ILCHESTER COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Arson Policy

Reviewed September 2026	M mordue	**M Mordue**	**Headteacher**	**Review September 2028**

Introduction:

How serious is the problem?

Arson accounts for 21% of fires in premises nationally. 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 can be reduced.

Premises Vulnerability:

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 visitors
- 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 other needs
- Not all arson is preventable but where possible its effects will be minimalised.

Responsibilities of All Staff

Staff are obliged to adhere to this policy. The Premises Manager/Headteacher is responsible for ensuring that the staff for whom they are responsible are aware of and adhere to this Policy.

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

The Premises Manager/Headteacher 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.

Staff must ensure that if they are the last person on site at the end of the day, they secure the external school gates.

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

The Premises Manager/Headteacher 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. (See Appendix 1 Arson Prevention Checklist)

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 Advisor will make recommendations to the staff regarding arson prevention measures. Fire risk assessment of premises will consider 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 biennially.

Guidance Developing an Action Plan against Arson

Once the arson risk has been assessment, the next priority is to address the weaknesses identified. These may not all require significant financial resources but may involve housekeeping or training issues.

The Premises Manager is the person with overall responsibility for initiatives against the threat of arson. The arson prevention strategy is to be incorporated in the Premises' Fire Risk Assessment and Fire Log Book and supported and endorsed.

Action Plan Process:

The prevention of arson attacks falls into a logical process:

1. Deter unauthorised entry onto the site:

- Discourage unauthorised entry onto the site by the use of signs and by delineating where practicable the boundary of the premises by use of a robust fence and/or shrubs
- Ensure the premises is 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
- 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:
  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 occurs at a premise, the installation of a monitored CCTV system should be considered.
- It is common practice for car thieves to deposit stolen vehicles on playing fields 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 immediately the building is vacated
- Ensure door frame construction is sound and of good quality
- Consider letterboxes being fitted with metal enclosures on the inside to prevent damage arising from the introduction of burning materials
- Check all external glazing for damage both on security and safety grounds
- With the premises being used out of normal hours and opening to a wider public, it is imperative that access to the other parts of the premises is limited
- 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:

- Take every opportunity to eliminate combustible material on the outside of the building
- Refuse/ recycling bins to be placed in a secure compound or alternatively secured by padlock and chain *no less than 6 metres* (where possible) from the premises building to prevent them being moved against the building. Ensure regular collections of such materials
- Sheds and other external buildings to be locked and sited *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 premises building
- Avoid placing combustible materials on window sills as a common method of attack is to break a window and set fire to combustibles within reach
- Check that shrubs and undergrowth is not allowed to encroach against buildings as they are when dry a source of ignition

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

4. Reduce the scope for potential fire damage:

- Nominated person to ensure that all external doors and windows have been locked once the premises has been vacated at the end of the day
- Ensure that contractors working on site have limited access to the whole building wherever possible
- Consider the preparation of a disaster recovery plan

5. Reduce subsequent losses and disruption resulting from a fire by preparing a disaster recovery plan (Crisis Management Plan).

- Well maintained fencing can be considered use less 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.

Using Prickly Plants as a Defence

The range of plants listed below are an attractive means of protecting your property, and are readily available from garden centres and nurseries. Consider planting a selection of these specially chosen plants as an alternative or addition to fencing.

Prickly planting is a visual deterrent and a physical barrier intended to complement and not replace traditional crime prevention measures such as locks, alarms and lighting.

Home-grown security can be adopted to protect all perimeters of your property and form a barrier around drainpipes and ground floor windows, making forced entry more difficult.

Good hedging plants:

- Berberis x ottawensis - Medium-sized deciduous shrub. Up to 6ft high. Red berries in autumn.
- Berberis x stenophylla - Medium-sized evergreen shrub. Up to 6ft high. Golden-yellow flowers in spring; black berries in autumn.

- Crataegus monogyna (Common Hawthorn) Used extensively throughout UK as hedging. White flowers in spring; red ‘haws’ in autumn. Plant as an impenetrable hedge.
- Ilex x aquilfolium (Common Holly) Excellent hedging plant, usually grown as tree or bush. Up to 50ft high.
- Prunus spinosa (Blackthorn or Sloe) Large dense shrub, good for hedging. White flowers in spring; blue-black fruits in autumn.
- Rosa rugosa (Rubra) Dense shrub, good for hedging. Up to 6ft high. Perpetual flowering wine crimson flowers; red ‘heps’ or berries.

Plants to be trained up a wall:

- Chaenomeles x superba (Pink Lady) Small to medium sized deciduous shrub. Up to 6ft high. Grow trained against a wall. Rose pink flowers in spring; yellow quinces in autumn.
- Pyracantha (Orange Glow – Firethorn) Evergreen Shrub. Up to 16ft high when trained up wall. White flowers in spring; orange – red berries in autumn/winter.
- Pyracantha (Golden Charmer – Firethorn) Evergreen Shrub. Up to 16ft high when trained up wall. White flowers in spring, orange – yellow berries in autumn.

Shrubs:

- Mahonia x media (Winter Sun) Tall evergreen shrub. Up to 10ft high. Yellow flowers in autumn; blue-black berries in winter.
- Hippophae rhamnoldes (Sea Buckthorn) Tall deciduous shrub. Up to 10ft high. Grows on any soil, providing a good windbreak. Silver, willow-like leaves in summer; orange berries in autumn.
- Ulex europaeus (Common Gorse) Dense, evergreen, spiny shrub, Up to 5ft high. Golden yellow flowers. Good on poor soil.

Policy produced using extracts from the Arson Prevention Bureau’s publication ‘How to Combat Arson in Premises.’

Appendix 1

ARSON PREVENTION CHECKLIST – ILCHESTER COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL

The questions in the checklist are addressed primarily to those responsible for day-to-day management of premises, e.g. Headteachers, Premises Managers, Bursars, Site Managers/Supervisors and Caretakers. Whilst the checklist will address the majority of issues for consideration, not all questions will be relevant for all premises and it may need to be adapted for specific locations or situations.

MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES	Yes	No	N/A	Comments / Action
Is there any history or evidence of fires being started deliberately on the premises?		✓		
Are you in contact with the Council's Fire Officer, Fire Service Fire Protection Officer and the Police Crime Prevention Officer? Is their advice sought and implemented as far as possible?		✓		We have our own fire officer PCSOs would come if requested
Have you discussed any problems you can foresee in implementing their advice with the officers?		✓		
Are all employees aware of fire and security problems, the protective strategies which are adopted to counter them and the contributions which they can make?	✓			
Do you have a procedure to ensure that all fires are reported, investigated and recorded?		✓		
Do you know what hazardous materials are kept on the premises and do you keep them only in reasonable quantities?	✓			
Are chemicals (including gases) and highly flammable materials, kept locked away in properly designed secure stores?	✓			
Is the store kept locked at all times and the keys held by a responsible person?	✓			
Are there arrangements to limit waste paper and other combustible materials in which a fire can be started?	✓			

PRECAUTIONS AGAINST HAZARDS Outside the building:	Yes	No	N/A	Comments / Action
Is combustible waste placed in a secure bin store away from the building?	✓			
Is the space under raised huts/mobile classrooms protected against accumulation of litter / dry vegetation?	✓			
Are advance arrangements made for reception of stores deliveries and for goods to be put into store without delay?	✓			
Are there any openings through which burning materials could be put?		✓		
Are any windows, doors of buildings vulnerable to external fire?		✓		
Are windows (even those protected by bars) kept closed in unoccupied parts of the building?	✓			
Are windows kept in good repair and are breakages quickly dealt with?	✓			
Are letterboxes protected on the inside with sheet metal boxes?			✓	
Are doors in good repair and without gaps through which burning paper could be pushed?	✓			
Are fuel tanks kept in secure enclosures with locked valves?			✓	
Is there easy access onto roofs via drainpipes, walls / fences, outbuildings etc.?		✓		
If present, are perimeter fences / gates secured and provide an adequate deterrence?	✓			
Are outbuildings secured?	✓			
Is the site easily accessible by the public and trespass a problem?		✓		
PRECAUTIONS AGAINST HAZARDS Inside the building:	Yes	No	N/A	Comments / Action

Is there an automatic fire detection or sprinkler system?	✓			**No sprinkler system, only smoke detection**
If so, is it linked to the Fire Service?		✓		
Does the fire alarm sound at a point from which action can be safely taken?	✓			
Do employees, particularly the caretaker / site supervisor, know what action to take if the fire alarm sounds?	✓			
Are the necessary arrangements made to ensure that the fire alarm system is quickly reset after operation?	✓			
Is the fire alarm system properly maintained and tested?	✓			
Is there an intruder alarm with a monitored link to an alarm receiving station?	✓			
PRECAUTIONS AGAINST HAZARDS **End of the working day / closing the building:**	**Yes**	**No**	**N/A**	**Comments / Action**
Do employees ensure that work / classroom materials are put away tidily?	✓			
Is valuable equipment and cash secured?	✓			
Are electrical appliances and equipment including that in craft rooms, workshops, kitchens and offices disconnected from the supply?	✓			
Are windows and doors closed and locked to deter intruders and restrict the spread of fire within the building?	✓			
Are all rooms, including toilets, checked for intruders?	✓			**In the event of an alarm, the outside of the building is checked first, if anything looked forced open then the police would be called.**
PRECAUTIONS AGAINST HAZARDS **End of the working day / closing the building:**	**Yes**	**No**	**N/A**	**Comments / Action**

Are heating, lighting and ventilation services etc. shut down as far as practicable? (Note that some lighting may be needed for security reasons).	✓			
Is rubbish collected and removed to a safe place at the end of each day?	✓			
If present, are the fire and/or intruder alarms set?	✓			**Intruder alarm only set when no one is on the premises.**
If present, is external lighting and / or CCTV working?	✓			
Are the gates to the premises locked shut?	✓			
PRECAUTIONS AGAINST HAZARDS **Outside normal operational hours:**	**Yes**	**No**	**N/A**	**Comments / Action**
Is the building open to the local community outside of normal operational hours?	✓			
Is there a problem of unauthorised / forced entry to the site?		✓		
Is there a telephone readily available to authorised users of the premises outside normal operational hours?	✓			
Are people using the premises briefed about fire precautions and locking up the building when they leave?	✓			
Without blocking escape routes, are people locked out of parts of the building they have no need to enter?	✓			
Do caretakers / cleaners understand the fire risks of rubbish and of cleaning materials?	✓			