

ARSON PREVENTION POLICY

Rationale:

Arson, as defined by the Criminal Damage Act 1973, is “the unlawful damage by fire of property belonging to another.”

Scope:

Arson accounts for 21% of fires in all premises. The incidence of arson in all types of premises is increasing and is recognised as a major cause of fire.

Principles:

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:

- Providing a safer environment for staff and pupils.
- 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 educational needs.
- Eden Park views arson as preventable, if not in its entirety then to such a degree that its effects are minimised.

ARSON POLICY

Core Principles

Eden Park Academy believe that minimising the incidence of arson to property and thereby helping to provide a safe environment for service users, staff and other person on our sites, and protecting essential resources is a high priority. To achieve this, Eden Park Academy will ensure that there will be a high level of management commitment and adequate resources directed to arson prevention measures. This will apply to all premises and staff.

Common Standards

Eden Park Academy will develop a management plan to address arson covering the following areas:

- Risk management
- Security arrangements
- Systems for fire alarm and detection
- Fire containment and extinguishment

- General fire safety policies and precautions

IMPLEMENTATION AND COMPLIANCE

Responsibilities of all Staff

Staff are obliged to adhere to this policy. The Head teacher is responsible for ensuring that the staff for whom they are responsible are aware of and adhere to this Policy.

The Head Teacher is also responsible for ensuring that staff are updated in regard to any changes in this Policy.

Eden Park Academy will recognise the cause and effects of arson and will encourage measures recommended to combat arson and will promote good practice.

Staff are aware of the possibility of arson and will politely challenge strangers and report anyone of whom they have suspicions.

Combustible materials will be stored securely and waste not allowed to accumulate.

The **Justine Daniels** is the named 'Fire Officer' and will ensure that this Policy is accessible and up-to-date.

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.

Procedures to prevent the possibility of arson are to be implemented and regularly reviewed.

Staff are to investigate any outbreak of fire and if there is any suspicion that arson could be the cause, any material evidence should be safeguarded for the attention of the Police/Fire Service.

Fire Safety Advisors 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.

Fire safety training will include arson awareness and prevention.

REVIEW

This Policy will be reviewed bi-annually.

How serious is the problem? Statistics from insurers and fire protection organisations estimate that between 70-75% of school fires can be attributed to arson. However, this is not the full picture as fire brigades are not always summoned

to fires, particularly where they have self- extinguished, or are put out by staff. In addition to the financial costs, many fires will result in consequential loss, such as the destruction of irreplaceable records, teaching notes, course-work for examinations and in some instances, the need to find alternative, temporary accommodation

Who are the arsonists?

Fires in schools are most likely to be started by pupils, ex-pupils or their friends, or others with knowledge of the school, perhaps living in close proximity. Of those individuals prosecuted, cautioned, or found guilty of arson, approximately 50% are aged between ten and sixteen. Don't imagine they will all be boys; girls are also capable of committing arson.

When and how do they strike?

Until recently, the majority of school fires occurred outside normal school hours. However, current trends show that fires during the school day are now far exceeding those occurring out of hours. Most fires will be started using combustibles found within the school grounds – rubbish from bins for example. It is rare for accelerants, such as petrol, to be used unless left on site.

What can be done to deter arsonists?

The prevention of arson falls into a logical process known as the five-point action plan.

1. **Deter unauthorised entry onto the site.** Eden Park Academy is surrounded by a metal fence, which is secured by a lock gate, outside of schools hours
2. **Prevent unauthorised entry into the building.**
The easiest points of entry into the premises are via the doors and windows. Skylights are also a weak point.
The burglar alarm system is maintained fully functional.
3. **Reduce the opportunity for an intruder to start a fire.**
Arsonists seldom bring combustible items with them but tend to use what is available on site. Store external combustible storage and materials away from the main school building and lock all bins together to prevent moving.
4. **Reduce the scope for potential fire damage.**
Closing all doors at night will help to contain any fire or smoke within the room of origin, or at the very least, slow down the rate of fire growth.
5. **Reduce subsequent losses and disruption resulting from a fire by preparing a disaster recovery plan (covered in 'Crisis Management Plan').**
The time and effort put into creating a plan will pay dividends in the event of serious fire, whether started accidentally or deliberately. Even well maintained

fencing can be considered useless if trees are allowed to grow next to it as these will assist in gaining access over the fencing. Ensure perimeter fencing is maintained in good order to deter unauthorised access to your site.

Members of staff are adequately trained in fire procedures, including how to summon the Fire Service, building evacuation and the use of fire extinguishers.

A great deal can be achieved with little or no cost implications, particularly in relation to 'housekeeping' and staff training.

- Any graffiti that appears on the school premises will be removed without delay. If it is left to accumulate, vandals and arsonists will begin to view the site as being a legitimate target of little or no value.
- Wheeled bins will be kept secured to each by padlock and chain well clear of any building, by a distance of at least 6 metres. If possible, bin lids will be secured outside normal school hours.

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

- Bins on wheels can be pushed against the building or, rubbish can be removed from the bins and piled against doors before being set alight.

Both are very common methods of attack.

- Recycling bins in connection with fundraising activities, will be located and secured in the same manner as described above. Regular collections will be arranged to avoid an accumulation of combustible material.
- External litterbins will not be fixed to the walls of the building, or under roofs constructed of combustible materials, but secured to the ground well away from the any building. Ideally, bins will be of metal construction.
- Avoid placing combustible items on windowsills. A common method of attack is to break a window and set fire to combustibles within reach.
- Burning materials are sometimes introduced into school premises via letterboxes. The letterboxes have been permanently sealed. All holiday and weekend post is kept by the post office and collected by the school administrator.
- The flat roofs on the premises, are regularly checked for breaches in security, in particular the skylights.
- Matches or lighters are not left in the staff room overnight. Opportunist vandals have found these items very useful in the past!



- Schools foster good relationships with neighbours, who are able to observe unlawful activity at the premises when closed. Neighbours are asked to contact the Police if they witness such activity.

Alternatively contact

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

- The Academy has strong links within local neighbourhood. Vandals are less likely to attack a school if there are strong ties with the local community.
- Where sustained vandalism or deliberate fire setting occurs at a school premises, the installation of a monitored CCTV system is considered.
- Specialist advice from Police Crime Reduction Officer has been sought on such matters.
- Arson attacks during school hours are on the increase. Areas targeted include toilets, cloakrooms and any other areas where young people may congregate unobserved. Extra vigilance is therefore required. This is mitigated by the a care staff presence on a daily basis
- A routine has been adopted, whereby a nominated individual is responsible for ensuring that all doors and windows have been secured, once the building is vacated at the end of the day.
- Shrubs and undergrowth are not allowed to encroach against buildings. In the summer, vegetation often becomes tinder dry and will burn vigorously.