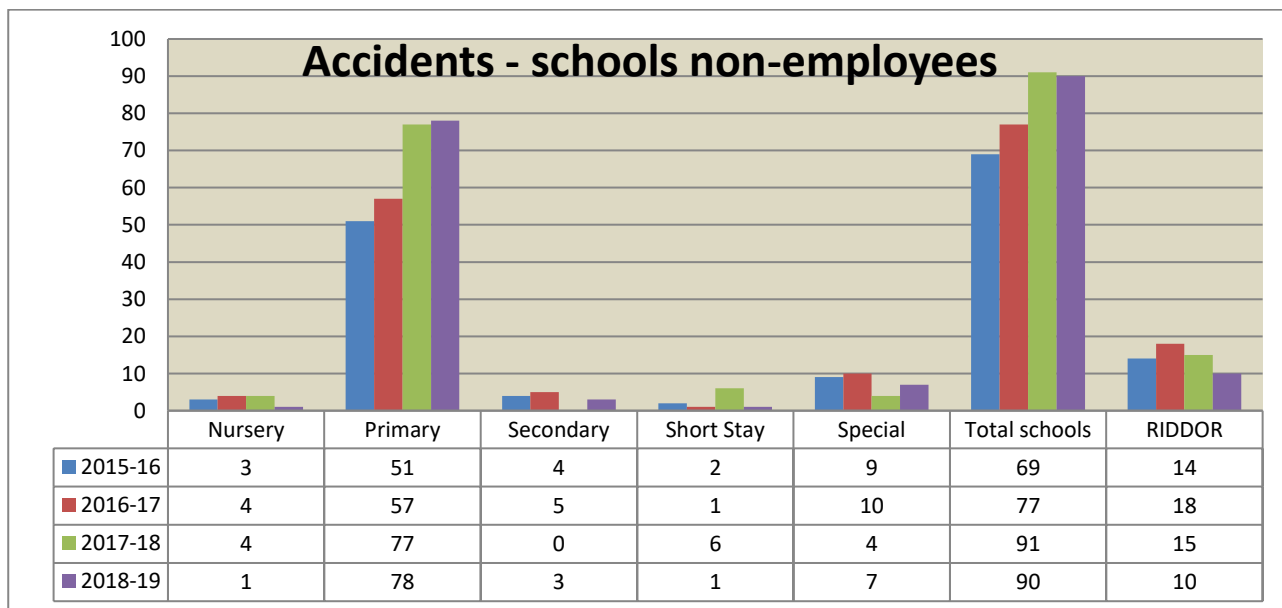
² Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013

5.2 Accidents – non-employees



A few points are worth noting:

- The large fall in non-employee accidents in Adult Social Care – ASC suggests that following the closure of Hollybank, fewer front facing customers use their facilities. Hence the fall in accidents
- The fall in non-employee accidents in Children’s Services – this possibly suggests that the rise in accidents last year was a blip – perhaps due to natural variation, but we will keep this under review at Children’s Services H&S Committee
- Last year’s report showed low numbers of non-employee accidents in Economy & Environment for 2016-17 and 2017-18. Following adjustments to the data to include (as noted at the start of section 5) misaddressed historic reports, these figures have risen and are now more consistent; although work continues to ensure we are capturing the right data



The number of non-employee accidents in schools has fallen slightly, as have RIDDOR reportable incidents. Given the diverse schools community, trends can be difficult to spot; however, the data

is examined in more detail at Children's Services Health & Safety Committee to establish any learning points.

5.3 Kinds of accident

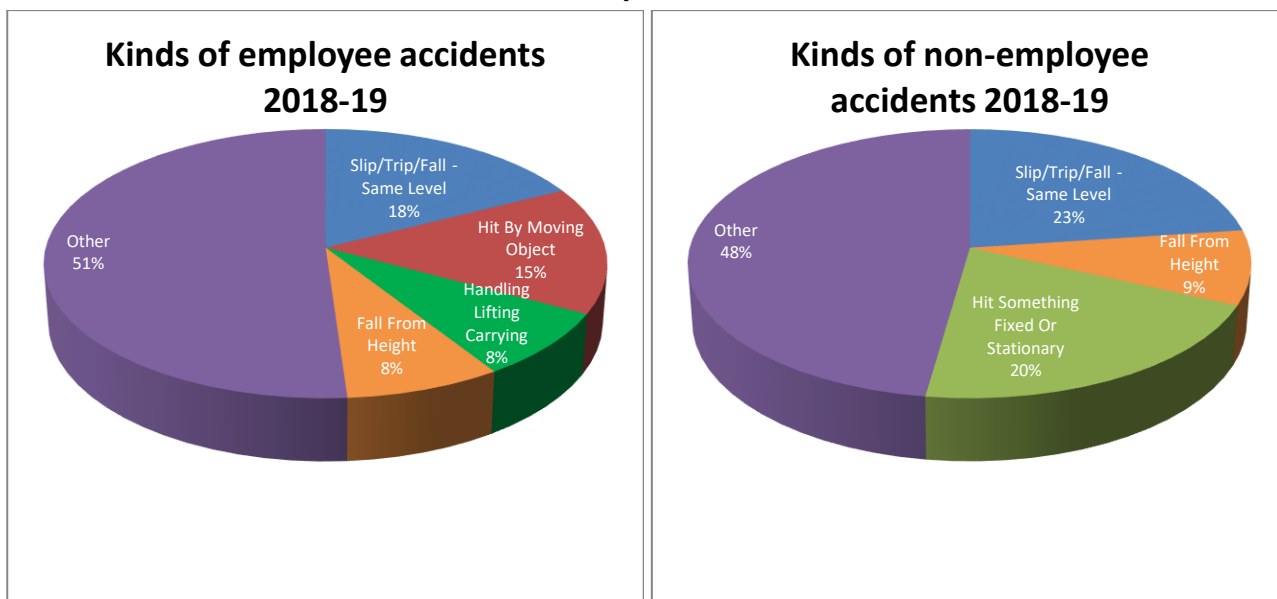
The top three "kinds" of accident for employees/non-employees both corporately and in schools were (numbers of incidents in brackets):

	1st	2nd	3rd	Others
Employees	Slips/trips/falls on same level (24)	Hit by moving object (21)	Joint* HLC (11), FFH (11)	(70)
Non-employees	Slips/trips/falls on same level (56)	Hit something fixed or stationary (50)	Fall from height (22)	(117)
School employees	Slips/trips/falls on same level (44)	Hit by moving object (34)	Hit something fixed or stationary (27)	(44)
School non-employees	Slips/trips/falls on same level (36)	Hit by moving object (19)	Fall from height (13)	(22)

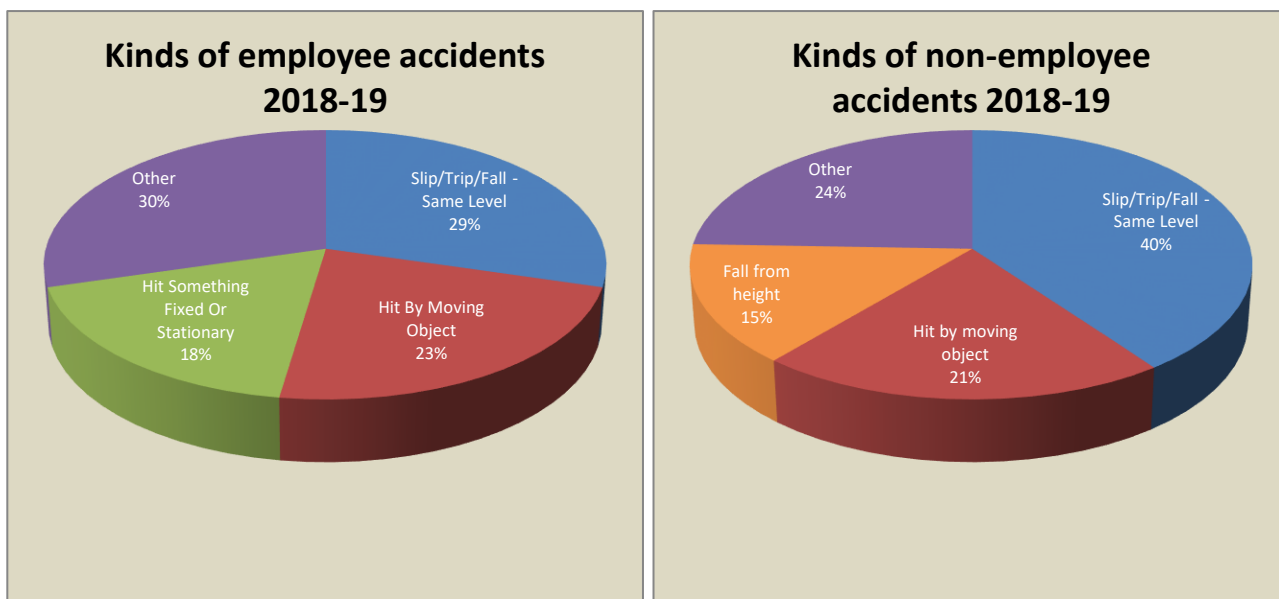
* HLC = Handling, lifting and carrying, FFH = Fall from height

This can be better illustrated as percentages on the following charts:

Corporate



Schools

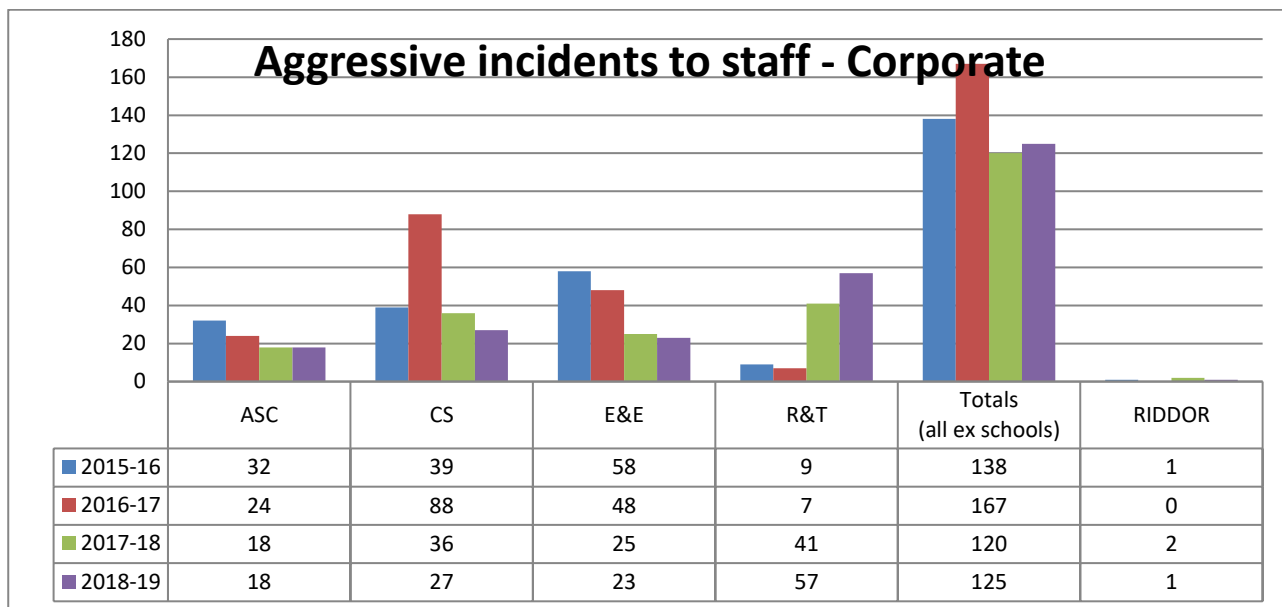


It is interesting to note that slips/trips/falls on same level is the main cause of accidents both corporately and in schools. However, when we look at these in more detail, it appears that there are many scenarios behind this kind of accident and there is no one simple solution that will work in all circumstances, although good housekeeping always helps. The prevalence of this kind of accident does illustrate however, that accidents often have simple causes.

“Hit by moving object” is, once again, often a significant “kind” of accident and the prevalence may at first seem strange; however it covers a range of common incidents including being hit by equipment such as trolleys, doors and gates; being hit by equipment/supplies that fall from shelves, etc.; being accidentally kicked or hit by a football. As with slips/trips/falls, there are many scenarios behind this kind of accident and no one simple solution; however as with slips/trips/falls, in many cases, good housekeeping helps.

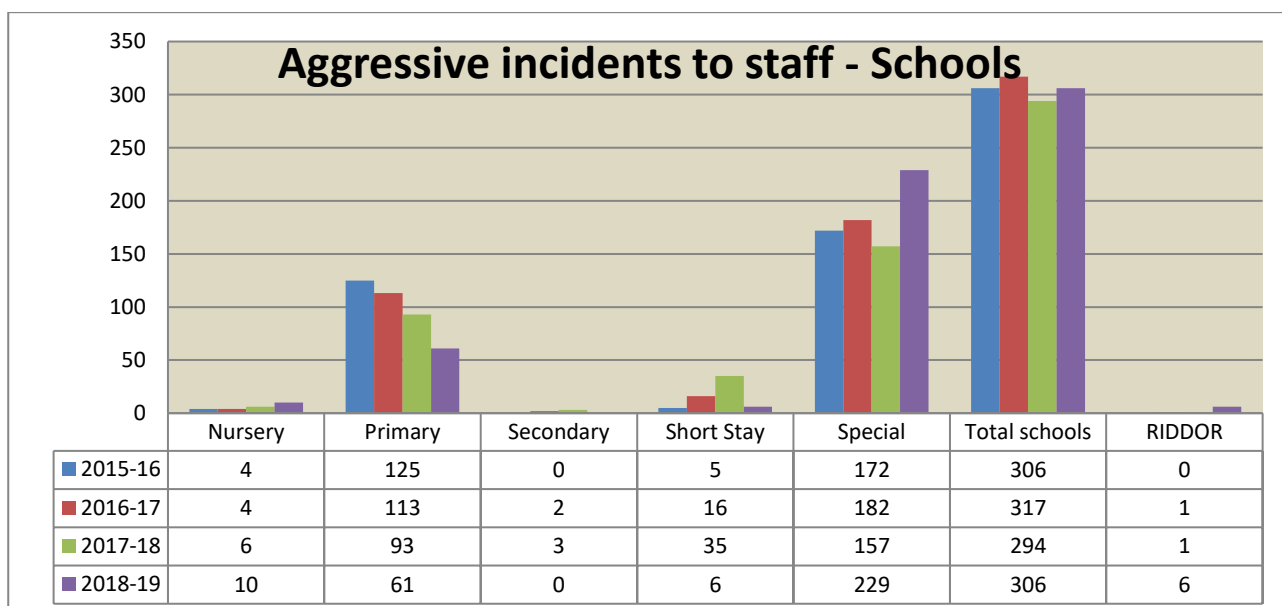
5.4 Violence and aggression (to staff)

We collect data on physical assaults, threatening behaviour, and verbal abuse aimed at our staff. Physical assault tends to be reported more than the other categories; but “physical assault” encompasses a wide range of incidents from simple scratches through to more serious issues; however, the vast majority are minor incidents, many with no intent behind them.



Overall incident numbers have risen slightly; however, a few points should be noted:

- Incidents in Children’s Services have fallen slightly; however, we recognise that in care environments, a small number of children displaying disruptive behaviour can seriously affect incident numbers; consequently, figures can be volatile year on year
- Having fallen last year, incidents in Economy and Environment remain at a lower level – whilst welcome, there doesn’t appear to be any obvious reason behind the lower numbers
- Resources and Transformation has seen another increase in incidents reported. Better reporting in First Stop Shop appears to be giving us more consistent data than was previously the case, so the rise doesn’t give us any immediate concerns



Overall, the changes in number of aggressive incidents to staff in schools do not appear to be particularly significant; however, as stated earlier a small number of children displaying disruptive behaviour, for instance in special or short stay schools, can seriously affect incident numbers; consequently, figures can be volatile year on year. This year's rise in incidents in special schools appears to have been mainly offset by falls in primary and short stay schools. We continue to work with Children's Services Health & Safety Committee to see if there are any underlying causes and will further clarify reporting arrangements with schools to help ensure consistency.

Annual violence and aggression incident rates

The following table provides incident rates (per thousand FTE employees, excluding casuals)

Directorate	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Adult Social Care	55.5	49.3	41.1	41.1
Children's Services	53.0	142.4	58.9	44.2
Economy & Environment	46.3	60.7	32.3	29.7
Resources & Transformation	12.6	7.9	48.2	67.0
Overall (exc. schools)	42.0	59.8	44.9	46.7
Note: we only calculate incident rates for schools where the council is the employer				
School aggressive incident rate	97.4	108.4	109.4	115.0

Corporately, the overall aggressive incident rate is similar to that for accidents; however, in schools, the aggressive incident rate is higher than that for accidents. Please note, for most staff incidents of aggression are rare; however, some staff are more exposed to aggression due to the nature of the service users/customers they work with, hence, we tend to get "hot spots", and this is where resources should be concentrated.

5.5 Employers' liability and public liability claims

During the financial year 2018-19:

- There were 18 employer's liability claims received. One open claim relates to alleged exposure to asbestos and three were assault claims. Six of these have been closed – three with no payment, three settled in the sum of £4,902. Twelve remain open
- There were 14 public liability claims related to work received, some of which relate to slips and trips. Ten of these have been closed – six with no payment, four settled in the sum of £1,023. Four remain open

Both employer's liability and public liability can include historic claims – some of which take a while to come through and/or be settled. The cost of historic claims settled during 2018-19 were:

- Employer's liability claims total 11 claims paid in sum of £173,549
- Public liability claims total 4 claims paid in sum of £25,852

Note 'net claim costs' quoted above include legal fees.

5.6 Auditing activity

Generally, our premises have an audit every two years; although this can be adjusted according to the risk profile of the establishment, (e.g. higher risk premises can be done more frequently). The audits are thorough and examine the management arrangements for health & safety at each establishment, in order to check compliance with legislative requirements, best practice and the council's Safety Management Standards.

During 2018-19, there were 13 management audits³ of schools and 21 intermediate audits. In addition, five corporate management audits and eight corporate intermediate audits were carried out, along with 13 desktop reviews of lower risk premises.

Following an audit, managers/headteachers receive an Audit Report that includes an Action Plan setting out any issues that need addressing. The head of service⁴ or, in the case of schools, the schools' improvement team also receives a copy of the report. Managers/headteachers are asked to return a copy of the completed Action Plan to the health & safety team to show they are addressing any issues raised. Any learning points are shared as appropriate with directorate health & safety committees.

5.7 Fire risk management

Generally, our premises have a fire risk assessment (FRA) every two years, although this can be adjusted according to the risk profile of the establishment. Establishments are expected to review their FRA each year, and inform the health & safety team of any major changes that may affect the current FRA.

During 2018-19, there were 37 FRAs of schools, along with 30 FRAs of corporate premises.

Following an FRA, managers/headteachers receive an FRA Report that includes any deficiencies that need addressing, along with an Action Plan. The head of service or, in the case of schools, the schools' improvement team also receives a copy of the report.

Our FRA programme is quite mature and most premises have few substantive issues; consequently we only ask managers/headteachers to return a copy of the completed Action Plan if there are substantive issues raised. Any learning points are shared as appropriate with directorate health & safety committees.

6. Joint consultation

We consult with staff and appropriate trade unions representatives in the development and monitoring of our health & safety systems, policies, procedures and risk assessments.

In addition, we formally consult with trade union colleagues at both the Corporate Health & Safety Board and directorate Health & Safety Committees.

7. Key achievements (overview)

During 2018-19, we revised our Health & Safety Policy (revised Feb 19, published Sep 19). We also reviewed and updated the following safety management standards during the year:

- Radiation
- Fire and evacuation
- Safety signs
- Lone working/Home working
- Managers' Responsibilities

³ Most of our establishments have a "four plus two" year audit programme; that is they receive a full management audit every four years, with a two yearly intermediate audit based around a self-audit questionnaire and the previous audit's Action Plan

⁴ We are considering sending copies of corporate audits/FRAs to the appropriate directorate H&S committee chair, to allow them to discuss any concerns/learning points with the head of service

In addition, we undertook a comprehensive review of our educational visits guidance and processes – this resulted in a revised suite of documents; including our “Educational Visits Standards”, schools’ model policy, model risk assessments; and a refreshed EVC (Educational visits coordinator) training package.

As part of the corporate Service Planning Cycle, in December, we asked directorates and managers to undertake the first of an annual health & safety “sense check” to help assure themselves that they have appropriate systems in place for reviewing health & safety controls, and can evidence that they have reviewed their systems.

During 2018/19 we undertook initiatives to promote stress awareness (including producing a stress “toolkit”) and, in conjunction with Public Health, produced a “Health and wellbeing at work offer”.

On the training front, in order to help ensure staff competence, we have comprehensive programmes of health & safety and fire safety training available both corporately and, as a traded service, to schools. This training aims to cover core health & safety topics, such as management of health & safety, risk assessment, accident investigation, and first aid. The training is often supplemented by more role-specific training arranged locally by service areas/schools. In 2018-19 we delivered the following:

- 85 face to face training courses were delivered corporately with 672 attendees
- 47 face to face training courses were delivered to schools with 435 attendees
- 11 face to face fire training courses were delivered corporately with 85 attendees
- 9 face to face fire training courses were delivered to schools with 27 named attendees (plus an unknown number where fire awareness was delivered directly to large groups in school).

A range of health & safety eLearning courses is also available for staff.

Our training offer and course take up was summarised in our Annual Health & Safety Training Report published in July 19.

8. Monitoring health & safety performance

We have a number of active and reactive monitoring systems in place, most notably the audit/FRA programmes and statistics/analysis of accidents and aggressive incident data collected by the health & safety team.

The Corporate Health & Safety Board receives a regular report outlining developments in health & safety. The report includes data on accidents and incidents, along with some interpretation of the results and any trends identified. The Board is also kept up to date with the audit/FRA programmes and any emerging issues.

Following the Board, a report is taken to CMT outlining the main issues discussed at the Board and any learning points.

Each directorate health & safety committee receives regular updates on learning points from audits/FRAs, along with more detailed analysis of accidents/aggressive incidents for their areas.

Directorates are asked to feedback to the Board/their committee any circumstances that influence accidents/incidents numbers and any initiatives taken to reduce the instances. In addition, directorates are now asked to feedback to the Board what action they have taken to share learning points raised at the last Board; how changes to SMSs, procedures, etc., have been communicated

across the directorate; and how the directorate is checking that learning points are acted upon and amended procedures are implemented/monitored.

9. Strategic action plan - (long term corporate)

We believe that the building blocks are in place to ensure that we manage health & safety effectively; however, we want to ensure that we have the right health & safety culture in Walsall. To that end, a number of initiatives are already in place, for instance:

- We have increased engagement with managers, staff and the unions on key issues with a requirement that directorates update each Board on any outstanding matters
- Three times a year a report is presented to CMT to highlight trends, key issues and ensure effective responses have been put in place
- Most members of CMT and a number of their direct reports have attended health & safety for leaders training to reinforce the senior accountability for health & safety
- We have a Corporate Health & Safety Objective, along with a set of actions to help ensure that we keep health & safety on track

Going forward:

- We have arranged a refresher session on health & safety for leaders that will be delivered to CMT in November 2019. We will also look to offer a similar session to assistant directors and heads of service in 2020
- We launched the annual health & safety sense check in December 2018 and sought feedback from directorates in the following year to judge its effectiveness. Anecdotally, the sense check was well received; however, we struggled to get any quantitative data on its uptake. Consequently, from December 2019, we plan to use a simple survey tool in “Forms” (part of Teams/Office 365) to get a more detailed insight we can share with committees and the Corporate Health & Safety Board/CMT
- A review of fire safety management in the civic centre and town hall/council house complex will be undertaken (this was completed in April 19, so just outside the scope of this report’s key achievements)
- The COSHH assessment process will be updated to modernise the process and match changes in labelling legislation. This will be accompanied by changes in our COSHH training package
- Further work will be undertaken, in conjunction with Public Health, on the “Health and wellbeing at work offer” – this stalled during the latter part of 2018/19 due to resource issues
- We will work with key service areas to better understand their accident and incident data – are we capturing the right data, is it being reported and investigated consistently, how does our data compare with comparable figures from neighbouring councils?
- We still want to engage directorates in some higher level auditing, that concentrates on planning, communication, and monitoring – to help ensure that we are embedding health & safety in the organisation and that we are closing the loop (the **Plan, Do, Check, Act** model) – due to resource issues, we were unable to action this during 2018/19

10. Conclusion and development

The health & safety team has a work programme that includes a schedule of regular revision of all key health & safety documentation, along with a programme of audits/fire risk assessments of all

corporate premises. In addition, the team continues to modernise our health & safety procedures, to ensure that they add value and do not impose an unnecessary bureaucratic burden.

The team, alongside colleagues in Learning and Development continually review all health & safety training offered corporately, to ensure it meets the needs of our customers and is fit for purpose.

As stated above, we believe that the building blocks are in place to ensure that we manage health & safety effectively; however, the council is committed to continuous improvement in health & safety and, as such, will continue to develop policies, systems and procedures to achieve that aim.

We want to ensure that we have the right health & safety culture in Walsall. We also want to ensure that there is effective succession planning so that the systems we put in place remain effective and do not fall apart if we lose key staff through retirement or restructure.

Having robust health & safety systems in place, along with the right health & safety culture, and effective succession planning helps compliment some of the wider workforce themes identified in the Corporate Workforce Strategy 2017-20, particularly the theme of having a “*valued workforce*”.

Monitoring of our policies, procedures, and training both by directorates and by our auditing systems should help ensure that health & safety remains one of our top priorities and we keep both staff and customers safe.

Appendix 1 – list of current Safety Management Standards

SMSs are reviewed on a rolling programme; however, reviews can be reprioritised to reflect emerging issues and changes in legislation, etc.

SMS	Issued
Accident and Incident Reporting*	June 2015
Aggression & Violence	June 2015
Asbestos Safety	March 2015
Contractors – Selection and Control	April 2015
COSHH	October 2015
Driving [§]	September 2017
DSE	November 2017
Electricity & Gas	September 2017
Fire and Evacuation	January 2019
First Aid	September 2017
Health Surveillance and Assessment	April 2015
Infection Control	April 2015
Legionella	March 2016
LOLER (Lifting Operations)	April 2018
Lone working/Home working	November 2018
Managers' Responsibilities	November 2018
Manual Handling	September 2017
New and Expectant Mothers	April 2018
Noise	November 2017
Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)	April 2018
Pressure Systems	March 2015
Radiation	July 2018
Risk assessment	November 2017
Safety Signs	July 2018
Stress	December 2016
Vibration	March 2015
Work at Height*	March 2015
Work Equipment/PUWER	May 2016
Working conditions	June 2015
Workplace Inspections	September 2016
Young Workers	August 2016

[§]reviewed; awaiting further input before publication

*reviewed autumn 2019 – drafts to be approved at Corporate Health & Safety Board November 2019

Other substantive guidance	
Educational Visit Standards	November 2018