

Considerations for Fire Risk Assessments in Schools

Changes to Legislation

Following legislation changes to the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 on 1 October 2023, there is now a requirement that all the findings of Fire Risk Assessments (FRA's) must be recorded, and not just the significant findings. Following the changes, the Health and Safety Team have carried out a review of FRA's across our estate, which has led to this guidance on the required quality of FRA's.

What the changes mean

The changes emphasise that fire risk assessments must now include information about all the relevant fire safety arrangements on site, including details of physical measures provided for fire safety purposes, as well as detailing the management arrangements in place. Competent fire risk assessors are required to fully engage with on-site management to discuss and obtain information for the assessment. Additionally, no fire risk assessment should consist of mainly 'tick box' responses, without any detail of arrangements in place or a risk evaluation and justification. This would not be deemed to be a suitable and sufficient FRA.

Recognised Standard for Fire Risk Assessments

The Health and Safety Team have recently produced the new Fire Safety and Prevention Standard applicable to all KCC premises ([HSS 011 Fire Safety and Prevention Standard \(kelsi.org.uk\)](https://www.kelsi.org.uk/HSS-011-Fire-Safety-and-Prevention-Standard)), this sets out the minimum standard expected across KCC's premises including the requirements for the fire risk assessment. Although there is no prescribed method to complete a FRA, there is a recognised standard which should ensure that all the relevant requirements of a suitable and sufficient assessment have been considered. This standard is known as PAS 79. PAS 79 (Fire risk assessment – Guidance and a recommended methodology) which is a publicly available specification published by the British Standards Institution.

Commissioning your Fire Risk Assessment

KCC's Fire Safety and Prevention Standard requires that a new fire risk assessment must be completed by a competent person every 3 years. This is likely to require the services of an independent fire risk assessor. Additionally, the FRA should be renewed when there is any building alteration or change of occupation and use of the premises, or following a fire safety incident/emergency, etc. The fire risk assessment must also be reviewed annually, but in most cases, this can be completed in-house.

When commissioning your school fire risk assessment, you should request confirmation that it will be completed to the PAS 79 standard. The fire risk assessor should also discuss their findings with you before leaving site and don't be afraid to challenge anything you feel is inaccurate or any recommendations where there is no risk justification.

You need to be satisfied that the fire risk assessor providing this service is competent to do so. It is advised that you check that anyone who wishes to

provide this service has independent registration with, or certification from, a professional or certification body. Some of these certifying bodies will also have a 'Risk Assessors Register' which generally means the fire risk assessments of the registered person will have been reviewed by the certifying body and judged to be of the necessary quality. Examples of a recognised certifying body might be the Institution of Fire Engineers, the Institute of Fire Prevention Officers, or the Institute of Fire Safety Management.

You can also ask the risk assessor for references or ask to see previous examples of their work.

For further Health and Safety Advice please contact the Health and Safety Advice Line email healthandsafety@kent.gov.uk or telephone 03000 418456