



# HILLINGDON

LONDON

## Occupational Health & Safety - GREEN ALERT School fined after worker injured in fall from ladder

Issue reference: OHS0131

Date of issue: 22/06/2021



### Applicable to Head Teachers

The injured person was using an unsecured ladder at the school to dismantle a canopy roof. The ladder slipped, causing the worker to fall and sustain fractures to his face, a fractured femur and other injuries.

The HSE's investigation found that:

- The school did not have a risk assessment or safe system for dismantling the canopy roof which resulted in the work being conducted unsafely.
- No assessment was made as to the fragility of the roof before accessing it.
- Suitable equipment was not provided.
- The injured person was not trained.
- The work was not supervised.
- Other work at height at the school was also carried out without specific planning, supervision and was not carried out safely.

The school pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. It has been fined £24,000 and ordered to pay costs of £5,446.

Speaking after the hearing, HSE Inspector said: "Falls from height remain one of the most common causes of work-related fatalities in this country and the risks associated with working at height are well known."

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“Those in control of work have a responsibility to devise safe methods of working and to provide the necessary information, instruction and training to their workers in the safe system of working.

“If a suitable safe system of work had been in place prior to the incident, the serious injuries sustained by the employee could have been prevented.”

The Chair of the Ladder Association’s Training Committee said: “Ladders can be a sensible and practical option for low risk and short duration tasks (maximum 30 minutes), but they shouldn’t automatically be your first choice. The law states that ladders can be used for work at height when a risk assessment has shown that using equipment offering a higher level of fall protection is not justified because of the low risk and short duration of use; or there are existing workplace features which cannot be altered.

“Unfortunately, this case highlights the effect a lack of planning can have on using the right type of equipment for working at height and in doing so, the school failed in its duty to ensure the safety of its employee. At the Ladder Association, we strongly believe training is an important contribution in keeping people safe when working at height and that training is about more than just using the ladder; it’s about understanding when it’s right to use a ladder (and importantly when it’s not), choosing the right ladder and then understanding the simple steps to take to use the ladder safely.”

### **Key actions required for Head Teachers:**

1. Ensure risk assessments are conducted prior to any work being carried out and creating a robust Safe System of Work to be followed by employees.
2. Provide correct and suitable equipment as highlighted from the risk assessment to allow work to be carried out safely.
3. Ensure adequate training is provided to those completing the risk assessments and those who will be carrying out the work.
4. Identify the information, instruction and training as is necessary for them to perform the tasks safely.
5. Ensure adequate supervision is provided throughout the work activity

### **Key actions required for Health & Safety Services:**

1. To continue auditing community schools on their arrangements to manage health and safety issues effectively

Should you require any further information or support in implementing the requirements of this alert please contact your [Health & Safety Team](#)

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<b>Traffic light key</b>	
<b>Red alerts</b>	Mandatory - where immediate action may be required
<b>Amber alerts</b>	Mandatory - with a timescale for action that may be required.
<b>Green alerts</b>	Information only