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FIRE SAFETY POLICY

Reviewed and updated: October 2023

Next review: November 2024

This policy should be read in conjunction with the school's health and safety policy as drawn up with health and safety consultants and the following CEFM documents:

- Risk management procedure.
- Site security policy.
- Governors' guidance – school premises.
- Governors' guidance – health and safety.
- Education update July 2017ii – Fire safety in schools.
- Education update February 2013 iii – Standards for school premises.
- Education update June 2008 ii – Fire safety management in schools.
- Do you know – Questions and answers – Fire safety of school buildings March 2018.
- Do you know – Questions and answers – School critical incident plan June 2014.

Reference should also be made to:

- The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 SI 2005/1541.
- The School Premises (England) Regulations 2012.
- The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010 as amended (*academies and free schools only*).
- The DfE publication '*Advice on standards for school premises*' 2015.
- The DfE publication '*Building bulletin 100 – design for fire safety in schools*' 2014 (currently in draft for consultation May 2021).
- 'Fire safety risk assessment – educational premises' DCLG 2006
www.gov.uk/government/publications/fire-safety-risk-assessment-educational-premises.

Background

According to Local Government Association figures in 2016, 'on average, each year in the UK there are over 1,500 fires in schools and other educational establishments' and the government estimates that the average cost of school fires between 2000 and 2004 was £58 million per year. Unfortunately, central government has not released more up-to-date figures in the public domain. The leading cause of fire in schools is arson, with over half of school fires being started maliciously. Therefore, arson prevention needs to be an integral part of a school's security strategy, because losses from a serious fire can have long term effects on both staff and pupils. Records, course work, teachers' materials and whole areas of the school may be lost. The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (RRO) applies to both new and existing school buildings and imposes a number of duties on the 'responsible person' relating to fire safety:

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- To ensure that precautions against fire are taken as a matter of routine.
- To ensure that employees and others are aware of their own responsibilities with regard to fire safety.
- To carry out risk assessments.
- To apply the principles of fire prevention.
- To make arrangements for fire safety.
- To eliminate or reduce risks from dangerous substances.
- To have special procedures for serious and imminent danger and for danger areas.
- To have additional emergency measures in respect of dangerous substances.
- To have on the premises means of fire-fighting and fire detection.
- To have emergency routes and exits.
- To ensure that premises and equipment related to fire safety are kept in good repair and have regular maintenance.
- To ensure that the 'responsible person' has adequate support and assistance in carrying out the duties.
- To provide information on fire safety to employees, pupils and others on the premises at any time.
- To offer training on fire safety precautions to staff.

Responsibility for fire safety in schools lies with the employer and this depends upon the type of school.

- In community schools, community special schools, voluntary controlled schools, maintained nursery schools and pupil referral units the employer is the local authority (LA).
- In academies and free schools, the employer is the academy trust.
- In foundation schools, foundation special schools and voluntary aided schools, the employer is usually the governing board.
- In independent schools, the employer is usually the governing board or proprietor.

Those with responsibility must ensure fire precautions at the school comply with all relevant health and safety legislation. On a day-to-day basis, headteachers will either be, or appoint, a fire safety manager and manage fire safety in the same way they manage other health and safety issues – by implementing the policies agreed and monitored by the employer (LA or governing board) in conjunction with the demands of the local fire brigade and the school insurers.

An appointed fire safety manager should have the necessary authority and powers of sanction to ensure that standards of fire safety are maintained.

The fire safety manager is likely to be a member of the site staff with enhanced salary to reflect the responsibility.



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Following the fire at Grenfell Tower in London, where external cladding had been used, the government contacted all schools in July 2017 and asked them to conduct building checks to identify those that might require further investigation for fire safety.

The DfE publication '*Building bulletin 100 – design for fire safety in schools*' is non-statutory guidance on fire safety for schools. The DfE felt that the guidance needed updating and simplifying, and to see if additional fire safety measures should be included. A consultation was held in 2021 to seek views on the revised version of *Building bulletin 100*, but the guidelines remain in draft.

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Introduction

Employers must ensure fire precautions at the school comply with all relevant health and safety legislation. Additionally the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 requires schools to undertake risk assessments to identify the general fire precautions needed to safeguard the safety of staff and pupils in case of fire, including their safe means of escape. At Pippins school we ensure that procedures are in place to reduce the likelihood of fire, maintain fire detection and alarm systems, and familiarise staff and pupils with emergency evacuation procedures. These risk assessments are updated if any significant changes to the premises or their use take place.

In Pippins school responsibility for health and safety and fire safety lies with the LA or governing board. The safety of children, staff and visitors is of paramount importance to Pippins school and appropriate attention by leadership and management is taken to reflect this. Fire safety is also considered in the school's health and safety policy as drawn up with health and safety consultants.

Objectives and targets

Pippins school aims to secure an education environment that is as safe from fire as far as can reasonably be achieved.

Action plan

If a fire does occur, it is imperative that all staff members are well trained in procedures for safe evacuation and mitigation of damage.

Responsibilities of the headteacher

In discharging its duty of care, the governing board delegates to the headteacher:

- Operational responsibility for ensuring that fire evacuation drills are carried out on a regular basis, and at least once a term.
- Responsibility for ensuring that staff and pupils are all educated in the need to be fire-safety aware. Fire safety is integrated into the curriculum wherever necessary.
- Responsibility for all contractors on the school site understanding and implementing this fire safety policy.
- Responsibility for ensuring that the school's fire safe for storage of back-ups of important or sensitive data, exam papers, cash etc is adequate for purpose.

Responsibilities of the fire safety manager

On a day-to-day basis, the fire safety manager has responsibility to the headteacher to:

- Carry out fire risk assessments and establish a fire risk assessment framework to apply to all school premises and workplaces.
- Be responsible for how the school manages and maintains its premises so as to adequately control the risk from fire and ensure adequate monitoring and supervision of activities to minimise its risk.



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- Produce a fire safety policy for the school.
- Ensure that every occupied room has a fire action notice.
- Ensure that notices are displayed in the staff room, detailing for staff their actions in an emergency.
- Produce an emergency fire plan in the case of a major outbreak of fire to include:
 - Means of detection and giving warning of fire.
 - Provision of means of escape.
 - Means of fighting fire.
- Supervise fire drills.
- Be responsible for ensuring that all the fire-fighting equipment and fire detection systems are adequate and checked at least termly.
- Implement any recommendations of those professionals.
- Be responsible for the condition of emergency lighting, particularly the 'escape lighting' which is provided to illuminate escape routes to enable occupants to safely evacuate the building. A monthly flash test is undertaken (short check to ensure the lighting is working) and a more detailed six-monthly condition test, including a three-hour battery test is also carried out.
- Make frequent informal checks to confirm fire safety rules are being followed, especially that fire escape routes and fire exit doors and passageways are unobstructed, and that doors open correctly.
- Ensure that a fire safety report is included in any health and safety report to the governors.
- Keep a log book containing details of this fire safety policy, evacuation procedures, incident reports, training undertaken (date of the instruction or fire drill, duration, name of person giving the instruction, names of persons receiving instruction, nature of instruction or fire drill), tests on fire-fighting equipment, and results of fire drills.
- Train staff (in conjunction with the school's health and safety officer) or delegate this responsibility to a professional where appropriate.

Training of staff

During the first week of term, or as soon as practically possible thereafter, all new entrants being students, teaching staff or support staff, will be conducted around the primary escape routes of the school. They will also receive instruction on the school fire evacuation routine. All members of staff will receive a personal copy of a floor plan and designated evacuation routes.

All members of staff will receive instruction and training appropriate to their responsibilities in the event of any emergency. This will include department specific training. Further details are contained in the staff handbook.

Notices

Each fire alarm point is clearly indicated 'Fire alarm' in accordance with the Health and Safety (Safety Signs and Signals) Regulations 1996 (SI 1996/341) followed by the appropriate operating instructions. A notice is

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displayed adjacent to the telephone or switchboard giving clear instructions for calling the fire brigade in case of fire. Every room has a fire notice (see the appendix).

The purpose of fire drill

In Pippins school fire drills are intended to promote an attitude of mind whereby persons will react rationally when confronted with a fire or other emergency at school or elsewhere. Fire drills will not assume that all escape routes are available. Fire drills ensure that, by means of training and rehearsal, in the event of fire:

- The people who may be in danger act in a calm and orderly manner.
- Those people who have designated responsibilities carry out their tasks to ensure the safety of all concerned.
- The escape routes are used in accordance with a predetermined and practised plan.
- Evacuation of the building is achieved in a speedy and orderly manner.

Our fire drills give us the opportunity to consider the age-related needs of the students attending the school and also any special needs of the students on the school roll. Each fire drill will be started by our pre-determined signal and the whole premises checked as if any evacuation was in progress.

Fire routine

Our fire routine is based on a critical sequence of events outlined in the appendix, these being as follows.

Alarm operation

Anyone discovering an outbreak of fire must, without hesitation, sound the alarm by operating the nearest fire alarm call point.

The fire alarm systems in each building are not linked to each other. However, in the event of an alarm actuation, our procedure is for contact to be made with the other buildings on site, either by telephone or designated person. Once contact has been made it is our procedure to evacuate all buildings by operating the fire alarm. The aim of evacuating all buildings is to attempt to carry out a roll call.

Calling the fire brigade

All outbreaks of fire or any suspected fire, however small, should be reported immediately to the fire brigade by the quickest means available. The fire safety manager and headteacher must also be informed immediately.

Evacuation

On hearing the fire alarm:

- Students must be instructed to leave the building in single file and in a calm, orderly manner.
- The person in charge of each class must indicate the exit route to be used and everyone must be directed to a predetermined assembly point. Specific arrangements are established for students with physical or mental disabilities to ensure that they are assisted during evacuation.
- No running is permitted to avoid panic.
- On staircases everyone must descend in single file. Overtaking of classes or individuals is not permitted.
- Lifts must not be used.
- Anyone who is not in class when the fire alarm sounds must go immediately to the assembly point.



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- No one is allowed to re-enter any building until told to do so by the fire brigade, or, in the case of a fire evacuation drill, the senior person in charge.

Assembly

Everyone must make their way to the assembly points, which are areas outside the school premises clearly designated as assembly points, easily identifiable by any person who is on the school premises as a visitor, far enough away from the school premises to afford protection from the heat and smoke in a fire situation and in positions that do not put students and staff at risk by emergency vehicles responding to the incident.

Roll call

The person in charge of each class or group has overall responsibility to ensure that a roll call is conducted in the event of evacuation of the premises so they must bring attendance registers and visitors book to the assembly point when the alarm sounds.

- On arrival at the assembly point a roll call will be made to ascertain that no one remains in the premises. Any visitors or contractors in the premises will be included.
- The count at the assembly point will be checked with the attendance registers and visitors book to verify that everyone is out of the building.
- Each person in charge of a class or group will report to the leadership team member in charge of the evacuation procedure that everyone in their charge is accounted for or inform him/her of the number of persons missing.

Meeting the brigade

The leadership team member in charge of the roll call will identify him/herself to the fire brigade on their arrival. In doing so, vital information can be relayed to the fire officer which will dictate the necessary actions to be carried out by the fire brigade.

The fire brigade will want to know:

- Is everyone accounted for?
- If anyone is missing: How many? What is their usual location? Where were they last seen?
- Where is the fire? What is on fire? (It may not be apparent).
- Are there any hazardous substances involved in the fire or stored in the building? (For example, chemicals, solvents, liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) or acetylene cylinders, etc.)

Fire fighting

Any attempt to fight the fire must always be secondary to life safety. Circumstances will clearly dictate whether fire-fighting should be attempted. Any attempt to fight the fire must be based upon the type and degree of training received in the use of fire-fighting equipment employed in the premises.

Monitoring and evaluation

At the beginning of each school year all staff will be involved in a discussion of issues relating to all aspects of school safety, including fire safety. Regular fire drills will ensure that the evacuation procedure applying to the school premises fulfils its aim satisfactorily and will highlight any area of the procedure which needs alteration.



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APPENDIX Fire action notice

Any person discovering a fire must:

- Operate the nearest fire alarm.
- Call the fire brigade immediately by dialling '999' using the nearest telephone.

On hearing the fire signal:

- When in class, the order to evacuate will be given by the person in charge, who will indicate the route to be followed.
- When not in class, form single file and move by the most direct route to the place of assembly.
- At all times act quietly and calmly.
- Do not stop to collect your personal belongings.

Do not attempt to pass others on your way