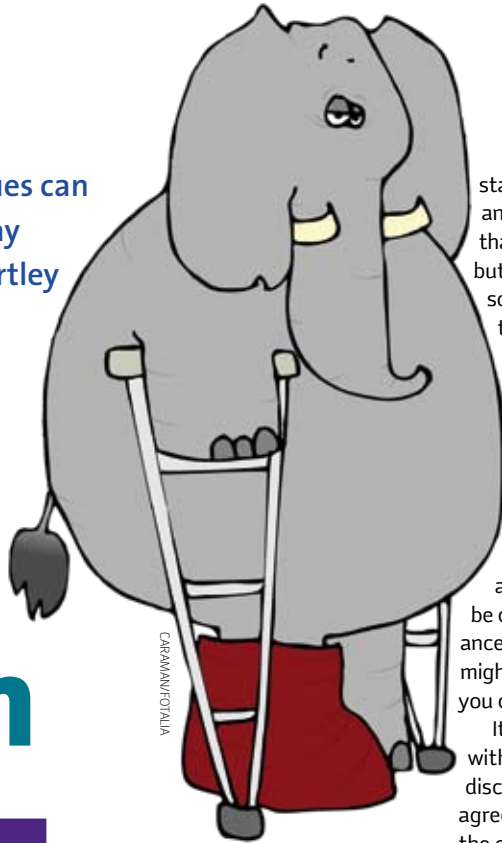


Health and safety issues can be important in display making says Linda Hartley

# Don't be a victim



standing display boards. The health and safety policy may state clearly that you must use a stepladder, but from a step ladder there is sometimes no way to reach the top of the display board.

If you sometimes find yourself perched, perhaps standing on a wall-mounted computer bench or balanced on a sink trying to just reach a tricky bit, think for a moment.

If you fall and you are in clear breach of the staff health and safety policy, you may not be covered by the school's insurance for any injuries you sustain. You might even be liable for any damage you cause to equipment.

It's easier to resist taking risks with your safety if you have had a discussion with your colleagues and agreed that none of you will. If you're the only person "making a fuss" it can cause bad feeling.

## THE RISKS

There have been more than 3,000 injuries from falls in the education sector since 2002, according to the Health and Safety Executive.

Teaching assistants and teachers are at risk of falling, especially in older buildings with high ceilings. Teaching assistants have to strip boards, back them with poster paper and put up displays.

Putting in that extra effort to yank out a staple or straining to reach something just beyond your grasp puts you at risk.

Even quite low falls from desks or chairs while putting up displays can cause serious injuries.

## SAFETY POLICIES

You need to be aware of your school's health and safety and risk assessment policies.

These should cover the risk of staff falls with guidelines for using the correct equipment to reach high boards, and the correct procedures to follow. Some schools set limits on how high displays can be placed.

This makes sense in several ways. Remember displays at child-level are likely to be more effective.

## FOLLOW THE POLICY

The policy exists not just for your physical protection but also for legal reasons. Not only do you need know what the policy is; you should also follow it. In some schools the policy is carefully displayed – perhaps in the staffroom – and then totally ignored.

The increased use of computers in class, for instance, means computer desks are being fixed in front of long-

## PROTECT YOURSELF

In the workplace you are responsible for your own safety. The school must provide suitable equipment but you are responsible for making sure it is used.

## PRACTICAL ADVICE

- Avoid or minimise working at height
- If you do work at height, always use suitable equipment
- Be aware of your school's health and safety policy
- Always think of your personal safety. School furniture was not designed for you to stand on
- Wear suitable footwear
- If you don't have the equipment you need to do your job safely, inform your head teacher or safety representative. Trade unions train and organise workplace safety reps and have lots of information on safe working and all the relevant rules and regulations.

