FIRE RISK (PREVENTION) POLICY

Policy Owner: Headmistress / Safety Co-ordinator
Operational Lead: Site Manager / Fire Safety Manager
Review Period: September 2026 – August 2027
Next Review: September 2027, or sooner where there is a significant change, incident or change in legislation
Applies to: All school buildings, grounds, staff, pupils, visitors, contractors and other persons who may be affected by school activities

1. Purpose and Fire Safety Statement

Birchfield School is committed to protecting the lives and safety of pupils, staff, visitors and contractors by preventing fires wherever reasonably practicable and ensuring that effective arrangements are in place for warning, evacuation and emergency response.

The School will:

- reduce the likelihood of fire occurring;
- identify and control significant fire hazards;
- maintain appropriate fire detection, warning and firefighting systems;
- ensure that escape routes and exits remain available and unobstructed;
- provide appropriate arrangements for the safe evacuation of all persons, including pupils and adults who may require additional assistance;
- provide appropriate fire safety information, instruction and training;
- undertake regular fire drills and use the results to improve arrangements;
- maintain appropriate records demonstrating that fire safety arrangements are implemented and monitored; and
- review fire safety arrangements whenever there is a significant change to the premises, occupancy, activities or identified risks.

This policy should be read alongside the School's current Fire Risk Assessment, Fire Emergency Action Plan, evacuation procedures, premises management procedures, safeguarding arrangements and relevant individual evacuation plans.

2. Legislative and Guidance Framework

Birchfield School will manage fire safety in accordance with applicable legislation and relevant government guidance, including:

- Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (as amended);
- Fire Safety Act 2021;
- Building Safety Act 2022, including section 156 amendments to the Fire Safety Order;
- Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022, where and to the extent applicable to any relevant residential accommodation;
- relevant provisions of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974;
- relevant requirements of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999;
- applicable building regulations and fire safety requirements relating to building work;

- Department for Education guidance relating to fire safety in schools; and
- Home Office fire safety risk assessment guidance for educational premises.

The School will also take account of relevant British Standards and competent professional advice where appropriate.

The Home Office guidance specifically identifies schools and other educational premises as premises for which an appropriate fire risk assessment should be undertaken.

3. Responsible Person and Fire Safety Management

3.1 Responsible Person

The School will identify and record the legal Responsible Person(s) under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

The Responsible Person has ultimate legal responsibility for ensuring that the fire safety duties applicable to the premises are discharged.

Where more than one Responsible Person has duties in relation to the premises, the School will ensure appropriate cooperation, coordination and information sharing.

The School recognises that responsibilities for day-to-day fire safety management may be delegated, but the legal responsibilities of the Responsible Person are not transferred simply by appointing a Fire Safety Manager or other member of staff.

Birchfield School Responsible Person / Senior Oversight

Mrs Amy Jones – Headmistress & Safety Co-ordinator

Mrs Jones has overall responsibility for ensuring that the School maintains effective arrangements for health and safety and fire safety.

3.2 Fire Safety Manager

Mr Darren Brittain – Site Manager & Designated Fire Safety Manager

The Fire Safety Manager is responsible for the day-to-day coordination and implementation of the School's fire safety arrangements.

Responsibilities include:

- maintaining the School's fire safety arrangements and Fire Safety Log;
- ensuring that fire risk assessments are reviewed and actions followed up;
- arranging appropriate inspection, testing and servicing of fire safety systems;
- overseeing fire drills and evacuation exercises;
- ensuring staff receive appropriate fire safety information and training;
- ensuring contractors receive relevant fire safety information;
- monitoring escape routes, fire doors and fire safety equipment;
- maintaining records of inspections, tests, drills and training;
- ensuring fire safety information is updated following significant building or operational changes;
- liaising with competent contractors, fire risk assessors and the Fire and Rescue Service where appropriate;

- ensuring identified fire safety defects are reported and addressed; and
- escalating significant concerns to the Headmistress.

3.3 Deputy Fire Safety Lead

Mr Dean Sheasby – Deputy Fire Safety Lead

The Deputy Fire Safety Lead supports the Fire Safety Manager with:

- fire safety monitoring;
- staff communication and training;
- evacuation arrangements;
- fire drills;
- fire marshal coordination; and
- implementation of remedial actions.

The Deputy Fire Safety Lead will assume operational responsibility for fire safety arrangements in the absence of the Fire Safety Manager, subject to the overall authority of the Headmistress.

4. Fire Marshals

The School will appoint an appropriate number of trained Fire Marshals to support safe evacuation.

Fire Marshals will:

- understand the emergency evacuation arrangements for their designated area;
- encourage prompt and orderly evacuation;
- check their designated areas where it is safe to do so;
- close doors where appropriate without putting themselves at risk;
- never delay evacuation in order to undertake a sweep;
- report their findings at the assembly point;
- identify any person known or believed to be missing;
- report hazards or difficulties encountered during evacuation; and
- follow instructions from the Fire Safety Manager or emergency services.

Fire Marshals must never place themselves at risk and must not re-enter a building to search for a person.

5. Responsibilities of All Staff

All staff have a responsibility to contribute to fire safety.

Staff must:

- familiarise themselves with fire procedures and evacuation routes;
- attend required fire safety training;
- know the location of the nearest suitable fire exit;
- keep fire exits and escape routes clear;
- report damaged or defective fire safety equipment immediately;
- report fire hazards to the Site Manager;
- ensure pupils understand and follow evacuation instructions;
- never wedge or otherwise improperly hold open fire doors;
- never interfere with fire alarm, detection or firefighting equipment;

- evacuate immediately when the alarm sounds unless specifically instructed otherwise as part of an authorised procedure; and
- never re-enter a building until authorised by the Fire and Rescue Service or the person with appropriate authority under the School's emergency arrangements.

6. Fire Safety Induction and Information

All new staff will receive fire safety information as part of their induction and as soon as reasonably practicable after joining the School.

Staff will be informed of:

- the action to take on discovering a fire;
- the action to take on hearing the alarm;
- evacuation routes and assembly points;
- arrangements for pupils requiring additional assistance;
- their individual responsibilities;
- the location of fire extinguishers and other firefighting equipment;
- the location of fire alarm call points; and
- procedures for reporting fire safety concerns.

Pupils will receive age-appropriate fire safety information and will participate in evacuation drills.

Fire action notices will be displayed in appropriate locations throughout the School.

7. Visitors and Contractors

All visitors will sign in and, where applicable, be issued with appropriate identification.

The School will ensure that visitors are given appropriate information regarding emergency evacuation arrangements.

Hosts are responsible for ensuring that their visitors evacuate with them in the event of an emergency, where practicable.

Contractors must:

- comply with the School's fire safety arrangements;
- follow relevant site rules;
- maintain good housekeeping;
- keep escape routes clear;
- control ignition sources;
- store combustible and hazardous materials appropriately; and
- comply with permit-to-work arrangements where applicable.

Where contractors undertake hot works or other higher-risk activities, appropriate controls must be implemented before work begins.

8. Public Events and Activities

For events involving parents, visitors or members of the public, including:

- Open Days;

- concerts;
- productions;
- performances;
- sports events;
- exhibitions; and
- other large gatherings,

the event organiser will consider fire safety and emergency evacuation arrangements in advance.

Where appropriate, attendees will be informed of:

- the fire alarm signal;
- emergency exits;
- assembly points;
- the requirement to evacuate immediately;
- arrangements for persons requiring assistance; and
- the prohibition on re-entering the building until authorised.

The School will consider occupancy levels and the suitability of escape routes for the particular event.

9. Fire Risk Assessment

Birchfield School will maintain a suitable and sufficient fire risk assessment covering the premises, activities and people at risk.

The assessment will identify:

- sources of ignition;
- sources of fuel;
- sources of oxygen;
- people at risk;
- existing fire prevention measures;
- fire detection and warning arrangements;
- emergency lighting;
- escape routes and exits;
- firefighting equipment;
- emergency evacuation arrangements;
- arrangements for vulnerable persons;
- contractor and maintenance risks;
- hazardous substances;
- cooking and catering risks;
- electrical risks;
- arson and security risks;
- housekeeping arrangements; and
- any other significant fire hazards relevant to the School.

The full fire risk assessment and its findings will be recorded and retained.

The School will identify the person or organisation responsible for undertaking or reviewing the assessment and retain the relevant information in accordance with legal requirements.

The assessment will be reviewed:

- at least annually as part of the School's fire safety management cycle;
- following a significant fire or serious fire-related incident;
- following significant building works or alterations;
- following a significant change in occupancy or use;
- where there is reason to believe the assessment is no longer valid; or
- following significant changes in legislation or official guidance.

Government guidance states that schools should maintain an appropriate and up-to-date fire risk assessment and review it when significant changes occur.

10. Emergency Evacuation

The School will maintain a written Fire Emergency Action Plan consistent with the findings of the Fire Risk Assessment.

On discovering a fire, staff must:

1. Raise the alarm immediately.
2. Call 999 or ensure that the emergency services have been called.
3. Evacuate the building by the nearest safe route.
4. Take pupils to the designated assembly point.
5. Do not stop to collect personal belongings.
6. Do not use lifts unless specifically authorised as part of an approved evacuation arrangement.
7. Do not attempt to fight a fire unless appropriately trained, the fire is small and controllable, and doing so does not place the individual or others at risk.
8. Never re-enter the building.

The Fire Safety Manager or nominated senior member of staff will coordinate the School's response until responsibility is assumed by the emergency services.

11. Pupils and Persons Requiring Additional Assistance

The School recognises that young children, pupils with disabilities, temporary injuries, medical needs, sensory impairments or other circumstances may require additional consideration during an evacuation.

The Fire Risk Assessment will consider the needs of people who may have difficulty responding to or escaping from a fire. GOV.UK guidance specifically requires evacuation planning to consider disabled people and provides guidance on individual evacuation plans.

Where necessary, the School will develop an appropriate individual evacuation plan, which may include a PEEP or another suitable person-centred evacuation arrangement.

Such arrangements will:

- be based on the individual's needs;
- identify appropriate assistance;
- identify suitable evacuation routes;
- identify any necessary equipment;
- be communicated to relevant staff;
- be reviewed when circumstances change; and
- be tested where appropriate.

The School's arrangements will not rely upon the Fire and Rescue Service carrying out the initial evacuation of an individual.

12. Fire Drills

Fire evacuation drills will normally be undertaken **at least once each term**, with drills varied by time and circumstances where reasonably practicable.

The School will consider:

- different days and times;
- different areas of the School;
- blocked or unavailable escape routes;
- pupils with additional evacuation needs;
- visitors and contractors;
- realistic but safe scenarios; and
- lessons learned from previous drills.

Fire drills will be recorded, including:

- date and time;
- nature of the drill;
- evacuation time;
- buildings/areas involved;
- any problems identified;
- missing or unaccounted persons;
- communication issues;
- actions required; and
- date actions were completed.

Where a drill identifies a significant weakness, the School will take appropriate corrective action and, where necessary, undertake a further drill.

13. Fire Detection and Alarm Systems

The School will maintain an appropriate fire detection and alarm system in accordance with the Fire Risk Assessment and relevant standards.

Routine testing, servicing and maintenance will be undertaken by appropriately competent persons.

The School will maintain records of:

- routine alarm tests;
- servicing;
- faults;
- repairs;
- false alarms;
- modifications; and
- follow-up actions.

Weekly alarm tests will be undertaken in accordance with the School's planned maintenance arrangements and recorded in the Fire Safety Log.

14. Emergency Lighting

Emergency lighting will be maintained and tested in accordance with the relevant system specification and applicable standards.

Routine checks and periodic specialist testing will be recorded.

Defects will be reported promptly and remedial action taken according to the level of risk.

15. Fire Doors and Escape Routes

Fire doors are critical life-safety measures.

Staff must not:

- prop fire doors open;
- wedge fire doors;
- obstruct fire doors;
- interfere with door closers; or
- alter fire doors without appropriate authorisation.

Escape routes and exits must be kept clear and available for immediate use.

The School will undertake appropriate routine checks and formal inspections of fire doors and escape routes, with defects recorded and remedied.

16. Firefighting Equipment

The School will provide appropriate firefighting equipment based on the Fire Risk Assessment.

Equipment may include:

- water extinguishers;
- foam extinguishers;
- CO_2 extinguishers;
- dry powder extinguishers;
- fire blankets; and
- other specialist equipment where identified as necessary.

Equipment will be appropriately located, clearly identified, accessible and maintained.

Firefighting equipment is provided primarily to support life safety and should only be used where an individual is trained or otherwise competent, the fire is small and manageable, and a safe escape route remains available.

Life safety must always take priority over property protection.

17. Fire Prevention

The School will take reasonable measures to prevent fires, including appropriate controls relating to:

- electrical equipment;
- cooking and catering;

- heating equipment;
- smoking and vaping;
- combustible materials;
- waste;
- arson and security;
- hazardous substances;
- laboratories and practical activities;
- contractor activities;
- hot works;
- storage;
- housekeeping; and
- temporary events.

Staff must report any significant fire hazard immediately to the Site Manager.

18. Electrical Safety

Electrical installations and equipment will be inspected, maintained and tested at appropriate intervals by competent persons.

Portable electrical equipment will be subject to appropriate inspection and testing based on risk.

Electrical equipment should not be used where it is damaged, defective or presents a fire risk.

Staff must not overload sockets or use inappropriate extension arrangements.

Electrical equipment should be switched off when not required, unless designed to remain permanently operational.

19. Gas Safety

Gas appliances and installations will be maintained by appropriately qualified and registered contractors.

Gas isolation points will be identified and accessible.

Any suspected gas leak must be reported immediately and appropriate emergency procedures followed.

20. Hazardous and Flammable Substances

Flammable liquids, gases and other hazardous substances will be:

- identified;
- risk assessed;
- appropriately stored;
- kept away from ignition sources;
- secured where necessary; and
- disposed of safely.

Relevant COSHH assessments and laboratory safety arrangements will be maintained alongside this policy.

21. Smoking and Vaping

Smoking and vaping are prohibited within School buildings and grounds in accordance with School rules and applicable law.

The School will take reasonable steps to prevent smoking-related ignition sources from creating a fire risk.

22. Housekeeping and Waste

Good housekeeping is an essential fire prevention measure.

Staff must ensure that:

- combustible waste is not allowed to accumulate;
- waste is removed regularly;
- corridors and escape routes remain clear;
- storage does not obstruct fire doors or firefighting equipment;
- combustible materials are not stored against heat sources; and
- storage areas are kept orderly.

23. Maintenance and Inspection Programme

The Site Manager will maintain a planned programme covering, as appropriate:

- fire alarm systems;
- automatic detection;
- emergency lighting;
- fire extinguishers;
- fire blankets;
- fire doors;
- emergency exits;
- escape routes;
- signage;
- emergency power supplies;
- smoke control systems, where applicable;
- gas systems;
- electrical installations; and
- other fire safety systems identified by the Fire Risk Assessment.

Inspection and servicing frequencies will be based on applicable legislation, relevant standards, manufacturers' requirements, the Fire Risk Assessment and competent professional advice.

24. Fire Safety Training

All staff will receive appropriate fire safety training.

Training will cover, as relevant:

- fire prevention;
- recognition of fire hazards;
- raising the alarm;
- evacuation;
- assembly procedures;
- fire extinguisher awareness;
- responsibilities during drills;

- arrangements for vulnerable persons; and
- reporting fire safety concerns.

Fire Marshals will receive additional training appropriate to their responsibilities.

Training will be recorded and refreshed at appropriate intervals.

25. Record Keeping

The School will maintain a Fire Safety Log and associated records.

Records will include, as applicable:

- current Fire Risk Assessment;
- review records;
- fire safety arrangements;
- emergency plans;
- fire drill records;
- staff training records;
- fire alarm tests and servicing;
- emergency lighting tests;
- fire extinguisher servicing;
- fire door inspections;
- electrical inspection and testing records;
- gas safety records;
- maintenance certificates;
- contractor information;
- fire incidents and false alarms;
- identified defects;
- remedial actions;
- fire safety meeting/monitoring records; and
- information relating to competent persons appointed to assist with fire safety.

Since 1 October 2023, Responsible Persons have been required to record the full findings of the fire risk assessment and their fire safety arrangements, rather than only significant findings in specified circumstances.

26. Fire Incidents and False Alarms

All fires, suspected fires and significant fire-related incidents will be reported to the Headmistress and Site Manager.

The incident will be investigated proportionately and, where appropriate:

- the Fire Risk Assessment will be reviewed;
- emergency procedures will be reviewed;
- staff will receive further instruction;
- equipment or systems will be checked;
- corrective actions will be recorded; and
- relevant external authorities will be notified where legally required.

False alarms will also be monitored to identify recurring problems or patterns.

27. Contractors, Building Works and Changes to Premises

Fire safety will be considered before significant building works, refurbishment, changes of use or changes in occupancy.

Where works may affect:

- fire compartments;
- fire doors;
- alarm systems;
- escape routes;
- emergency lighting;
- fire stopping;
- means of escape; or
- access for the Fire and Rescue Service,

the School will obtain appropriate competent advice.

The Fire Risk Assessment and emergency arrangements will be reviewed following significant changes.

28. Cooperation and Information Sharing

Where other Responsible Persons, landlords, contractors, occupiers or organisations have fire safety responsibilities relating to the same premises or building, Birchfield School will cooperate and share relevant information as required.

The School will maintain appropriate records of:

- the identity of relevant Responsible Persons;
- the extent of their respective responsibilities;
- relevant fire safety information;
- significant changes affecting fire safety; and
- information passed to or received from other Responsible Persons.

These arrangements reflect the cooperation and coordination requirements introduced through section 156 of the Building Safety Act 2022.

29. Monitoring and Review

The Headmistress and Fire Safety Manager will monitor the effectiveness of the School's fire safety arrangements.

The policy will be formally reviewed annually and sooner where:

- legislation changes;
- significant changes are made to the premises;
- there is a significant change in use or occupancy;
- a serious incident occurs;
- a fire drill identifies significant weaknesses;
- the Fire Risk Assessment identifies a need for change; or
- competent professional advice indicates that revision is necessary.

The School will ensure that actions identified through monitoring, inspection, risk assessment or drills are tracked through to completion.

30. Fire Marshal – Emergency Instructions

During an evacuation, Fire Marshals should:

1. Evacuate themselves and pupils safely.
2. Direct people towards the nearest safe exit.
3. Check their designated area only where this can be done safely and without delaying evacuation.
4. Close doors where appropriate.
5. Never enter an area containing smoke or fire.
6. Never re-enter the building.
7. Report their findings at the assembly point.
8. Report anyone known or believed to be missing.
9. Clearly identify any area that could not be checked.
10. Provide relevant information to the Fire Safety Manager and emergency services.

Information about pupils or adults requiring assistance should be available to those responsible for coordinating evacuation, subject to appropriate safeguarding and data protection arrangements.

31. Assembly and Accountability

The School will maintain designated assembly points appropriate to each building and evacuation arrangement.

At the assembly point:

- staff will account for pupils using appropriate registers or electronic systems;
- visitors and contractors will be accounted for using signing-in records;
- missing persons will be reported immediately;
- no person should leave the assembly area without appropriate authorisation; and
- information regarding missing or potentially trapped persons will be communicated to the Fire and Rescue Service immediately upon arrival.

No member of staff should place themselves at risk by attempting to locate a missing person inside a building.

32. Policy Approval

This policy has been reviewed for the academic year **2026–2027** and should be read alongside Birchfield School's current Fire Risk Assessment and Fire Emergency Action Plan.

Policy Owner: Mrs Amy Jones, Headmistress
Fire Safety Manager: Mr Darren Brittain, Site Manager
Deputy Fire Safety Lead: Mr Dean Sheasby