

High school fined after child is fatally injured

A high school in Chelmsford has been fined after a young child died after a locker in a changing room fell on top of him.



Chelmsford Magistrates' Court heard that on the 23 May 2019, nine-year-old Leo Latifi was fatally injured when he attended an after-school swimming lesson at the sports centre of Great Baddow High School. The incident occurred whilst he and another young child had been waiting in the boy's changing room for their lesson to start. The lockers, which had doors missing, stood prominently in the changing area provided a climbing frame to the children. As they climbed on the front of the unit it toppled forward. One child was able to jump free but tragically Leo could not and the locker fell on top of him.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) found that the locker unit, which was 180cm tall and weighed 188kg, had not been secured to the wall to prevent it from toppling over despite the unit having fixing brackets fitted as part of its structure. The court heard how several scenarios could have caused the unit to move including an adult stepping onto the lowest edge of the unit to pull at a bag stuck in a top tier locker or to clean the top the unit.

Great Baddow High School, Duffield Road, Chelmsford pleaded guilty to breaching Section 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and has been fined £16,700 and ordered to pay costs of £12,000 with a surcharge fee of £170.

After the hearing HSE inspector, Saffron Turnell, said: "This tragic incident led to the avoidable death of a young child which has, and will continue to, deeply affect his loving family, his friends and acquaintances.

"This incident could easily have been prevented had the school simply ensured the locker unit had been securely fixed to the wall, however it had failed to identify the risk associated with the potential for the unit to topple over

and to put in place appropriate monitoring arrangements to ensure that it stayed secure.

“At the inquest into Leo’s death last year, the jury agreed that this tragedy was significantly contributed to by a lack of appropriate assessment to a clear and obvious risk. This remained the case for around six years.

“I therefore urge all organisations to urgently check that any free-standing furniture is appropriately assessed and properly secured, if they have not done so already.”

Leo’s family commented: “Nothing can bring back our precious Leo, and the prosecution hearing is yet another very difficult time when we will have to re-live what happened on the terrible day he died.

“Families must be sure that their children will be kept safe when they are at school, in the care of other adults and organisations. We can only hope that no one else has to suffer what we have endured these past two years since our Leo lost his life, and if the prosecution makes other schools more alert to their responsibilities in looking after equipment that could put children at risk, then that is all we can ask for right now.”

Notes to Editors:

1. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is Britain’s national regulator for workplace health and safety. We prevent work-related death, injury and ill health through regulatory actions that range from influencing behaviours across whole industry sectors through to targeted interventions on individual businesses. These activities are supported by globally recognised scientific expertise. www.hse.gov.uk
2. More about the legislation referred to in this case can be found at: www.legislation.gov.uk and <https://www.hse.gov.uk/risk/classroom-checklist.pdf>
3. HSE news releases are available at <http://press.hse.gov.uk>
4. Following the tragedy, a health and safety message was issued to HSE’s dedicated schools eBulletin list.
5. The family do not wish to be interviewed.

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