

Fire Safety in Schools: A Practical Guide for Teachers

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Fire safety is a core part of safeguarding in schools, and as a teacher, you play a frontline role in making sure students stay protected. While the leadership team and site staff often manage the technical side of compliance, it's teachers who carry out the day-to-day safety actions that really matter during an emergency.

The main law covering school fire safety in England and Wales is the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. This legislation applies to all non-domestic buildings, including schools, and requires that each site has working fire detection systems, alarms, and a clearly communicated evacuation plan. Regular fire drills are not optional—they're a legal requirement to ensure staff and students can respond quickly and calmly in a real fire.

For schools specifically, Building Bulletin 100 (BB100) provides detailed guidance on fire safety design and management. It includes recommendations on school layout to prevent arson, the use of fire-resistant materials, and guidance on how to assess fire risks in educational environments. It also covers how many exits a building should have, how to keep escape routes clear, and what kind of fire warning systems are needed.

These aren't just box-ticking exercises—they're practical steps that directly affect student safety. For example, if fire exits are blocked by PE equipment, or if a classroom door is propped open against school policy, that can seriously delay an

evacuation. Teachers need to remain aware of these everyday risks.

When new school buildings or extensions are planned, they must meet fire safety standards set by the Department for Education. These rules are designed to ensure safe evacuation under real-life conditions, accounting for students with special educational needs or disabilities, high-traffic areas like corridors and canteens, and the age-specific behaviours of pupils.

As a teacher, your responsibilities include:

- Knowing the evacuation routes and assembly points
- Practising fire drill routines with your class
- Supervising pupils during drills and real emergencies
- Reporting any safety concerns (e.g. obstructed exits or faulty alarms)
- Understanding the school's fire safety policy

In secondary schools, where students are more mobile and may be spread across multiple buildings, keeping an accurate register during evacuations becomes especially important. In primary settings, ensuring younger pupils understand basic fire safety behaviour—like lining up quickly and not panicking—is a key part of your role.

Good fire safety in schools isn't just about having the right equipment—it's about having a well-informed staff culture. Teachers are critical to that. Staying vigilant, speaking up about potential hazards, and guiding your students calmly in a crisis all contribute to a safer learning environment for everyone.

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