

HSE Targets Schools on Transport Safety and Automatic Gate Risk

The HSE has embarked on a programme of targeted inspections of schools to examine arrangements for managing pedestrians and vehicle movements on school property, the regulator has revealed.

According to the latest HSE Schools Bulletin, the inspections have also resulted in enforcement action.

The initiative follows a case where a 15 year old student in Bridgend, south Wales, was killed in 2014 when he ran out from behind a parked bus to be hit by a school minibus.

His death led to an HSE prosecution and £300,000 fine for the local authority, Bridgend Country Borough Council.

The HSE, which provided the photo of poor practice, says that it has identified cases where similar incidents could happen, and where car and bus movements were not adequately controlled.

The bulletin also alerts schools to the need to properly manage and maintain automatic gates, alerting them to new guidance from the Gate Safe charity.

To ensure transport arrangements are safe, the HSE advises schools to ensure that all vehicles are parked in authorised positions, and to control vehicle movements at key times and until pedestrians are dispersed.

Schools should consider the walking routes used by pupils to access transport, and record and review incidents, near misses and non-conformities and share learning outcomes.

Maesteg School in Bridgend, where Ashley Talbot, 15, was killed, had been completed in 2008 on an out-of-town site. The HSE investigation found that lay-bys created by contractors had never been large enough to accommodate all the vehicles that would be parked at the school.

In the bulletin, the HSE points out that “eliminating or reducing transport risks should be a key consideration when designing new facilities or redeveloping school sites”.

On gate safety, the regulator says that it “continues to encounter circumstances where children are at risk of being trapped or crushed in the gate mechanism, or between powered gates and fixed structures”.

The HSE also warns that “gate design and installations must consider foreseeable interactions, particularly those of children, which may go well beyond normal use”.

The guidance itself urges schools to undertake full risk assessments before installing automatic gates, and that any gate should have at least two different devices or mechanisms to protect users from the risk of entrapment or injury.

Advice includes suggested minimum gaps between the gate and the ground, and the gate and the gate post, to avoid feet or hands becoming trapped when the gate closes automatically.

It advises that any gate under 1.8m tall can easily be scaled by an intruder, and so offers little benefit in terms of security.

The bulletin also covers safe working at height, and the safe use of ladders for works of short duration.

It also recaps on a safety alert issued earlier this year on maintenance and inspection procedures platform lifts, often used to move wheelchair users or those with limited mobility between floors in public buildings, including schools.

Head Office:

SSG Training & Consultancy Ltd, Valley House, Valley Road, Plympton, Plymouth, Devon, PL7 1RF



www.ssg.co.uk | 01752 201616 | info@ssg.co.uk
Redruth | Plymouth | Exeter | Taunton | Bristol | Worcester

Registered Office: Sigma House, Oakview Close, Edginswell Park, Torquay, TQ2 7FF

Reg No: 3564008

VAT No: 717 4961 13



The alert followed a spate of serious accidents, and urges “simple daily checks” of the landing door mechanisms alongside examinations under the Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations 1998 (LOLER).

Source: Healthandsafetyatwork.com

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