

PREVENTING THE NEXT CRISIS AND UNDERSTANDING RISK PRIORITIES

DEVELOPING A RISK REGISTER FOR YOUR SCHOOL

February 2005

Prepared by:
Tilden Watson, Principal Consultant
Zurich Municipal Management Services
Hermes House
Southwood Crescent
Farnborough
Hants
GU14 0NJ
Tel: 01252 387722



Introduction

Primary and Secondary schools face and manage many different risk issues every day. Risk management can sometimes be predominantly reactive with little evidence of a formalised, proactive risk management process. This document sets out a **simple process** to help you ensure that risk management is proactive, thorough and effective in your school and to enable you to demonstrate this.

Risk management is often done extremely well in schools and is an embedded part of the way they work. What is often lacking is the evidence to support this through a risk register. This is not an onerous process, once compiled a risk register need only be checked by the Headteacher termly, and annually at governors meetings, for example, and by doing this **the school can have confidence that it is managing it's risks effectively.**

A risk register is a positive document that makes the management of risk easier and more efficient as it enables you to see where you are at a glance.

The purpose of this document is to take you through the four stages of developing a risk register.

Stage 1: Risk Identification

the **first stage** is to identify the risks faced by the school, allocate a number to each risk identified and describe it briefly in column two of the risk register (Table 1 below).

Stage 2: Risk Prioritisation

the **second stage** is to consider how likely the risk is and how serious the consequences of the risk would be . When making this judgement current controls and procedures should be taken into account and assessed as Good, Fair or Poor. Some risks can just be accepted without any further action being taken as they have a low impact and/or low probability. Recording the risk is, however, still valid as the Risk Register will be reviewed periodically and recording the risk ensures it is not forgotten and if circumstances change in the future, the school will identify this fact and act accordingly.

Stage 3: Control Assessment

The **third stage** is to assess and record what current procedures / controls are in place and how well they mitigate unacceptable risks.

Stage 4: Action in required areas

The **final stage** is to identify which risks need further management action and prepare a Risk Treatment Plan to ensure the necessary action is taken (included in the register).

Stage 1. Risk identification / Compiling the Risk Register

The Risk Register as a document should be reviewed proactively on an ongoing basis e.g. at regular management/governors meetings and, if appropriate, reactively when key staff leave, when control systems change or when new evidence about risk exposure emerges e.g. a loss is incurred, errors are made or an accident is suffered. It is therefore, a key tool for senior management and school governors to use continuously to check that the schools level of risk exposure is acceptable.

A suggested format for a risk register is shown at **Table 1** below.

Table 2 sets out a list of example risks. A school should assess those risks that have the highest relevance for their circumstances.

Table 1. Suggested format for the Risk Register

REGISTER OF KEY RISKS FACING THE SCHOOL

SCHOOLNAME:

DATE:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Risk ref.	Brief description of the Risk	Brief description of Controls	Controls G / F / P	Risk Value Probability / Impact	Risk Score	Description of risk treatment	Priority	Risk Owner(s)	Review Date
1	See Table 2 over the page	What controls are currently in place?	Good / Fair / Poor	Probability (1)Low, (2) Medium, (3) High Impact (1) Low, (2) Medium, (3) High	Probability multiplied by Impact				
2									
3									
4									
5									
6									
7									
8									
9									
10									
11									
12									

See over the page for a list of the potential risks.

Table 2: Potential Risks facing your School

Select from the list below the main risks that face the school for entry into Table 1. **This list is not exhaustive but provides examples that may face your school.**

No:	Risk title	Brief Description or example
1	Inability to recruit in key areas	Shortage of teachers or staff in key curriculum areas
2	Staff turnover too high/too low	Cannot retain staff or losing valuable knowledge and continuity
3	Appointment of right staff – interview risk	Inappropriate staff / poor quality appointed
4	Staff training – need to be up to date	Cannot deploy suitable quality staff to teaching.
5	Reliance/Dependency on key staff	Risk that key staff leaves the school.
6	Fluctuating rolls	Cannot plan, loss of income.
7	Uncertainty over budgets	Cannot plan, decisions taken last minute.
8	Loss of staff time preparing funding bids	Time diverted from class room duties
9	Inspections	A critical inspection in a key area of the stress caused by an inspection.
10	Poor exam results	This may impact on school rolls and finances.
11	School trip incident	Harm to a child / helper / teacher whilst on a school trip.
12	Bullying incident	Bullying of pupils and staff, potential for claims.
13	Child welfare	Harm to a child either within school or results are seen at school and are not adequately dealt with.
14	Accident/Incident on site	Health and safety risks
15	Arson	Fire at the school started deliberately.
16	Fire	Caused through a variety of means e.g electrical, ongoing work, classroom experiments.
17	Fraud	Loss of funds.
18	Flood	Part of the school becomes flooded.
19	Trespass	Access to premises / land by inappropriate individuals.
20	Vandalism	Potential damage to key assets through vandalism,

		from graffiti to arson.
21	Lone visits by staff off site	Staff placed in vulnerable situations
22	Theft of key equipment	Loss of computers / printers and other equipment
23	Assault	Assault on staff
24	Inappropriate use of IT (by pupils or staff)	Inappropriate access to internet or receipt of e-mail.
25	Increasing reliance on IT	I.T failure caused by power issues, obsolete hardware or software or virus.
26	Power failure	Loss of power causing school closure
27	Food hygiene issue	Illness of child / staff. Critical inspection.
28	Drug misuse	Drug misuse or children exposed to drugs.
29	Non compliance with Health & Safety legislation (it can be unrealistic)	Found to be in non compliance
30	Disability Discrimination Act failure	Cannot provide appropriate access to facilities.
31	Buildings maintenance	Building costs spiral / cannot operate within the buildings.
32	Asbestos issue	Asbestos within property
33	Poor/Problem contracts	Enter into a contract that does not offer good terms or problem clauses.
34	Increasing partnerships/joint working risks	A partner organisation does not meet their obligations.
35	Data Protection Act breach	Challenge under Data Protection.
36	Freedom of Information Act breach	Enquiries and found to be in breach / cannot deal appropriately with enquiries.
37	Diversification/Innovation	Cannot satisfy Best Value
38	Relationship with community	Community does not support the school or is not engaged with the school.

Stage 2. Prioritisation - Assessing the Probability and the Impact of Each Risk

Table 3 below is a matrix offering a straightforward means of plotting the probability of the risk occurring and its likely impact. **This shows in quite stark terms those risks that should cause most concern – high chance of occurrence and high impact.** It should be relatively easy for staff and governors to complete as it is based on the knowledge of several people without the need for lots of detailed analysis. The idea is to plot the different risk assessments on the grid using the reference numbers from column 1 in Table 1 to quickly identify the risks about which management action needs to be taken.

Once all risks are plotted on the matrix, those that fall in the Red or Amber squares need to be looked at and will usually require some degree of management action. Red risks are more pressing than amber risks and these should be the ones that you deal with first.

Table 3. Risk Matrix

PROBABILITY	High	3	3	6	9
	Medium	2	2	4	6
	Low	1	1	2	3
			1	2	3
			Low	Medium	High
				IMPACT	

By multiplying Probability by Impact a risk score is given, i.e. the top score is 9, 3 multiplied by 3, which helps to prioritise the risks quickly within the register itself.

The following definitions help to identify where a particular risk might sit in the matrix shown at Table 3. Please note these are for guidance only. They are illustrative only and should not be used literally. Always use local discretion to ensure the ratings fit local circumstances.

Probability Description	Definition
High (3)	Risk is likely to occur
Medium (2)	Risk may occur (but is not inevitable)
Low (1)	Risk is unlikely to occur (i.e will only occur in exceptional circumstances)

Impact Description	Definition
High (3)	Risks resulting in – Extensive permanent or long term injuries / sick, loss of life, long or medium term interruption to school activities, adverse national publicity, negative consequences for most pupils, staff or parents, litigation almost certain and difficult to defend, material financial loss, breaches of law punishable by imprisonment or issues considered critical by OFSTED Inspectors.
Medium (2)	Risks resulting in – Medical treatment required, short term interruption to school activities, negative consequences for many pupils, staff or parents, litigation to be expected, significant financial loss, breaches of law punishable by fines or issues considered important by OFSTED Inspectors, breaches of national or professional regulations/standards.
Low (1)	Risks resulting in – No injuries beyond “first aid” level, minor or no significant disruption to school activities, difficult to handle local press interest, negative effects on a few pupils, staff or parents only, unlikely to cause complaint/litigation, negligible financial loss, breaches of local procedures/standards.

Stage 3: Control Definition and Controls Assessment

The first step is to consider the existing controls. A brief description of existing controls in place to manage the risk should be recorded in the risk register. Examples of controls are:

- project plans; effective resource management; verification processes; management information and actions; physical safeguards; supervision; monitoring.

This helps in the assessment of the “real” risk by briefly considering and evaluating the level of existing controls in place. For this purpose it will be sufficient to assess and record the controls as Good, Fair or Poor, using the criteria set out below.

Assessments

Good = all required controls in place and working

Fair = some controls are in place and operating

Poor = controls are missing, or in place but not operating

Stage 4: Priority/Timescales/Review Date

Description of further action required is entered into the risk register and reviewed periodically.

The priority of the risk determines the Time Frame and Review Date as follows:

Priority	Time Frame For review	Review Date
Low	Long Term	Date – 12 months from now
Medium	Medium Term	Date – 6 months from now
High	Short Term	Date – 3 months from now

Risk Owner

The risk owner is the person who can be accountable for taking the action (Risk Treatment). This may be further delegated in some instances and this person should be recorded in the risk register, but the primary risk owner must be recorded for accountability purposes