



DEBATE PACK

20 October 2015

Debate Pack: Fire safety measures in schools

Summary

This debate pack has been compiled ahead of the debate on fire safety measures in schools to be held on Thursday 22 October 2015 at 3pm in Westminster Hall. The Member in charge of the debate is Sir David Amess. Debate packs are produced quickly after the announcement of parliamentary business. They are intended to provide a summary or overview of the issue being debated and identify relevant briefings and useful documents, including press and parliamentary material. More detailed briefing can be prepared for MPs on request to the Library.

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Education Funding Agency Guidance: Fire safety in new and existing school buildings

Published 11 March 2014

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1. New buildings

Building work at all schools must comply with the building regulations enforced by local building-control bodies. [Building Bulletin 100: design for fire safety in schools](#) is the normal means of compliance with building regulations for fire safety design in new school buildings.

1.1 Who do the regulations apply to?

The regulations apply to nursery schools, primary and secondary schools, academies, free schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

2. Existing buildings

Schools are required to undertake risk assessments to identify the general fire precautions needed to safeguard the safety of occupants in case of fire, including their safe means of escape.

Under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (RRO) fire legislation has become simplified. The Department for Communities and Local Government has produced a guide for schools - [fire safety risk assessment: educational premises](#). The guide deals with the provision and management of fire safety.

You will need to:

- ensure procedures are in place to reduce the likelihood of fire
- maintain fire detection and alarm systems
- ensure staff and pupils are familiar with emergency evacuation procedures

It is important that:

- fire risk assessments are kept up to date
- fire precautions remain current and adequate (they should be reviewed in detail when significant alterations are made to a school's premises)

Background information - school capital funding, building new schools and refurbishments

Current Government capital programmes/ funding streams include:

- *The Priority Schools Building Programmes 1 and 2* (PSBP and PSBP2) were introduced by the Coalition Government to replace the previous Labour Government's Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme. PSBP aims to rebuild or very substantially refurbish only those schools in England that are most in need. An overview article on the background to PSBP can be found on the National Archives website:

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20131101192216/http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/adminandfinance/schoolscapital/priority-school-building-programme/a00221986/backgroundpriorityschoolbuildingprogramme> (Feb 2013)

Current information on rollout of the PSBP programme can be found on the Gov.uk website:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/priority-school-building-programme-psbp#psbp-1-documents-and-overview>

- *Free schools* Free schools are entirely new state schools (a very small number were previously fee-paying independent schools – most are completely new provision). More than 250 have opened since 2010 and the current Government has restated its commitment to rolling out the programme further. Not all free schools have been/ will be located in brand new buildings. Some have been housed in temporary buildings while a permanent site is sought, and others are in buildings that have been converted from e.g., office blocks or other public buildings. The Education Funding Agency (EFA) is responsible for capital funding for new free schools procured through the triannual free school application process.
- Capital maintenance funding, paid either to local authorities in respect of schools they maintain, or by the EFA directly (in many cases) to academy schools. There's more information on school capital funding here:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/capital-allocations>

News article

The Argus

Calls for sprinklers in more schools after an arson attack

Wednesday 14th October 2015

By Flora Thompson

CALLS for sprinklers in more schools have been reignited after an arson attack.

The National Union of Teachers believe water systems could help tackle the risk of fire in schools, after the blaze in Shinewater Primary School, Eastbourne, on Monday.

Just five schools in the East Sussex County Council area are currently fitted with the system which firefighters say can isolate and even extinguish blazes in some cases.

The news comes after Phil Howson, chairman of East Sussex Fire Authority, last year called on the Government to enforce laws so sprinklers had to be installed in all new buildings, big properties and where there is a significant risk to life and property.

He said: "Sprinklers can significantly help reduce death and injury from fire, reduce risk for firefighters, protect property and heritage and reduce the effects of arson. The greatest impact of installing fire sprinklers is likely to occur in schools, residential care homes, premises housing highly vulnerable residents and certain large commercial properties."

Council leader Keith Glazier said all schools are required to follow Department of Education fire safety guidelines and sprinklers may not always be the answer.

He said they were expensive and difficult to fit in older schools but can be used if there is a cost effective solution.

A blaze ripped through Shinewater Primary School, in Milfoil Drive, Langney, in the early hours of the morning and a 14-year-old boy was later arrested on suspicion of arson.

At its height, 60 firefighters were called from ten stations across the county to tackle the flames. They remained on the scene between 1am and 5.30pm and an investigation into the cause of the fire was launched.

Around half the teaching areas had been destroyed including Year 3, 4, 5 and 6 classrooms. The rest of the empty building was severely damaged but no-one was hurt.

The Eastbourne teenager was released on bail until January after being questioned by police.

Headteacher Theresa Buttery said: "Our focus now is to ensure we can get the younger children back into the non-damaged areas of the school as quickly as possible and find alternative provision for the older children."

MP Caroline Ansell said the town was "rallying together" with offers of help from churches and other schools.

A group of parents organised a charity event and nearly £200 was raised in an appeal in less than 24 hours.

The school will be closed until further notice but alternative arrangements are being made as soon as possible.

Nearby Shinewater Sports Centre was also closed temporarily because the fire cut off its water supply.

People are asked to avoid the area while the investigation continues.

Any witnesses to how the fire started or information on anyone involved should call police on 101 quoting 0033 of 12/10.

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PQs

Asked by: Sir David Amess

I have the honour of being the chairman of the all-party group on fire safety and rescue. Given that the Chief Fire Officers Association is very concerned that very few newly built schools have automatic sprinkler systems fitted, will my right hon. Friend find time for a debate on the issue?

Answering Member: Mr Hague:

I am advised that the Government's policy is that such sprinkler systems should be installed in new school buildings where there is a real and significant risk, as identified in a fire risk assessment. There will also be other situations where sprinklers are fitted because they form an integral part of the school building design and are good value for money. It is unlikely that we will be able to have a debate on the issue at this stage of the Parliament, but the House will have noted my hon. Friend's strong interest in it and I have every confidence he will be able to return to it in the new Parliament.

HC Deb 05 Mar 2015 | Vol 593 c1085

Asked by: Graeme Morrice

To ask the Secretary of State for Education pursuant to the answer of 23 October 2013 to the hon. Member for Poplar and Limehouse, Official Report, column 208W, on schools: buildings, what progress his Department has made with its review of the guidance on fire safety in schools; and what his policy is on the installation of fire sprinklers in schools.

Answering Member: Mr Laws | Department: Education

The Department for Education will be publishing revised guidance titled 'Fire Safety Design for Schools', later this year. This will replace the current guidance contained within Building Bulletin 100:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/adminandfinance/schoolscapital/buildingsanddesign/environmental/a0063718/fire-safety-design-guidance-building-bulletin-100>

Regarding the installation of sprinklers in schools, the Department's policy is that they should be installed in new school buildings where there is a real and significant risk, as identified in a fire risk assessment.

HC Deb 25 February 2014 | 187917 | 576 c224W

Asked by: Cunningham, Jim

To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families (1) how many schools follow the Building Bulletin 100 guidance on fire sprinklers issued by his Department; and what mechanisms are in place to ensure this guidance is followed;

Answering Member: Coaker, Vernon | Department: Department for Children, Schools and Families

On 1 March 2007 my right hon. Friend the Member for South Dorset (Jim Knight), the then Minister of State for Schools launched the policy to install fire sprinkler systems to protect the fabric of new schools. This was included in Building Bulletin 100 later that year. It is best practice to provide sprinkler systems in new school buildings and major refurbishments and DCSF encourages and expects client bodies to install them. Only those buildings which are unsuitable or of very low risk should not now include sprinklers. Partnerships for Schools monitors which schools in the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme include sprinkler systems and encourages local authorities and other client bodies to include sprinklers in all new schools through BSF procurement documents. This approach has resulted in over 70 per cent. of current new secondary schools in BSF including sprinkler systems. Before the introduction of the policy less than 10 per cent. of new schools had sprinkler systems fitted. We do not have figures for how many schools procured outside the Building Schools for the Future Secondary School programme include sprinkler systems. The legal requirements for fire safety measures in schools are set by Building Regulations, which prioritise the life safety of pupils, teachers and other users—not the protection of property. Sprinklers are not required for life safety as they are primarily a property protection measure. Therefore a school building designed to the Building Regulations should be safe whether or not it includes sprinklers. Information is not collected centrally about which schools in Coventry have sprinklers fitted. However, Coventry city council has a policy to fit fire sprinkler systems in all its new and refurbished schools.

HC Deb 18 March 2010 | Vol 507 c1061-2W | 322898

Asked by: Lynne Featherstone

To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families how much has been allocated to the fitting of fire suppression systems in schools in each of the last five years.

Answering Member: Jim Knight | Department: Children, Schools and Families

The Department does not hold information centrally on the amount allocated by local authorities and schools on fire suppression systems in schools in each of the last five years. Allocations are prioritised locally in accordance with asset management plans.

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Lynne Featherstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families (1) whether local authorities will be expected to show evidence that his Department's guidance document Designing and Managing Against the Risk of Fire in Schools (BB100) has been complied with and the conclusions of the accompanying risk assessment followed in any application for funding under the Building Schools for the Future and Primary Capital programmes;

(2) whether funding for new school buildings and major refurbishments under the Building Schools for the Future and Primary Capital programmes is contingent on compliance by local authorities with his Department's guidance document Designing and Managing Against the Risk of Fire in Schools (BB100) and the accompanying risk assessment tool; and if he will make a statement.

Jim Knight: Building Bulletins, among them BB100, are guidance documents and local authorities are responsible for compliance.

It is our expectation that all new and some refurbished schools will have fire sprinklers installed, however this is not a compulsory measure. There may be cases where local authorities or other promoters of schools consider that sprinklers are not needed. If so, in case of challenge they will need to be able to demonstrate that such schools are very low risk and that sprinklers would not represent good value for money.

Compliance with the Building Regulations for Fire is covered by Building Bulletin 100 and all designs must meet the life-safety requirements set out there. These life-safety requirements are enforced by Building Control Bodies. Sprinkler systems classed as life-safety systems and any trade-off of the fire requirements for life-safety that are allowed by BB100, for buildings fitted with sprinkler systems, will need to be checked in detail by the Building Control Body.

HC Deb 20 March 2008 | Vol 473 c1421W;473 c1417W

Asked by: Mark Oaten:

To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills (1) what estimate he has made of the average cost of installing a sprinkler system in a new school; what this represents as a percentage of total building cost; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how much has been spent on (a) installing and (b) maintaining school sprinkler systems in each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what representations he has received from (a) industry and (b) fire chiefs on sprinklers in schools; and if he will make a statement.

Answering Member: Jim Knight | Department: Education and Skills

In July, we commissioned consultants to produce an analysis of the costs of installing sprinklers in schools. Their study covers 26 schools and will give us an average cost for installing sprinklers in new schools—both as a percentage addition to construction costs and as a rate per square metre of floor area. Their study will be concluded early in January 2007 and we will publish the findings.

The Department does not provide funding specifically for the installation of sprinklers in schools. Local authorities decide what they do with the funding they are allocated. They may choose to install sprinklers when constructing new schools, but do not need to inform us or provide figures on costs. However, the study I refer to above is gathering information on maintenance costs as well as capital costs.

We have received representations from the Chief Fire Officers Association, individual Fire and Rescue Authorities, the National Fire Sprinkler Network and insurance companies on the value of installing sprinklers in schools. Our public consultation on Building Bulletin 100, "Designing and Managing Against the Risk of Fire in Schools", included questions on sprinklers. We take all of the views expressed very seriously and that is one of the reasons why we commissioned further studies on sprinklers. We saw the need to provide more information about sprinklers and their role in improving property protection, and will be expanding the guidance on their use in schools in the final version of Building Bulletin 100.

HC Deb 14 December 2006 | Vol 454 c1400-1W;454 c1402-3W

Useful links

Briefing by the National Union of Teachers on fire safety regulation

<https://www.teachers.org.uk/node/12519>

Background to the NUT's campaign for fire sprinklers in schools

<https://www.teachers.org.uk/node/12557>

HSE - Fire safety

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/toolbox/fire.htm>

Fire Safety Advice Centre - Educational Establishments including Schools and Colleges

<https://www.firesafe.org.uk/fire-safety-in-educational-establishments-including-schools-and-colleges/>

DCLG - Fire safety risk assessment: educational premises

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fire-safety-risk-assessment-educational-premises>

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