

## Schools 'too safe'

Monday, 26 April 2010

Schools 'too safe' teachers say and proper that children learn to deal with risk" Nearly half of teachers believe the health and safety culture in schools is damaging children's learning and development, a survey suggests.<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/8107858.stm> Ian Lewis

The HSE's Judith Hackitt:

When questioned by Teachers TV, teachers complained about a five-page briefing on using glue sticks and being told to wear goggles to put up posters.

Others said pupils were not allowed to enjoy the sun or snow without taking health and safety precautions.

Teachers TV surveyed 585 viewers to the channel by questionnaire.

Around 45% of those who took part thought health and safety precautions had a negative effect on teachers, as well as on students' personal development and learning.

### SAFETY RULES

Five-page briefing on the dangers of glue sticks Ban on running in the playground Wet grass stopping PE lessons Ban on playing with conkers One person at a time in staff kitchen Ban on sweets because of choking risk Buoyancy aids for capable year 11 swimmers on a school trip to France

Wearing goggles to put up posters

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However, 45% said they did not think health and safety regulations were too restrictive.

And just over 10% of teachers surveyed thought accidents in schools had increased during the last five years.

'Extreme'

The teachers were also asked about general safety - their own and that of their pupils.

More than half of those who responded - 56% - said they had had to deal with a situation where they suspected a child was being abused.

More than two in five said they were afraid to be alone in a room with a pupil in case they were falsely accused of inappropriate behaviour.

Just under a third of respondents said they were under-prepared in this area.

Questions regarding weapons checks in schools appeared to divide teachers.

Exactly half said they favoured weapons checks in schools and half opposed it.

Chief executive of Teachers TV Andrew Bethell said: "The more extreme examples [of health and safety] are thankfully not the norm but schools still need to take into consideration the workforce's concerns when trying to protect pupils.

"It is worrying that almost a third of the education workforce feel under-prepared to deal with the very complicated issues surrounding abuse and potential abuse."

The Health and Safety Executive has called some of the examples of health and safety precautions cited in the survey "frankly ridiculous".

HSE chair Judith Hackitt said children needed to learn how to manage risk.

She said: "Stop worrying about the 'conkers stories' and help children learn how to handle risk by doing things and going on visits.

"Concentrate on the real risks - not the trivia - by putting measures in place to manage them as far as is reasonable, but don't try to eliminate all risk and don't stop the activity."