# Use of heating systems in schools

The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 require employers to provide a ‘reasonable’ temperature in workplaces.  Whilst the regulations do not state minimum or maximum working temperatures HSE best practice guidance suggests a minimum of 16ºC or 13ºC if employees are doing physical work.  In terms of Schools, the School Premises (England) Regulations 2012 also do not specify minimum temperatures for any parts of a school. However as previous version did, we generally continue to refer to classrooms with normal activity reaching a minimum of 18ºC.

During the current pandemic the HSE still cite in their [guidance](https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/equipment-and-machinery/air-conditioning-and-ventilation.htm) that good ventilation is key with the risk of transmission by fans and mechanical systems thought to be extremely low.  Therefore, we must find a way to balance our legal obligations to provide a reasonable working temperature whilst ensuring good ventilation supply of fresh air from outside.

Schools are advised to ensure that where centralised or local mechanical ventilation is present, recirculatory systems should be adjusted to full fresh air and, if not, to ensure all ventilation systems are working in their normal operating modes.  Natural ventilation via windows or vents should be used as far as possible and, where available, occupied room windows should be open.

In terms of your convection heating system, the risks again are likely to be extremely low and it is unlikely that this could be replaced or retrofitted with additional filtration.

You will need to ensure that spaces are up to temperature for occupation,( so you could check with your heating ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) engineer to determine whether it would be feasible to operate the system with fan functions left off or on low during operation.  This might affect the safety/functionality of the system, however, so this advice would need to be provided by a competent person with knowledge of your heating system/site.

Should any subsequent guidance be released that indicates an increased risk in terms of the safe operation of mechanical systems, we will of course ensure that we relay this appropriately to schools.

# Portable Heaters and Fire Safety

The use of portable heaters should be avoided as far as practicable. However in circumstances where it is necessary to use these, the necessary risks and control measures should be identified within your School’s fire risk assessment.

the following advice applies:

* Radiant type heaters must not be used.
* The use of naked flame appliances, e.g. LPG appliances, must not be permitted under any circumstance.
* Prior to use all portable heaters must be inspected to ensure that they are correctly maintained;
* Portable electrical heaters should be subject to a portable appliance test at suitable timescales and display a label.
* Heaters must be stable and prevented from being knocked over i.e. is the base of the heater secure? (Ideally use heaters that have an automatic cut-out so that if the heater is knocked-over the heater will switch-off.)
* Staff must not be permitted to bring their own portable heaters into the school.
* When in use the heater should be connected directly to a fixed wall socket; the use of extension leads and adaptors avoided at all times
* All heating appliances must be kept clear of combustible material and the air flow around the appliance must not be impeded.
* Heaters must not be used under desks or other future.
* As far as practicable, heaters should not be left unattended.
* Heaters should be positioned where they will not cause an obstruction and must not be used within escape routes.

# Use of electronic hand dryers in schools

Despite earlier concerns regarding the risk of transmission of the Coronavirus COVID-19 using hand-dryers, these claims have now been refuted and the current HSE guidance now recommends the use of hand dryers as a proposed control measure within the workplace. We are therefore amending our guidance accordingly in line with the HSE.

Premises risk assessments will need to be amended where you have currently indicated that dryers have been disconnected or switched off.

# Guidance on Cleaning in Schools

Throughout the pandemic enhanced cleaning arrangements continue to be advised. It is important that cleaning schedules clearly describe the activities needed, the frequency and who will carry them out. Cleaning standards should be monitored regularly by the school.

Effective risk controls must be in place to ensure that any cleaning staff and school staff involved in such activities are appropriately trained and instructed. They must have access to safety data and user information outlining the risks of using any product. COSHH Assessments must be in place where these are required. Any required personal protective equipment must also be provided.

[Current Government guidance](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings) provides the general cleaning advice for non-healthcare settings where no one has symptoms of or confirmed COVID-19. For guidance on cleaning where there has been a person with symptoms of, or confirmed COVID-19, please refer to the section on [principles of cleaning after a case has left the setting or area](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings#left-area).

There is additional general health protection advice published by the Department for Education on [cleaning the environment](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-protection-in-schools-and-other-childcare-facilities/chapter-6-cleaning-the-environment), which includes toys and equipment.

The HSE have also produced useful general guidance on cleaning and hygiene. <https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/cleaning/index.htm>

We will continue to share top tips and good practice guidance to Schools in future updates.

# Use of Alcohol Hand Sanitiser

At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, national guidance clearly stated that hand sanitiser needed to have a minimum of 70% alcohol content in order to be effective. Any guidance that states this has since been superseded and the new guidance does NOT refer to the 70% alcohol content.

The Health and Safety Executive in their [current guidance](https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/hand-sanitiser/choosing-hand-sanitiser-surface-disinfectant.htm) does not even refer to alcohol content

Therefore, when ordering Hand sanitiser, we recommend following the World Health Organisation guidance of 60% alcohol. Existing risk assessments should be adjusted to reflect 60% alcohol instead of the existing 60-70%.