

OLD VICARAGE SCHOOL
FIRE SAFETY POLICY
and Emergency Evacuation Procedures

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Responsible Area	Proprietors / Bursar / Head of School

This policy applies to the whole School, including the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), out-of-school care, extra-curricular activities, events, lettings and other activities taking place on the school premises or under the School's control.

This policy is publicly available on the School website and on request from the School Office. An accessible format will be provided where reasonably required.

Approval and review

Matthew Adshead	Jenny Adshead	Kerry Wise
Proprietor	Proprietor / Bursar	Head of School

Approved: September 2026. Next formal review: no later than September 2027.

1. Purpose and commitment

Old Vicarage School is committed to protecting pupils, staff, visitors, contractors and other users of the premises from the risk of fire. The primary objective is the protection of life. Fire prevention, effective warning, safe evacuation, suitable fire precautions, competent maintenance, training and clear records are integral to the School's health and safety arrangements.

The Proprietors will ensure that the School complies with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, as amended, and with paragraph 12 of Schedule 1, Part 3 of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, as amended. Fire safety arrangements will be proportionate to the School's premises, activities, pupils and other people who may be present.

2. Legal and regulatory framework

- Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, as amended - Schedule 1, Part 3, paragraph 12.
- Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, as amended, including amendments made by section 156 of the Building Safety Act 2022.
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.
- Dangerous Substances and Explosive Atmospheres Regulations 2002 (DSEAR), where applicable.
- Equality Act 2010, including reasonable adjustments for disabled people where applicable.
- Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework for group and school-based providers, current version in force from 1 September 2026.
- Current Home Office fire-safety guidance for educational premises and means of escape for disabled people.
- Current DfE Independent School Standards guidance and School and college security guidance.

The School will update this policy and its procedures promptly where legislation, statutory guidance, the fire risk assessment, the premises, occupancy, activities or identified risks materially change.

3. Related documents

- Health and Safety Policy
- Accessibility Plan
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- SEND Policy
- First Aid / Medical Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Security / Lockdown / Emergency Response procedures

4. Responsibilities

The legal Responsible Person is determined by the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. For a workplace, this will ordinarily be the employer, with any other person having duties to the extent that they exercise relevant control of the premises or fire-safety measures. Internal delegation does not transfer or remove statutory duties.

Role	Key responsibilities	School arrangement
Proprietors	Ensure compliance with the Independent School Standards and obtain assurance that fire-safety duties are effectively discharged. Review significant risks, actions and this policy.	Matthew Adshead and Jenny Adshead
Fire Safety Manager	Coordinates the fire risk assessment, emergency arrangements, maintenance, testing, records, contractors, action tracking and liaison with other dutyholders or the Fire and Rescue Service as appropriate.	Zoe Smedley
Head of School	Ensures operational implementation, staff and pupil familiarisation, termly evacuation drills and effective day-to-day	Kerry Wise

Role	Key responsibilities	School arrangement
	arrangements during School activities.	
Fire Marshal(s)	Assist with evacuation, control at assembly points, reporting defects and other duties for which they have been trained.	Appointed by the Head of School;
Staff and volunteers	Follow fire-safety instructions, attend training and drills, keep escape routes clear, report defects or concerns promptly and take reasonable care of themselves and others.	All relevant staff and volunteers
Visitors, contractors and hirers	Follow the School's fire-safety and emergency instructions and any agreed site-specific arrangements.	Briefed or provided with relevant information as appropriate.

5. Fire risk assessment

The Responsible Person will ensure that a suitable and sufficient fire risk assessment is carried out for all relevant parts of the premises and activities under the School's control. The completed fire risk assessment, including all findings, will be recorded in full. The School will also record its fire-safety arrangements and the identity of any person or organisation engaged to carry out or review the assessment.

The fire risk assessment will identify hazards, people at risk and the preventive and protective measures required. It will take account of all buildings and areas used by the School; normal and out-of-hours occupation; EYFS and other young children; staff, volunteers, visitors, contractors and hirers; people unfamiliar with the premises; lone workers; anyone who may require assistance to perceive an alarm or evacuate; dangerous substances; ignition sources; combustible materials; deliberate fire-setting; means of escape; detection and warning; emergency lighting; fire doors and compartmentation; firefighting or suppression systems; and the emergency plan.

As School practice, the fire risk assessment will be formally reviewed at least annually. It will also be reviewed whenever there is reason to suspect that it is no longer valid, following a significant change to the premises, occupancy, activities or fire precautions, or after a fire, serious near miss, drill or other event indicating that review is necessary. Actions will be recorded, allocated, timescaled and tracked to completion.

6. Fire prevention and control measures

The School will maintain suitable general fire precautions in accordance with the current fire risk assessment. These include, as appropriate:

- good housekeeping and control of combustible waste;
- appropriate control and maintenance of electrical equipment and installations;
- safe management of heating, cooking, science and other equipment that may present an ignition risk;
- control of hot works by contractors where applicable;
- prohibition of smoking and vaping on the School premises;
- safe storage and handling of flammable and other dangerous substances in accordance with DSEAR and, where relevant, COSHH;
- suitable fire detection and warning, emergency lighting, signs, means of escape, fire doors and firefighting equipment;
- proportionate site-security measures to reduce the risk of arson; and

- regular inspection, testing, maintenance and prompt correction of defects.

Flammable and other dangerous substances will be kept to the minimum reasonably required and managed in accordance with the relevant risk assessments. Fire and explosion risks will be assessed under DSEAR where applicable; COSHH requirements will also be followed where a substance presents a health hazard.

7. Means of escape and fire doors

Escape routes, exits and fire-safety equipment will be kept clear and unobstructed. Corridors, stairs and final exits must not be used for storage in a way that compromises escape. Fire action notices and directional signs will be displayed at appropriate locations and kept current.

Fire doors will be maintained in good working order, kept unobstructed and allowed to close effectively. They will not be wedged or held open except by an approved device appropriate to the fire strategy. Final exits and escape-route doors will be readily openable from the inside without the use of a key or special knowledge whenever the premises are occupied, subject to the fire risk assessment and lawful security arrangements.

8. Fire detection, warning and system impairments

The fire detection and warning system will provide effective warning throughout all occupied areas used by the School. The fire risk assessment and any Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) will address outside classrooms and any person who may not hear, perceive or understand the standard alarm, and will identify any additional visual, vibrating, personal or staff-assisted warning arrangements required.

Any failure, isolation or impairment of the alarm, detection, emergency lighting, final exit, fire door, suppression system or other significant fire-safety measure must be reported immediately to the Bursar / Fire Safety Manager. The risk will be assessed, temporary precautions introduced where necessary, affected persons informed, repair prioritised and the impairment and restoration recorded. Areas will not remain in use where adequate safety cannot be maintained.

9. Inspection, testing and maintenance

Fire-safety systems and equipment will be inspected, tested and maintained at intervals appropriate to the system, manufacturer's instructions, current applicable standards and the fire risk assessment. The School's documented maintenance schedule will include:

- weekly testing of the fire alarm / manual call points on an appropriate rotation, with results recorded;
- regular checks of escape routes, exits and fire doors;
- routine functional testing and competent-person servicing of emergency lighting;
- competent-person servicing and maintenance of the fire alarm / detection system at the required intervals;
- competent-person maintenance of portable firefighting equipment and fire blankets at least annually or more frequently where required; and
- prompt recording, reporting and rectification of faults.

Specialist inspection, maintenance and servicing will be undertaken by suitably competent contractors. Relevant service certificates and remedial-action records will be retained.

10. Training and information

All staff receive fire-safety information and instruction on induction and refresher training periodically, at least annually as School practice. Additional instruction or training will be provided where roles, risks, premises, equipment or procedures change, or where a drill, incident or audit identifies a need.

Fire Marshals receive role-specific training on appointment and refresher training at intervals determined by the fire risk assessment and training provider, with annual School refresher information and additional training following relevant change or identified deficiency.

Staff whose assigned role may include use of portable firefighting equipment will receive suitable additional training. No member of staff is required to fight a fire merely because an extinguisher is available. Pupils are given age-appropriate instruction and take part in evacuation drills.

11. Evacuation drills

A whole-School fire evacuation drill will be held at least once each term. The first autumn-term drill will take place as soon as practicable after the start of the academic year so that new pupils and staff become familiar with the arrangements. Drills may be varied to test different times, routes and circumstances, including arrangements for EYFS, visitors, out-of-hours users and people requiring assistance.

Evacuation time will be recorded, but time alone will not determine whether a drill is successful. Each drill will evaluate alarm recognition, safe use of routes, staff leadership, pupil behaviour, accounting for pupils, staff and visitors, arrangements for people requiring assistance, communication and any other objective identified by the fire risk assessment. Weaknesses will result in recorded actions and follow-up.

Whether advance notice of a drill is given will be determined by the objective and risk assessment for that drill. Surprise drills will not be used where advance planning or notification is necessary to protect pupils or others, including individuals with SEND, medical needs or PEEPs.

12. Arrangements for disabled people and others requiring assistance

The fire risk assessment and emergency plan will take account of any pupil, member of staff, volunteer, contractor or visitor who may require assistance to recognise the alarm or evacuate safely, whether because of a permanent or temporary physical, sensory, cognitive, communication, medical or other impairment.

Where an individual regularly uses the premises and may require assistance, the School will prepare a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) in consultation with the individual and, for a pupil, their parents or carers where appropriate. The PEEP will identify the warning method, safe route, any equipment, assistance required, trained staff and suitable back-up arrangements, and will be reviewed when needs or premises change. Generic arrangements will be available for visitors whose needs are not known in advance. The School's arrangements will not rely on the Fire and Rescue Service to make evacuation possible.

13. Action on discovering a fire

1. Raise the alarm immediately using the nearest fire-alarm call point or other designated method.
2. Call 999, or ensure that the designated person does so without delay.
3. Warn and assist pupils or others in immediate danger only where this can be done without placing yourself at risk.
4. Leave the building by the nearest safe route, closing doors behind you where this can be done immediately and without delaying escape.
5. Do not attempt to investigate the fire and do not re-enter the building.

14. Action on hearing the fire alarm

1. Evacuate immediately by the nearest safe exit. Do not stop to collect belongings.
2. Staff supervising pupils must lead them calmly and promptly to the designated assembly point and take account of any individual evacuation arrangements.
3. Close doors behind you where this can be done immediately and safely. Do not delay evacuation to close windows, switch off lights or equipment, or investigate the source of the alarm.
4. The designated person will call 999 without delay where fire or smoke is seen or reported, or where the cause of the alarm cannot safely and immediately be confirmed as false.
5. No person may re-enter the building until the Fire and Rescue Service, or the person formally controlling the incident where the alarm is confirmed false, has given the all-clear.

15. Assembly, roll call and missing persons

At the assembly point, current attendance information will be used to account promptly for pupils, staff, volunteers, visitors, contractors and other users of the premises. Class teachers and other responsible adults must keep pupils together and report the result of their roll call to the person coordinating the evacuation.

Any person unaccounted for must be reported immediately to the person coordinating the evacuation, who will pass that information to the Fire and Rescue Service. No member of staff, pupil or visitor may re-enter a building to search for a missing person. Out-of-hours activities and hirers must maintain attendance information adequate for the same purpose.

16. Firefighting

Evacuation and life safety take priority over firefighting. No member of staff is required to fight a fire. Portable firefighting equipment may be used only by a person who has received suitable training, only on a small fire where it is safe to do so, and only where a clear escape route remains available. If there is any doubt, the person must withdraw and evacuate.

17. Visitors, contractors, events and lettings

Visitors and contractors will be provided with fire-safety information appropriate to the nature and duration of their visit. Staff hosting visitors are responsible for ensuring that they understand the relevant evacuation arrangements. Contractors must report any work that may affect fire precautions or introduce significant fire risk before work begins.

Public events and other non-routine or out-of-hours uses will be subject to an appropriate assessment addressing expected occupancy, escape routes and exits, supervision, people requiring assistance, alarm arrangements, fire precautions, attendance / accounting and emergency arrangements.

Before premises are hired or transferred for use, the School will provide relevant fire-safety information and agree the respective responsibilities for fire precautions, attendance and accounting, emergency arrangements and reporting of defects or incidents. The School and any other Responsible Person or dutyholder will co-operate and co-ordinate their fire-safety measures. Hirers must comply with the School's emergency arrangements unless an agreed alternative has been assessed as suitable.

18. Lone working and out-of-hours occupation

Lone working may take place only in accordance with the School's Lone Working arrangements and current risk assessments. Any person authorised to work alone must sign in and out, have a reliable means of raising the alarm and contacting the emergency services, know the available escape routes and emergency procedures, and must not undertake an activity or work in an area where the relevant risk assessment requires additional persons or supervision.

19. Security incidents, bomb threats and suspicious items

Bomb threats, suspicious items and other security incidents are managed under the School's current Security and Emergency Response procedures rather than automatically under the fire-evacuation procedure. The appropriate response may involve evacuation, shelter / invacuation or lockdown depending on the nature and location of the threat.

Staff must follow the School's current security plan, DfE security guidance and police / emergency-service instructions. Staff must not assume that the fire alarm, fire assembly point or normal fire route is appropriate to a security incident.

20. Fire prevention and arson

Deliberate ignition and arson are considered within the fire risk assessment and the School's security arrangements. Controls include proportionate site security, secure storage of flammable and combustible

materials, good housekeeping, prompt removal of waste, suitable positioning and management of external waste containers, reporting of suspicious activity and review of controls after any incident or relevant local intelligence.

21. Early Years Foundation Stage

This policy applies fully to the EYFS. The School will meet the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the current EYFS statutory framework, including maintaining an emergency evacuation procedure and appropriate working fire-detection and control equipment. Fire exits will be clearly identifiable, fire doors will be free from obstruction and capable of being opened easily from inside, and children will be supervised and supported during evacuation in accordance with their age and needs.

22. Records and evidence

The Bursar / Fire Safety Manager will maintain fire-safety records sufficient to demonstrate that the School's arrangements are effectively implemented. Records will include, as applicable:

- completed fire risk assessment in full and every review;
- identity of any person or organisation engaged to undertake or review the fire risk assessment;
- recorded fire-safety arrangements and emergency plan;
- details of other Responsible Persons or relevant dutyholders identified for the premises and records of co-operation and co-ordination;
- inspection, testing and maintenance records, including defects, remedial actions and completion dates;
- false alarms, fires and relevant near misses;
- staff and Fire Marshal training;
- fire drills, observations, lessons and resulting actions;
- PEEPs and other assisted-evacuation arrangements, with access appropriately restricted;
- relevant contractor certificates and reports; and
- fire-safety information provided to any incoming Responsible Person where applicable.

Emergency contact information for pupils and staff is maintained under the School's pupil-information, HR and data-protection arrangements and is available to authorised personnel where required in an emergency. Any health information is accessed and shared only where necessary and in accordance with the School's data-protection arrangements.

23. Monitoring, action tracking and Proprietor oversight

Fire-safety actions arising from risk assessments, drills, tests, maintenance visits, inspections, incidents or staff reports will be entered on an action log showing the action required, responsible person, priority, target date and completion evidence. Significant or overdue actions will be escalated to the Proprietors.

The Proprietors will review fire-safety arrangements formally at least annually and will receive sufficient information to satisfy themselves that the fire risk assessment is current, statutory records are maintained, significant actions are addressed, drills and training take place, and the policy is effectively implemented. This review will be recorded.

The policy will be reviewed no later than one year from approval and sooner if required by changes in law or guidance, a significant change to the premises or activities, a fire or serious near miss, an identified weakness, or the findings of the fire risk assessment, Fire and Rescue Service, external adviser or inspectorate.

24. Current principal external guidance

This policy has been reviewed with reference to: DfE Independent school standards guidance (April 2026); Home Office Fire safety risk assessment: educational premises; Home Office guidance on fire-safety responsibilities under section 156 of the Building Safety Act 2022; Home Office guidance on means of escape for disabled people; the EYFS statutory framework for group and school-based providers in force from 1 September 2026; DfE School and college security guidance updated July 2026; and HSE guidance on DSEAR 2002.

APPENDIX 1 - FIRE PREVENTION CHECKLIST

This checklist supports, but does not replace, the current fire risk assessment or the School's detailed inspection and maintenance schedules.

Check	Expected position
Escape routes and exits	Clear, usable, appropriately signed and capable of being opened as required.
Fire doors	Not wedged open; self-closing and other safety features functioning; defects reported.
Alarm / detection	Weekly test completed and recorded; faults escalated promptly.
Emergency lighting	Checks and maintenance completed in accordance with the documented schedule.
Firefighting equipment	Accessible, correctly located, apparently serviceable and within competent-person maintenance programme.
Electrical safety	Damaged plugs, leads, equipment or overloaded arrangements removed from use and reported.
Combustibles / waste	Unnecessary build-up avoided; external waste managed away from buildings where practicable.
Flammables / dangerous substances	Stored and used in accordance with DSEAR / COSHH controls and risk assessments.
Contractor work	Fire risks, isolations and hot work controlled and coordinated.
PEEPs / assisted evacuation	Current arrangements available to those who need to implement them; changes reported.
Visitors / events / hirers	Attendance and emergency arrangements adequate for the activity.
Records / actions	Tests, drills, defects and remedial actions entered promptly and closed out.

APPENDIX 2 - EMERGENCY EVACUATION SUMMARY

These instructions should be read together with the site-specific fire action notices displayed around the School.

If you discover fire or smoke

- Raise the alarm immediately.
- Call 999 or ensure that the designated person does so.
- Evacuate by the nearest safe route.
- Close doors behind you if this can be done without delay.
- Do not stop to investigate, collect belongings or fight the fire unless specifically trained and it is safe to do so.
- Do not re-enter.

If you hear the fire alarm

- Evacuate immediately by the nearest safe route.
- Staff lead pupils calmly to the designated assembly point and implement any PEEP or assisted-evacuation arrangements.
- Do not delay to close windows, turn off lights or collect belongings.
- Report to the assembly point and remain with your group.
- Report anyone unaccounted for immediately.
- Do not re-enter until formally authorised.

At the assembly point

- Class teachers / responsible adults account for pupils and report to the evacuation coordinator.
- Staff, visitors, contractors and other users are accounted for using current attendance information.
- The evacuation coordinator tells the Fire and Rescue Service immediately if anyone is unaccounted for.
- No person re-enters to search for a missing person.