

## **Assessing the risks of a primary science activity outside of a normal lesson**

Excited children sharing and seeing new science activities; the awe, the exhilaration, what could be better? This is the response when children have the opportunity to take part in extra-curricular science activities for example Science weeks, Great Science Share for Schools (GSSfs), science celebration events both in your own school or at external venues etc. Often these events involve your children sharing their activities with children from different classes or schools, parents, grandparents or younger siblings. Fantastic events that make lasting science memories for all. In the eagerness of planning, don't forget that the children and adults that your children share with, won't be from your class and you won't know them in the same way that you do your own children.

To keep everyone safe you will need to think about the risk assessments for your science practical activities. Below are some tips to help you do this:

- Start by looking at the resources and advice on our primary website [www.cleapss.org.uk](http://www.cleapss.org.uk).
- CLEAPSS advice is designed for use in a classroom with children, not for public events. You need to make this advice your starting point and adjust it to fit the event context, for example a busy hall with lots of excited children. Under these changed circumstances CLEAPSS safety advice may not be enough. You may need to add to or strengthen it and you may need support and advice from the event organiser.
- Only do activities that you would do in your own school. The risk assessments for those will be a good place to start.
- Think about the age range of those visiting you and your children; choose activities that all children can safely participate in.
- Involve your children when choosing activities, talk to them about the practicalities of different activities.
- Make sure any child demonstrators know about any hazards associated with their activity and can communicate how to stay safe to visiting children or members of the public (simple signage made by your children may help).
- Allow your children time to practice the activities, including practice at being a demonstrator.
- Science events are busy and exciting, so avoid activities where children need lots of space to work.
- With the best will in the world you won't be able to provide close supervision. Choose activities that require low levels of supervision, or adjust the way you showcase the activity at the event.

*We advise against teachers or children running large scale demonstrations and shows. The advice in this document is not applicable to such situations*

Risk assessment is a process:

- Think about the activity,
- Find out what the standard risks and safety measures needed are, (CLEAPSS resources can help you do this),
- if needed, add to or strengthen any safety measures to account for the setting (for example, you may be in a hall, another school classroom, a garden/field, a conference room etc) and the diversity of the audience,
- record any safety measures in a way that helps you and your demonstrators to carry them out,
- stick to your plan, beware of making changes on the fly that you have not had time to think through.

For example:

Your children might run an activity that includes using chopped fruits/vegetables. In your classroom, with your children, you might let them chop the fruit. But at the event it would be better to have the items chopped in advance. This will remove the risk of children you don't know using knives at a confined and busy table.

Hopefully your children will be mobbed with enthusiastic visitors to their table. But what would happen if they run out of fruit/vegetables? Do you give them some chopping boards and knives? No, go back to the safety measure you originally implemented i.e. have a plan for how you'll safely prepare more fruit/veg away from the stand.

In our example you would need to explain to your children that the fruits/vegetables are for the experiment and must not be eaten. Putting a sign up, on the day, saying "Please don't eat the fruit" will help enforce this simple safety message.

The guidance given here is for assessing the risks in practical science activities in settings where your children are sharing them with others. For more information on risk assessing practical activities search **Risk assessment** on the CLEAPSS website. For additional risk assessment processes related to taking children to external venues, refer to your school trip policies.