

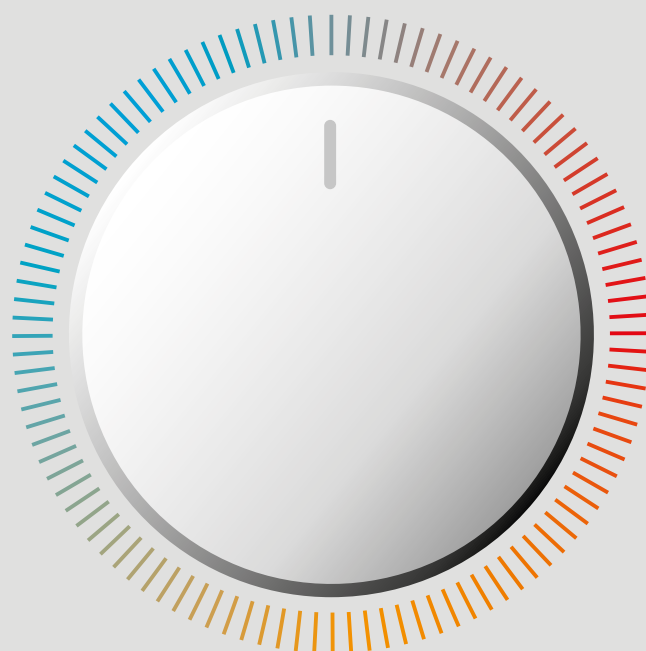
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Heating in Schools

Guidance for LA Secretaries

January 2020



Heating in Schools: Guidance for LA Secretaries

The EIS does not expect its members to continue to work in situations in which the legal requirements concerning the health, safety and welfare of employees and others are not being met.

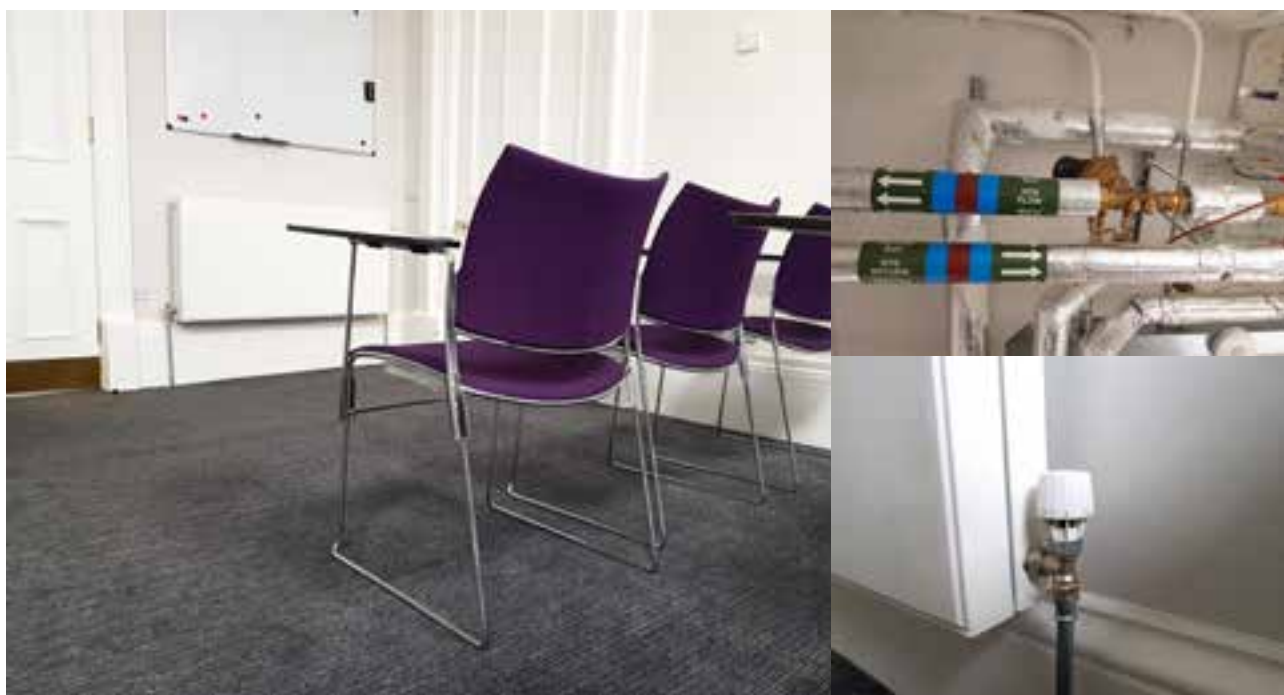
In dealing with heating problems, reference may be made to Regulation 7 of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 which places a statutory duty upon employees to take reasonable care for the health and safety of themselves and others. This duty may require teachers to withdraw themselves and their pupils from situations in which the physical conditions may affect the health and safety of themselves and their pupils.

The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992, which apply to all workplaces, including schools, set out requirements on minimum temperatures in workplaces. Regulation 7 requires that temperatures shall be “reasonable” and the accompanying Approved Code of Practice defines this as “normally at least 16 °C” (60 °F) (para 43) during “the length of time people are likely to be there” (para 49).

The School Premises (General Requirements and Standards) (Scotland) Regulations 1967 includes provisions for minimum temperatures in different areas within schools. They are on Page 52 of the EIS Health and Safety Handbook which is available [here](#)

The type of heating problems occurring in school usually fall into one of three categories: longstanding faults; temporary faults, which may or may not be capable of being remedied quickly; and problems caused by policies on operation of heating systems. These are considered in turn below.

Head teachers are responsible for the internal organisation and management of schools. They have the power to act in emergencies, including by deciding to close all or part of schools in the case of heating system failures. Where such decisions are taken, adequate notice of closures should be given to parents. Pupils should be given letters to parents informing them that closures will continue until adequate heating has been restored. Closing schools will not, however, always be possible on the first day of heating failures since adequate notice to parents will not be possible.



Longstanding Faults

Many problems result from longstanding faults or inadequacies in school heating systems which local authorities or governing bodies are unable or unwilling to replace or repair. Where such faults exist, the following steps should be taken.

1. The matter should be raised with the head teacher and information sought on the action proposed by the local authority or governing body to repair or upgrade the heating system.
2. Temperatures should be monitored in any classroom or other area with heating problems on a twice daily basis at the same time each day in order to provide evidence of the problem.
3. If the school employer is unwilling to accept that difficulties exist or seek to argue that they are unable to take action on financial or other grounds, the EIS should be contacted for assistance.
4. Where temperatures are consistently below the levels required by law, the head teacher should take appropriate action to ensure that teachers, support staff and pupils are not required to work in inappropriately heated areas. Such action might include bringing in temporary heating sources, rearranging timetabling in order to move classes, or closing all or part of the school.

The EIS does not regard the use of temporary portable heaters as an appropriate solution other than as a genuinely temporary measure in emergency situations while action is being taken to repair the heating system. It is the EIS's view that portable gas heaters should not be used where other temporary heating systems are available which do not pose health and safety risks from fumes, fire hazards etc. Where such heaters are provided in the absence of any other temporary heating system, HSE guidance on the safe use and storage of portable gas heaters should be followed.

Sudden Temporary Faults

Where sudden faults or failures arise with heating systems, the EIS safety rep should ensure that the head teacher has firstly taken action to ensure that the system is repaired as quickly as possible and secondly given consideration to appropriate additional measures to be implemented until the system is repaired. Again, such measures might include bringing in temporary heating sources, rearranging timetabling in order to move classes, or closing all or part of the school.

Where temporary faults occur which can be resolved within 24 hours, school closure will, as noted above, in most cases be difficult since there will be no opportunity to provide notice of closure to parents.

However, suitable arrangements and minimum temperatures must be in place during day 1 to enable decisions to be made regarding possible school closure on day 2 and subsequent days. Other appropriate action may nevertheless be possible, which may include closing those parts of schools most severely affected, rearranging timetabling or bringing in temporary heating sources.

Again, the EIS does not regard the use of portable temporary heaters as an appropriate solution other than as a temporary measure while action is being taken to repair the system. The length of time for which the system will be out of order will influence the EIS's view as to whether the use of such heaters as a temporary measure is appropriate. The EIS again advises against the use of portable gas heaters unless no other temporary heating system is available.

“The EIS does not regard the use of **portable temporary heaters** as an appropriate solution other than as a temporary measure while action is being taken to repair the system. The EIS also advises against the use of portable gas heaters unless no other temporary heating system is available.”



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