

Innsworth Preschool Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) Policy Last Updated: 1st January 2026

1. Purpose and Scope

1.1 Overview: This policy outlines how Innsworth Preschool identifies, stores, uses, and disposes of substances that could be hazardous to health.

1.2 Objective: It is designed to protect children, staff, and visitors from exposure in accordance with all relevant health and safety legislation.

1.3 Scope: This policy applies to all potentially hazardous substances used or stored on our premises, including cleaning products, art supplies (e.g., paints, glues), gardening chemicals, biological agents, and first aid products.

1.4 Exclusions (Permitted Non-Setting Substances): Certain items are controlled under specific policies and are carved out of the general prohibition on "personal items," provided they are risk-assessed:

- **Medications:** Prescribed or authorised medicines (managed under the **Administration of Medication Policy**).
- **Personal Care:** Named sun creams, nappy creams, or barrier creams (managed under the **Intimate Care** and **Sun Safety Policies**).
- **Allergy Controls:** Specific items approved via an individual risk assessment.

2. Legal and Statutory Framework

2.1 Compliance: This policy complies with our duties under the following:

- The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) Regulations 2002.
- The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).
- The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.
- The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.
- Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR).
- The GB CLP Regulation: Regarding classification, labelling, and packaging of substances in Great Britain.

3. Core Principles

3.1 Approach:

- **Prevention First:** Our primary aim is to prevent exposure to hazardous substances.
- **Substitution:** We substitute hazardous products for safer, non-hazardous alternatives (e.g., eco-friendly cleaning products) wherever possible.
- **Proportionality:** Control measures are proportionate to the risk.
- **Competence:** Staff are trained to handle substances safely and respond to emergencies.

4. COSHH Management in Practice

4.1 The COSHH Cycle: We follow the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) model for effective control:

1. **Identify:** What substances are present?
2. **Assess:** Who might be harmed and how?
3. **Control:** Prevent exposure or control it adequately.
4. **Maintain:** Ensure controls (e.g., ventilation, PPE) work.
5. **Train:** Inform and instruct staff.
6. **Plan:** Prepare for accidents/spills.
7. **Review:** Monitor effectiveness annually.

4.2 Tiered Risk Management: To ensure proportionality, we categorise substances:

- **Tier 1 (Low Risk):** Everyday child-safe products (e.g., PVA glue, washing up liquid). Used under supervision; subject to simplified assessment.
- **Tier 2 (Hazardous):** Staff-only chemicals (e.g., bleach, sanitizer concentrates). Subject to full COSHH assessment, locked storage, and strict usage controls.
- **Tier 3 (Prohibited/Restricted):** High-hazard items (e.g., strong solvents, pesticides). Use requires explicit Manager sign-off and specific justification.

4.3 Risk Assessment Content: Every hazardous substance undergoes a written risk assessment identifying:

- **People at Risk:** Staff, children (including those with asthma/allergies), pregnant workers, and contractors.
- **Exposure Routes:** Inhalation (fumes/sprays), ingestion, skin contact, or eye contact.
- **Controls:** Safe dilution ratios, ventilation requirements, and specific PPE.
- **Emergency Actions:** First aid and spill response.
- **Location:** Assessments are kept in the central COSHH Register and at the point of use where practicable.

4.4 Contractor Controls: Contractors must provide Safety Data Sheets (SDS) and risk assessments for any substances they bring on site. Work is scheduled and segregated to prevent child exposure. Contractors must strictly ensure no hazardous substances are left unattended.

4.5 Prohibition of Unauthorised Substances: Under no circumstances are staff, parents, or visitors permitted to bring their own cleaning products, aerosols, or unapproved chemicals onto the premises. Only COSHH-assessed products provided by the preschool may be used.

5. Specific Hazards and Controls

5.1 Storage and Decanting:

- **Security:** Hazardous substances are stored in original, clearly labelled containers in locked cupboards or high-level shelving, inaccessible to children. Incompatible substances are stored separately.
- **Decanting:** We avoid decanting products. If decanting is unavoidable (e.g., into spray bottles), the secondary container **must** be labelled with the product name, dilution ratio, hazards, and date. Unlabelled containers are prohibited.

5.2 Biological Hazards: Bodily fluids (blood, vomit, faeces) are managed as COSHH hazards via the **Infection Control Policy**.

- **Spills:** Spill kits are located in [Insert Location].
- **Protocol:** Isolate the area immediately. Use designated PPE. Do not "dry sweep" dried matter (minimise aerosols). Double-bag waste. Clean with the approved antiviral agent.

5.3 Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):

- **Requirement:** Staff must use the PPE defined in the risk assessment (e.g., aprons, eye protection).
- **Gloves:** We use non-latex gloves as the default to minimise allergy risks. Staff must not substitute PPE types without approval.
- **Maintenance:** PPE is checked regularly and replaced if damaged.

5.4 Emergency Procedures and Reporting:

- **Action:** In the event of a spill or exposure: Evacuate the immediate area if fumes are present. Contain the spill. Administer first aid as per the SDS.
- **RIDDOR:** We will report incidents to the HSE under RIDDOR where legally required, based on the facts and the work-related criteria. We document the decision for every significant incident.

5.5 Disposal: Disposal methods follow the manufacturer's Safety Data Sheet (SDS) and local regulations:

- **General Waste:** Non-hazardous empty containers (rinsed) where permitted.
- **Hazardous Chemical Waste:** Solvent residues or un-neutralised chemicals (disposed of via specialist routes).
- **Clinical/Hygiene Waste:** Bodily fluid waste/nappies (via hygiene bins).
- **Sharps:** Strictly via Sharps Bin only (if applicable).
- **Prohibition:** Chemicals are **never** poured down drains unless certified safe to do so.

6. Staff Training

6.1 Competency: All staff receive COSHH awareness training at induction, with annual refreshers.

- **High-Risk Tasks:** Tasks involving concentrated chemicals or hazardous biological spills are undertaken only by staff assessed as competent (recorded in the training matrix).

7. Monitoring and Review

7.1 Audit: The designated Health and Safety Officer conducts:

- **Termly Audits:** Checking storage cupboards, labels, and expiry dates.
- **Annual Review:** Reviewing the COSHH Register and Risk Assessments.
- **Immediate Review:** Following any accident, incident, or introduction of a new product.

7.2 Review: This policy is reviewed annually or immediately following any legislative changes.

