
POLICY STATEMENT ON PORTABLE APPLIANCE TESTING

Introduction

At Cobham Hall, we aim to engage our community in health and safety. Everyone, staff, pupils and visitors needs a safe and healthy environment. We welcome suggestions from everyone on how our school can be made a healthier and safer place. Staff must read the School's Health and Safety policy, and familiarise themselves with the risk assessments and health and safety procedures that affect their particular area of work or general responsibilities.

Faulty electrical fittings can be a major cause of fire and serious accidents. Over and above our general duty of care owed to staff, pupils and visitors, we ask all staff, pupils and visitors to cooperate with the measures that we provide in order to ensure electrical safety.

Organisation

The Governors have vested day to day responsibility for the operation of health and safety at the school with the Bursar who has overall responsibility for monitoring health and safety within the School and for reporting any breaches to the Headmaster. He is responsible for ensuring compliance with the Regulations, for electrical safety and the testing of portable appliances and for safe conditions at the school. All Heads of Faculty are asked to cooperate in applying this regime.

Frequency of Inspection and Testing

The law does not specify how often you must test the electrical equipment under your control. The School has carried out a risk assessment based on Health & Safety Executive guidelines to determine the frequency of testing. The frequency of testing depends on the wear and tear, risk to user and the likelihood of maintenance being required.

As a school electrical equipment is introduced by staff and students throughout the year often from countries outside of the UK and EU. All new equipment must be checked before it is used to ensure it complies with current British standards. Where necessary the School will arrange for a competent person to make alterations to ensure that equipment is safe and suitable for use.

The success of the system relies on the co-operation of staff and students. Through training, the School will ensure that staff, students and parents know the risks, the requirements and their individual responsibilities. Where necessary individuals will be given additional training to ensure that they can competently carry out their roles.

Training

Health and safety training is critical in order that staff understand how to manage the potential hazards associated with their roles and how to respond in a crisis. Training is provided to all new members of staff. All new staff receive basic training in fire safety and emergency procedures. The training covers the basics of electrical safety, including:

- Safe operation and usage, with specialist training given to those using specialist equipment, such as power tools, performance lighting or catering equipment.
- Any portable electrical appliance, belonging to a member of staff or pupil, that is operated by the mains supply requires to be tested by an appropriately trained member of staff.
- Ensuring that pupils understand that Christmas lights, computers, DVD players, iPod chargers and players, mobile phone chargers, games consoles, hair dryers, kettles and toasters are all covered by the term "portable electrical appliance" and must be tested before use in school (and labelled).
- The basic visual safety checks that all staff should carry out on the electrical equipment that they regularly use, and the need to report any concerns to the Maintenance Department as soon as they are spotted.
- The need to switch off and unplug a piece of equipment that is suspected of being faulty until it can be tested by an appropriately qualified member of staff.
- The daily routine of switching off appliances at the end of the day, and not leaving them on "standby"

Electrical Safety

The School holds current electrical test certificates for all of its buildings. As a matter of policy, we only use NICEIC accredited, qualified Electrical Engineers to inspect and maintain our electrical installations which are gradually being upgraded to meet the latest standards; but all of which have been inspected for safety, earth continuity etc. By exclusively using NICEIC accredited contractors, we ensure that we only employ contractors who are qualified and work to the highest current standards of workmanship and safety.

Every member of the Caretaking and Maintenance Department has been trained in isolating the fuse boxes in the School.

Visual Inspections

The HSE advises that "Around 95% of faults or damage can be found just by looking (visual inspection)" in its publication "Maintaining Portable Electrical Equipment in Offices and Other Low-Risk Environments." Formal visual checks, all of which are recorded, are therefore organised as follows:

Science: our maintenance team is responsible for carrying out and recording formal, visual checks of all portable electrical Science equipment used by pupils every year, and every two years for equipment used exclusively by staff. Fume cupboards are serviced annually by a qualified individual.

Art: The Maintenance Supervisor will arrange for the kiln to be serviced annually by a qualified person

Drama: The Maintenance Supervisor will arrange for all the performance lights to be inspected annually by a competent person and for the caretakers to carry out an annual visual check of all portable electrical tools and equipment used in the Drama workshop.

Catering: Our GA Supervisor, has been trained and is responsible for inspecting all electrically operated equipment in the school kitchens on a daily basis, and for recording those checks.

Maintenance equipment: All power tools are inspected annually.

Miscellaneous equipment: Kettles, toasters, fridges, microwaves and desk lamps are visually inspected by the Maintenance Department. The Maintenance Department also inspect electrical floor

cleaners, the electronic equipment, CD players etc that are held in the Music Department and in other areas of the school.

Boarders' personal items: All portable equipment brought into the School by boarders is checked. The checks are carried out by our Maintenance staff at the start of term and when new equipment is purchased.

Format

This basic inspection is designed to identify defects, caused through wear and tear before the equipment can cause a shock or burn, or cause a fire. We also check that:

- Plug sockets are not over-loaded by the use of multi-way adaptors
- Cables do not cause a trip hazard
- Unprotected cables do not run under carpets
- Cups, plants and other items are not kept routinely where they can spill onto electrical equipment
- Equipment is not positioned in such a way as to cause strain on the cable
- Equipment is not operated with its cover removed
- There is no visible damage to the equipment, cable or the plug
- There are no non-standard joints (such as taped joints)
- Plug covers are in place
- Correct fuses are fitted
- There is no sign of over-heating
- There is no sign of damage to the wall socket.
- Ventilation is adequate to prevent over-heating
- All appliances can be easily switched off
- All staff who carry out visual inspections are instructed to remove the plug from any piece of equipment that is found to be faulty. We ask all staff to cooperate.

Testing

Some faults cannot be detected by visual inspection, particularly lack of continuous earths.

The School's testing equipment is hand held and includes an earth-bound continuity test that is suitable for IT equipment. ICT equipment is tested on purchase, and thereafter at intervals of up to 5 years. All other equipment, cables, leads, plugs and extension leads is tested on purchase, and thereafter on the frequency identified in the risk assessment. All equipment is tagged with the date of the test.

Information for Parents on Electrical Safety

The following information is sent to all parents of new pupils:

All personal electrical equipment must be checked and authorised by the Bursar's Department for legal and safety reasons. Some adaptors from overseas do not meet British Health and Safety requirements and use of these will not be allowed.

Equipment Inspection and Testing

Visual checks of all new portable electrical equipment introduced to the School by pupils and staff will be carried out at the beginning of each term. Housemistresses to make arrangements with Caretakers for visually checking equipment introduced by pupils.

Continuity testing of all other portable equipment is carried out on a continuous cycle.

Controls and Audits

All checks must be recorded in writing by the responsible person. All new equipment must be added to the register and equipment that is disposed of, removed from the register.

The Bursar will carry out an audit on at least an annual basis to ensure that checks and records have been completed.

Related Policies and Documents

- Policy Statement on Health and Safety