

# **Health, Safety and Wellbeing Annual Report Covering the year 2022-23 January 2024**



## Document information

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## Document accessibility

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## 1. Introduction

It is best practice for local authorities and other large organisations to summarise their health & safety performance in an annual report. This is Walsall Council's seventh annual report since they were reintroduced in 2017.

The report summarises how Walsall Council manages health & safety and gives key performance data for the reporting period.

Health & safety legislation requires employers to have competent health & safety advice and appropriate systems in place to manage health & safety. In Walsall, we have a small central team of advisers consisting of a health & safety manager, two health & safety advisers, and a (0.8 FTE) fire safety adviser based in Human Resources. In addition, we have a health & safety training officer (also based in HR) and a health & safety/training manager based in Clean & Green (Economy Environment & Communities).

## 2. Corporate management

The council's health & safety management system is aligned to HSE's guidance "Managing for health & safety" (HSG65) and follows the **Plan, Do, Check, Act** approach to management.

The council has a Health & Safety Policy in place that is reviewed every three years (last published May 2023); in addition, there is a suite of 32 Safety Management Standards (SMSs). These are reviewed on a rolling programme (see appendix 1).

The council's main health & safety forum is the Corporate Health & Safety Board (CHSB) that meets three times per year; the Board is chaired by the Executive Director of Economy Environment & Communities (the "executive nominated director" for health & safety). Following each Board, a report is taken to Corporate Management Team (CMT) outlining the main issues discussed at the Board and any learning points. Each directorate and recognised trade union is represented at the Board, and it is supported by the health & safety team.

Each directorate has established a Health & Safety Committee that meets three times per year; committees are chaired by the directorate's "lead officer" who is also their representative at the Board and sits on their Directorate Management Team (DMT). Committees consist of both management and trade union representatives, with support from a member of the health & safety team.

The Board/Committee meeting cycles are designed to feed into each other and help ensure effective communication. The links between the Board/CMT and Committees/DMTs are also designed to help monitor health & safety and ensure that key information is considered at the right level.

On the reactive front, the Board and Committees receive regular reports on our accidents, near misses, and aggressive incidents, and directorates are expected to take appropriate remedial action to help prevent recurrence.

### 3. Regulatory intervention

This year has seen no regulatory intervention from either the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) or the Fire Authority, and no notices have been served on the council<sup>1</sup>.

If we receive any regulatory intervention, CMT and the Board would be notified and informed of the implications for the council, including what actions are required to address the issues.

### 4. Communication

Directorates are charged with ensuring that they take ownership of health & safety issues and communicate corporate initiatives and learning points effectively to their staff. Over and above this, the health & safety team ensures that the policy, SMSs, and a range of guidance and tools are available on the council's intranet site [Inside Walsall](#). A comprehensive range of clear, up to date, school related guidance and tools is also available on the schools' intranet [Walsall Link](#) (access to the traded pages requires user name and password).

In addition, key health & safety messages and changes in procedures are communicated via Inside Walsall, and other communication channels as appropriate.

### 5. Statistical information

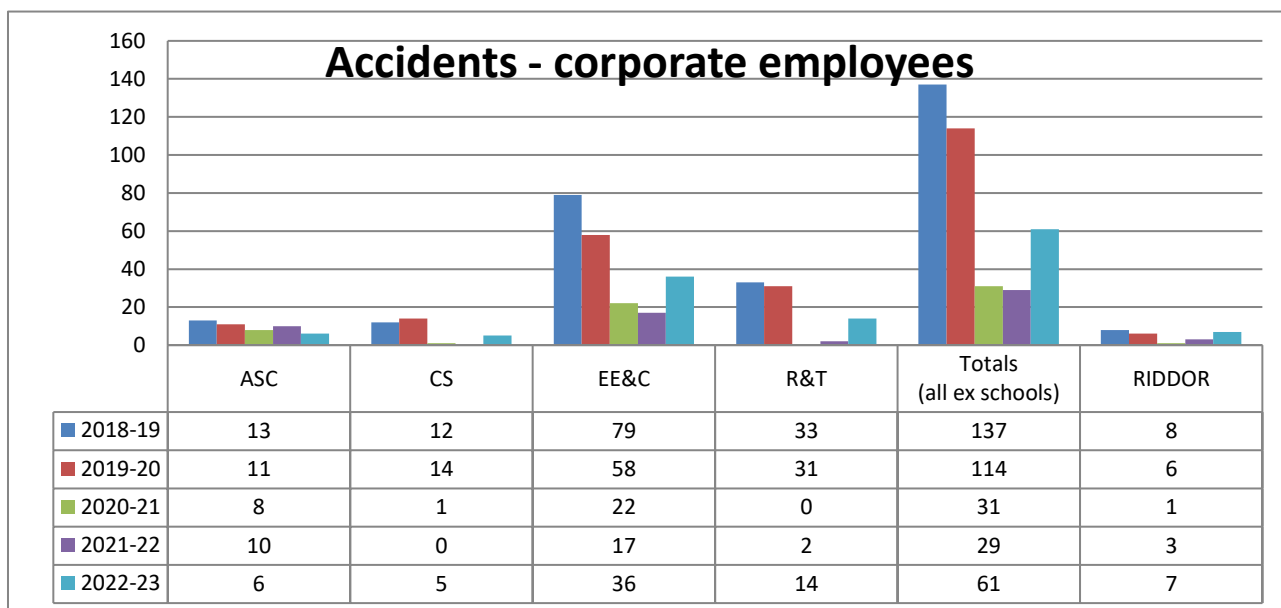
Key statistical information on accidents, aggressive incidents, and work-related liability claims, are included in this section. For clarity, we split accident/incident data for schools from the overall corporate data.

Post-covid, and in line with our Ways of Working Policy many staff are now working from home on a regular basis and interactions with customers have reduced in some areas. This has impacted positively on both accident and incident numbers, consequently at the November 2021 CHSB it was agreed that going forward any comparison of reporting periods use September 2021 as a baseline.

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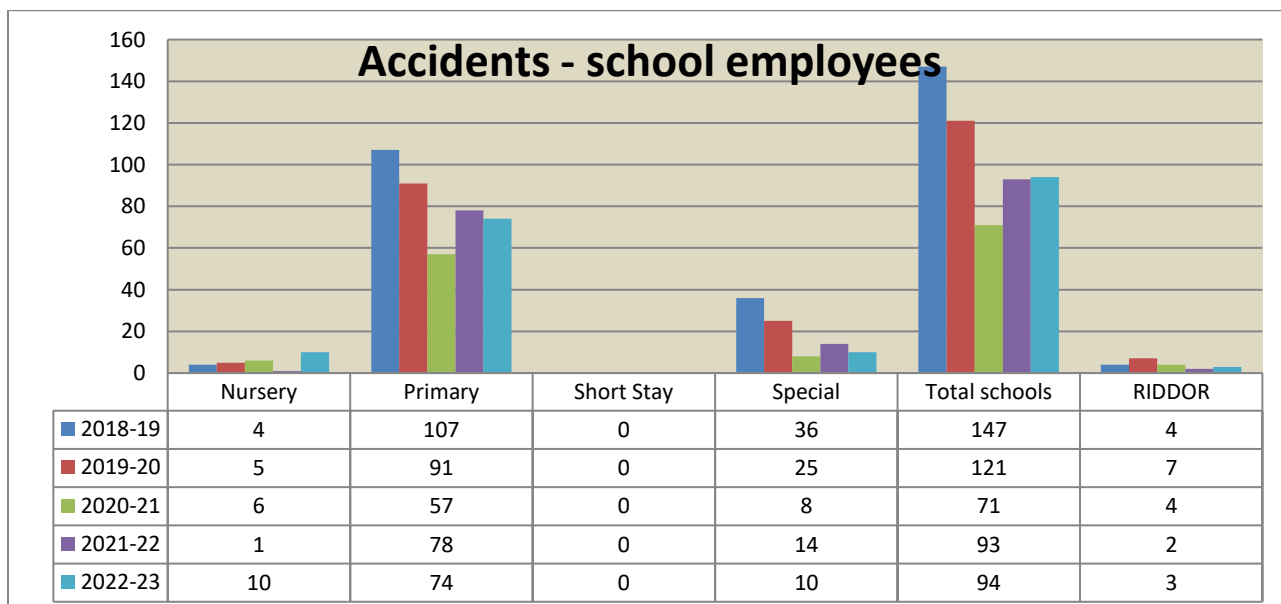
<sup>1</sup> Outside of the scope/range of this report, a notice was served on the council in November 2023, for a breach of pesticide legislation (the Plant Protection Products (Sustainable Use) Regulations 2012), at one of our depots – the stock of the no-longer authorised product has now been removed by a licenced contractor.

### 5.1 Accidents – employees



The number of employee accidents has risen compared to last year, particularly in EE&C and R&T; however, the number of accidents is still around half the level they were pre-pandemic. The rise may be a reflection that many staff in EE&C and in certain sections of R&T work on site, and the reduction in accidents we saw during/post-pandemic was because many staff started working from home, albeit more staff now come into the workplace as part of our flexible ways of working.

There was a rise in the number of accidents reportable under RIDDOR<sup>2</sup>, but low numbers overall and nothing that causes any immediate concern.



Note: given that no mainstream secondary school has council employees, we have removed secondary schools from our accident statistics.

<sup>2</sup> Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013

The number of employee accidents is similar to last year's. We note that figures have remained at a lower level than the historic norm; no obvious reason accounts for this, however as more schools become academies, we expect accident numbers to fall since the staff will no longer be our employees.

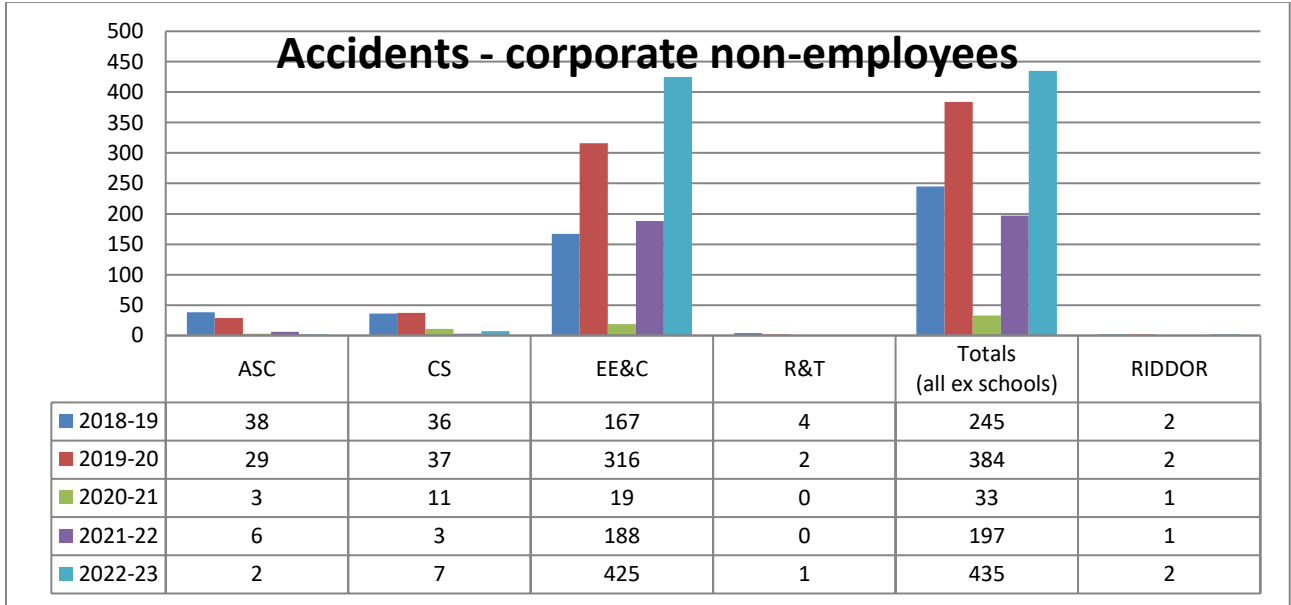
**Annual accident incident rates**

The following table provides incident rates (per thousand FTE employees, excluding casuals)

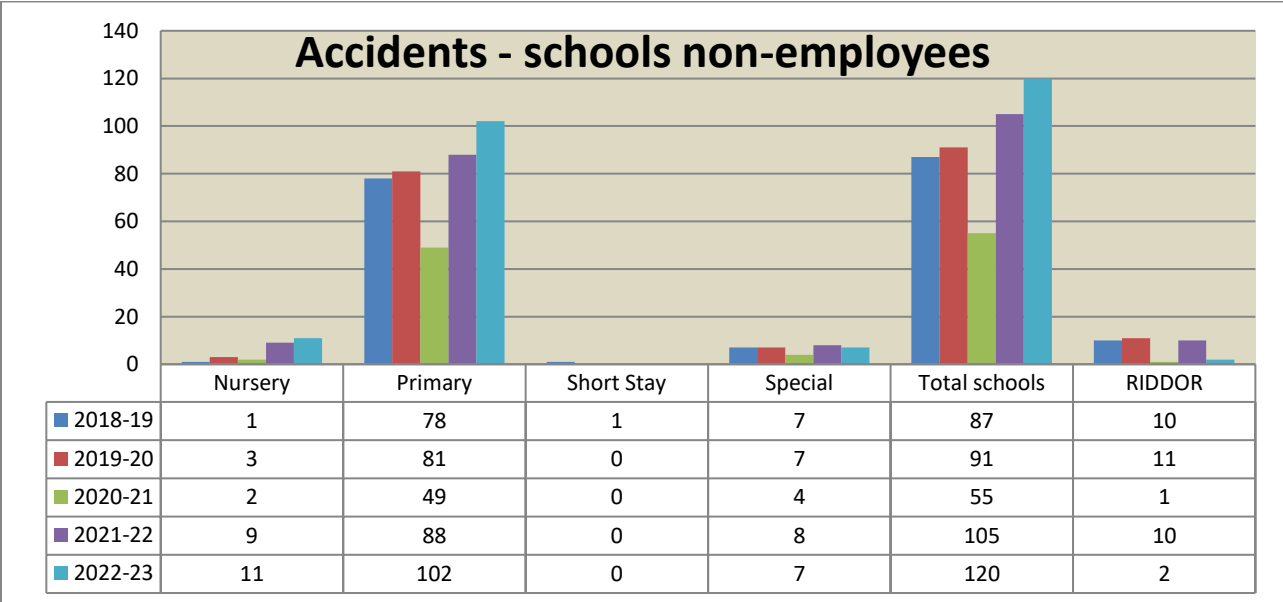
Directorate	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Adult Social Care	32.6	33.7	21.4	25.4	16.0
Children's Services	19.4	22.8	1.3	0.0	6.8
Economy Environment & Communities	105.5	77.6	29.3	25.8	51.7
Resources & Transformation	38.8	36.0	0.0	3.1	18.8
<b>Overall (exc. schools)</b>	<b>52.4</b>	<b>44.7</b>	<b>12.0</b>	<b>11.7</b>	<b>23.9</b>
Note: we only calculate incident rates for schools where the council is the employer					
School employee accident rate	52.0	42.6	25.5	33.5	32.5

Accident incident rates have risen in line with the increased number of accidents in EE&C and R&T, noted above; however, the overall rate is still around half of the pre-pandemic rate.

**5.2 Accidents – non-employees**



Non-employee accident reports have increased markedly; however, most of these accidents are in our leisure facilities and are mostly sporting related, rather than due to any issues with our premises, etc. We continue to monitor these accidents but believe that the increase is mostly down to more consistent reporting by our leisure facilities, rather than an increase in actual accidents to the public. The improvement in consistency is to be welcomed since it gives a more accurate picture and allows our leisure colleagues to check if we have the right systems in place to minimise these types of accident.



The number of non-employee accidents in schools has risen slightly, however incidents per school remains low.

The number of RIDDOR reportable incidents has fallen sharply (possibly because we now ask all schools and council managers to contact the health & safety team prior to reporting an accident as RIDDOR – this has reduced the misreporting of accidents that fall outside RIDDOR’s reporting criteria).

**5.3 Kinds of accident**

The top three “kinds” of accident for employees/non-employees both corporately and in schools were (numbers of incidents in brackets):

	1st	2nd	3rd	Others
Employees	Slips/trips/falls on same level (19)	Hit something fixed or stationary (6)	Hit by moving object (5)	(31)
Non-employees	Slips/trips/falls on same level (116)	Sporting injury (60)	Hit something fixed or stationary (53)	(206)
School employees	Slips/trips/falls on same level (32)	Hit by moving object (20)	Hit something fixed or stationary (13)	(32)
School non-employees	Slips/trips/falls on same level (66)	Hit by moving object (16)	Hit something fixed or stationary (10)	(39)

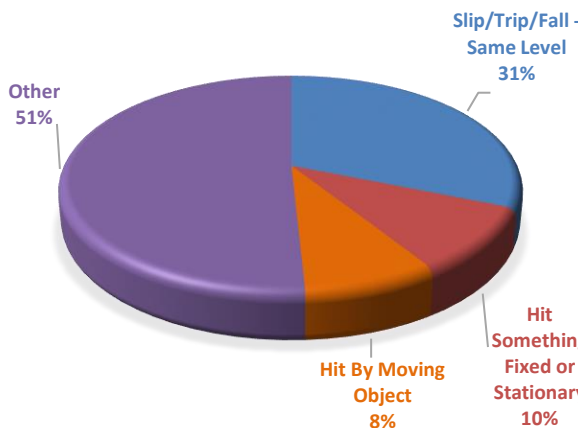
This can be better illustrated as percentages on the following charts:



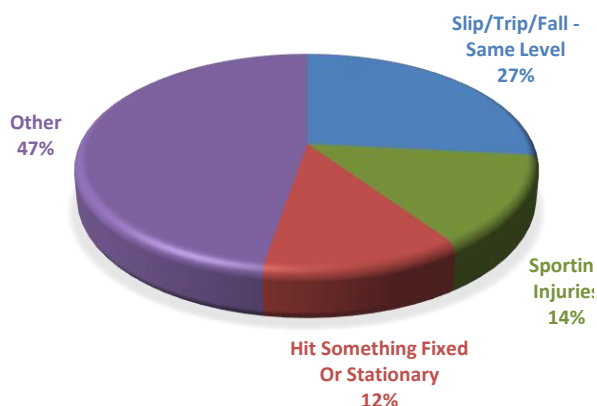


**Corporate 2022-23**

**KINDS OF EMPLOYEE ACCIDENTS**

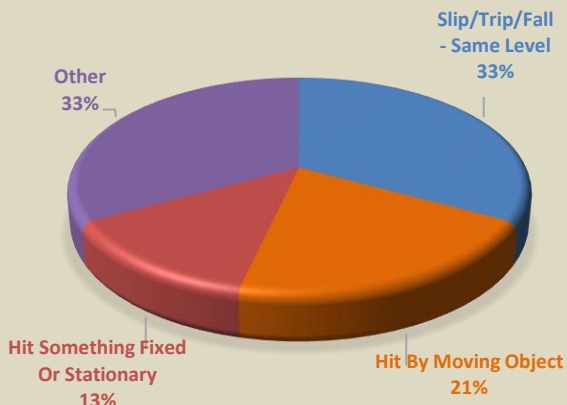


**KINDS OF NON-EMPLOYEE ACCIDENTS**

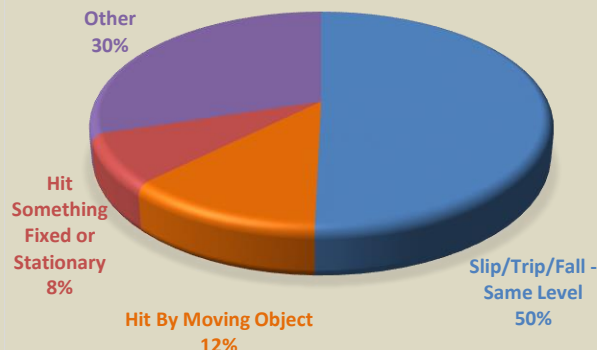


**Schools 2022-23**

**KINDS OF EMPLOYEE ACCIDENTS**



**KINDS OF NON-EMPLOYEE ACCIDENTS**



The proportions of “kinds of accidents” are broadly in line with previous years.

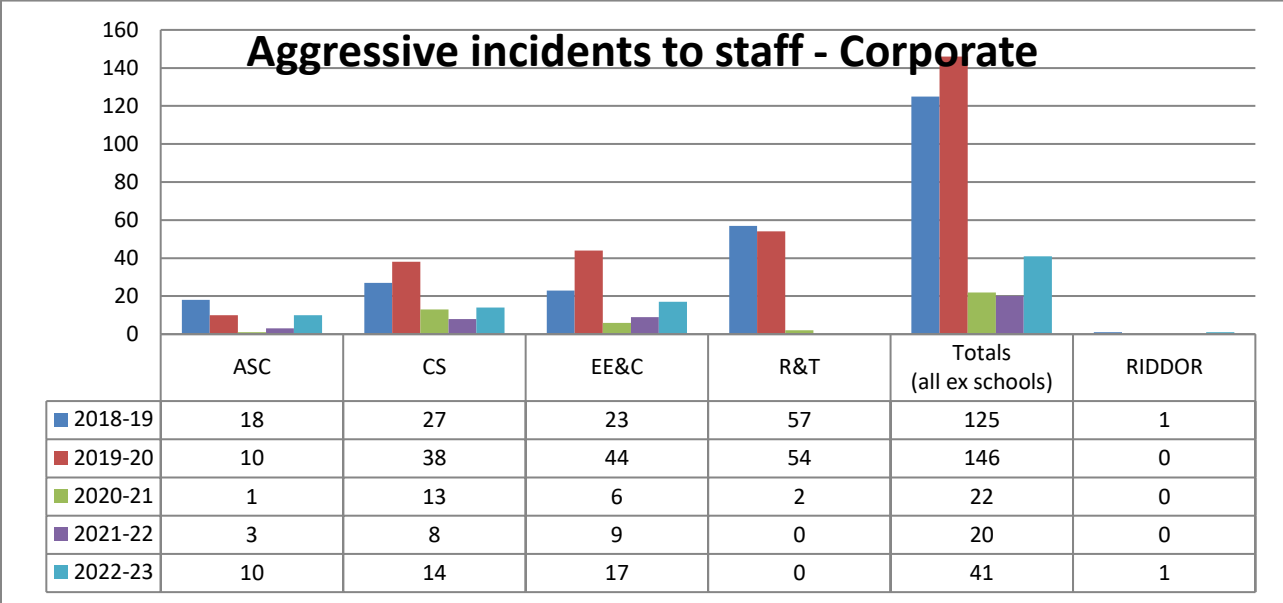
Once again, slips/trips/falls on same level is the main cause of accidents both corporately and in schools. However, when we look at these in more detail, it appears that there are many scenarios behind this kind of accident and there is no one simple solution that will work in all circumstances, although good housekeeping always helps. The prevalence of this kind of accident does illustrate however, that accidents often have simple causes.

“Hit by moving object” and “Hit something fixed or stationary” are, once again, often a significant “kind” of accident and the prevalence may at first seem strange; however, it covers a range of common incidents including being hit by a ball and walking into furniture. As with slips/trips/falls, there are many scenarios behind these kinds of accidents and no one simple solution.

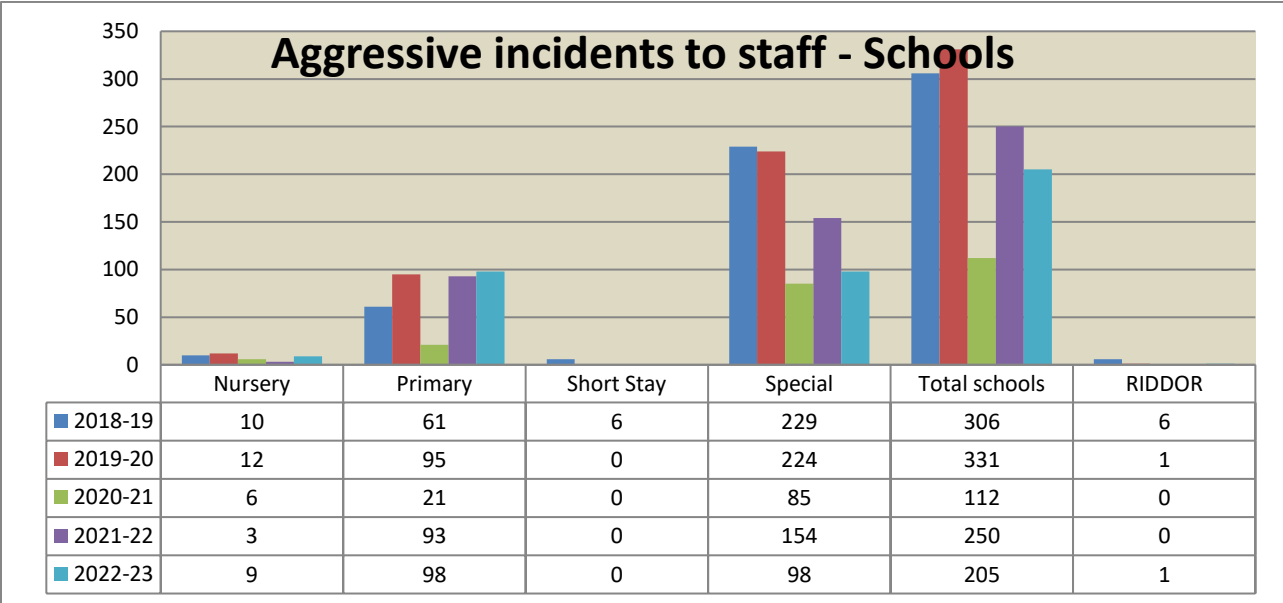


**5.4 Violence and aggression (to staff)**

We collect data on physical assaults, threatening behaviour, and verbal abuse aimed at our staff. Physical assault tends to be reported more than the other categories; but “physical assault” encompasses a wide range of incidents from simple scratches through to more serious issues; however, the vast majority are minor incidents, many with no intent behind them.



There has been a “bounce back” in aggressive incidents in our public facing services but numbers are still only around a third of those pre-pandemic. Since the First Stop Shop became appointment only, aggressive incidents have disappeared in that area; however, we are aware that having contact centres in local libraries may divert some incidents to other parts of the council. We continue to monitor this to ensure the right controls are in place to keep staff safe.



Aggressive incidents to school staff have fallen. The highest levels of aggressive incidents are, as expected, in our special schools, along with mainstream schools with specialist

provision. In these settings a small number of children displaying disruptive behaviour can seriously affect incident numbers; consequently, figures can be volatile year on year.

### Annual violence and aggression incident rates

The following table provides incident rates (per thousand FTE employees, excluding casuals)

Directorate	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Adult Social Care	45.2	30.7	2.7	7.6	26.7
Children's Services	43.7	61.8	16.5	10.3	19.1
Economy Environment & Communities	30.7	58.9	8.0	13.7	24.4
Resources & Transformation	67.0	62.7	3.0	0.0	0.0
<b>Overall (exc. schools)</b>	<b>47.8</b>	<b>57.3</b>	<b>8.5</b>	<b>8.1</b>	<b>16.1</b>
Note: we only calculate incident rates for schools where the council is the employer					
School aggressive incident rate	115.0	119.5	41.6	93.3	71.0

Aggressive incident rates have risen in line with the increased number of incidents, noted above; however, the overall rate is still around a third of that pre-pandemic. The incident rate in schools also remains significantly below pre-Covid levels.

Please note, for most staff incidents of aggression are rare; however, some staff are more exposed to aggression due to the nature of the service users/customers they work with, hence, we tend to get "hot spots", and this is where resources should be concentrated.

### 5.5 Employers' liability and public liability claims

During the financial year 2022/23:

- There were eight **employer's liability** claims received, three closed due to one being repudiated; one being referred to contractors and one without a formal claim being pursued [this incurring £350 in Loss Adjusters fees]. There remain five open with a total reserve of £96,300
- There were no **public liability** claims

Both employer's liability and public liability can include historic claims – some of which take a while to come through and/or be settled. The cost of historic claims settled during 2022-23 were:

- There were six **employer's liability** claims consisting of one repudiated, one not pursued and one with no official claim being made [the latter two resulting in £350 Loss Adjusters' fees being paid]. There were three claims paid totalling £23,455
- There were six **public liability** claims relating to workplaces of which two were repudiated with one incurring £350 Loss Adjusters fees. Four were successful totalling £13,750

## 6. Wellbeing

The council has several wellbeing initiatives in place. These include:

- Our [Health & wellbeing at work offer](#) – designed to help create a healthy environment at work and help staff to take responsibility for their own health and wellbeing.

- Our [stress toolkit](#) – which includes links to a range of training courses to help raise awareness of stress amongst staff and managers, and to help build resilience; links to our HR policies and procedures that directly or indirectly relate to staff wellbeing and are designed to support staff and managers; links to our stress related health & safety guidance; and links to our employee assistance and occupational health support.

In addition, we promote [mental health and wellbeing](#) and have a number of staff trained in [mental health first aid](#). We also have trained [menopause champions](#) to provide support to colleagues and managers.

Although outside the timeframe of this report, our recently introduced (September 23) Ways of Working Policy allows employees to work from home, hot desk from a variety of council locations or out in the community. Most staff appreciate the flexibility of this hybrid working, but we know that working from home can feel isolating, hence the policy stresses that managers should ensure contact is maintained to provide appropriate health and wellbeing support and to ensure that staff continue to feel included and connected as part of the team.

## 7. Joint consultation

We consult with staff and appropriate trade unions representatives in the development and monitoring of our health & safety systems, policies, procedures, and risk assessments.

In addition, we formally consult with trade union colleagues at both the Corporate Health & Safety Board and directorate Health & Safety Committees.

## 8. Key achievements (overview) to end March 23

Although the impact of covid was much reduced during the period 2022/23, we still occasionally felt it's impact on our work programme, e.g., audits postponed at short notice due to unavailability of school staff; however, the impact gradually lessened throughout the year.

The health & safety team has fully embraced our flexible ways of working, we tend to work from home and most of our meetings are now online; however, auditing, fire risk assessment, and training means that we regularly meet colleagues face to face both in schools and at our corporate establishments.

Some of the key achievements in 2022/23 are set out below:

### 8.1 Guidance and process review

During 2022/23, we reviewed and updated the following safety management standards (SMSs):

- Personal protective equipment (PPE)
- DSE
- Electricity & gas
- Young workers
- LOLER (lifting operations)
- New & expectant mothers
- Radiation

- Safety signs
- Accident and incident reporting
- Manual handling
- Work at height

Away from SMSs we also revised and simplified the manual handling form used for higher-risk manual handling tasks, and produced a range of documentation to help schools manage swimming pool safety.

## 8.2 Auditing activity

Generally, our premises have an audit every two years; although this can be adjusted according to the risk profile of the establishment, (e.g., higher risk premises can be done more frequently). The audits are thorough and examine the management arrangements for health & safety at each establishment, to check compliance with legislative requirements, best practice, and the council's Safety Management Standards.

During 2022/23, there were 22 management audits<sup>3</sup> of schools and 11 intermediate audits. In addition, four corporate management audits and four corporate intermediate audits were carried out, along with ten desktop reviews of lower risk premises.

Following an audit, managers/headteachers receive an Audit Report that includes an Action Plan setting out any issues that need addressing. The head of service or, in the case of schools, Children's Services' head of access also receives a copy of the report. Managers/headteachers are asked to return a copy of the completed Action Plan to the health & safety team to show they are addressing any issues raised. Any learning points are shared as appropriate with directorate health & safety committees.

In addition to our general audit programme, all community schools with swimming pools received a pool audit along with at least one pool safety support day and a LZVT (lifeguard zone visibility test). They were also issued with revised documentation, namely a PSOP (pool safety operating procedure), a PTOP (pool technical operating procedure), and pool test check sheets.

## 8.3 Fire risk management

Generally, our premises have a fire risk assessment (FRA) every two years<sup>4</sup>, although this can be adjusted according to the risk profile of the establishment. Establishments are expected to review their FRA each year and inform the health & safety team of any major changes that may affect the current FRA.

During 2022/23, there were 33 FRAs of schools, along with 42 FRAs of corporate premises.

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<sup>3</sup> Most of our establishments have a "four plus two" year audit programme; that is, they receive a full management audit every four years, with a two-yearly intermediate audit based around a self-audit questionnaire and the previous audit's Action Plan

<sup>4</sup> Note, during 2023-24 the 24-month FRA cycle will move, in most instances, to a 30-month cycle to reflect the reduced working hours of our fire safety adviser. Given the maturity of our FRA programme, we do not envisage this increasing the overall risk

Following an FRA, managers/headteachers receive an FRA Report that includes any deficiencies that need addressing, along with an Action Plan. The head of service or, in the case of schools, the head of access also receives a copy of the report.

Our FRA programme is quite mature, and most premises have few substantive issues; consequently, we only ask managers/headteachers to return a copy of the completed Action Plan if there are substantive issues raised. Any learning points are shared as appropriate with directorate health & safety committees.

## 8.4 Training

On the training front, to help ensure staff competence, we have comprehensive programmes of health & safety and fire safety training available both corporately and, as a traded service, to schools. This training aims to cover core health & safety topics, such as management of health & safety, risk assessment, accident investigation, and first aid. The training is often supplemented by more role-specific training arranged locally by service areas/schools.

In 2022/23 we delivered the following:

- 67 training courses were delivered corporately with 523 attendees (approaching pre-pandemic level)
- 44 training courses were delivered to schools with 433 attendees (around pre-pandemic levels)

A range of health & safety eLearning courses is also available for staff.

A summary of the training that took place during 2022/23 is provided at appendix 2.

## 9. Monitoring health & safety performance

We have several active and reactive monitoring systems in place, most notably the audit/FRA programmes and statistics/analysis of accidents and aggressive incident data collected by the health & safety team.

The Corporate Health & Safety Board receives a regular report outlining developments in health & safety. The report includes data on accidents and incidents, along with some interpretation of the results and any trends identified. The Board is also kept up to date with the audit/FRA programmes and any emerging issues.

Following the Board, a report is taken to CMT outlining the main issues discussed at the Board and any learning points.

Each directorate health & safety committee receives regular updates on learning points from audits/FRAs, along with more detailed analysis of accidents/aggressive incidents for their areas.

Directorates are asked to feedback to the Board/their committee any circumstances that influence accidents/incidents numbers and any initiatives taken to reduce the instances. In addition, directorates are asked to feedback to the Board what action they have taken to share learning points raised at the last Board; how changes to SMSs, procedures, etc., have been communicated across the directorate; and how the directorate is checking that learning points are acted upon and amended procedures are implemented/monitored.

## 10. Strategic action plan – (long term corporate)

We believe that the building blocks are in place to ensure that we manage health & safety effectively; however, we want to ensure that we have the right health & safety culture in Walsall. To that end, several initiatives are already in place, for instance:

- We regularly engage with managers, staff, and the unions on key issues with a requirement that directorates update each Board on any outstanding matters
- Three times a year a report is presented to CMT to highlight trends, key issues, and ensure effective responses have been put in place
- We have a Corporate Health & Safety Objective, along with a set of actions to help ensure that we keep health & safety on track
- We launched the annual health & safety sense check in December 2018 and have asked line managers to use a simple form once a year as a “sense check” to show that they are on top of all their main health & safety responsibilities. At the same time, we also ask them to complete a managers’ training checklist to help give themselves reassurance that they are on top of all their health & safety training needs

Going forward:

- We will continue to work with key service areas to better understand their accident and incident data – our Accident Dashboard is proving a very valuable tool in spotting trends/hot spots and highlighting where questions need to be asked to get reassurance that our systems remain robust or to prompt a review of the controls already in place
- We have been developing a tool to help summarise and analyse the main findings of audits so that we can highlight recurring themes and drill down into specific topics, rather than just look at individual audit reports in isolation
- We are looking to review the health & safety training offered to managers to ensure greater consistency both at operational and leadership level
- As resources and directorate capacity allow, we still want to engage directorates in some higher-level auditing that concentrates on planning, communication, and monitoring – to help ensure that we are embedding health & safety in the organisation and that we are closing the loop (the **Plan, Do, Check, Act** model)

## 11. Conclusion and development

The health & safety team has a work programme that includes a schedule of regular revision of all key health & safety documentation, along with a programme of audits/fire risk assessments of all corporate premises. In addition, the team continues to modernise our health & safety procedures, to ensure that they add value and do not impose an unnecessary bureaucratic burden.

The team, alongside colleagues in Organisational Development continually review all health & safety training offered corporately, to ensure it meets the needs of our customers and is fit for purpose.

As stated above, we believe that the building blocks are in place to ensure that we manage health & safety effectively; however, the council is committed to continuous improvement in



health & safety and, as such, will continue to develop policies, systems, and procedures to achieve that aim.

We want to ensure that we have the right health & safety culture in Walsall. We also want to ensure that there is effective succession planning so that the systems we put in place remain effective and do not fall apart if we lose key staff through retirement or restructure.

Having robust health & safety systems in place, along with the right health & safety culture, and effective succession planning helps compliment some of the wider workforce themes identified in the Corporate Workforce Strategy.

Monitoring of our policies, procedures, and training both by directorates and by our auditing systems should help ensure that health & safety remains one of our top priorities and we keep both staff and customers safe.

## Appendix 1 – list of current Safety Management Standards

SMSs are reviewed on a rolling programme; however, reviews can be reprioritised to reflect emerging issues and changes in legislation, etc.

<b>SMS</b>	<b>Issued</b>
<b>Accident and Incident Reporting</b>	April 2023
<b>Aggression &amp; Violence</b>	March 2021
<b>Asbestos Safety</b>	December 2023
<b>Contractors – Selection and Control</b>	December 2023
<b>COSHH</b>	August 2023
<b>Driving*</b>	
<b>DSE</b>	September 2022
<b>Electricity &amp; Gas</b>	September 2022
<b>Fire and Evacuation</b>	August 2023
<b>First Aid</b>	April 2022
<b>Health Surveillance and Assessment</b>	August 2021
<b>Infection Control</b>	August 2021
<b>Legionella</b>	January 2022
<b>LOLER (Lifting Operations)</b>	December 2022
<b>Lone working/Home working</b>	November 2020
<b>Managers' Responsibilities</b>	August 2023
<b>Manual Handling</b>	April 2023
<b>New and Expectant Mothers</b>	December 2022
<b>Noise</b>	April 2022
<b>Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)</b>	September 2022
<b>Pressure Systems</b>	March 2021
<b>Radiation</b>	December 2022
<b>Risk Assessment</b>	April 2022
<b>Safety Signs</b>	December 2022
<b>Stress</b>	January 2022
<b>Training &amp; Competence</b>	August 2020
<b>Vibration</b>	March 2021
<b>Work at Height</b>	April 2023
<b>Work Equipment/PUWER</b>	January 2022
<b>Working Conditions</b>	August 2021
<b>Workplace Inspections</b>	January 2022
<b>Young Workers</b>	September 2022

\*Review awaiting finalisation of Management of Occupational Road Risk Policy before publication

<b>Other substantive guidance</b>	
<b>Educational Visit Standards</b>	March 2023
<b>Schools' Safety Guides</b>	January 2024
<b>Supporting Children with Medical Conditions Policy</b>	November 2019

## Appendix 2 – corporate health & safety training offer

Health & safety training is provided by Human Resources to cover the key risks both corporately, and in schools. In addition, some service specific training is arranged directly by the service involved but is outside the scope of this report.

The training provided corporately is split into two distinct areas – training provided corporately to council managers and staff (provided by an officer from the Organisational Development team; and, in the case of fire, our fire safety advisor), and training provided to schools (by the Health & Safety team). Regarding the former, 50 per cent of that officer's time is used to provide more bespoke training to Adult Social Care (which includes some training offered to the private/voluntary care sector in Walsall)

Both Organisational Development and the health & safety team offer an annual programme of health & safety training; regularly reviewed to reflect demand and emerging priorities. The following tables summarise the training that took place during 2022/23:

### Course take-up – corporate

Course name	Courses run	Attendees
Accident reporting and investigation	2	4
Apprentice health & safety training	3	25
COSHH training	2	10
Emergency first aid at work	11	92
Evacuation (for elections staff)	1	6
Evacuation chair training (ad-hoc)	0	0
Fire warden training (ad-hoc)	0	0
Food safety	8	66
Health & safety for managers and supervisors	7	45
Health & safety in health and social care	0	0
Hygiene infection control training	0	0
Managing display screen equipment and agile working	2	5
Manual handling of loads	3	72
Manual handling of people	10	47
Personal safety and lone working	7	47
Paediatric first aid (bespoke)	8	91
Risk assessment training	3	13
Working at height	1	6
<b>Totals</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>523</b>

### Course take-up – schools

Course name	Courses run	Attendees
Accident reporting and investigation	4	40
Asbestos awareness training	3	25
COSHH awareness training	2	18
Educational visits coordinator (EVC) & group leader training	3	44
Emergency first aid at work	6	50
Fire warden and extinguisher training	2	23
Initial first aid at work	2	16

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Initial first aid at work - requalification	1	8
Introduction to health and safety for schools' SMT	3	35
IOSH managing safely	3	21
Managing safely refresher	3	27
Paediatric first aid	7	94
Risk assessment training	3	20
Working at height	2	12
<b>Totals</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>433</b>