West Lodge School

A co-educational prep school for 3-11 year olds

Fire Prevention Policy

This Plan has regard for the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005

To be read in conjunction with the School's Health & Safety Policy, Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan
and Emergency Evacuation Procedure

Introduction

The prevention of fire is of vital importance. Most fires are caused by carelessness and ignorance. A high standard of fire consciousness will prevent this. It is the responsibility of all personnel to become conversant with these instructions.

This policy supplements our Health and Safety Policy arrangements for fire management, is the basis of our compliance strategy and ensures that every employee in this school and every occupant of the premises understands precisely what they must do in the event of fire.

Our objectives are to adhere to the law and engage best practice. In particular, we will comply with the legal requirements for risk assessment, with the principles of prevention, which include the elimination or reduction of risk, including the risk of hazardous substances, which may be high risk in the event of fire, for proper structural and fitted fire precautions, for proper maintenance, for fire procedures, for training and for recording systems.

Every employee, pupil and visitor must adhere to the parts of this developed policy which are relevant to them. A formal review of the contents will take place annually at the beginning of each academic year.

The Head is responsible for fire safety and delegates to the Bursar the duties of fire management (see Health and Safety Policy section 'Organisation for Health and Safety Management'). In particular the Bursar ensures that *Fire Safety Risk Assessments* are comprehensive and include any elimination or reduction of risks such as from dangerous substances and that the risk assessment requirements with any written recommendations from the Fire Authority.

Strategy for fire prevention

Management strategy for fire prevention may be classified as follows:

- everyday management and vigilance by staff to ensure that potential hazards are kept under control to prevent the occurrence of fire
- alarm, evacuation and emergency action, backed up by notices, drills and practice to ensure that correct action is taken in the event of an outbreak of fire

Fire prevention checks

Regular fire prevention checks should be carried out.

Checks are to include the following.

- Unnecessary lights and electrical appliances (TVs, videos, microwave ovens etc) are to be switched off and, where possible, unplugged.
- It is recommended that convector heaters are not used in school. All other electric fires must be regularly tested and maintained.

A fire prevention check is to be carried out in all areas at the termination of the day's work prior to the premises being vacated.

The following precautions are to be observed.

- With the exception of essential systems that must continue to operate after normal working hours, all electrical appliances and lighting systems are to be switched off and disconnected by a person nominated for this purpose.
- Waste paper bins are to be emptied and the contents removed from the building.
- All parts of the school are to be inspected by the caretaker at the end of the day. He or she is also to ensure that computers have been closed down and television sets have been disconnected and that all doors are closed.
- Windows are to be left free from obstruction. To facilitate detection of a fire from outside, prior to vacating rooms or premises at the end of the day, all curtains should be drawn apart, other than when security requirements dictate otherwise.

Housekeeping

Tidiness and cleanliness are essential fire prevention measures. The accumulation of rubbish and waste material is to be kept to a minimum; it is to be cleared away each day on the cessation of work and removed to a safe location outside and away from buildings for early disposal.

Paint materials are subject to spontaneous ignition. Such items should be removed to a safe external location on cessation of work. The storage or accumulation of combustible materials in roof voids, under stairs and similar spaces should be avoided.

Smoking

Smoking is one of the main causes of fire and is prohibited in the School and the School grounds.

Refuse and rubbish

Refuse or rubbish must not be permitted to accumulate in or around the school. Disposal is to be undertaken at the end of each day.

Flammable materials

Flammable materials are not to be stored near any form of heating.

Electrical appliances

When using electrical appliances, the following rules should be observed.

- They are to be switched off and unplugged when not in use.
- They are to be fitted with the correct plug for the socket provided. Plugs are to be undamaged.
- Temporary wiring and extensions are not to be used.
- Electrical faults are to be reported immediately to the Bursar or the School Handyman, in his absence.
- Fuses that have blown must only be replaced after establishing the cause for the blowing, with fuses of the correct rating.
- A fuse should never be replaced with one of a higher rating.
- Flexible cable to fittings should be as short as possible and should be inspected regularly and replaced if worn.
- Personal portable electrical appliances must be PAT tested. Such items must not be used without the appropriate testing and prior authorisation of the Head Teacher, Bursar or IT Manager.

Paint solvents

Paints and solvents suitably marked are to be segregated in properly prepared stores.

Paint and solvents should be disposed of correctly.

Grass and undergrowth

Grass and undergrowth is to be kept cut well back from buildings.

Kitchens

In order that losses by fire are kept to a minimum and that catering facilities are not jeopardised, a high standard of fire precautions in kitchens is of paramount importance. Catering staff should be fire conscious and are to be trained in the action to be taken when a fire occurs.

Disabled persons

Special precautions may be required when disabled persons have access to a building. Where possible they should be located within a building so that they are able to evacuate with the minimum of assistance. This will normally mean location on the ground floor. However, consideration must be given to any steps or other changes of level that may need to be crossed.

Vandalism and damage limitation

Fire caused by vandals or persons breaking into a building intent on causing damage are a constant risk, and this type of fire is probably the greatest risk facing the school. Such fires are often started at night or during holidays, and result in extensive material damage, and disruption of pupils' education.

The opportunity for reducing such vandalism lies partly in the long-term development of a good relationship with neighbours and partly in the security of the premises, by ensuring the windows and internal doors are properly secured when the building is unoccupied. Combustible materials should not be left where they are immediately accessible to intruders and flammable liquids, which may be used as accelerants, should be stored securely.

Structural fire precautions incorporated to assist escape from buildings will also reduce the spread of fire. All fire doors should be closed when premises are vacated (closing of all doors and windows is recommended to limit the spread of smoke damage).

Curtains, furnishings, art displays and decorations

Care should be taken when choosing curtains, furnishings and fittings. Inherent or tested fire-retardant materials should be used whenever possible.

- Art displays and other decorations of a combustible nature can increase the spread of fire considerably. Accordingly, the quantity and location of such displays is critical in reducing the fire loading.
- Displays should not block exits.
- Sources of ignition, such as light bulbs, should not be placed near the displays.
- Expanded polystyrene and other plastics produce large amounts of toxic, black smoke and considerable heat. They should not be allowed on escape routes.
- In corridors or on staircases, wall displays made from combustible material should be limited to 20 per cent of the available overall surface.

Storage

Readily combustible materials such as paper should be stored in designated areas. These areas must be free of sources of ignition, such as heaters and suspended lighting units.

Flammable liquids must be kept in purpose-built storerooms or cupboards provided with ventilation.

All persons handling such material should be aware of the dangers.

Electricity

All electrical apparatus should be installed by an approved contractor, using the correctly rated fuse. If a fault occurs, get it repaired before continuing. Electrical installations should be checked regularly as electrical faults are a major cause of accidental fires.

All electrical equipment not required to be used out of hours should be switched off and, where practicable, the plug removed from the socket. All portable electrical equipment is to be checked annually by a suitably qualified contractor.

Fire doors

Fire doors have at least one of two functions, to protect:

- escape routes from the effects of fire so that occupants can safely reach a final exit
- the contents and/or the structure of a building by limiting the spread of fire

Neither of the above functions will be satisfactorily undertaken unless the door is a good fit in the frame, the self-closing device is working efficiently and the door is not wedged or held open.

Even if a door is not a fire door, it may reduce smoke and heat damage, so at evenings and weekends, all doors should be left in the closed position.

Contractors

Building contractors bring a large number of ignition sources to the school. Ensure that all contractors entering the premises are aware of the fire precaution measures and procedures, should a fire occur.

At the end of the day, no building materials should be left outside where vandals can use them to damage the premises.

The Bursar should be made aware, when hot cutting work is to take place for both the safety of the pupils and the school.

School grounds

Access for emergency vehicles must be kept clear at all times. Areas beneath raised buildings should be protected against the accumulation of litter and access for intruders.

Combustibles, rubbish containers and equipment, which could be used by vandals, especially those used by outside contractors, must not be left unsecured.

Fire records

The safety of a building's occupants cannot be assured by design alone. Any building can quickly become dangerous unless there is foresight in the activities carried out there, and care in the maintenance of it.

The following fire records are to be maintained:

- persons with special responsibilities
- fire alarm call point locations and checks
- weekly fire alarm tests
- fire alarm fault records
- fire alarm maintenance inspection
- emergency lighting maintenance inspection
- fire-fighting equipment routine monthly checks
- fire drills
- fire-fighting equipment tests and maintenance by contractors
- training records
- visits and inspections by the fire service

Appendix A: Displays, display boarding and decorations

Great care should be taken that educational and display materials, which may be added to a building by the occupants, do not unintentionally cause a fire hazard. The same caution is needed in respect of decorations using combustible materials, for example, Christmas trimmings and displays of autumn leaves. Flimsy materials, natural and artificial, can be readily combustible and increase the risk of fire occurring and, depending on quantity and location, will increase the possibility of rapid spread of smoke and fire. Blazing pieces may drop over a wide area before people have a chance to escape.

In determining what is reasonable by way of display materials and/or decorations, the overriding consideration is whether persons are likely to be trapped as a result of fire involving such materials. This is a difficult area for the lay person to assess as it needs an understanding of how parts of the building contribute to escape routes, and how materials, for example display boarding, may contribute to the spread of fire over its surface. The following guidance can be given concerning materials that form the linings of walls and ceilings (the technical terms are defined in DCSF Building Bulletin 7 (DCSF, 2005) and British Standard 476 (for fire doors), and are essential to understanding which materials are acceptable).

- In 'protected stairways', 'protected corridors' and 'protected lobbies', the surface linings should be 'class 0', ie non-combustible. The meaning of this is that display boards and free-standing displays should not be incorporated in these areas.

- In ‘horizontal circulation areas’, the linings should be ‘class 0’, except that 20 per cent of the total wall and ceiling area may be ‘class 2’. This means that display boarding may be acceptable in these areas, subject to its area being within the amount given, and that the character of the fire resistance as given in the manufacturer’s specification is ‘class 1’.
- In new construction, these requirements should have been taken into account at the design stage. However, occupants should ensure that no modifications occur, such as covering or painting that will change the nature of its fire resistance.
- Where there are any areas of doubt, for example whether a certain material is acceptable in terms of the effect that it may have on fire precautions, then the advice of the fire officer should be sought.
- Where displays are provided in other cases, they must be located where they are well clear of any source of ignition.
- Where paper, natural or plastic materials are used for decorations or display, they should not be suspended from light fittings or near any heat source. Coloured paper must not be placed inside light diffusers for coloured effects.
- Cellular plastics (polyurethane foam) present particularly severe fire risks and should not be used for display purposes.

Appendix B: Electricity

The current running through electric wiring is a source of heat, and if a fault develops in the wiring, that heat can become excessive and start a fire. Neglect and misuse of wiring and electrical appliances is one of the main causes of fire. Fuses or circuit breakers are incorporated in a system to protect against overloading in the event of defect.

Plugs and circuits must be correctly wired and fused. Equipment and plugs with loose connections must be taken out of use.

In the event of a fuse protecting equipment or a circuit blowing, the cause of the failure should be identified before replacing the fuse.

Any replacement of fuses must be with fuses of the same rating.

Electrical socket outlets must not be overloaded, and the use of multi-way adapters inserted directly into the socket outlet is not permissible. It is therefore essential that before additional equipment is obtained, facilities should exist to allow its safe use.

It may be permissible to run up to four items of equipment which draw low amounts of current, for example computer and monitor from a single socket outlet by a fixed plug connected to a purpose-designed, four-socket outlet with an integral fuse. Careful location of the cable is essential. The unit should be removed when not in use.

Flexible cables are to be replaced when worn or damaged. This is not a task expected to be in the ability of most employees, as it will involve partial disassembly of the equipment.

After use, outlets should be switched off, and, where practicable, plugs removed from sockets.

Any addition or alteration to the permanent electrical system of premises must be carried out by a qualified electrician. Under no circumstances should work of this nature be undertaken without prior approval of the Bursar.

Appendix C: Deep-fat fryers

The principal fire hazard in kitchens is the deep-fat fryer, whether or not it is thermostatically controlled. Cooking oils and fats over-heating or boiling over usually results in a fire that can rapidly involve the ceiling or fume extraction ducting. Fires in fryers usually occur when they are left unattended or when used by unqualified persons. Catering staff are to adhere to the following fire precautions.

- Deep-fat fryers are not to be left unattended when switched on. The appropriate fire precaution notice is to be prominently displayed.
- After use the oil is left to cool.
- After repeated use of oil, a residue of food particles can build up and the danger of fire can become progressively higher.
- Defects in cooking apparatus are to be reported immediately.
- In the event of fire, electricity and gas supplies are to be switched off, preferably at the main switch or valve, and appropriate action taken.

Staff are to be aware of the locations of:

- fire alarms and fire-fighting equipment
- main electrical switch or gas isolation valve, which must be indicated by suitable notices
- dampers for isolating ducting in kitchen hoods, etc.

Charlene Whyte, Bursar

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Next Review: October 2025