

Fire doors – Guidance for schools

Following guidance issued in 2024 Fire Risk Assessments are now required to refer to Fire doors in their reports. This has led to a number of schools contacting KCC for guidance in this area.

We have therefore issued this information sheet.

All schools are subject to the requirements of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. Under this piece of legislation the 'responsible person' is required to take general fire precautions to reduce the risk of fire spread on the premises. This will include the provision of fire doors along with their on-going care and maintenance.

'The responsible person must make a suitable and sufficient assessment of the risks to which relevant persons are exposed for the purpose of identifying the general fire precautions they need to take, and to comply with the requirements and prohibitions imposed on them, by or under the Order. This will include a determination of whether the fire doors installed (when first built or subsequently updated) are adequate, based upon the risks from fire identified and analysed by the fire risk assessor.'

The simple purpose of a fire door in everyday use is just as any other door. However, since a breakout of fire is never predictable, the fire door, unlike any other door, must then perform its prime purpose – to protect lives and offer protection to the remainder of the building.

A fire door ensures that should a fire break out, it can be contained in a 'compartment'. This prevents the spread of fire, smoke and toxic fumes for a defined period, allowing adequate time for occupants to escape before becoming overwhelmed. It will not fulfil this function if it is not fitted or maintained properly, propped open, or 'hold open' devices are not working effectively.

All fire doors are 'fire rated' and all this means is that some provide longer protection than others for holding back smoke, fire, and toxic fumes. You will probably find most school fire doors are FD30 rated which means they will resist the elements of fire and contain the flames for a minimum of 30 minutes.

There are, however, both single and double fire doors of a higher rating available, allowing a longer period of fire containment. These are ordinarily located on rooms of special fire risk like plant rooms, electrical intake rooms, science and technology laboratories, kitchens, combustion engine rooms, rooms used for the storage of chemicals and fuels, and stores for PE mats

Schools should review their fire risk assessment to determine if any recommendations have been made in relation to the current fire doors and put in place remedial action plans to address the recommendations made.

WHAT YOU NEED TO DO

- Ensure that the Fire Compartmentation Route is fully understood and has taken into account any changes to the building. This is the route that needs to be protected. This is very important, as this will dictate the number of doors classified as fire doors.
- Ensure fire doors on this route are identified and included in the fire risk assessment for the school
- Ensure that where new fire doors are installed or repairs conducted, this is completed by a competent organisation

- Ensure there is a regime of care and maintenance for fire doors including regular inspections

WHAT IS A FIRE DOOR?

A fire door is defined as “a door provided for the passage of persons, air or objects which together with its frame and furniture as installed in a building, is intended (when closed) to resist the passage of fire and/or gaseous products of combustion, and is capable of meeting specified performance criteria to those ends”.

The criteria referred to above relates to the fire doors level of integrity in terms of resisting fire and smoke spread. The performance criteria required will normally be determined by reference to Building Regulation codes of practice and other standards such as BS9999, with appropriate doors being installed accordingly.

A doors performance criteria will normally be identified by the prefix FD on the door followed by the required integrity rating expressed in minutes, e.g. FD30, a fire resisting door able to resist integrity failure for 30 min. Certain doors are also required to restrict the spread of ambient temperature smoke. These doors are identified by the suffix S, e.g. FD30S. Fire doors, when being installed are normally supplied in two main formats. Stickers denoting the type of door are often affixed to the top edge of the door. The specific features of a fire door are shown in the diagram in Appendix 2.

Fire doors must not be wedged open, there are automatic hold-open systems integrated with fire alarms to maintain compliance and safety.

It is important to distinguish between a Fire door and a Fire Exit door.

Key Differences

Primary Function: Fire doors prevent the spread of fire; fire exit doors facilitate safe evacuation

Location: Fire doors are usually internal; fire exit doors are typically external

Fire Resistance: Fire doors are fire-rated; fire exit doors may or may not be fire-rated

Hardware: Fire doors have closers and intumescent seals; fire exit doors have panic bars or push pads

Operation: Fire doors should remain closed; fire exit doors must open easily and immediately in an emergency

Understanding these differences is crucial for legal compliance, risk management, and occupant safety, as both door types play complementary roles in a building's fire safety strategy

CARE AND MAINTENANCE

All fire doors in a school should be subject to a regime or regular inspection and ongoing care and maintenance as they can be subject to significant use and potential damage. A Fire door Inspection checklist has been provided in Appendix 1.

The recommended inspection periods for fire doors are as follows:

- 1) Frequently used doors: monthly
- 2) Other doors: every term

To ensure all fire doors are subject to appropriate inspection, schools should:

- Develop a register of all fire doors in the premises noting the type and location (modern doors will have a tag detailing this information)
- Undertake a visual inspection of fire doors utilising the guidance in Appendix 1
- Where damage is found or adjustments are required, ensure these are undertaken by a competent person*
- Make a record of the inspection/s undertaken in a suitable format (e.g. fire log-book)

The 'Responsible person' should allocate a member of the team to undertake these regular checks. There is information and a training course on KELSIs to support.

[New online fire door check course - KELSIs](#)

[Updated Fire Safety Logbook - KELSIs](#)

Regular inspections should be recorded, consistent logging of observations and door condition would assist in identifying recurring issues and plan more effective remedial actions. They also act as evidence of maintenance which may be helpful if seeking external funding.

*If deficiencies are noted then repairs should be organised. Simple repairs can be carried out by school site staff. If external contractors are required, to maintain quality and consistency they should hold a minimum Level 3 UKAS accredited or above fire safety or passive fire protection.

Appendix 1 : FIRE DOOR INSPECTION CHECKLIST

Feature	Checks	
Door leaf	• Does the door leaf sit against the door stop and is it free of distortion? • If the door is veneered or lipped, is the glue still holding these products firmly in place? • Is the door free from damage including dents, and holes?	
Door frame	• Is the door frame firmly attached to the wall? • If a planted door stop is present, is it firmly attached? • Is the frame to door leaf gap consistently 3 mm?	
Intumescent/smoke/ acoustic seals	• Are intumescent seals in place? • Are the seals well attached inside the groove in the frame or door leaf? • Are the seals free from damage and paint? • If you have a brush or fin type seal, is it free from damage or breakage? • If fitted are the smoke and acoustic seals continuous around the frame or door leaf?	
Hinges	• Is there a minimum of 3 hinges with all the screws fitted? • Are all the screws the correct size? • Are the hinges free of metal fragments and oil leakage? (these are signs of wear) • Are the hinges free from non-combustible packing?	
Door closers	• Open the door to approximately 5 degrees or 75 mm. Does it close and engage with the latch? • Is the closer securely attached to the door and frame? • Is the closer free from damage and not leaking? • If unlatched, does the closer hold the door in line with the frame and intumescent seal? • If hung in pairs, do they close in line if both opened and released together? • If hold-open device is used, is it electronically released? • Does the hold-open device release the door when required?	
Lock and latch	• Does the latch hold the door firmly in place	

	without rattling?	
Glazing and glass	• Is the intumescent seal continuous and attached to the glass and bead? • Are the glazing beads well attached to the frame and free from damage? • Is the glass free from damage and cracking? • If the glass has been replaced, is it fire rated glass? • If glazing panels are below 1500 mm from the bottom of door, is the glass safety glass?	
Threshold gap	• Is there a consistent gap under the door that allows it to swing without touching the floor covering? • Is the door to floor covering gap consistently 10 mm (3 mm if smoke seals are fitted) or less when the door is closed? • If the door leaf is fitted with a threshold seal, does the seal make contact with the floor covering when the door is closed?	

Appendix 2 : FEATURES OF A FIRE DOOR

