Safety in Cookery Lessons

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1. Introduction

1.1 Kitchens and food technology rooms in any environment can be a dangerous place in which to work, where staff (including pupils in schools) all face a range of health and safety risks while using the kitchen or food technology room. It is therefore essential that safety rules be taught as part of the initial training through which pupils are made aware of the risks involved in these environment.

1.2 Managers of establishments and Headteachers of schools must know the requirements of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act (HASAWA) 1974 that employers have legal duties to assess all risks to the health and safety of employees and pupils under their control.

1.3 The Food Safety Act 1990, along with its associated regulations, deals with the management of safe food preparation, prevention of contamination and management of food allergens. Failure to manage such issues could lead to disaster if not suitably controlled, and failure to comply with such legislation can lead to illness and injury, which in turn may lead to notable fine or jail sentences (depending on the severity of the case).

2. Training in Cookery Lessons

2.1 The training programme will include all aspects of risks one is likely to encounter in the kitchen or food technology environment. Ideally the training programme will include information on; how to move about in the surroundings, safe storage of food and materials, cookery equipment, including lifting of heavy articles to avoid injury, suitable clothing and footwear (including hair gear and jewellery for safety and hygiene), and the safe use of cookers and other heat sources.
2.2 There should be clear instructions to pupils on the use of electrical appliances, the safe use and storage of items such as knives and scissors, hygienic storage and handling of food, appropriate disposal of waste and fire precautions. This should be followed by demonstrations wherever possible. The teachers must be able to carry out risk assessments of all tasks involved prior to allowing pupils into the kitchen and or food technology room to carry out cookery activities.

2.3 Children of reception class age and children with special needs/disabilities can be taught the fundamentals of food preparations and mixing of ingredients, without the requirement for using the hobs/other hot sources. Only the nominated members of staff will use the hot hobs and ovens for the final preparation of the food that has been prepared.

3. **Personal Safety**

3.1 The main causes of accidents during cookery lessons are:

- Slips, trips and falls
- Being struck by moving object
- Exposure to toxic or hot substances
- Manual handling injuries.

It is therefore essential that floors are kept clear and dry at all time. It is necessary that appropriate footwear and head cover is worn at all times while cooking.

4. **Food Hygiene**

4.1 It is important that hands are washed frequently with soap and water before and after dealing with food items, and between food items of different types (e.g. meat, fish and raw vegetables). This will help prevent the spread and transmission of infectious diseases and germs, preventing food poisoning as well as the cross-contamination of cleaning materials and allergens.

- Jewellery must not be worn, with the exception of wedding rings which should be covered with a blue plaster to help eliminate contamination.
- Makeup should be avoided where possible. Where it cannot be avoided, such as nail polish/false nails, protective items such as gloves should be worn.
- Personal hygiene must be maintained at a very high standard in order to avoid food poisoning. Suitable protective clothing provided by the school must never leave the premises, and should be regularly laundered to ensure that it is free of contamination.
• Where a member of staff or a child has had a recent bout of gastrointestinal illness, they should be barred from a cooking lesson until they have been free from symptoms for at least 48 hours and, where necessary, have received permission from a doctor to resume such lessons. Likewise, any wounds or breaks in the skin should be covered by a blue plaster to prevent blood contamination.
• The member(s) of staff leading the class should undertake a suitable food hygiene course from a recognised body (such as the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health), as highlighted by the appropriate risk assessment.
• Use of coloured-coded equipment such as knives and chopping boards will minimise the possibility of cross-contamination.
• For further information, please refer to the Guidance Note on Food Safety in Kitchens (GN041).

5. Appropriate Clothing and Structure

5.1 People dealing with food must always wear the protective clothing provided for food preparation.

• Staff must ensure that children use oven gloves, if needed.
• That appropriate headgear (hats or hairnets) is worn to prevent food contamination.
• That appropriate flat/low heel covered shoe must always be worn to prevent injury to the foot from spillage of hot food. The shoe must have a non-slip sole to prevent slip accidents. Slip-resistant flooring in the kitchen can help avoid accidents.
• The floor being kept clean, dry and free from obstructions will help prevent accidents, as well as preventing the build up of waste that could attract vermin.
• The use of appropriate cleaning materials will prevent damage to the slip-resistant properties of the flooring whereby prolonging the life of the floor. Suitable cleaning equipment such as mops and cloths must be colour coded to prevent their inadvertent use in non-kitchen “dirty” areas such as toilets. Cleaning staff should be appropriately briefed to ensure that this does not happen.
• Making sure that spilled water, grease or food is cleaned immediately.
• Notices to warn staff and pupil of wet floor areas.
6. **Manual Handling**

6.1 Manual handling accidents in the kitchen or food technology room occur when items are being moved, pulled and lifted/carried. Class teachers should assess all manual-handling activities in the kitchen, where these cannot be avoided; it is necessary to label and identify heavy objects, and any precautions that will be required to be implemented. It is also important that the condition of the floor, the storage arrangements, and layout of the kitchen is taken into account when risk assessment is being carried out in order to provide for any action that needed to be taken to prevent or reduce the risks.

6.2 Heavy and unsafe loads, poor working environment, badly planned work methods and inadequate training can lead to manual handling injury in kitchens. It is essential that staff and pupils are made aware of the necessary procedures in place for their own safety and that of their fellow users. Where possible, equipment such as trolleys should be used to prevent the carrying, or the load broken down into smaller and more portable items.

7. **Food Storage**

7.1 Foodstuffs should be stored appropriately as required:

- Dry foodstuffs should be stored in a dry good store, that is clean, dry and free of pests.
- The storage area must be easily cleanable to prevent build up of waste that attracts pests.
- Access to the food storage area must be proofed against entry of pests and other vermin, such as flies and rodents.
- Racking for dried food must be at least 250mm from the floor unless loaded on pallets. It must also be 500mm from any source of ventilation or window.
- Storage containers must be regularly checked to ensure that they are not damaged and that the product is still in-date. Any out-of-date material should be segregated and disposed of.
- The products should be stock rotated on a regular basis to ensure that the food products are use on a first-in, first out basis.
- Chilled food should be placed in refrigerators, and frozen food in freezers. Both pieces of equipment should be tested regularly to ensure that they are in good working order, and that any damage is repaired.
- Refrigerator must maintain products below 8 degrees centigrade, and ideally between 1 degree centigrade and 5 degree centigrade. Temperature records should be undertaken three times per day and the findings recorded. Food items should be segregated and appropriate packed to prevent cross-contamination e.g. raw meat, cooked meat, vegetables, dairy products etc.
• If spillage occurs this must be cleared immediately, and any damaged product should be examined and repackaged or disposed off, as necessary.
• Food placed in freezers must be maintained below 18 degrees centigrade and the temperature reading taken three times per day. Temperature records should be undertaken three times per day and the findings recorded. Food items should be segregated and appropriate packed to prevent cross-contamination e.g. raw meat, cooked meat, vegetables, dairy products etc.
• Fresh fruits and vegetables are to be stored as per requirement, either in a dry store or in a refrigerator
• All damaged or rejected goods must be segregated and clearly labelled, and disposed of as soon as possible.

8. Equipment Storage

8.1 All catering equipment must be designed to avoid any risk to health in the following ways:
• It must be easy to clean, with joints and surfaces that do not have ridges that could harbour germs.
• The surface that is in contact with food must be easily cleaned and disinfected.
• Equipment must be of design that will prevent the accumulation of organisms or pests that can fester in the joints, etc.
• Equipment must be stored high above the floor level in order to avoid contamination.
• Smaller utensils knives and forks must be stored in a cupboard or container with lid or cover.

9. Fire Precautions in Kitchens

9.1 Under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, employers are required to make sure that sufficient fire fighting equipment is provided for various fires that can ensure in the kitchen/food technology area.

9.2 The kitchen/food technology room must have fire door/s one of which must open into a safe area. There has to be an early warning system to give people ample time to vacate the area if there is any risk of fire starting. For further details please refer to the Guidance Note on Health and Safety in Kitchens (GN043).
10. Further Information

10.1 If further advice and assistance is required, the Health and Safety Team at John Smith House may be contacted on the following numbers; (0207 525) 5034, 5035 or 5259. Alternatively, the Environmental Health Team at Chaplin House may also be contacted for food safety advice and assistance as required, on (0207 525) 0392.