Arson Prevention Policy

Name of School: St Vigor & St John Church School

Date of last review: September 2022

Next review date: September 2024

Approved by: D Aldridge

Signature: D Aldridge Date: 23RD September 2022

Position held: H&S Governor

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 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 regarding any changes in this Policy.

The 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.

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

The 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 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 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.

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 Headteacher 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 then 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 too 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.

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