| | HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL<br>SCHOOL HEALTH & SAFETY GUIDANCE | | | |
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| Hertfordshire | DATE: | NOVEMBER 2020 | VERSION: | 3 |
| | REVIEW DATE: | NOVEMBER 2022 | | |
| | SUBJECT: | **DSE Display Screen Equipment and ICT in schools** | | |

Where HCC are not the duty holder e.g. for Voluntary Aided (VA), Foundation, or Academy status schools this guidance is commended to them. The HSE website provides detailed information on DSE https://www.hse.gov.uk/msd/dse/

Updates November 2020 V3: review of content and updated hyperlinks no major changes.

## Introduction

1. The Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regs 1992 as amended 2002, impose the following key duties on employers to:

   - carry out risk assessments of DSE workstations.
   - incorporate work breaks / activity changes.
   - provide a free eye test and glasses (where specifically required for working with DSE).
   - provide training and information relevant to the tasks being undertaken.

2. DSE refers principally to laptop and desktop PC's, but includes other technologies such as tablet devices and smart phones.

3. In general DSE users are those staff who use DSE as a significant part of their normal work. Significant is taken to be continuous or near continuous spells of an hour or more at a time on most working days.

4. The regulations **do not apply** to workstations provided for use by pupils (it is nevertheless good practice for pupils to be aware of how to correctly set up workstations in a way which minimises risks)

5. The Workstation includes not just the computer and the screen but also the keyboard and mouse, the work surface, chair and the general work environment.

## Key Actions

6. The key actions necessary to control the health and safety risks arising from the use of DSE are to:

   - Identify all individuals who are classified as DSE Users. Typically within school settings this may include admin staff, business manager, bursars, school secretaries etc.
   - Ensure each identified DSE user sets up their workstation correctly and completes a DSE self assessment form.
   - Ensure any remedial actions identified by DSE risk assessments been carried out.

- Review risk assessments annually or sooner if significant changes have occurred.
- Ensure staff classed as DSE users are aware of their entitlement to a free 'DSE eye test' and corrective glasses **if prescribed specifically for the purpose of working with DSE**.

## Hazards associated with DSE

7. Poor work design and a lack of awareness in the correct way of setting up a workstation can result in discomfort, and/or cause or aggravate conditions such as
   - Upper Limb Disorders (ULD) (e.g. upper limb aches and pains caused by poor posture);
   - Back ache;
   - Fatigue and stress;
   - Temporary eye strain.

8. Staff can help ensure a safe system of work by self assessing and setting up their workstation correctly.
   See Appendix 2 for advice on good posture and work practice.

## Risk assessment

9. Within Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) it is the responsibility of line managers/ headteachers to ensure that risk assessments of DSE workstations are conducted. However, they may delegate the task of actually carrying out the assessments.

10. Self assessments can be conducted by the individual user, in using a DSE self assessment form users are also receiving basic instruction and guidance in ensuring their workstation is correctly set up.

11. Once completed, this self-assessment should normally be reviewed on an annual basis. It should be immediately reviewed if a user moves to a different workstation, or if any issues arise that might suggest the set up needs changing (for example, the appearance of aches and pains).

## Eyesight tests

12. Under the regulations staff identified as DSE users are entitled to an eyesight test, every 2 years by a qualified optician (and corrective glasses if required specifically for DSE use). Line managers / headteachers should ensure that all DSE users are aware of this entitlement.

13. HCC utilises an eyecare voucher scheme via Specsavers opticians to fulfil this duty. Schemes such as this allow schools to easily budget for eyesight tests without any additional costs if glasses are required. Schools wishing to make use of the scheme should set up an individual account with Specsavers.

    For more information visit www.specsavers.co.uk/corporate.

## Information, instruction and training

14. In completing the self-assessment form staff and adjusting their workstation staff are already receiving information and instruction.

    Staff should be aware of the following elements:

- good posture
- adjusting chairs and other furniture
- arranging desk space
- adjusting screens and lighting to avoid reflections and glare
- breaks and changes of activity
- risk assessments
- how to report problems

If further advice is needed they may complete the Display Screen Equipment training module on iLearn. http://www.learningpool.com/hertfordshire
Line managers should decide whether they wish to require that their staff complete this training.

The HSE also provide advice online https://www.hse.gov.uk/msd/dse/index.htm

## Laptop and other mobile devices

15. The use of laptops and mobile devices for prolonged periods of work are also subject to the DSE Regulations. Design compromises in such devices (e.g. small screen and keyboard size) can lead to poor practice / postures being adopted.

16. Consideration needs to be given as to where and how such devices are utilised. For example where laptops are intended to be used for prolonged periods a separate keyboard and mouse should be used and the laptop raised in height to enable the user to achieve the correct posture. (See Appendix 2)

17. Extended use in poor working environments should be avoided, when using mobile devices users should take more frequent breaks to compensate for ergonomic disadvantages of the technology.

## Using whole class teaching technologies

18. The use of interactive whiteboards and data projectors in schools is commonplace and of low risk provided basic ‘common sense’ procedures are followed.

19. There is also increasing use of ultra-short throw projectors, these enable the projector to be mounted above the display screen and thus remove any risk for a user in directly exposing their eyes to the beam.

    Where such devices are not in place it is recommended that schools:

- Make clear to all users that no one should stare directly into the beam of the projector.
- Encourage users to stand to the side of the beam when working with a class.
- Ensure that when entering the beam, users do not look towards the audience for more than a few seconds.
- Encourage users to keep their backs to the projector beam when standing in it.
- Ensure that pupils are supervised at all times when a projector is being used.

- Position whiteboards at a comfortable height for both staff and pupils.
- Make sure that all leads are safely located, and that pupils don't walk around the back of working areas which have cables.

20. Appendix 1 provides a summary of the above and could be displayed adjacent to interactive whiteboards.

21. In rare situations where the use of fixed, ceiling-mounted projectors is not possible, it should ensured that the unit is anchored firmly when in use, and that trailing power cables are covered and secured.

## Use of ICT by pupils

22. Whilst the DSE Regulations do not apply to pupils, the good practice in terms of workstation set up and posture should be adopted where practicable.

23. General guidance for schools as regards health and safety relating to ICT had previously been produced by BECTA (The British Educational Communications and Technology Agency). BECTA closed in March 2011.
Its website is archived on the National Archives site, and its health and safety pages can be found at
http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110130111510/http://schools.becta.org.uk/index.php?section=lv&catcode=ss_lv_saf_hs_03

**Pupil safety with ICT**

- Ensure there is sufficient working space in front of the keyboard and that pupils have room to make notes or use textbooks alongside the computer.
- Provide adequate space around workstations for unhindered staff and pupil movement.
- Position the screen to avoid reflections.
- Encourage pupils to adopt postures which do not impose a strain or require awkward movements.
- If pupils are going to be seated for extended periods, ensure that good-quality seating is provided which supports the back.
- Chairs which are height adjustable are desirable (but not mandated) in order they may safely accommodate the range in size of pupils.
- Pupils sit at the recommended height (with the eye level at the top of the screen).
- Screens should be positioned to reduce reflection and glare from lights and windows, using blinds where necessary, and should be adjustable for brightness and contrast as the lighting changes throughout the day. They should also be cleaned regularly.
- Desks must be the appropriate height for the user.
- Ensure the room temperature does not get too warm because computers are kept switched on for prolonged periods.

## Use of Wireless technology

24. With regard to the potential exposure of staff and pupils to radio frequency (RF) radiation HCC follows the advice of Public Health England (PHE).

25. On the basis of current scientific information, exposures from Wi-Fi equipment satisfy international guidelines and are less than those from mobile phones.

26. PHE continue to state that wireless networks are safe for use in schools as is the case with mobile phones this situation is kept under review so that parents and others can have as much reassurance about their use as possible.

27. Schools should use an experienced installer who will follow the manufacturer's recommendations for installation and operation.

## Further information and guidance

**Health and safety guidance and support**
Education Health and Safety Team - 01992 556478
healthandsafety@hertfordshire.gov.uk

HSE (Health and Safety Executive)
http://www.hse.gov.uk/MSD/dse/index.htm

HSE Advice on use of interactive whiteboards
http://www.hse.gov.uk/radiation/nonionising/whiteboards.htm

E safety
https://www.thegrid.org.uk/safeguarding-and-child-protection/online-safety/school-online-safety-policy

BECTA (British Educational Communications and Technology Agency)
http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110130111510/http://schools.becta.org.uk/index.php?section=lv&catcode=ss_lv_saf_hs_03

Appendix 1

# Health and Safety Advice

## When using an interactive whiteboard:

- **Make sure that pupils are supervised at all times whilst the projector is in use**
- **Do not stare directly into the projector beam at any time**
- **Staff should stand to the side of the beam when working with a class and not look towards the beam for more than a few seconds**
- **Whilst using the whiteboard, pupils should stand with their back to the projector beam.**
- **Do not cover the projector ventilation slots at any time**
- **Do not unplug or switch off the mains supply to the projector whilst the cooling fan is running.**

**APPENDIX 2**

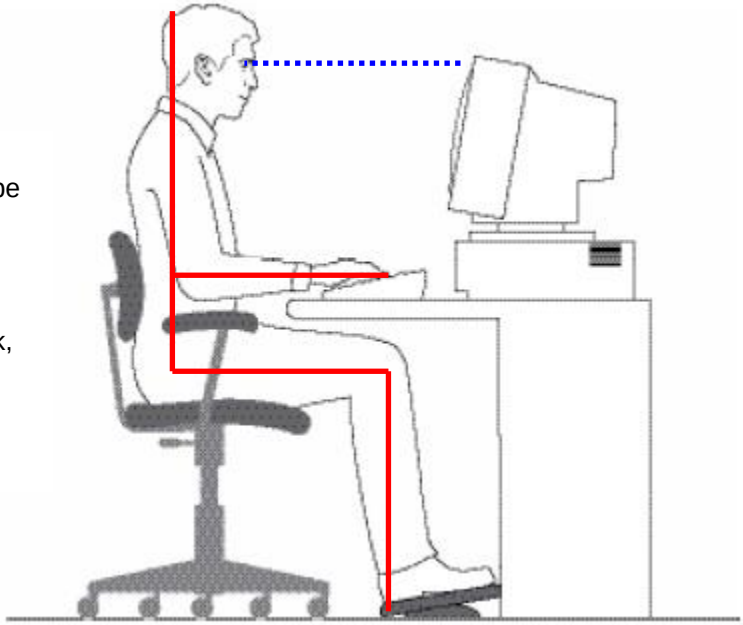
## *How do I set up my workstation for the best safety and comfort?*

Work through the following points as a checklist:

**Getting comfortable**

- Adjust your chair and equipment to find the most comfortable position for your work. As a broad guide, your forearms should be approximately horizontal and your eyes the same height as the top of the screen/monitor. The chair should support the back and generally promote an upright posture.
- Make sure you have enough workspace (avoid clutter – do you **need** everything that's on your desk today?).
- Try different arrangements of keyboard, screen, mouse and documents to find the best arrangement for you. A document holder may help you avoid awkward neck and eye movements.
- Arrange your desk and equipment to avoid glare, or bright reflections on the screen. This will be easiest if neither you nor the screen is directly facing windows or bright lights. Adjust curtains or blinds to prevent unwanted light where possible.
- Make sure there is space under your desk to move your legs freely. Move any obstacles such as boxes, bags or equipment.
- Avoid excess pressure from the edge of your seat on the backs of your legs and knees. In general, there should be an approx. 3 finger width gap between the seat edge and the inside of your knees.
- Your thighs should be approximately horizontal. If they slope down when feet are resting on the floor, a footrest may help to achieve an horizontal position.

For most people, good posture will be achieved by considering the vertical and horizontal alignments of back, arms and legs to achieve a good 'balance'.



**Keyboard use**

- Adjust your keyboard to get a good keying position. A space in front of the keyboard is sometimes helpful for resting the hands and wrists when not keying.
- Try to keep your wrists straight when keying. Keep a soft touch on the keys and don't overstretch your fingers. Good keyboard technique is important.

**Using a mouse**

- Position the mouse within easy reach, so it can be used with the wrist straight (move your forearm, rather than pivoting at the wrist).
- Sit upright and close to the desk, so you don't have to work with your mouse arm stretched. Move the keyboard out of the way if it is not being used.
- Don't grip the mouse too tightly.
- Rest your fingers lightly on the buttons and do not press them hard.

**Reading the screen**

- Adjust the brightness and contrast controls on the screen to suit lighting conditions in the room.
- Make sure the screen surface is clean.
- In setting up software, choose options giving text that is large enough to read easily on your screen.
- Select colours that are easy on the eye
- Individual characters on the screen should be sharply focused and should not flicker or move. If they do, the screen may need servicing or adjustment.

**Posture and breaks**

- Don't sit in the same position for long periods. Make sure you change your posture as often as possible.
- Some movement is desirable, but avoid repeated stretching to reach things you need. If this happens a lot, rearrange your workstation to bring the most frequently needed items closer to you.
- A screen break doesn't have to mean a tea break! Most jobs provide opportunities to take a break from the screen, such as to work with papers or talk to a colleague. Can you stand up for a moment during a telephone call? If there are no such natural breaks in your job, talk to your line manager about how this may be achieved. Frequent short breaks are better than fewer long ones.
- Between breaks, keep your eyes active. Force yourself to blink periodically to moisten the eyes and occasionally look away from the screen and focus on a distant object to get the muscles and lenses of your eyes moving. This will help reduce eye strain.
- Remain hydrated – this should help you to avoid headaches which can sometimes be attributed to computer use.