



## Fire Safety Advice for Schools

This note has been produced to provide a starting point for those with responsibilities towards fire safety in school premises. The note has not been designed to provide the answers to all fire safety queries; it will provide guidance on the basic requirements of fire safety and provide links to supporting documents and information which will assist schools in managing fire safety of the premises.

It is advisable to download the Government guide "Fire Safety in Educational Premises" which is free to download in PDF format using the following link:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/14887/fsra-educational-premises.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/14887/fsra-educational-premises.pdf)

This guide will assist the person undertaking the fire risk assessment and provides useful checklists and information which will help with the day to day management of fire safety in the school.

### The legislation

All non-domestic premises are required by law to conform to the requirements of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (RRO). This piece of legislation was introduced on 1 October 2006 and replaced previous fire safety legislation.

### Who does the legislation apply to?

The RRO applies to teaching staff, headteachers, governors, pupils, parents and carers, visitors, contractors, volunteers, – basically anyone who is **lawfully** entitled to be on the premises. These people are referred to in the legislation as "**Relevant Persons**" and need to be considered in the fire safety management strategy for the school.

### Who is responsible for implementing fire safety in the school?

Generally, the person who has day to day control of the premises is deemed to be the person responsible for the implementation of fire safety in the school. However, this person who under the legislation is known as the "**Responsible Person**" can nominate other persons to assist them in carrying out fire safety functions. All persons involved in implementing fire safety should have some experience, knowledge or skills relevant to fire safety to enable them to undertake the task. These people are known as "**Competent Persons**" and can be from various backgrounds i.e. governors, parents, consultants, business managers etc. and are a valuable asset when it comes to managing the fire safety arrangements in school.

## What do you need to do to comply with the legislation?

Fire safety starts with completing a suitable and sufficient fire safety risk assessment (FSRA). The FSRA should be undertaken by the Responsible Person; however they can nominate Competent Persons to assist in the process. It is good practice to utilise the skills, knowledge and expertise of staff, governors, business managers etc. when carrying out a fire risk assessment.

The FSRA should take into consideration all Relevant Persons and pay particular attention to pupils, students and staff with special needs, including those with a disability.

Findings of the FSRA should be recorded and kept onsite. The findings should be used to form an **action plan** to address the issues identified during the assessment.

The FSRA should be reviewed on an annual basis or where significant changes have been made to the layout or means of escape from the building or changes to the numbers or type of occupants.

A FSRA template with a section for the action plan is available to download from the Shropshire Learning Gateway fire safety page along with a worked example. Access to these documents is available at:

Shropshire Learning Gateway\Occupational Health and Safety\Fire Safety in Schools

The template has been produced using the information provided in the publication *“Keep your School in Business”* produced by the West Midlands Arson Task Force, of which all schools have received a copy.

## What information should be included in the fire risk assessment?

Details should include:

- Name of the school  
Address of the school including the postcode  
Name of the Responsible Person  
Name of the person undertaking the fire risk assessment  
Date that the assessment was conducted and subsequent review dates
- Description of the building and its occupants:  
  
e.g. single storey Victorian stone building with slate roof operating as a Primary School of two classes with 54 pupils and 6 staff.  
  
Or, two storey building with basement boiler house, brick construction with a flat roof and two staircases, operating as a Primary School of five classes for 120 pupils and 10 staff.
- Or, three storey building of SCOLA construction with multiple staircases, operating as a Secondary School for 500 pupils and 63 staff.
- The assessment should signpost to various documents that the school has:

- Fire Safety Policy
- Fire Evacuation Procedure
- Fire Drill Records
- Fire Safety Staff Training Records
- Fire Safety Equipment Testing Records
- Fire Safety Equipment Maintenance Certificates
- Portable Appliance Testing Records
- Electrical Installation Certificates
- Sprinkler Testing and Maintenance Records and Certificates
- Recovery/Contingency/Disaster Plan
- Arson Prevention Policy etc.
- Smoking Policy

**Has school got these documents and records in place?**

- Who is at risk?
  - Children and young people
  - Employees
  - Visitors
  - Contractors etc.

**Remember to give extra consideration to young people and the disabled!**

**Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans will need to be considered for disabled pupils, staff or regular visitors to the school?**

- What risks are there in the school i.e. what could cause a fire to start?
  - Electrical equipment
  - Machinery
  - Gas supplies – laboratories, cooking facilities etc.
  - Heaters
  - Hot work
  - Arson
  - Cooking equipment etc.

**What action should be taken to prevent a fire starting?**

- Consideration should be given to the structure of the school i.e.
  - **Means for escaping from the school**
    - Are there adequate escape routes?
    - Do they lead to a final exit from the building?
    - Do the fire doors and associated fittings, provide adequate protection to prevent corridors and escape routes becoming smoke logged and affected by fire?

- Can all exit doors be opened without the need for a key or code?
- Are escape routes clear from obstruction and combustible materials? etc.
- Can fire develop undetected? i.e. a fire in a roof space can spread undetected or a fire in a remote or unused area such as the kitchen or a boiler house or a reprographics room would be well developed before it is spotted etc.

***What action needs to be taken to remedy any insufficiencies?***

- What training have employees received to enable them to fulfil obligations to fire safety in the school?
  - Fire extinguisher training
  - Evacuation training
  - Fire Warden training etc.

***It is advisable that records and certificates are kept to demonstrate the training employees have received.***

- Is there adequate provision of firefighting equipment?
  - Fire extinguishers
  - Fire Blankets
  - Suppression systems etc.
- Are there adequate means for detecting fire and alerting the occupants in the event of a fire? Consider what is appropriate for the size and use of the building(s)
  - Shout of fire
  - Hand bell or horn
  - Break glass manually operated electric fire alarm
  - Automatic fire alarm with smoke detectors
- Consider emergency routes and exits
  - Do they lead as directly as possible to a place of safety away from the building?
  - Can people evacuate the premises quickly and safely?
  - Are the number of exits and the widths of exits wide enough to accommodate the number of people in the building? **Think about times when school hold events and performances!**
  - Do the exit doors open in the direction of escape?
  - Can doors be immediately opened without the use of keys, keypads or codes?
  - Are the routes and exits adequately marked with escape signs?

- Sliding and revolving doors should not be considered as emergency exits.
  - Are escape routes adequately lit? Consider the times when there are performances.
  - Consider the needs of those with mobility issues especially those with wheelchairs and walking aids
- Consideration should be given to any dangerous substances on site e.g. oxyacetylene, laboratory chemicals etc.
    - Name the substance and the risks associated with it
    - Specify the quantities and where it is located
    - Ensure staff are aware of the presence of dangerous substances and what they need to do in the event of an emergency or spillage.

***Schools with Science Labs should make the fire and rescue service aware of the quantities and types of chemicals stored and where they are stored.***

- What arrangements are in place for evacuating the school?
  - How is the alarm raised and can it be heard by all occupants in school?
  - Is there a designated, marked assembly point(s)?
  - Does everyone know where to assemble and who to report to?
  - Who is responsible for dialling 999 and notifying the fire service?
  - How will people in other buildings on the site know to evacuate?
  - Who will check to make sure the building is clear (if it is safe to do so)
  - How will each person be accounted for? Registers? Visitor Log?
  - Are fire evacuation notices displayed at each exit?
  - Is there a contingency plan in place to ensure pupils are safely accommodated should the school become inoperable?
- Maintenance and testing of fire safety equipment
  - Daily Checks
  - Weekly Checks
  - Monthly Checks
  - Bi-annual and Annual Maintenance Checks

**Daily** check should be undertaken to make sure

- exit routes are clear and exit doors are unlocked and available
- check whether any fire extinguishers have been moved or tampered with
- check the fire alarm panel (where fitted) for any faults
- check handheld equipment to see that it works and is in the place it is meant to be e.g loud hailers, torches, radios etc.

**Weekly** tests should be carried out on fire alarm systems to check

- all bells and sounders are working and that the alarm can be heard throughout the building(s) ideally test one call point each week.
- Check that any hold open devices function on the sounding of the alarm.
- Fire doors should be checked for damage or wear and tear with attention being paid to smoke and heat seals and closing devices.

**Monthly** Checks of emergency lighting should be undertaken to check that lighting units work effectively.

**Bi-annual and Annual** Maintenance Checks should be carried out on fire alarm systems, fire fighting equipment and emergency lighting.

Records of all testing routines should be kept in an appropriate log book. Tests should be carried out in line with manufacturer's recommendations and the relevant British Standard. A log book is available from the Shropshire Learning Gateway\Occupational Health and Safety\Fire Safety in Schools\Fire Safety Training Testing and Maintenance Log Book 2014.

- **Multiple Use Sites**

- Does the school have employees from other organisations on site? e.g. school nurse, music teacher, multi-agency groups etc.
- Does the school have other organisations the site using parts of the premises but working independently to the school e.g. Sure Start, nursery etc.
- Have they undertaken a FSRA for their area of the building or site?
- Have the findings of their risk assessments and the school's assessment been discussed collectively?
- Are they aware of the fire safety arrangements in school?
- Can the fire alarm be heard throughout the building/site?
- Consider the times when the school is in use and also the times when the building is being used when the school is not in use.

## Useful Contacts

- **Health and Safety Information and Advice**

Shelley Reid  
Health and Safety Officer, Shropshire Council  
email: [shelley.reid@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:shelley.reid@shropshire.gov.uk)  
telephone: 01743 252819

- **Crime Prevention Information and Advice – Safer Schools Initiative**

Ian Bartlett  
Crime Prevention Officer, Shropshire Council  
email: [ian.bartlett@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:ian.bartlett@shropshire.gov.uk)  
telephone: 01743 252819

- **Learning and Skills**

Helen Lambert  
Project Development Officer, Shropshire Council  
email: [helen.lambert@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:helen.lambert@shropshire.gov.uk)  
telephone: 01743 254269

- **Risk Management and Insurance**

Risk Management Team, Shropshire Council  
email: [insurance@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:insurance@shropshire.gov.uk)  
telephone: 01743 252092

- **Occupation Health and Safety Team, Shropshire Council**

Organisational Development Team, Shropshire Council  
email: [CorporateTrainingBookings@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:CorporateTrainingBookings@shropshire.gov.uk)  
telephone: 01743 252819

- **Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service**

Business Fire Safety  
[www.shropshirefire.gov.uk](http://www.shropshirefire.gov.uk)  
email: [businessfiresafety@shropshirefire.gov.uk](mailto:businessfiresafety@shropshirefire.gov.uk)  
telephone: 01743 260200

- **West Midlands Arson Task Force**

<http://www.wmarsontaskforce.gov.uk/>

## Further information available online

### Government Website – Fire Safety Your Responsibilities

<https://www.gov.uk/workplace-fire-safety-your-responsibilities/who-is-responsible>

## Fire Safety Guides

More detailed information regarding fire safety and the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety Order) 2005 can be found in the *Fire Safety Guide for Educational Premises* which is **free** to download in PDF format from the following website link:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/14887/fsra-educational-premises.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/14887/fsra-educational-premises.pdf)

Advice regarding evacuation for disabled persons can be found in the *Means of Escape for Disabled People* guide which is **free** to download in PDF format from the following website link:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/14898/fsra-escape-disabled.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/14898/fsra-escape-disabled.pdf)

## Corporate Training

Shropshire Council's Corporate Training group offer the following fire safety courses free of charge:

- Fire Risk Assessment
- Fire Safety
- Fire Warden
- Fire Warden Refresher
- Evacuation Chair

Courses should be booked using the electronic booking form – link below

<https://forms.shropshire.gov.uk/cus/servlet/ep.app?ut=X&type=923132&auth=1831>

## Shropshire Learning Gateway

Information is available from the Shropshire Learning Gateway and can be saved and printed for use in school. The following documents are available:

- Fire Risk Assessment Template
- Fire Safety Policy Statement
- Keep Your School in Business information pack
- Fire Safety Log Book
- School Halls – Calculating the capacity
- Fire Safety for Events and Functions