



COVID-19 – Protection - Schools

6th April 2021 – Issue 6

1. Advice to Fire and Rescue Services for schools during the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak

- 1.1. This advice note is to provide consistency for Fire and Rescue Services (FRSs), when issuing guidance to schools and other educational establishments regulated under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (FSO 2005) during the COVID-19 pandemic. As such, this guidance is only valid for the duration of any restrictions introduced to manage the spread of COVID-19 after which it should be disregarded. It contains specific messages and areas for consideration that can be used to augment the existing work being carried out across the UK FRS¹.
- 1.2. On 22nd February 2021, HM Government published their 'COVID-19 Response – Spring 2021' document. This contained an overview of the current national picture with regard to COVID infections, hospitalisations, deaths, economic impact, vaccine response and other elements. It also contains a roadmap which outlines the staged approach to coming out of the current lockdown.
- 1.3. This roadmap outlines a 4-step approach to relaxing the current national lockdown restrictions. The roadmap will be applied in a uniform way across England. The devolved administrations are setting out separate plans for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. While the general approach in this document will still be relevant, specific elements such as timescales will depend on the specific plans set by those administrations.
- 1.4. There is no relaxation of fire safety legislation during the COVID-19 emergency and it is the responsibility of the Responsible Person (RP) to ensure they are testing and maintaining all fire safety measures to maintain a safe premises, although it is acknowledged that a pragmatic approach to achieve compliance may be required.
- 1.5. NFCC have produced specific 'COVID-19 Advice to premises' which contains advice that will be applicable to schools as well as providing a frequently asked questions section that will address many of the common enquiries. This can be located at the [NFCC COVID-19 webpage](#).
- 1.6. To support FRS the NFCC Protection Policy and Reform Unit are happy to discuss further, please contact PPRUAdmin@nationalfirechiefs.org.uk.

2. Useful information for schools

- 2.1. If the fire safety measures rely on specified staffing levels, the RP may need to review them during this period. Many establishments will have procedures in place for out of hours use which may be suitable. The RP should review and update the current fire risk assessment and evacuation plan as necessary. FRS should take this opportunity to advise the RP of the need to ensure that their fire risk assessor is competent. Advice on selecting a competent fire risk assessor can be located [here](#).
- 2.2. Comprehensive government guidance has been introduced to support schools to remain safe from both a COVID-19 and fire safety perspective. Two documents have been published to assist schools during the pandemic. These are the [Safe working in education, childcare and children's social care settings, including the use of personal protective equipment \(PPE\)](#) guide and [Actions for schools during the coronavirus outbreak](#). It is recommended that those involved in education provision read the documents at the [Education and Childcare website](#).
- 2.3. The key elements of this guidance with regards to fire safety are:
- Fire safety management plans should be reviewed and checked in line with operational changes.
 - Check all fire doors are operational at all times
 - Ensure fire alarm systems and emergency lights have been tested and are fully operational
 - Carry out emergency drills as normal (following social distancing as appropriate). Adjustments should be made to fire drills to allow for social distancing as appropriate and practice it in the first week when pupils return.
 - Special measures may be needed to
- 2.4. In addition to the review of the fire risk assessment and emergency procedures, the following questions may provide some assistance when considering fire prevention and protection of the building from factors such as the risk of arson, risk from electrical fire etc. while elements of the schools are closed or not in full use.
- 2.5. Security measures
- Is there an intruder alarm installed?
 - Is alarm remotely monitored?
 - Is there a staffed security presence?
 - Is there external security lighting?
 - Is interior lighting in place?
- 2.6. Physical security if closing
- Have any potentially vulnerable access points been suitably protected?
 - Are all perimeter barriers in good repair?
 - Are existing doors and door hardware in good repair?
 - Are existing windows in good repair?

2.7. Administration considerations

- Is there a plan for controlling the shutdown?
- Have the building's insurers been notified?
- Are routine inspections planned?
- Have keyholders been nominated?

2.8. Housekeeping and health and safety

- Has a risk assessment been done?
- Has the health and safety of security staff been addressed?
- Has all refuse been removed from the interior?
- Has all refuse been removed from the external site areas?
- Have any skips been removed from the site?
- Have all non-essential services been disconnected or isolated?
- Has electrical safety been assessed? (overloaded electrical sockets / appropriate use of extension leads etc.)

2.9. All the above should be considered in the context of any local COVID Alert Level or national lockdown measures (where applicable). If establishments require further advice and guidance, it is advised they contact their local Fire and Rescue Service.