



Arson Prevention Policy

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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 40% 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.
- Pupils.

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.
- The school views arson as preventable, if not in its entirety, then to such a degree that its effects are minimised.

ARSON POLICY

Core Principles

The Rowans 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, we 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

We have developed 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
- Individual pupil risk assessments

IMPLEMENTATION AND COMPLIANCE

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.

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

The Rowans 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 be allowed to accumulate.

The Headteacher 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 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 every two years, or following any incident or "near miss".

Background to Arson / Rowans Procedures

How serious is the problem?

Statistics from insurers and fire protection organisations estimate that around 40% 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. They are not all 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 The Rowans is doing 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.** Boundary signs deter intruders and CCTV cameras record visitors to the front entrance.
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. These are checked regularly by the caretaker. The burglar alarm system is serviced quarterly to ensure it is 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. We therefore store combustible materials and rubbish for collection away from the main school building.
4. **Reduce the scope for potential fire damage.**
 - All doors closed at night to help to contain any fire or smoke within the room of origin, or at the very least, slow down the rate of fire growth.
 - A daily check of the perimeter fencing is carried out to ensure this is as secure as possible.
 - 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 waste bins will be kept in a secure, padlocked compound.
 - 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 well away from the any building.
- No combustible items will be placed on windowsills. A common method of attack is to break a window and set fire to combustibles within reach.
- As burning materials can be introduced via letterboxes, we do not have letterboxes. The site is manned throughout the year to collect post/deliveries.
- 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.
- The school is not currently open to the public outside normal hours, but should this happen in the future, it is essential that visitors are restricted to authorised areas of the building, without compromising their means of escape.
- Arson attacks during school hours are on the increase nationally. Areas targeted include toilets, cloakrooms and any other areas where young people may congregate unobserved. Extra vigilance is therefore required.
- Shrubs and undergrowth are not allowed to encroach against buildings. In the summer, vegetation often becomes tinder dry and will burn vigorously.
- Storage facilities will be sited at least 8 metres from buildings to prevent fire spread from one to the other.
- 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.
- Members of staff are adequately trained in fire procedures, including how to summon the Fire Service and building evacuation as part of their induction process.

5. **Reduce subsequent losses and disruption resulting from a fire by preparation of a Business Continuity Plan.**

We have a Business Continuity Plan which is regularly reviewed and will be used in the event of serious fire, whether started accidentally or deliberately.