



# CROSCOMBE AND STOKE ST MICHAEL PRIMARY FEDERATION

## ARSON POLICY

Croscombe is a Church of England Primary School and this policy has been written with reference to its Christian foundation.

### Rationale

Arson, as defined by the Criminal Damage Act 1973, is “the unlawful damage by fire of property belonging to another.”

### Scope

Arson accounts for 21% of fires in all premises. The incidence of arson in all types of premises is increasing and is recognised as a major cause of fire.

### Principles

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 pupils.
- 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 educational needs.
- Our federation views arson as preventable, if not in its entirety then to such a degree that its effects are minimised.

## ARSON POLICY

### Core Principles

Croscombe and Stoke St Michael Primary Federation believe that minimising the incidence of arson to property and thereby helping to provide a safe environment for service users, staff and other person on our sites, and protecting essential resources is a high priority. To achieve this, our federation will ensure that there will be a high level of management commitment and adequate resources directed to arson prevention measures. This will apply to all premises and staff.

### Common Standards

Croscombe and Stoke St Michael Primary Federation will develop a management plan to address arson covering the following areas:

- Risk management
- Security arrangements
- Systems for fire alarm and detection
- Fire containment and extinguishment
- General fire safety policies and precautions

## IMPLEMENTATION AND COMPLIANCE



## **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 in regard to any changes in this Policy.

Croscombe and Stoke St Michael Primary Federation 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 is the named 'Fire Officer' and 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.

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 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.

**How serious is the problem?** Statistics from insurers and fire protection organisations estimate that between 70-75% of school fires can be attributed to arson. However, this is not the full picture as fire brigades are not always summoned to fires, particularly where they have self-extinguished, or are put out by staff. In addition to the financial costs, many fires will result in consequential loss, such as the destruction of irreplaceable records, teaching notes, course-work for examinations and in some instances, the need to find alternative, temporary accommodation

## **Who are the arsonists?**

Fires in schools are most likely to be started by pupils, ex-pupils or their friends, or others with knowledge of the school, perhaps living in close proximity. Of those individuals prosecuted, cautioned, or found guilty of arson, approximately 50% are aged between ten and sixteen. Don't imagine they will all be boys; girls are also capable of committing arson.

## **When and how do they strike?**



Until recently, the majority of school fires occurred outside normal school hours. However, current trends show that fires during the school day are now far exceeding those occurring out of hours. Most fires will be started using combustibles found within the school grounds – rubbish from bins for example. It is rare for accelerants, such as petrol, to be used unless left on site.

### **What can be done to deter arsonists?**

The prevention of arson falls into a logical process known as the five-point action plan.

1. **Deter unauthorised entry onto the site.** Consider the use of boundary signs to deter intruders, particularly at vulnerable spots. Croscombe gates are all locked outside school hours and CCTV cameras have been installed at Stoke St Michael.
2. **Prevent unauthorised entry into the building.**  
The easiest points of entry into the premises are via the doors and windows. The burglar alarm systems are maintained fully functional.
3. **Reduce the opportunity for an intruder to start a fire.**  
Arsonists seldom bring combustible items with them but tend to use what is available on site. Store external combustible storage and materials away from the main school building and lock all bins together to prevent moving.
4. **Reduce the scope for potential fire damage.**  
Closing all doors at night will help to contain any fire or smoke within the room of origin, or at the very least, slow down the rate of fire growth.
5. **Reduce subsequent losses and disruption resulting from a fire by preparing a disaster recovery plan (covered in 'Crisis Management Plan').**  
The time and effort put into creating a plan will pay dividends in the event of serious fire, whether started accidentally or deliberately. Even well maintained fencing can be considered useless 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.

### **Members of staff are adequately trained in fire procedures, including how to summon the Fire Service, building evacuation and the use of fire extinguishers.**

A great deal can be achieved with little or no cost implications, particularly in relation to 'housekeeping' and staff training.

- Any graffiti that appears on the school premises will be removed without delay. If it is left to accumulate, vandals and arsonists will begin to view the site as being a legitimate target of little or no value.
- Wheeled bins will be kept secured by padlock and chain well clear of any building, by a distance of at least 6 metres. This or contained within a fenced compound.

### **Remember! Rubbish is an ideal fuel for the 'Arsonist'.**

- Bins on wheels can be pushed against the building or, rubbish can be removed from the bins and piled against doors before being set alight.

### **Both are very common methods of attack.**



## Arson



- Recycling bins in connection with fundraising activities, will be located and secured in the same manner as described above. Regular collections will be arranged to avoid an accumulation of combustible material.
- External litterbins will not be fixed to the walls of the building, or under roofs constructed of combustible materials, but secured to the ground well away from the any building. Ideally, bins will be of metal construction.
- Avoid placing combustible items on windowsills. A common method of attack is to break a window and set fire to combustibles within reach.
- The flat roofs on the premises, are regularly checked for breaches in security, in particular the skylights.
- Matches or lighters are not left in the staff room overnight. Opportunist vandals have found these items very useful in the past!
- 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  
**Crimestoppers on Tel: 0800 555 111,**  
 Calls are free (except for some mobiles)  
 And the caller will remain anonymous.

- CCTV has been installed at Stoke.
- It is essential that out of hours visitors are restricted to authorized areas of the building, without compromising their means of escape.
- Arson attacks during school hours are on the increase. Areas targeted include toilets, cloakrooms and any other areas where young people may congregate unobserved. Extra vigilance is therefore required.
- A routine has been adopted, whereby the last individual to leave the school is responsible for ensuring that all doors and windows have been secured, once the building is vacated at the end of the day.
- Shrubs and undergrowth are not allowed to encroach against buildings. In the summer, vegetation often becomes tinder dry and will burn vigorously.
- New sheds and other storage facilities should be sited at least 8 metres from buildings where possible to prevent fire spread from one to the other.

Signed..... Headteacher

Signed..... Chair of Governors



# Arson



Date of adoption: 2020  
Date for review: 2022