



Fire Safety Policy and Procedures

Education Plus NE Ltd

Reviewed:	Reviewed By – Name:	Signature:
September 2026	John Southeran / Harvey Wake	J Southeran / H Wake
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1. Introduction

The health, safety and welfare of everyone who works, learns and visits Education Plus is of fundamental importance. Fire is one of the few risks in our settings that can cause multiple serious injuries or fatalities in a matter of minutes, and one where the outcome depends almost entirely on the preparation done beforehand. This policy sets out how Education Plus NE Ltd prevents fire, how it maintains the systems that give early warning and safe escape, and exactly what every person is expected to do when the alarm sounds.

It is written for a specific context. Education Plus provides alternative provision for KS3 and KS4 students with social and emotional needs, many of whom have disengaged from mainstream education. Our students are all under 18. Some are neurodiverse, some have additional learning needs, and some may respond to an alarm or an evacuation in ways that a mainstream setting would not have to plan for. Our procedures are therefore built around small groups, high staff ratios, individual knowledge of each student, and staff who are trained to lead rather than simply instruct.

This policy operates in partnership with our other relevant documentation, including:

- Health and Safety Policy
- Site fire risk assessments (one for every premises we occupy)
- Site general risk assessments and off-site activity risk assessments
- Fire evacuation plans for each site and hired venue
- Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs)
- Behaviour Management Policy
- Physical Intervention and Restraint Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Medical Policy
- Smoking Policy
- Attendance Policy (student registers)
- Educational Visits arrangements
- Critical Incident and Business Continuity arrangements
- Staff Training / CPD programme

2. Aim of the policy

The aim of this policy is that no person is harmed by fire at any premises used by Education Plus, and that if a fire does occur everyone leaves the building quickly, calmly and accounted for.

To achieve that, Education Plus will, so far as is reasonably practicable:

- identify and remove or control the sources of ignition and the fuel that could start or feed a fire
- maintain fire detection, warning, emergency lighting and firefighting equipment in efficient working order
- keep means of escape available, unobstructed and usable by every occupant, including those who need assistance
- ensure every member of staff knows what to do on discovering a fire and on hearing the alarm, and has practised it

- ensure every student is told what to do, in a way they understand, before they are ever expected to do it
- record and review a suitable and sufficient fire risk assessment for every premises we occupy
- record our fire safety arrangements, so that how fire safety is managed can be evidenced at any time
- learn from every fire, false alarm, near miss and drill, and act on what we learn

3. Scope

This policy applies to all Education Plus NE Ltd staff, students, visitors, contractors and volunteers, at all premises we occupy or use, and to all off-site activities. It covers three types of premises, and the arrangements differ for each.

3.1 Premises we occupy

Site	Address	Type of premises
Durham Nurture Provision	Unit 8, St Johns Road, Meadowfield Industrial Estate, Durham, DH7 8TZ	Leased unit
Durham School's Provision	Unit 11, City West Business Park, Saint Johns Road, Meadowfield, Durham, DH7 8ER	Leased unit
Dedicated Woodlands Centre	Pandora House, Redworth Road, Shildon, Durham, DL4 2JT	Education Plus Premises
Middlesbrough School's Provision	Middlesbrough Scout Headquarters, 48 Tollesby Road, Middlesbrough, TS5 7PJ	Shared premises
Washington Hub	Washington Football Hub, Northern Area Playing Fields, Stephenson Road, Washington, Sunderland, NE37 3HR	Shared premises – operated by Leisure United Trust

Education Plus holds a recorded fire risk assessment and a fire evacuation plan for every site listed above. Where a building is leased or shared, we co-operate and co-ordinate with the landlord, the site operator and any other occupier, as required by Article 22 of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. Responsibility for the building itself, however, is not the same at every site, and staff need to be clear which applies where they work.

Sites where Education Plus manages the building. At the Durham Nurture Provision (Unit 8), the Durham School's Provision (Unit 11) and the Dedicated Woodlands Centre (Pandora House), Education Plus is responsible for the fire safety of the premises as a whole. That includes the fire detection and alarm system, emergency lighting, firefighting equipment, fire doors, escape routes and signage, together with all the testing, inspection, servicing and record keeping set out at section 10 and Appendix A. A fire log book is held at each of these sites and the full testing regime applies, subject to any obligation the landlord holds under the lease, in which case we obtain and file their certificates.

Sites operated by another organisation. At the Middlesbrough School's Provision (Middlesbrough Scout Headquarters) and Washington Hub (operated by Leisure United Trust), the site operator is the Responsible Person for the building and manages fire safety for the premises as a whole. They are responsible for the fire risk assessment of the building, the fire detection and alarm system, emergency lighting, firefighting equipment, fire doors, escape routes and signage, and for testing, servicing and maintaining all of it. Education Plus does not test or maintain those systems and does not keep a testing regime for them; the weekly alarm test, monthly checks and servicing intervals at section 10 and Appendix A do not apply to us at these sites.

What Education Plus remains responsible for at those sites. Our duties as an employer and as the provider caring for the students do not transfer to the site operator. At Middlesbrough and Washington Hub we remain responsible for: fire safety within the areas we use during our session times, including housekeeping, the control of ignition sources and keeping escape routes clear; a fire risk assessment covering our own activities in those areas; the site fire evacuation plan; briefing staff and students on the alarm, exits and assembly point; staff training; PEEPs; taking the register, carrying out the roll call and accounting for our group; and reporting every fire, alarm activation, defect and near miss both to the site operator and through section 15 of this policy. We obtain the operator's fire risk assessment, evacuation arrangements and current service records, hold them on file, and treat any refusal or failure to provide them as an outstanding action escalated to the Directors under section 18.

3.2 Venues we hire

Sports halls, astro turf pitches, leisure centres and community venues booked for sessions. The venue is responsible for its own fire precautions. Education Plus remains responsible for its staff and students within that venue, and applies the arrangements in section 17 of this policy.

3.3 Off-site activities

Educational visits, work experience placements, outdoor activity and travel between sites. Fire and emergency arrangements form part of the visit risk assessment.

4. Legal framework

The principal legislation is the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 ("the Fire Safety Order"), as amended by the Fire Safety Act 2021 and by section 156 of the Building Safety Act 2022. Since 1 October 2023 every Responsible Person must record their fire risk assessment in full and record their fire safety arrangements, regardless of the size of the organisation or the premises. This policy, together with the site fire risk assessments and evacuation plans, forms the recorded fire safety arrangements for Education Plus.

The following also apply or inform our practice:

- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (as amended)
- Fire Safety Act 2021 and Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022
- Building Safety Act 2022, section 156
- Dangerous Substances and Explosive Atmospheres Regulations 2002 (DSEAR)
- Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR)
- Electricity at Work Regulations 1989 and BS 7671
- The Equality Act 2010, in respect of evacuation of disabled occupants
- HM Government guidance: Fire Safety Risk Assessment – Educational Premises
- DfE Building Bulletin 100 and the DfE Technical Manual – Employer's Requirements (January 2026)
- PAS 79-1:2020 Fire risk assessment – premises other than housing
- BS 5839-1 fire detection and alarm systems
- BS 5266-1 and BS EN 50172 emergency lighting

- BS 5306-3 and BS 5306-8 portable fire extinguishers
- BS 8214 fire door assemblies, and BS 9999 fire safety in the design and management of buildings

5. Roles and responsibilities

5.1 The Responsible Person

The Directors of Education Plus NE Ltd are the Responsible Person under the Fire Safety Order for the premises we occupy. The Directors named as Responsible Person in the current site fire risk assessments are John Southeran and Kevin Wake. The duty cannot be delegated: where a task is carried out by a manager, a contractor or an external assessor, the Directors remain accountable for its adequacy.

The Directors will:

- ensure a suitable and sufficient fire risk assessment is carried out and recorded for every premises, by a competent person, and reviewed at least annually
- ensure the fire safety arrangements are recorded and kept up to date
- allocate the funding and time needed to complete fire safety actions within the timescales set in the assessment
- appoint competent persons and contractors, and satisfy themselves of that competence
- receive a termly fire safety compliance report and review fire safety at least annually
- ensure co-operation and co-ordination with landlords, host venues and any other Responsible Person sharing the premises
- ensure the enforcing authority is given access, information and the fire risk assessment on request
- authorise re-entry to a building after a fire, and lead the response to any serious incident

5.2 Property and Compliance Manager

The Property and Compliance Manager (Harvey Wake) manages fire safety day to day on behalf of the Directors, and is the single point of contact for all fire safety matters across the organisation. The role will:

- carry out and review the fire risk assessments, or commission them where specialist input is needed
- maintain the action plan arising from each assessment and report progress to the Directors
- set up and monitor the testing and inspection schedule at Appendix A, and check the fire log books
- arrange servicing and maintenance contracts for alarms, emergency lighting and extinguishers, and hold the certificates
- arrange fire safety training and keep the training record
- plan and monitor fire drills, and record the outcome and any lessons
- investigate every fire, false alarm, defect and near miss reported, and close it out
- carry out a termly documented fire safety audit of each site
- obtain and hold fire safety information from landlords and hired venues
- liaise with the fire and rescue service, insurers and enforcing authorities

5.3 Head of Site

The Head of Site (or the most senior member of staff present) is responsible for fire safety in the building on any given day. The role will:

- ensure the daily escape route and fire door check is completed before students arrive
- ensure the weekly alarm test takes place and is recorded
- take charge of an evacuation until relieved by the fire and rescue service, and act as the person the fire service is directed to
- ensure the register is taken to the assembly point and a roll call completed
- ensure new staff, students, visitors and contractors are briefed on fire procedures on arrival
- report defects and incidents to the Property and Compliance Manager without delay
- ensure PEEPs are in place and understood by the staff who will implement them

5.4 Fire Marshals

Every site has nominated Fire Marshals, with enough marshals to cover every part of the building and enough cover for absence, so that at least one trained marshal is on site whenever students are present. Fire Marshals are trained and their names are displayed on the site noticeboard. Their duties are set out in full at section 11.4.

5.5 All staff

Every member of staff, including agency, supply and volunteer staff, must:

- know the location of the nearest call point, the escape routes from wherever they are working, and the assembly point
- complete fire safety induction before working unsupervised with students, and annual refresher training
- raise the alarm immediately on discovering a fire or suspected fire, without waiting to confirm it
- evacuate students promptly and calmly by the nearest available exit and remain with their group at the assembly point
- never wedge, prop or disable a fire door, and never obstruct an escape route, exit or extinguisher
- report any fire safety defect the same day – a damaged door, a blocked exit, a missing extinguisher, an alarm fault, a damaged socket or lead
- follow the arrangements for any student with a PEEP whom they supervise
- not attempt to fight a fire unless trained, the fire is small, they have a clear escape route behind them and students are already leaving

5.6 Students

Students are told what to do in a fire at induction, at the start of every term and before any activity in an unfamiliar building. The briefing is short, concrete and repeated: what the alarm sounds like, which door to use, where to stand outside, and that they must stay with staff. Students are expected to leave immediately when told and to remain at the assembly point until staff say otherwise. Fire safety, including the risks of vapes, aerosols, lighters and lithium batteries, is covered in the curriculum where opportunities arise.

5.7 Visitors, contractors and volunteers

All visitors sign in at reception and are given the fire procedure, including the exits and the assembly point, as part of the sign-in. Visitors are escorted or supervised at all times and are the responsibility of the member of staff they are visiting during an evacuation. Contractors report to the Head of Site before any work starts and before each subsequent working session; arrangements for contractors and hot works are at section 8.8.

5.8 Landlords, host schools and hired venues

Where we occupy a leased or shared building, the landlord or managing agent is responsible for the structure, the common parts and, in most cases, the fixed fire safety systems. Education Plus will obtain from them, and hold on file, the fire risk assessment for the common parts, the alarm and emergency lighting service records where they maintain them, the asbestos information, and the arrangements for co-operation in an evacuation. Where a venue is hired, section 17 applies.

6. Fire risk assessment

A recorded fire risk assessment is held for every premises Education Plus occupies. Assessments follow the format of PAS 79-1:2020 and are carried out by a competent person – currently the Property and Compliance Manager, who holds the Level 4 ABBE Diploma in Fire Risk Assessment, the NEBOSH National General Certificate and Associate membership of the Institution of Fire Engineers. Where a building presents a hazard outside that competence, an external specialist is commissioned.

6.1 What the assessment covers

- the premises, its construction, layout, occupancy and use
- the people at risk, including students with additional needs, young employees and anyone who would need help to escape
- sources of ignition and sources of fuel, and the controls applied to each
- the fire detection and warning system, its category and its coverage
- means of escape, travel distances, final exits, signage and emergency lighting
- fire doors, compartmentation and measures limiting fire spread
- firefighting equipment and access for the fire and rescue service
- the management of fire safety – training, drills, testing, record keeping and PEEPs
- an action plan, with each action given a priority and a timescale

6.2 When it is reviewed

Each assessment is reviewed at least every 12 months by the Property and Compliance Manager. It is reviewed sooner, and before the work or change takes effect wherever possible, if any of the following occur:

- a change to the building – alterations, refurbishment, a new partition, a change of layout or a change to escape routes
- a change in what the building is used for, or a significant increase in the number of occupants
- the introduction of a new activity, process or piece of equipment – for example new workshop machinery or cooking activity
- the admission of a student or the appointment of a member of staff who would need assistance to escape
- a fire, a near miss, a pattern of false alarms, or a drill that did not go to plan

- new legislation, new guidance or a recommendation from the fire and rescue service or an insurer
- any reason to believe the assessment is no longer valid

The reviewed assessment records who instructed it, who carried it out and the date. Superseded versions are retained. Actions are logged, given an owner and a date, and tracked to completion by the Property and Compliance Manager; progress is reported to the Directors termly and any action rated as high priority is escalated to a Director immediately.

7. Recorded fire safety arrangements

Section 156 of the Building Safety Act 2022 requires the fire safety arrangements to be recorded – that is, a written account of how fire safety is actually managed. For Education Plus those arrangements are this policy, together with, for each site: the fire risk assessment; the fire evacuation plan; the site fire log book; the PEEPs in force; the training record; the drill records; and the service and test certificates. These are held by the Property and Compliance Manager at Head Office, with the current fire risk assessment, evacuation plan and log book also held on site. Any of these documents will be produced to an inspector on request.

8. Preventing fire

Fire needs ignition, fuel and oxygen. Everything in this section is about removing or separating the first two. Prevention is a daily habit rather than an annual task, and every member of staff contributes to it.

8.1 Electrical safety

- The fixed electrical installation is inspected and tested by a competent electrician at least every five years, or as specified in the previous report; the certificate is held at Head Office.
- Portable appliances are tested annually. Any item that fails is removed from use the same day, labelled and either repaired or disposed of.
- Staff carry out a visual check of leads, plugs and sockets in their area as part of the daily walk round. Damaged or scorched items are unplugged, labelled “do not use” and reported immediately.
- Trailing leads and adapter blocks are minimised. Where they are unavoidable, a fused extension lead is used – never an unfused block adapter, and never one extension plugged into another.
- Personal electrical items brought in by staff or students are not used until PAT tested.
- Equipment is switched off and unplugged at the end of the day, other than items designed to run continuously such as fridges, alarm panels and servers.
- Heaters are not used unless authorised; where authorised they must be thermostatically controlled, positioned clear of anything combustible and never used to dry clothing.

8.2 Lithium-ion batteries, vapes and chargers

Lithium-ion batteries are one of the fastest growing causes of fire in education settings, and are a particular consideration for us because vapes and e-cigarettes are commonly carried by the students we work with. A lithium battery fire develops very quickly, produces toxic smoke and cannot be put out with a standard extinguisher.

- Charging of e-scooters, e-bikes and their batteries is not permitted anywhere on Education Plus premises.
- Charging of any other lithium battery device is only permitted in a designated, supervised area, away from escape routes and never overnight.
- Only the manufacturer's charger is used. Damaged, swollen, punctured or water-damaged batteries are never charged.
- Confiscated vapes, e-cigarettes and batteries are stored in a lidded metal container, kept in an agreed location away from escape routes and student areas, and returned or disposed of promptly rather than accumulated.
- Batteries and vapes are never put in general waste bins; they are disposed of through a battery recycling point.
- If a battery is hot, hissing, swelling or venting, staff evacuate the area immediately, raise the alarm and call 999. No attempt is made to move or extinguish it.

8.3 Cooking and kitchens

- Cooking takes place only in the kitchen areas, under staff supervision, and never when the room is unattended.
- Hobs, ovens, grills, microwaves and extraction are kept clean and free of grease build-up; grease is the most common cause of kitchen fire spread.
- A fire blanket is provided in each kitchen and staff know where it is and how to use it. Water is never applied to a fat or oil fire.
- Deep-fat frying is not permitted.
- Appliances are switched off at the end of every session and the room checked before it is left.
- Tea towels, packaging, paper and cloths are kept away from hobs and toasters.

8.4 Workshop, technology and practical activity

- Practical work takes place in the designated workshop under direct staff supervision, in small groups of two to three students at a time.
- Dust from drilling, sanding and cutting is swept down after every session and is not allowed to accumulate on surfaces, ledges, heaters or light fittings.
- Extraction is used where provided; eye protection and, where appropriate, respiratory protection are worn.
- Off-cuts, shavings and combustible waste are removed to the external bins at the end of the session and not stored in the workshop.
- Tools are counted out and counted back in; damaged tools are taken out of use.
- Flammable adhesives, finishes and aerosols are held in the smallest practicable quantity, kept in a metal cupboard, and used only with staff supervision and ventilation.
- An extinguisher suitable for the risk is kept in the workshop and its access is never obstructed.

8.5 Smoking and vaping

Smoking and vaping are prohibited inside all Education Plus premises and are not permitted by staff or students during the working day. Lighters, matches and aerosols brought onto site by students are removed and stored securely. Any evidence of smoking or vaping inside a building – discarded material, burn marks, the smell of smoke, a triggered detector – is treated as a fire

safety incident, reported under section 15 and investigated, because it usually indicates a hidden location where a fire could start unseen.

8.6 Housekeeping, storage and displays

- Escape routes, corridors, stairs, lobbies and final exits are kept completely clear – nothing is stored in them, even temporarily.
- Storage is kept tidy and away from heaters, distribution boards, sockets and ignition sources; combustible storage is limited to what is needed.
- Waste is removed daily to the external bins, which are kept away from the building and, where possible, secured.
- Displays of student work are limited on escape routes and are not applied to fire doors, over signage, over call points or over extinguishers.
- Nothing is stored under stairs or in cupboards housing electrical intake, alarm or IT equipment.
- Deliveries and packaging are broken down and removed the same day rather than left in circulation areas.

8.7 Arson and security

Arson is the most common cause of fire in education premises. Entrances are controlled to prevent unauthorised access. Bins and combustible materials are kept away from the building. Staff challenge or report unfamiliar people on site – without putting themselves at risk, and having first moved students to a place of safety. Damage, graffiti, evidence of tampering with fire equipment or signs of unauthorised access out of hours are reported to the Head of Site and the Property and Compliance Manager the same day, and to the police where appropriate.

8.8 Contractors and hot works

Contractors are a significant source of fire risk in occupied buildings, particularly where heat is used.

- All contractors report to the Head of Site before work starts and before each subsequent working session, and sign in and out.
- The Head of Site briefs them on the alarm, the escape routes, the assembly point and any temporary restriction, and obtains their method statement and risk assessment beforehand.
- Where work will affect the alarm, detection, emergency lighting, escape routes or fire doors, it must be agreed with the Property and Compliance Manager in advance; any temporary disabling of detection is recorded, communicated to all staff, covered by an alternative arrangement such as a manual watch, and restored the same day.
- Hot works – welding, cutting, grinding, soldering, brazing, blowtorch or hot air work – require a written hot work permit issued by the Property and Compliance Manager, valid for a defined area and time.
- A hot work permit requires: the area cleared of combustibles within at least three metres or protected by fire blankets; an extinguisher immediately to hand; the detection considered; work stopped at least one hour before the building is vacated; and a fire watch of the area for at least one hour after the work stops, with a final check recorded on the permit.
- Hot works are not carried out while students are in the affected part of the building wherever it can be avoided.

9. Fire detection, warning and escape provision

9.1 Fire detection and alarm

Each site is fitted with a fire detection and alarm system designed and maintained to BS 5839-1, with manual call points on escape routes and at final exits, and automatic detection appropriate to the building. The alarm signal is a single continuous evacuation signal at every site: there is no phased or staged evacuation, and there is no "investigate first" stage – when the alarm sounds, the building is emptied. Where a site has occupants with a hearing impairment, visual alarm devices or a personal vibrating device are provided.

A zone plan is displayed adjacent to the alarm panel at each site so that staff and the fire service can identify the area in alarm immediately.

9.2 Emergency lighting

Emergency escape lighting to BS 5266-1 covers escape routes, stairs, final exits, changes of level, the alarm panel and the external route to the assembly point. Lighting on the external route matters as much as internal lighting during winter months and is checked before the clocks change.

9.3 Firefighting equipment

Portable extinguishers are provided and sited in accordance with BS 5306-8: water or foam on escape routes for general risks, CO₂ near electrical equipment, and fire blankets in kitchens. Each is wall-mounted on a bracket or floor stand, signed, unobstructed and identified by an ID sign above it. Staff are trained in what each type is for and, more importantly, when not to use one. Nobody is expected to fight a fire. Evacuation always takes priority over firefighting.

9.4 Fire doors and compartmentation

Fire doors are the single most commonly defeated fire precaution in education buildings, usually by being wedged open for convenience or for ventilation. A wedged fire door has no function at all. Fire doors must never be held open by a wedge, a bin, a chair, a fire extinguisher or any other object. Where a door genuinely needs to stand open for operational reasons, an approved hold-open device linked to the fire alarm must be fitted, so that the door closes automatically when the alarm operates. Any breach of compartmentation – a hole cut for a cable, a damaged wall or ceiling, a missing ceiling tile – is reported and made good promptly.

9.5 Escape routes, exits and signage

- Every part of the building has access to a route leading to a final exit and a place of total safety.
- Escape routes and exits are checked every morning before students arrive, and again before the building is locked.
- Final exit doors are openable immediately from the inside by a single action, without a key, wherever this is achievable.
- Where an entrance must be locked during the day for safeguarding – to prevent a student leaving the site unsupervised – the arrangement is recorded in the fire risk assessment, every member of staff on duty carries a key at all times, and the unlocking arrangement is tested and timed at every fire drill. Where practicable, a thumb-turn or an alarmed green break-glass release is fitted so that escape does not depend on someone finding a key.
- Escape route signage complies with BS 5499 and is visible from every point on the route, including at changes of direction.
- Fire action notices are displayed at every call point and at reception, and state clearly what to do, how to raise the alarm, and where the assembly point is by name.

10. Testing, inspection and maintenance

Fire safety equipment only works if it is maintained, and maintenance only counts if it is recorded. Every test and check below is entered in the site fire log book at the time it is done, with the date, the result and the name of the person who did it. A missed test is itself a defect and is reported.

10.1 Weekly fire alarm test – the detailed procedure

The weekly test is carried out on the same day and at the same time each week, so that occupants recognise it and are not misled by it. It is carried out by the Head of Site or a nominated member of staff.

1. Announce the test to everyone in the building beforehand, so that nobody evacuates unnecessarily and nobody assumes a real alarm is a test.
2. Use a different manual call point each week, working through the call points in rotation, so that every device is proved over time. Record which one was used.
3. Operate the call point with the test key. Confirm the alarm sounds throughout the building and that any visual alarm devices operate.
4. Check the panel identifies the correct zone and device.
5. Silence and reset the panel, reset the call point, and confirm the panel returns to normal with no fault.
6. Record in the fire log book: date, time, call point tested, sounders operated correctly, panel reset, and the name of the tester.
7. If the alarm does not operate, or a device or zone fails, or the panel will not reset, report it immediately as a defect under section 15 and inform the Property and Compliance Manager the same day. If the system is out of service, the building must not be occupied until a manual alternative – a continuous fire watch and a means of raising the alarm such as a hand bell or air horn, with staff briefed – is put in place and the Directors have agreed it.
8. The test should last no longer than necessary; anyone who cannot hear it should report that, as it may indicate a sounder fault or an area of poor audibility.

10.2 Emergency lighting

- Monthly: a short functional test of every luminaire and exit sign, using the test key or test switch, confirming each lamp illuminates and then recharges. Failures are recorded and replaced.
- Annually: a full rated duration test – normally three hours – carried out by a competent contractor, with a certificate issued. This is scheduled during a holiday period so that the building is not left without emergency lighting while occupied.

10.3 Fire extinguishers

- Monthly: a visual check by site staff – correct position, correct sign, seal and pin intact, gauge in the green, no damage or corrosion, access clear. Recorded in the log book.
- Annually: a basic service by a competent, third-party accredited engineer, with each unit labelled and a certificate issued.
- Extended service and overhaul intervals are followed as specified in BS 5306-3 for the extinguisher type.
- Any extinguisher that has been discharged, tampered with or damaged is taken out of use and replaced immediately, not at the next service.

10.4 Fire doors and escape routes

- Daily: escape routes, corridors, stairs and final exits checked clear and exits openable, before students arrive.
- Weekly: final exit doors physically opened to confirm they operate, and external routes checked clear.
- Quarterly: a recorded fire door inspection of every fire door – gaps at head and sides (nominally 3–4 mm), threshold gap, intumescent strips and smoke seals intact, self-closer closing the door fully onto the latch from any angle, hinges secure with all screws present, glazing and beading sound, correct signage, no wedges, no damage.
- Any door that fails is reported the same day; a door that will not close onto the latch is a priority defect.

10.5 Servicing by contractors

- Fire alarm and detection system: serviced and inspected by a competent contractor at the frequency recommended in BS 5839-1 for the system, and at least annually; certificates held at Head Office.
- Emergency lighting: annual duration test and service.
- Fire extinguishers: annual service.
- Fixed electrical installation: periodic inspection and test at least every five years.
- Portable appliances: annual test.
- Any suppression, ventilation, hold-open device or other fire safety system installed at a site: maintained to the relevant standard and recorded.
- Where the landlord holds the maintenance obligation, the Property and Compliance Manager obtains a copy of the current certificate and files it; an unobtainable certificate is treated as a defect and escalated to the Directors.

The full schedule, showing the task, the frequency, the person responsible and where it is recorded, is at Appendix A.

11. Evacuation strategy

Every Education Plus site operates a simultaneous evacuation strategy: when the alarm sounds, everybody leaves the building immediately by the nearest available exit and goes to the assembly point. There is no delay to investigate, no collecting of bags, coats or phones, and no returning for anything. Each site has a written fire evacuation plan setting out its exits, assembly point, sweep responsibilities and any site-specific arrangement; the plan is displayed and forms part of staff induction.

11.1 On discovering a fire

1. Raise the alarm immediately by operating the nearest manual call point. Do this first, before anything else, and do not wait to confirm that the fire is real.
2. Do not tackle the fire unless you are trained, the fire is very small, you have a clear escape route behind you, students are already leaving and you are not alone. If in any doubt, leave.
3. Leave the room, closing the door behind you to slow the spread of fire and smoke. Close doors as you go.
4. Leave the building by the nearest available exit, taking your group with you, and go to the assembly point.

5. Report what you saw – the exact location, what was burning and how big it was – to the Head of Site at the assembly point immediately, so that it can be passed to the fire service.

11.2 On hearing the alarm – all staff

1. Stop what you are doing at once and instruct your group to leave. Use short, clear, calm instructions.
2. Take the register or class list if it is immediately to hand – never delay the evacuation to look for it. Attendance is confirmed from the daily register at the assembly point.
3. Lead your group out by the nearest available exit, walking, not running, and do not use any route that is affected by smoke.
4. Close windows and doors behind you if it is safe and takes no time; do not go back for this.
5. Take charge of any visitor or contractor with you.
6. Check the area you are responsible for as you leave – including toilets, small rooms and quiet spaces – if you can do so without delaying your group, otherwise leave it to the Fire Marshal sweep.
7. Go directly to the assembly point, keep your group together, and report to the Head of Site.
8. Never re-enter the building for any reason – including for a phone, a bag, a vape, a coat or a pet – until the fire and rescue service or a Director has confirmed it is safe.

11.3 Calling the fire and rescue service

999 is called on every occasion the alarm operates and a fire is suspected, and on every occasion where the cause is unknown. It is far better to call and stand a crew down than to delay. The call is made by the person nominated in the site evacuation plan – normally reception or the Head of Site – from a mobile phone outside the building, and is not delegated to a student.

The caller states: the full address of the site including the postcode and the business park or building name; the what3words location where one is recorded for the site; what is on fire and where in the building; whether anyone is missing or trapped, and their likely location; the number of people evacuated; and that the occupants include children under 18. The caller stays on the line until told to hang up, then reports back to the Head of Site that the call has been made and what was said.

11.4 Fire Marshal duties during an evacuation

1. Put on the high-visibility marshal vest kept at your station.
2. Sweep your allocated area – including toilets, kitchens, breakout rooms, small group rooms, store cupboards and any quiet or sensory space – calling out and checking, closing doors behind you.
3. Direct people to the nearest available exit and stop anyone re-entering.
4. Note anything relevant – a door you could not open, a route affected by smoke, a room you could not check – and report it at the assembly point.
5. Do not put yourself at risk. If a route is smoke-logged, do not enter it; leave and report.
6. Report your area as “clear” or “not clear” to the Head of Site as soon as you reach the assembly point.
7. Assist any person with a PEEP as set out in that plan.

11.5 At the assembly point

1. Groups line up with their staff away from the building, clear of the access route the fire service will use, and clear of vehicle movements.
2. Each member of staff takes a roll call from the register and reports to the Head of Site: numbers present, anyone missing, and anyone who has left the site.
3. The Head of Site collates the roll call and the Fire Marshals' area reports, and forms a single picture of who is accounted for.
4. Anyone unaccounted for is reported to the fire service immediately on arrival, with their last known location. Staff do not go back in to look for them.
5. Students are supervised at all times at the assembly point, and are not permitted to leave the site.
6. A member of staff is sent to the site entrance to meet the fire and rescue service, direct them to the incident and hand over the information they need – what is on fire, who is missing, the zone in alarm and any hazard such as gas or batteries.
7. Nobody re-enters until the fire and rescue service, or a Director where the service has not attended, gives express permission.
8. If the weather makes it unsafe to remain at the assembly point, the Head of Site moves everyone to the agreed place of shelter recorded in the site evacuation plan, and tells the fire service where the group has gone.

11.6 After the evacuation

1. Students are settled, checked for injury and supported; a first aider attends anyone hurt or distressed and an ambulance is called where needed.
2. A Director is informed immediately of any fire, injury or fire service attendance.
3. Parents, carers and the referring school or local authority are informed by the Head of Site as soon as students are safe and the position is clear, and are told what happened, that their child is safe, and what is happening next.
4. Where the building cannot be reoccupied, the business continuity arrangements at section 19 apply and transport home or to an alternative site is arranged.
5. The incident is recorded and reported under section 15, and an investigation is started the same day.

12. Specific situations

12.1 A student who will not leave the building

This is a realistic possibility in our setting and staff must not be improvising when it happens. Staff use the de-escalation approach they are trained in and that the student is familiar with: calm, short instructions, one voice, no crowding, and a named member of staff the student trusts leading. Staff do not enter into negotiation and do not remain in a building that is on fire. If a student cannot be persuaded to leave, staff withdraw to a place of safety and report the student's exact location to the Head of Site and to the fire and rescue service on arrival. Physical intervention is used only in accordance with the Physical Intervention and Restraint Policy, and only where the risk of remaining plainly outweighs the risk of intervening. Where a student is known to be likely to refuse, a strategy is agreed in advance, written into their PEEP or behaviour plan and practised at drills.

12.2 A student who absconds during an evacuation

If a student leaves the assembly point and the site, staff do not pursue them into traffic or beyond the point where they are still supervising the rest of the group. The Head of Site is told immediately, the student is recorded as having left the site rather than missing in the building, and the fire service is told this explicitly so that no crew searches a building for someone who is not in it. The safeguarding procedure for a missing student then applies, and parents, carers and the referring school are contacted.

12.3 Evacuating students with additional, sensory or mobility needs

Every person who would need help to evacuate has a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan – see section 13. For students who find alarms distressing, arrangements may include familiarisation with the alarm sound, ear defenders kept ready, a named member of staff, a planned exit route away from crowding, and a defined position at the assembly point. These are agreed with the student where possible; being told what will happen before it happens is the single most effective adjustment we make.

12.4 Fire discovered out of hours or by a lone worker

A member of staff alone in the building leaves immediately, raises the alarm, calls 999 from outside and telephones the Head of Site and a Director. No check of the building is made alone. Staff working outside normal hours must inform the Head of Site in advance, know the escape routes for the part of the building they are in, and carry a mobile phone.

12.5 A fire alarm during an examination

Life safety takes priority over the examination. Candidates are evacuated with their group, and the invigilator notes the time and prevents discussion at the assembly point. The awarding body and the host school are informed afterwards in line with their contingency arrangements.

12.6 A fire outside the building or in an adjoining unit

Where our sites are in shared or terraced units, a fire next door is a fire that affects us. If a neighbouring occupier's alarm sounds, if smoke is seen or smelt from outside, or if a neighbour reports a fire, the Head of Site evacuates our building as if it were our own alarm, calls 999 and moves the group to a place of safety well clear of the affected units – not simply to the shared car park immediately outside.

12.7 Evacuation versus lockdown

Fire evacuation and lockdown are different responses to different threats and must not be confused. The fire alarm always means leave the building. Lockdown is signalled separately, as set out in the site's critical incident arrangements, and never uses the fire alarm signal. If both apply – for example a fire during a lockdown – the evacuation takes precedence and the group moves to the agreed alternative assembly point.

13. Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs)

A PEEP is prepared for any person – student, member of staff, regular visitor – who could not evacuate independently, promptly and safely. This includes mobility impairment, whether permanent or temporary such as a leg in plaster or a late-stage pregnancy; visual or hearing impairment; a medical condition affecting stamina or consciousness; and cognitive, sensory or behavioural needs that would affect the person's response to an alarm.

- The need is identified at admission, at recruitment, or as soon as the circumstances change, by the Head of Site with the Property and Compliance Manager.

- The PEEP is written with the person, and with parents or carers for a student, and records: the alarm signal they will receive; the route they will use; the assistance needed and by whom, with a named deputy for absence; any equipment; the arrangements at the assembly point; and the arrangements if the usual route is unavailable.
- The PEEP is shared with every member of staff who may implement it, kept with the site fire evacuation plan and referenced in the fire risk assessment.
- It is tested at the next drill, reviewed each term, and reviewed immediately if the person's needs, the timetable or the building changes.
- For occasional visitors, a standard Generic Emergency Evacuation Plan is explained at sign-in and the member of staff hosting them takes responsibility for their evacuation.

14. Fire drills and training

14.1 Fire drills

- A fire drill is held at each site at least once every term – three per academic year – with the first held within the first half-term autumn, once new students and staff have started.
- Drills are varied so that the same evacuation is not rehearsed every time: different times of day, different parts of the timetable, and on occasion with a nominated exit blocked so that staff and students use an alternative route.
- Drills are unannounced to students wherever it is appropriate to their needs. Where a student would be significantly distressed, a planned or staff-only drill is used and the reason recorded, with the student's own arrangements practised separately.
- The Head of Site records: the date and time, the scenario, the number of people evacuated, the time taken to evacuate and complete the roll call, whether the sweep was complete, any door, route or system that did not work, and any student or staff difficulty.
- A short debrief is held immediately afterwards with staff, and lessons are acted on. Anything that cannot be fixed on site is reported to the Property and Compliance Manager and added to the fire risk assessment action plan.
- A drill that reveals a problem is a successful drill. Staff are encouraged to report what went wrong rather than record a clean sheet.
- Drill records are held in the site fire log book and reviewed by the Property and Compliance Manager termly.

14.2 Training

Who	Training	Frequency
All staff, including agency and volunteers	Fire safety induction – alarm signal, call points, escape routes, assembly point, sweep responsibilities, PEEPs, reporting defects	Before working unsupervised with students, on day one
All staff	Fire safety refresher, including any lessons from incidents and drills	At least annually
Fire Marshals	Fire marshal / warden training	On appointment, refreshed every year
Fire Marshals and nominated staff	Practical fire extinguisher use	On appointment and periodically thereafter
Head of Site	Fire safety management, evacuation control and log book responsibilities	On appointment and annually
Property and Compliance Manager	Fire risk assessment competence and CPD	Maintained continuously

Who	Training	Frequency
Students	Fire procedure briefing – alarm, exits, assembly point, staying with staff	At induction, at the start of each term, and before using any unfamiliar building

All training is recorded on the central training matrix held by the Property and Compliance Manager, including the date, the content and the trainer. Training that has lapsed is treated as a compliance failure and is reported to the Directors.

15. Reporting procedures

Nothing in this policy matters more than reporting. Almost every serious fire is preceded by something somebody noticed and did not report. Staff are told at induction, and reminded at every refresher, that they will never be criticised for reporting something that turns out to be nothing.

15.1 What must be reported

- Any fire, however small, and however quickly it was put out – including a bin fire, a scorched socket or a fire outside the building.
- Any activation of the fire alarm, whether real, accidental or malicious.
- Any near miss – something that could have caused a fire, such as an overloaded socket, a hot appliance left on, a charger left running, or evidence of smoking or vaping inside the building.
- Any defect in a fire precaution – a fire door that will not close, a wedged door, a blocked or locked escape route, a missing or discharged extinguisher, a faulty emergency light, an alarm fault or panel fault, damaged signage, a breach in a wall or ceiling.
- Any deliberate interference with fire safety equipment.
- Any occasion when a test, check or service was missed.

15.2 How and when to report

What	Report to	When
Fire, or fire service attendance	Head of Site, then a Director and the Property and Compliance Manager	Immediately, by phone, once everyone is safe
Alarm activation or false alarm	Head of Site, then Property and Compliance Manager	Same day, and recorded in the log book
Priority defect – alarm fault, blocked or locked exit, fire door that will not close	Head of Site, then Property and Compliance Manager	Immediately on discovery
Other defect or near miss	Head of Site, recorded on the defect / near miss form	Same day
Deliberate interference or evidence of smoking inside	Head of Site and the safeguarding lead as appropriate	Same day

Reports are made verbally in the first instance where anything is urgent, and then recorded in writing the same day on the accident, incident and near miss form and in the site fire log book. The Head of Site takes immediate interim action to make the situation safe – for example unlocking an exit, removing a wedge, taking an extinguisher out of use, or putting a fire watch in place – and does not wait for the defect to be repaired before making the area safe.

15.3 What happens next

- The Property and Compliance Manager logs every report, assigns a priority and an owner, and records the date the issue was closed out.

- Priority defects that leave the building without adequate detection, warning or means of escape are escalated to a Director immediately, and the Directors decide whether the building can continue to be occupied and what interim measures apply.
- Every fire and every significant near miss is investigated: what happened, why, what was already in place, what failed and what will change. The findings are recorded and shared with staff.
- The fire risk assessment is reviewed after any fire, any significant near miss and any recurring false alarm.
- A summary of all fire safety reports, actions and their status is included in the termly compliance report to the Directors.

15.4 External reporting

- RIDDOR: a death, a specified injury, an injury resulting in a worker being incapacitated for more than seven consecutive days, or a dangerous occurrence, is reported to the Health and Safety Executive by the Property and Compliance Manager – fatal and specified injuries without delay and by report within ten days, over-seven-day injuries within fifteen days.
- The landlord or managing agent is informed of any fire, any fire service attendance and any defect in a system they maintain.
- The referring school and the commissioning local authority are informed of any incident affecting the safety of their students, in line with our agreements with them, along with parents and carers.
- The insurer is notified of any fire or damage, within the timescales in the policy.
- The fire and rescue service is co-operated with fully, including any post-incident audit, and any enforcement correspondence is passed to the Directors immediately.
- Where a hired venue is involved, the venue operator is informed and their own reporting requirements are followed.

15.5 False alarms and unwanted fire signals

Every alarm activation is treated as a real fire until proven otherwise, and the building is always evacuated. False alarms are then recorded with the suspected cause – cooking, aerosols or vapes, dust from workshop activity, a faulty detector, steam, a malicious operation of a call point, or contractor works. The Property and Compliance Manager reviews the pattern each term. Repeated false alarms are dangerous because they teach occupants to hesitate, and they waste fire service resources, so the cause is engineered out: relocating or changing the type of a detector, adding a protective cover to a call point, changing where an activity takes place, or isolating a zone under a written procedure while dusty or hot work is carried out.

16. Record keeping

Each site holds a fire log book, kept at reception or another agreed location and available for inspection at any time. Master copies and certificates are held by the Property and Compliance Manager at Head Office, so that records survive a fire at any one site. The log book contains:

- the current fire risk assessment and its action plan
- the site fire evacuation plan and floor plan
- weekly alarm test records, showing the call point used
- monthly emergency lighting and extinguisher check records

- quarterly fire door inspection records
- daily and weekly escape route check records
- fire drill records, including times and lessons
- training records for the staff on that site
- PEEPs in force
- service and inspection certificates – alarm, emergency lighting, extinguishers, electrical installation, PAT
- records of every fire, false alarm, defect and near miss, and what was done about it
- hot work permits issued
- correspondence with the fire and rescue service, the landlord and insurers

Records are retained for a minimum of three years, and for six years where they relate to an incident, an injury or an insurance claim.

17. Hired venues and off-site activities

When we take students into a building we do not control – a leisure centre, a sports hall, a community venue – the venue is responsible for its fire precautions, but we remain responsible for our staff and students inside it. Familiarity with our own sites counts for nothing in an unfamiliar building, so the arrangements below are followed every time.

17.1 Before the first visit

- Confirm the venue holds a current fire risk assessment and its own public liability insurance.
- Obtain the fire procedure: alarm signal, escape routes, assembly point, and who takes charge in an evacuation.
- Establish whether the venue will be shared with members of the public at the same time, and what that means for supervision during an evacuation.
- Identify the arrangements for any student or member of staff who would need assistance, and agree them with the venue.
- Record the fire arrangements in the activity risk assessment, along with anything venue-specific.

17.2 On every visit

- On arrival, staff locate the exits, the call points and the assembly point before the session begins, and brief the students on all three.
- The register is carried by the group leader for the whole session.
- If the alarm sounds, staff evacuate the group immediately by the nearest exit, take a headcount at the assembly point and report the group's status to venue staff.
- Students are kept together and supervised throughout, and are not permitted to leave the assembly point or the site.
- Any incident is reported to venue staff at the time, and to the Head of Site and the Property and Compliance Manager the same day.

18. Shared and leased premises

Where more than one Responsible Person has duties in the same building, the Fire Safety Order requires each to co-operate, co-ordinate their measures and share information. Education Plus will take reasonably practicable steps to identify the other Responsible Persons for each site, exchange contact details with them, agree how the alarm, escape routes, assembly point and access for the fire service are managed in common, and share our fire risk assessment where it affects them. Where a landlord will not provide the fire safety information we need – the common parts assessment, service records for systems they maintain, or asbestos information – the request is made in writing, escalated to the Directors and recorded as an outstanding action in the site fire risk assessment.

19. After a fire – recovery and continuity

- Nobody re-enters the building until the fire and rescue service confirms it is safe, and it is not reoccupied until the Directors are satisfied that detection, warning, escape routes and emergency lighting are all functional and any damage has been made safe.
- The Directors decide whether to close the site, relocate students to another Education Plus site, or suspend provision, and inform parents, carers, referring schools and commissioning authorities the same day.
- Communication is handled by the Directors; staff and students do not comment publicly or on social media about the incident.
- The insurer, the landlord and, where relevant, the enforcing authority are notified.
- Pastoral support is offered to any student or member of staff affected; a fire is frightening, and students who have experienced fire or loss outside school may be affected disproportionately.
- A post-incident review is held by the Directors and the Property and Compliance Manager within ten working days, covering what happened, how the evacuation went, what the records show, and what changes are required to this policy, the fire risk assessment or the site evacuation plan.

20. Monitoring, audit and review

- Daily: escape routes and exits checked by site staff.
- Weekly: alarm test and final exit check by the Head of Site.
- Monthly: in-house fire safety inspection at each site – emergency lighting, extinguishers, signage, housekeeping, fire doors – recorded in the log book.
- Termly: documented fire safety audit of each site by the Property and Compliance Manager, including a log book review, a drill review and a check that actions have been closed out; reported to the Directors.
- Annually: fire risk assessment review at every site; annual review of this policy by the Directors.
- Immediately: review of this policy, the relevant fire risk assessment and the site evacuation plan after any fire, significant near miss, enforcement contact, change of premises or change in legislation.

21. Responsibility for this policy

Directors are responsible for communicating this policy to all stakeholders and take a lead role in monitoring and reviewing it. The Property and Compliance Manager is responsible for its

implementation and for the arrangements it describes. All staff, including senior leadership, teaching and non-teaching staff, have a duty to support, uphold and implement this policy accordingly. Failure to follow it – in particular wedging fire doors, obstructing escape routes, interfering with fire safety equipment or failing to report a defect – is treated as a disciplinary matter.

Appendix A – Fire safety testing and inspection schedule

Task	Frequency	Carried out by	Recorded in
Escape routes, exits and fire doors clear and operable	Daily	Site staff / Head of Site	Site fire log book
Fire alarm test from a rotating call point	Weekly	Head of Site or nominee	Site fire log book
Final exit doors physically opened; external routes checked	Weekly	Head of Site	Site fire log book
Emergency lighting function test	Monthly	Site staff	Site fire log book
Fire extinguisher visual check	Monthly	Site staff	Site fire log book
In-house fire safety inspection of the site	Monthly	Head of Site	Site fire log book
Fire door inspection – gaps, seals, closers, hinges, signage	Quarterly	Head of Site / Property and Compliance Manager	Fire door inspection record
Fire drill	Termly (min. 3 per year)	Head of Site	Drill record in log book
Fire safety audit of the site	Termly	Property and Compliance Manager	Audit report to Directors
PEEP review	Termly and on change	Head of Site	PEEP file
Fire alarm system service	At least annually, per BS 5839-1	Competent contractor	Certificate at Head Office
Emergency lighting full duration test	Annually	Competent contractor	Certificate at Head Office
Fire extinguisher service	Annually	Accredited engineer	Certificate and unit label
Portable appliance testing	Annually	Competent contractor	PAT register
Fire safety refresher training	Annually	Property and Compliance Manager	Training matrix
Fire risk assessment review	Annually and on change	Property and Compliance Manager	Fire risk assessment
Fixed electrical installation inspection (EICR)	At least every 5 years	Competent electrician	Certificate at Head Office
Review of this policy	Annually	Directors	Policy review table

Appendix B – Fire action notice wording

The following is displayed at every call point and at reception, with the assembly point named in full for that site.

IF YOU DISCOVER A FIRE

1. Operate the nearest fire alarm call point immediately.
2. Leave the building by the nearest available exit, closing doors behind you.
3. Do not stop to collect belongings. Do not tackle the fire.

ON HEARING THE ALARM

1. Leave the building immediately by the nearest available exit.
2. Staff take their group and their register, and close doors behind them.
3. Go to the assembly point: [NAME THE LOCATION IN FULL].
4. Report to the Head of Site for the roll call and remain at the assembly point.
5. Do not re-enter the building for any reason until told it is safe.

THE FIRE SERVICE IS CALLED ON EVERY OCCASION. Dial 999 from outside the building and give the full address, the postcode and the what3words location for this site.

Appendix C – Site fire safety information

Completed and kept current for each site by the Head of Site, and held with the site fire evacuation plan.

Detail	Durham Nurture (Unit 8)	Durham School's (Unit 11)	Woodlands / Middlesbrough
Responsible Person			
Head of Site			
Fire Marshals			
Assembly point			
what3words location			
Landlord / managing agent contact			
Students or staff with a PEEP			
Date of current fire risk assessment			
Date of last drill			

Appendix D – Fire defect and near miss report

Completed by the person reporting, passed to the Head of Site the same day and forwarded to the Property and Compliance Manager.

Field	Detail
Site and exact location	
Date and time noticed	
Reported by	
What was found – defect, near miss, false alarm or fire	
Immediate action taken to make it safe	
Reported to (name and time)	
Priority assigned	
Action required	
Date closed out	
Fire risk assessment reviewed as a result?	