

Consultation opens on a revised Building Bulletin 100 design guide for fire safety in schools

30 June 2021

The Department for Education has issued a call for evidence as part of its review of the Building Bulletin 100 'Design for Fire Safety in Schools'.

The Building Bulletin 100 (BB100)

The BB100, initially published in 2007, is non-statutory guidance on fire safety for schools. It applies to nursery schools, primary and secondary schools, including sixth form colleges, academies and city technology colleges, special schools and pupil referral units. Whilst it is particularly relevant to designers, fire engineers, building control officers (or equivalent) and fire safety officers, it is also of interest to head teachers, governors, teaching staff and facilities and maintenance staff in their role as fire safety managers (albeit the Fire Safety Risk Assessment: Educational Premises Guidance is likely to be more useful for advice on fire precautions).

BB100 provides technical advice on fire safety design for the erection, extension or material alteration of school buildings and the conversion of other building types to school use, to satisfy the requirements of the Building Regulations. It covers life safety (compliance with the Building Regulations), school-specific fire risks, property protection and general fire safety management.

The review

Whilst reviews of BB100 have been completed before following the Grenfell Tower fire and wider work across government on fire safety standards, the Secretary of State for Education decided to revise and update BB100 to ensure it remains fit for purpose and aligns with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's (MHCLG) wider review of fire safety.

An initial consultation was held from 8 March 2019 to 31 May 2019 as part of a technical review of BB100. A summary report on the responses to questions covered in the technical review can be found [here](#).

Following receipt of feedback as part of the Technical Review, the Department for Education has issued a revised draft BB100 guide. Before finalising the revised guidance, the Department for Education are now consulting on the main changes as set out in the consultation document (link below).

The revised guidance includes:

- updated and expanded advice on:
 - compliance with Building Regulations Part B (Fire Safety)
 - school-specific fire risks
 - property protection
 - fire safety management
- boarding accommodation for the first time
- minimum levels of automatic fire detection and alarm systems provision
- a recommendation that single escape stairs should not be allowed in new construction and that lifts in multi-storey schools should be evacuation level standard
- an increase in the allowable fire compartment sizes to match the general levels for educational buildings set by MHCLG

- a raise in the standards required for external wall cladding
- further restrictions on the provision of noticeboards in teaching spaces
- the recommendation that automatic fire suppression systems should be installed in all:
 - new school buildings that have a storey with a finished floor level over 11m above ground level
 - new special schools
 - new boarding accommodation.

What next?

Respondents have until 18 August 2021 to respond to the consultation and can do so by following [this link](#).

Whilst this is a technical guide and therefore likely to be less helpful to [schools](#) in respect of the day to day management of fire safety, it is an important reference guide, particularly where there is material alteration/extension and conversion of [school buildings](#) being considered.

It is worth noting that the Fire Safety Bill currently before Parliament will reform the Fire Safety Order, and once the law is ratified and implemented, the Department for Education will consider whether and how the guidance should be further updated to reflect the new legislation. There is also anticipated to be further changes in fire safety law and it is likely this will also impact other fire safety management guidance issued for schools. Therefore, schools should look out for further developments on fire safety over the coming months.

Contact

Daisy May Coster-Hollis

Senior Associate

daisymay.coster-hollis@brownejacobson.com

+44 (0)330 045 2370

Related expertise

Services

Construction and capital projects
on school sites

Health and safety in academies
and schools

School land and buildings