

Document Control			
Title	Guidance on the use of finger protection on doors and gates		
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Intended audience	Any school, PRU, Special School, Academy, or Children's Centre in Suffolk.		
Date for review	December 2021 or due to legislation change		
We will, on request, produce this document or particular parts of it, in other languages and formats in order that everyone can use and comment upon its contents.			

1.0 Introduction

1.1 What is the concern?

We constantly encourage the younger generations to explore, question and seek out knowledge in their lives. This search for new information can sometimes take the form of physically and actively going places they shouldn't be, opening or propping open doors which should be closed, and sneaking the odd peak through the hinge side of the staff room door, keeping the door ajar, in the hope to hear 'Miss' read out the spelling test list for the morning....

Equally there are those times in schools where queues form, before lunch, outside loos, and doors are either propped open or are constantly swinging to and fro. Gates are sometimes forgotten to be latched back, and can be violent in their swinging shut, especially on windy days.

You have a door, so naturally you have a door frame, and with that the only possible design is a gap to allow for hinges. Physics dictates that with heavy doors comes a powerful slam if door 'furniture' is not fitted. Irrespective of whether there's a slow closer mechanism, there is still a 'pinch point' and a young person's fingers can fit right in that hinge gap and therefore sustain, when the door closes, a nasty injury.

It is reported that there are thousands of incidents of amputated, mutilated or damaged fingers every year. These injuries can be physically and psychologically life changing for a child or young person **and they are preventable.**

1.2 What can we do about it?

Simple mechanisms known as hinge protectors, or door jambs, can be fitted to the hinge side of the door. These provide a cushioning effect and also a 'sweeping' effect when doors close on things that are in the way. The sweeping effect is made by the material the device is made of, and simply pushes any fingers in the hinge area out of the way before full closure.

With regard to gates, a simple mechanism to hold them firmly open when required can be applied.

Supervision must still occur, especially where challenging behaviour is shown, or where involuntary harm to the self or others may be apparent.

Information on risk assessing doors and gates can be found below.

2.0 Responsibilities

2.1 Suffolk County Council

Where Suffolk County Council is the employer, all the usual duty of care to all employees, and anyone else affected by our business (i.e., children, visitors, contractors etc) applies. This includes giving schools and other settings competent health and safety advice which should be adhered to and carried out. This guidance constitutes that advice, alongside verbal support and during any premises audit.

Specifically with regard to hinge protection, SCC has, as an employer, also carried out or asks its partners to carry out, the following:

- New buildings, designed in accordance with SCC good practice advice, are fitted with doors that do not present a finger trapping risk either inherently or by including hinge protection devices as standard.
- CYP guidance has existed since, at the latest, 2004 which provides advice to managers of buildings on assessing the need for retro-fitting protective devices. This guidance underpins all previous documents.
- When CYP used a consulting health and safety service (circa 2011 – 2014) they were briefed on the need for their consultants to be alert to the need to identify higher risk doors and gates to premises managers
- Property Advisers were briefed in 2012 (now Vertas Property Advisors) to include this concern in building inspections and it now appears on the Annual Compliance Review
- Governor training has included the item since Autumn 2011 and guidance directed to governors has included the risk assessment criteria since 2004
- Schools are advised to ensure, when they undertake to produce their own building work specifications or use design consultants other than Suffolk County Council, that risk control features are included in the design

- Schools and other setting are asked to consider all equipment that contributes to risk control and that it should be included in the regular, routine inspections of the premises to ensure that they remain effective.

2.2 Individual Schools and Settings

Schools and settings **must** conduct a risk assessment of doors and gates which pose a potential danger. This risk assessment will identify the level of risk posed by each door and will assist the assessor in working out the number and types of devices required.

It is recommended that a site walk-round is conducted and that the assessor should be a person who has good knowledge of 'people flow' and 'people gathering areas'. If you have a caretaker, or Site Manager, ensure they attend to assist the assessor.

Whilst this assessment occurs, you may find that there are some doors and gates where the risk is sufficiently low so that action is not required.

Advice on door types and potential risk can be found below in a pictorial guide.

3.0 Guidance from other agencies

There seems to be no definitive national guidance or legislative requirement on this subject. There is a huge amount of companies who are competent in their knowledge and have a range of devices to sell – a simple Google search on 'door hinge protection in schools' will come up with hundreds of results. By carrying out your risk assessment with the knowledge from this document, you may well ensure that you are not sold something you don't need. Further advice from your Property Advisor and Health and Safety Advisor is available.

4.0 Points to consider on your premises walk-round

4.1 The location of the doors or gates:

- doors in corridors
- entrances to halls
- entrances to classrooms
- entrance foyers

- cloakrooms
- toilets
- and other frequently visited locations.

4.2 The use of the doors or gates:

- doors that are intended to be kept locked – monitoring is required to ensure that doors marked to be routinely locked, actually are reliably kept locked.
- age group concerned – younger children are more likely to be caught – consider younger siblings who may come into school with parents
- school layout / design – some doors are used more frequently by children of all ages
- whether the premises are used by very young people at other times – after school clubs etc. where supervision ratios may be smaller.

4.3 The design or modification of the doors or gates:

- self-closers may be a useful safety measure, but can cause doors to close very quickly if not adjusted properly which may create additional traps
- type of doors – internal doors and fire doors which are regularly used often present more risk than external doors leading from classrooms which may be left and fixed open
- very lightweight doors may present less risk and less need of hinge protection, but this is not a very significant factor reducing risk – on balance, even lightweight doors that are otherwise vulnerable should have hinge protectors fitted
- generally, the gap that creates the trapping hazard is on the side of the door which opens away from you. Whilst a gap may open on the side of the door which opens TOWARDS you, this gap is much smaller and the risk of a finger entering the gap is much smaller and therefore hinge protectors are not generally required on both sides of a door
- hinge gaps that open on the inside of cupboard doors that open outwards, which means the trapping risk is only created if a child is on the inside of the

cupboard when the door closes, do not generally require any fittings. Always worth noting that it's been assessed within the paperwork though, so justification is clear.

5.0 Pictorial examples of types of doors and gates within schools and CYP settings

Door or Gate	Situation	Hinge Protection Required ?
	<p>Door from corridor into a classroom, lots of people passing through, no door closer.</p>	<p>Yes, one side only. The gap between the frame and the door does not open wider than 8mm and access is very restricted by furniture inside the room. The door is not a fire door.</p>
	<p>Small cupboard door, hidden hinges in a classroom.</p>	<p>No. Access to the trapping area is impossible when the cupboard door is closing.</p>

	<p>Fire exit door not used for routine access to outside. No door closer on top of door.</p>	<p>No hinge protection required, but the door should be fitted with a closer to prevent slamming as the door is in an exposed place and vulnerable to slamming in windy weather.</p>
	<p>Door from corridor to resources room, no child access through this door, but children queue in the corridor. Door has no closer.</p>	<p>Yes</p>
	<p>Door to staff room, off corridor and entrance foyer.</p>	<p>Yes. Children may queue to speak to teachers in the staff room.</p>

	<p>Same door as above, <i>inside</i> staff room, seating nearby.</p> <p>An important element is that this hinge gap opens to greater than 12mm on both sides.</p>	<p>Yes, on both sides. May not be strictly necessary to have the protection on the inside of the door as well as the outside, but the seating nearby means even adult fingers could be trapped.</p>
	<p>Door off corridor to staff toilet.</p>	<p>No. Children do not access this toilet, nor this part of the corridor.</p>
	<p>Door to cleaner's cupboard, off main corridor in entrance foyer.</p>	<p>No.</p> <p>This door has no closer but should be locked at all times.</p> <p>The door opens outwards into the corridor so the trapping point is on the inside of the room. No child access at any time.</p>

	<p>This is the main vehicle entrance gate for the school. It is identical to the pedestrian access. It has no means of securing the gate in the open position. The gap between the gate and the post remains larger than 12mm throughout the gate's swing.</p>	<p>No <i>protection</i> required, but to prevent the gate accidentally swinging into vehicles, it should be secured in the open position during the hours when it is routinely open.</p> <p>During the day, the gate is normally closed and bolted.</p>
	<p>This is the only pedestrian access gate leading from the street to the entrance of the building. There is no means of securing it in the open position and no means of stopping the gate swinging right round to 180 degrees open, even though the path on the inside of the fence requires the gate only to open to 90 degrees. A flower bed at the side of the path has no plants and is bare earth. When fully closed the gap between the gate and the post is about 30mm. However, when open to more than 45 degrees, the gap closes to less than 4mm.</p>	<p>Yes. There are two options here. The gate should either be robustly secured in the 90-degree open position permanently, or at least during the working day. The alternative is that the hinge gap should be covered to prevent fingers being trapped.</p> <p>In any event, it should be prevented from swinging beyond 90 degrees.</p>

6.0 Further assistance

If you need more help on this subject, please contact nina.bickerton@suffolk.gov.uk . It would really assist if possible, for your email to contain pictures of the doors or gates in question, with some dialogue as to the flow or access of children and young people in the vicinity.