

School Closure Over Legionella, Highlights Need for Proactive Water Safety Management

2 months ago



The recent temporary closure of Hazeley Academy in Milton Keynes, following the detection of Legionella bacteria in its water supply, has brought national attention to the risks and health and safety concerns facing schools and other large buildings and their water systems. While no illnesses have been reported, the case has demonstrated the importance of routine monitoring and swift action when potential risks are identified.

Kieran Irving, Legionella and Water Treatment Manager at [Lucion Services](#), explained: “*Legionella* is a natural environmental bacteria that can be found in man-made water systems. The bacteria become more dangerous when it is given the correct breeding grounds, multiple of which can be influenced by poor management of the water systems.”

“When water droplets containing the bacteria are transmitted into aerosol form, individuals can inhale these droplets and potentially can develop Legionnaires’ disease, a serious form of pneumonia that can be particularly dangerous for vulnerable individuals.”

“With the recent temporary closure of Hazeley Academy, it should also be made aware that there are no parameters in place within the water quality regulations surrounding waterborne pathogens like legionella, pseudomonas, etc, therefore it is the Duty Holders’ responsibility to ensure water systems are safe to anyone who can come into contact with them”

The risk is not limited to educational institutions, but schools often face unique challenges due to complex domestic water systems on larger premises, intermittent usage due to half terms, resulting in the

likelihood of system stagnation. All buildings, including leisure, industrial, retail, office, care homes, hospitals and even domestic properties can face similar risks from poorly installed and maintained systems.

“Schools present unique challenges for water management,” says Kieran. “The combination of complex domestic water systems, varying usage patterns throughout the academic year, and due to public access, the chance of any susceptible persons coming into contact with the water systems creates a perfect storm of risk factors.”

Extended shutdowns, whether school holidays, seasonal building closures, or hybrid work patterns, require particular vigilance. Larne Fuller, Area Director at Lucion Services, added: “Schools need specific strategies for managing water systems during extended breaks. This might involve scheduled flushing programmes, holiday sampling regimes, and careful recommissioning procedures before terms begin.”

Kieran added to this by stating, “Sampling is the perfect way to see if bacteria is present, but a strategic sampling plan should be implemented using the correct methods as detailed within the British Standard 7592”.

Kieran has also recommended all Duty Holders and Responsible Persons should review ‘*INDG458 – Legionnaires’ Disease: A Guide For Duty Holders*’ for a brief understanding of the overarching responsibilities.

Under UK health and safety law and COSHH regulation, all organisations are legally required to assess and manage the risks from waterborne pathogens such as Legionella, ensuring systems remain safe and compliant. This includes regular risk assessments, ongoing monitoring, and keeping detailed records of actions taken. For offices, hospitals, leisure centres, and other facilities, the requirements are just as critical.

“What we’re seeing should serve as a catalyst for other schools and organisations to review their water safety protocols,” adds Irving. “With proper management and regular attention, the risks associated with Legionella can be effectively controlled.”

With over a decade of expertise in Legionella and water management, Lucion Services delivers end-to-end solutions across education, healthcare, commercial, and public sectors. Their approach combines risk assessments, monitoring and inspection, servicing, disinfection, and long-term management strategies, going beyond compliance to provide proactive support, training, and consultancy. This ensures organisations can not only meet their legal obligations but also confidently safeguard the health of their communities.

The closure of Hazeley Academy demonstrates how robust monitoring can catch problems early, but prevention is always the better strategy. Lucion is urging schools, businesses, and building operators to review their water safety protocols now, before issues arise.

For further information on Legionella risk management and water safety services, visit: www.luciongroup.com/services/legionella-and-water-services/