



Wessex
Learning Trust
We Learn Together!

Arson Prevention Policy

Date approved by Trust Board: April 2025
Review Date: April 2028

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Wessex Learning Trust

Policy Title

This policy will be reviewed by the Board of Trustees every three years.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gavin Ball". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial 'G'.

Signature:

Name: Mr Gavin Ball

Position: Chief Executive

Date: 24/04/25

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Jacobs". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial 'P'.

Signature:

Name: Mr Paul Jacobs

Position: Chair of the Board

Date: 24/04/25

Arson Prevention Policy

What is Arson?

Arson is a criminal act whereby someone wilfully and deliberately sets fire to property. Arson attacks commonly involve buildings, but this criminal act also refers to the intentional burning of other things such as vehicles etc.

How serious is the problem?

Each year in the UK an estimated 1,400 – 1,800 arson attacks occur in schools, with one in eight schools suffering a serious arson attack. 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 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 risk can be reduced.

Responsibilities of all staff

- Staff are obliged to adhere to this policy. The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring that the staff for whom they are responsible are aware of and adhere to this policy.
- This policy is available to view on the Wessex Learning Trust website or on the staff intranet 'My Wessex, SharePoint'. The central Wessex team will inform the Headteacher of any updates to this policy and it is the responsibility of the Headteacher to update their staff.
- The Headteacher will recognise the cause and effects of arson and will encourage measures recommended to combat arson and will promote good practice.
- Combustible materials will be stored securely and waste not allowed to accumulate.
- Staff will ensure that a high level of security is maintained to prevent unauthorised access and that legitimate visitors can be identified and access controlled.
- The Headteacher will ensure an investigation is completed into any outbreak of fire and 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.
- A fire risk assessment of the premises will consider the risk from arson and the measures to minimise the risk.

Action against Arson:

1. Deter unauthorised entry onto the site

- Discourage unauthorised entry onto the site using signs and by delineating where practicable the boundary of the premises by use of a robust fence and/or shrubs.
- Ensure the premises are adequately lit externally during the hours of darkness.
- Remove any graffiti that appears on the premises without delay. If left to accumulate, vandals and arsonists will begin to view the site as being a legitimate target of little or no value.
- Foster good relationships with neighbours, they can observe unlawful activity at the premises when closed. Neighbours are asked to contact the Police if they witness such activity.

Alternatively contact
Crime stoppers on Tel: 0800 555 111,
Calls are free (except for some mobiles)
And the caller will remain anonymous.

- Consider getting involved in local neighbourhood watch schemes. Vandals are less likely to attack a school if there are strong ties with the local community.
- Where sustained vandalism or deliberate fire setting occur at premises, the installation of a monitored CCTV system should be considered.
- Be aware that it is common practice for car thieves to deposit stolen vehicles on playing fields if accessible, before setting fire to them.

2. Prevent unauthorised entry into the building

- The weakest points of entry into the premises are the windows and doors. Their vulnerability needs to be regularly reviewed and replaced as considered necessary.
- Ensure all external doors are fitted with approved locks and secured as the building is vacated.
- Ensure door frame construction is sound and of good quality.
- Consider fitting letterboxes with metal enclosures on the inside to prevent damage arising from the introduction of burning materials.
- Regularly check all external glazing for damage both on security and safety grounds.
- Make regular checks of areas where there are flat roofs to ensure there are no breaches of security, in particular skylights.
- Consider the installation of an intruder alarm system.

3. Reduce the opportunity for an offender to start a fire

If an arsonist cannot enter the premises the opportunity to light a fire outside is often exploited. There are some common-sense steps that you can take to reduce the risk of combustible material being ignited outside.

- Take every opportunity to eliminate combustible material on the outside of the building.
- Place refuse/ recycling bins in a secure compound or alternatively secured by padlock and chain *no less than 6 metres* (where possible) from buildings to prevent them being moved against the building. Ensure regular collections of such materials.
- Lock sheds and other external buildings and site them *at least 8 metres* away from the premises.
- Ensure that any waste bins are not fixed to walls or under roofs constructed of combustible materials but secured to the ground away from the building.
- Avoid placing combustible materials on windowsills as a common method of attack is to break a window and set fire to combustibles within reach.
- Check that shrubs and undergrowth aren't encroaching against buildings as they are a source of ignition when dry.

Remember! Rubbish is an ideal fuel for an 'Arsonist'

4. Reduce the scope for potential fire damage

- Schools of open-plan design are more difficult to protect than those with traditional layouts with separate classrooms. With the latter, compartmentalisation (firestops 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, give consideration to providing additional fire-break walls and fire doors to separate the building into compartments, including protecting concealed spaces such as roof voids. This should be designed and carried out with the assistance of professional advice.
- Inspect partition walls regularly, particularly when any maintenance, repair or alteration has been finished.

5. Reduce subsequent losses and disruption resulting from a fire by preparing a disaster recovery plan.

- Have the correct type of fire extinguisher installed to use in an emergency by your trained staff.
- Members of staff should be trained in fire procedures, including how to summon the Fire Service, how to evacuate the building and how to use 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.

Note - this policy also relates to the Mid Somerset Consortium and Kings Fitness and Leisure