



“Let your light shine brightly.”

Matthew 5:16

Arson Prevention and Fire Safety Policy

Policy accepted by SLT on:	<i>15/6/2020</i>
Next review:	<i>Summer 2022</i>
Signed (Headteacher):	<i>R. Kaye</i>
Statutory policy: <i>Yes/No</i>	On school website: <i>Yes/No</i>

ARSON PREVENTION AND FIRE SAFETY POLICY

(This policy is based on guidance set out in the Arson Prevention Bureau's publication "How to combat Arson in Schools" at www.firesafe.org.uk)

1. Introduction: How serious is the problem?

Arson accounts for 21% of all fires in premises nationally, and for 25% of fires in school buildings. The incidence of arson in all types of premises is increasing and is recognised as a major cause of fire. This policy is addressed primarily at the person who has overall responsibility for the premises. It aims to alert those responsible and working in the premises to the possible dangers of arson attacks and suggests means by which such a potential can be reduced.

2. Premises vulnerability

Premises may be vulnerable to arson attacks due to:

- the ease of access to sites;
- vandalism;
- poor housekeeping.

Reduction in the incidence of arson will benefit everyone by the following:

- Providing a safer environment for staff and visitors.
- Ensuring that buildings and facilities are not lost due to the effects of fire.
- The damage done by fire can be very costly, taking financial resources away from the provision of other needs – these costs will be reduced.
- Not all arson is preventable but, where possible, its effects will be minimalised.

3. Responsibilities of all staff

All staff are required to adhere to this policy, the School Business Manager or Headteacher is required to ensure that all staff are aware of and follow procedures related to arson prevention.

The School Business Manager and Headteacher will work with the Caretaker to ensure that all staff understand the cause and effect of arson, and to encourage good practices to combat the threat.

All staff should be trained in the removal and storage of potentially combustible materials and in challenging suspicious intruders on the site.

All staff will ensure that a high level of security is maintained to prevent unauthorised access and ensure that legitimate visitors can be identified and access controlled. Staff will immediately challenge and report strangers/intruders.

The school site should also be secured at the end of each school day and appropriate fire warning systems regularly assessed for effectiveness.

Procedures to prevent the possibility of arson are to be implemented and regularly reviewed (see Appendix A: How to combat arson in schools).

The School Business Manager and/or Headteacher will investigate any outbreak of fire. If there is any suspicion that arson could be the cause, any material evidence will be safeguarded for the attention of the Police/Fire Service.

The Fire Safety Advisor will make recommendations to the staff regarding arson prevention measures. Fire risk assessment of premises will take into account the risk from arson and the measures to minimise the risk.

The School Business Manager and/or Headteacher will ensure that this policy is accessible and up to date.

4. Fire prevention

Fire safety training

At Christ Church we ensure that all staff are trained in basic fire prevention and premises evacuation procedures. Fire safety training will include arson awareness and prevention.

Fire Marshals

In addition to this, named staff are trained as Fire Marshals:

- 1) Rupert Kaye, Headteacher (trained: 24.1.16)
- 2) Sara Lodge, School Business Manager (trained: 24.1.16)
- 4) Emma Penney, Nursery Senior (trained: 24.1.16)
- 5) Lucy Rushbridge, Nursery Nurse (trained: 24.1.16)

General housekeeping

- The Caretaker will ensure flammable materials are correctly stored.
- The Caretaker will carry out, and record, weekly fire alarm tests.
- The School Business Manager will carry out a termly fire drill during the school day.
- All staff are aware that there is to be no smoking at any time on, or close to, the school premises.
- Access/escape routes are clear and unobstructed at all times.
- Fire notices, fire alarm call points, firefighting equipment, emergency exit signs or lights are visible and unobstructed at all times.
- Combustible materials are always stored securely.
- Rubbish and recycling is regularly removed from classes and placed in industrial wheelie bins with lids that are located in a fenced area at least 8m from school buildings.
- Combustible waste is collected regularly and not allowed to accumulate.

Hot work

With regard to hot work (soldering, welding, cutting metal with a grinder, work with hot tar on roofs, etc.), it may only be carried out by the holder of a Hot Work Permit, who has:

- first sought permission on the day from the School Business Manager, Headteacher or Caretaker, and
- in accordance with Health and Safety guidelines and Somerset CC policy.

Display boards

With regard to class and corridor displays, we follow the guidance set out in Appendix C: Displays in schools.

5. Review

This policy will be reviewed biannually by the School Business Manager, to ensure that practises and procedures stated are being carried out and are an effective form of arson prevention.

APPENDIX A: HOW TO COMBAT ARSON IN SCHOOLS

(<https://www.firesafe.org.uk/how-to-combat-arson-in-schools/>)

Start the action planning process

Once the arson risk has been assessed, the next priority is to address the weaknesses identified. These may not all require significant financial resources but may involve housekeeping or training issues.

The Caretaker is the person with overall responsibility for initiatives against the threat of arson. The arson prevention strategy is to be incorporated in the Premises' Fire Risk Assessment and Fire Log Book, and supported and endorsed.

The prevention of arson attacks falls into a logical process, as detailed in the following sections.

Five Point Action Plan

The prevention of arson attacks falls into a logical process:

- (i) Deter unauthorised entry onto the site
- (ii) Prevent unauthorised entry into the building
- (iii) Reduce the opportunity for an offender to start a fire
- (iv) Reduce the scope for potential fire damage
- (v) Reduce subsequent losses and disruption from a fire.

Each of the above aspects are addressed below.

(i) Deter unauthorised entry onto the site

- Discourage unauthorised entry onto the site by the use of signs and by delineating the boundary of the premises by use of a robust fence or hedge. This action makes it clear to would-be intruders and trespassers that they are on private property and for neighbours to see clearly that people are within the site boundaries. Consideration should be given to the type of fence or hedge used so that it does not obscure the vision of passers-by and neighbours. If a hedge is decided upon, consider berberis, hawthorne or other similar shrubs as they in themselves are a deterrent (see Appendix B: Plants as a defence). It may also be necessary to consider palisade security fencing for part of, or the whole site, if unauthorised intrusion is a major problem.
- Most trespass and associated vandalism occurs out of school hours and often under cover of darkness. Consequently, good lighting is recommended. Sodium lighting should be used on elevations which are overlooked. Such lighting is inexpensive to run. In contrast, tungsten halogen lighting which is operated via infrared motion detection is ideal for elevations which are not overlooked, but such lighting can be expensive to run. Lighting on elevations which are not overlooked or are in recesses can attract unwanted visitors or provide intruders

with working light. The colour rendering of light sources needs to be considered where CCTV surveillance is in use. Bespoke advice on security lighting can be obtained from local crime prevention officers.

- The presence of school staff living on site is obviously a high deterrent to intruders. Where this is not feasible, then roving patrols by either commercial or local authority security teams can be effective. Such patrols should be random in order to avoid a recognised pattern. If such a service is used, close liaison should take place with the Police.

(ii) Prevent unauthorised entry into the building

If access to the site is controlled, then the next barrier to the miscreant is the building itself.

- Deep recesses and alcoves are particularly vulnerable. Ideally, building alterations should be undertaken to eliminate these features. Failing that, point lighting should be used.
- The weakest points of entry into the building are, of course, the doors and windows. The numbers of doors and windows, particularly those out of view from the public, should be kept to a minimum. Clearly, the means of escape should never be compromised, and the Fire Brigade should always be consulted prior to any changes being made.
- All external doors and windows should be fitted with approved locks (Thief Resistant Locks BS 3621:2007 or BS EN 1303 2005) and secured immediately the building is vacated. The local crime prevention officer would be pleased to advise on this subject.
- Door frame construction should be of good quality, with solid core doors without lower panels which may easily be forced. The hinges and frames should be reinforced to deter removal. Where letterboxes are fitted, they should be fitted with metal enclosures on the inside to prevent damage arising from the introduction of burning materials.
- Break-ins via roof lights should be prevented by fitting grills or bars within the inside of the frame.
- Low-level glazing should be avoided both on security and safety grounds. If this is not possible, it should be laminated or toughened and securely fixed within the frame.
- Intruder alarms should be fitted. In most cases, they should be connected to a call monitoring centre. Where the coverage of the alarm has to be limited, areas of high value should be alarmed. Consideration should be given to alarming areas such as corridors, where intruders might be detected moving between rooms.
- Schools should foster relationships with neighbours who are able to observe out-of-hours activity on the premises. In addition, the school should become involved in local Neighbourhood Watch schemes, or develop their own School Watch scheme in conjunction with the local Police.

- The installation of CCTV has a high deterrent effect. CCTV systems which are not monitored have limited value, as the wide-angle lenses used to get the required coverage do not provide recordings of evidential quality. Some joint arrangements for monitoring CCTV pictures between schools and local councils who operate a CCTV system have proved valuable in spreading the costs. The subsequent reduction in vandalism has proved such schemes to be cost effective, despite the initial high capital outlay. Specialist advice should always be sought before installation of CCTV is considered.
- With the use of school buildings outside normal school hours and opening the premises to a wider public, it is imperative that access to other parts of the school is limited. A routine should be adopted by a nominated person to check that all external doors and windows have been locked once the school is vacated at the end of the day. It is important that the means of escape are not compromised when deciding which areas to secure whilst the premises are occupied, and it is also important that the local Fire Safety Officer is consulted.
- Many of these measures will not only prevent arson but keep the school more secure generally.

(iii) Reduce the opportunity for an offender to start a fire

If an arsonist intent on causing damage is unable to enter the premises then the opportunity to light a fire on the outside of the building is often exploited. In many circumstances, willful damage can get out of hand. For this reason, it is important that the opportunity to ignite combustible material is eliminated.

- Refuse containers should ideally be placed in a secure compound or alternatively secured by a padlock and chain to a post sited no less than 8m from the building to prevent them being moved against the building.
- Many schools are involved in recycling or fundraising initiatives where newspapers, clothing and other materials are collected. Recycling bins should be located at least 8m from the building in secure compounds, and collections made regularly to avoid a build-up of possibly combustible materials.
- Sheds and other storage facilities for sports and play equipment should be sited at least 8m away from the main building. This will avoid fire spread from such buildings involving the whole school.
- Similar precautions should be taken with heating oil, natural gas and liquid petroleum gas installations. In particular, the vulnerable parts of these systems, such as the pipe work and meters, should be secured and protected to avoid them being vandalised and used as a ready supply of fuel. Bund walls should be provided around fuel tanks to ensure spillages are contained.
- Skirts should be fitted at the base of mobile classrooms to prevent combustible materials being placed underneath buildings and ignited.
- External waste bins should not be fixed to walls or under roofs constructed of combustible materials, but secured to the ground and away from the school buildings. They should be emptied each day as part of the close-down routine.

- All external gates need to be open during the day and closed at night as part of the close-down routine.

(iv) Reduce the scope for potential fire damage

Should a fire be started, either deliberately or accidentally, it is important that its effect is minimised by containing the fire to a limited area, or ensuring high value contents are protected.

- Schools of open plan design are more difficult to protect than those with traditional layouts with separate classrooms. With the latter, the compartmentalisation (fire-stops in the roof/ceiling voids) is an essential element of the design even though the classroom construction may not be fire resisting.
- During alterations and maintenance, consideration should be given to providing additional firebreak walls or doors to separate the building into compartments. This should include protection of concealed spaces such as roof voids. This needs to be properly designed and carried out with the assistance of professional advice.
- This compartmentalisation may require fire-resisting screens and doors across corridors, and the restrictions this may impose can be reduced by installing hold-open devices linked to automatic fire detection. Doors not required to protect means-of-escape routes may be left open during school hours.
- Sprinkler systems are rare in existing schools but are increasingly being fitted in new school buildings, particularly in those which have been assessed as high risk. Sprinkler systems are best regarded as a combined detection and extinguishing system. They have a proven track record over many years for successfully controlling fires in commercial buildings. The number and distribution of the sprinkler heads is arranged so that they can cover the area protected. This is usually the entire floor area of the school.
- Partition walls need to be inspected regularly. When any maintenance, repair or alteration has been finished, such as installation of pipes/cables through partitions, the gaps around pipework should be made good with fire retardant sealant.
- Equipment of high material value, such as audio-visual aids, computers and similar laboratory-type equipment, should ideally be located in a secure, separate room where it will be out of sight and better protected in a fire.
- Early warning of the outbreak of fire can significantly reduce the losses if early firefighting can be initiated. This ranges from a wastepaper bin being extinguished by a member of staff to the alerting of the fire service whilst the premises is unoccupied. An automatic fire detection system, possibly using the same communication system as the intruder alarm, can mean the difference between containing the fire to the compartment of origin and the loss of the whole building and contents. To be effective the alarm must give warning off-site.
- Sprinklers are expensive to install but are relatively cheap to maintain. By careful design of the system, malicious damage can be avoided, e.g. by using concealed heads.

(v) Reduce subsequent losses and disruption resulting from a fire

- Recognition should be given to the provision of the most appropriate form of extinguishing medium. Water is the most effective medium for most fires but inappropriate for fires in electrical equipment.
- Schools located away from residential areas may have poor water supplies, which can hinder the fire service when trying to extinguish the fire. Ideally, a private hydrant on a suitable sized main is desirable, but this is usually only available when the site is developed. An alternative would be an emergency water supply. This may be the swimming pool, but could be an ornamental pond of sufficient size which could double for nature and wildlife studies or an ecology area.
- Members of staff should be adequately trained in fire procedures, including how to summon the Fire Service, building evacuation and the use of fire extinguishers. They should also be aware of the location of high-value materials and equipment, particularly school records, which may be irreplaceable, and have knowledge of a salvage plan to recover these items.
- In the event of a fire, a service recovery plan will be invaluable. This should be formulated in advance with the assistance of the Local Authority Risk Management Group where this exists, or with the LA. The service recovery plan, should include:
 1. Details of people who can help in an emergency
 2. Information regarding suppliers
 3. Inventory information
 4. How media enquiries will be handled.

APPENDIX B: PLANTS AS A DEFENCE

Good hedging plants

- Berberis x ottawensis – medium-sized deciduous shrub. Up to 6ft high. Red berries in autumn.
- Berberis x stenophylla – medium-sized evergreen shrub. Up to 6ft high. Golden-yellow flowers in spring; black berries in autumn.
- Crataegus monogyna (Common Hawthorn) – used extensively throughout UK as hedging. White flowers in spring; red “haws” in autumn. Plant as an impenetrable hedge.
- Ilex x aquifolium (Common Holly) – excellent hedging plant, usually grown as tree or bush. Up to 50ft high.
- Prunus spinosa (Blackthorn or Sloe) – large dense shrub, good for hedging. White flowers in spring; blue-black fruits in autumn.
- Rosa rugosa (Rubra) – dense shrub, good for hedging. Up to 6ft high. Perpetual flowering wine-crimson flowers; red “heps” or berries.

Plants to be trained up a wall

- Chaenomeles x superba (Pink Lady) – small- to medium-sized deciduous shrub. Up to 6ft high. Grow trained against a wall. Rose pink flowers in spring; yellow quinces in autumn.
- Pyracantha (Orange Glow – Firethorn) – evergreen shrub. Up to 16ft high when trained up a wall. White flowers in spring; orange-red berries in autumn/winter.
- Pyracantha (Golden Charmer – Firethorn) – evergreen shrub. Up to 16ft high when trained up a wall. White flowers in spring; orange-yellow berries in autumn.

Shrubs

- Mahonia x media (Winter Sun) – tall evergreen shrub. Up to 10ft high. Yellow flowers in autumn; blue-black berries in winter.
- Hippophae rhamnoides (Sea Buckthorn) – tall deciduous shrub. Up to 10ft high. Grows in any soil, providing a good windbreak. Silver, willow-like leaves in summer; orange berries in autumn.
- Ulex europaeus (Common Gorse) – dense, evergreen, spiny shrub. Up to 5ft high. Golden-yellow flowers. Good in poor soil.

APPENDIX C: DISPLAYS IN SCHOOLS

School Displays – Fire Safety in Schools

(Advice from the Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA) and Ofsted.)

UK Fire and Rescue Services have identified reoccurring issues within schools which would put the safety of occupants at risk should a fire occur. These can be summarised in two key points:

- Excessive learning displays on routes designated as a means of escape.
- Excessive displays of pupils work within corridors which form the means of escape.

To enable schools to comply with fire safety law and provide a fulfilling, nurturing and safe learning environment, schools should minimise the amount of combustible display materials in corridors and circulation spaces.

Ofsted inspectors do not and will not penalise schools that are unable to display work or produce additional opportunities for learning within the school due to restrictions placed upon them under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 to protect the means of escape.

Displays are often located in corridors and in entrance foyers, and generally comprise materials such as paper, cardboard and plastic which provide a means for the rapid spread of fire. Schools should evaluate what material could ignite first and what would cause the fire to develop and spread. Appropriate measures to mitigate the dangers of ignition and fire spread can include the following:

1. Notice boards containing pupils work should not be more than 3m wide, and there should be a gap between notice boards on the same wall of at least 1m. Notice boards on a means of escape should be fitted with covers, preferably top hung so that the cover cannot be left “jutting out” into the escape route.
2. Escape routes need to be kept free of clutter.
3. Ensure that display materials (including artificial and dried foliage), scenery and stands are fire retardant or have been treated with a proprietary fire-retardant treatment designed to enhance their fire performance.
4. Ensure that all upholstered furniture, curtains, drapes and other soft furnishings are fire retardant or have been treated with a proprietary fire-retardant treatment designed to enhance their fire performance.
5. Ensure storage and display areas are adequately controlled and monitored.
6. Use fire-retardant display materials wherever possible (suppliers should be able to provide evidence of this).
7. Avoid the use of displays in corridors and foyers.
8. Minimise the size and number of display areas to discrete, separated areas.
9. Do not put displays down stairways which are part of a designated escape route or where there is only one direction of escape (i.e. dead-end conditions).

10. Treat displays with proprietary flame-retardant sprays.
11. The use of display boxes.
12. Keep displays away from curtains, light fittings and heaters.
13. Keep displays away from ceiling voids, which may lack fire barriers.
14. Ensure that there are no ignition sources in the vicinity.
15. Ensure displays do not obstruct escape routes or obscure fire notices, fire alarm call points, firefighting equipment or escape signs.