HEALTH & SAFETY

School Hall Seating Guidelines

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# Introduction

The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 covers general fire safety in England and Wales. These regulations were introduced in early 2006 and places duties upon building managers to manage risks around fire safety. These duties for schools are found in more detail in the HM Government document entitled ‘[Fire Safety and Risk Assessment for Educational Premises](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fire-safety-risk-assessment-educational-premises)’.

# Roles and Responsibilities

## Head teachers

Head teachers, as the responsible person on a school site, are accountable for ensuring the completion of the fire risk assessment and the management of fire risks and precautions. Within the ‘[Fire Safety and Risk Assessment for Educational Premises](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fire-safety-risk-assessment-educational-premises)’ document it has been identified that school halls have certain requirements regarding the layout of seating particularly during large gatherings.

Head teachers are required to ensure the correct and safe layout of seating in school halls as per below guidance.

If chairs are not lockable in rows further measures are required to secure seats together to prevent, in the event of an emergency evacuation, ‘row topple’, that can obstruct escape.

## Recommended Arrangements for Temporary Seating

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Number of Seats | Recommendations |
| 50 seats or more | Seating should be secured together in lengths of not fewer than 4x and no greater than 12x seats. |
| 250 seats or more | Provision should be made for fixing to the floor the rows of seats flanking the front, the back and the cross gangways and the seats near exits although only the end seats of the rows need to be fixed to the floor if all the seats are secured together.  |
| Over 600 seats | Fix all seats to the floor. |

NB: Where seats are secured together, it should not be possible to separate them, nor for a row to “snake” merely by pushing one or more seats in a row.

## Gangways and Seatways

Consideration should also be given to ‘gangways’ and ‘seatways’.

Gangways refer to the passage created in between rows of seats and should be:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Number of Seats | Recommendations |
| 50 seats or less | 900mm minimum. |
| 50 seats or more | 1100mm minimum.  |

NB: Where feasible it is strongly recommended that all gangways are a minimum of 11100mm.

Seatways refer to the smallest usable distance between the back of seat ‘A’ and the front of seat ‘B’:

The minimum recommended distances for seatways in relation to the number of seats and available gangways as follows:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Seatway Widths (mm) | Recommended maximum Number of Seats in a row |
|  | Seats in Rows(1x gangway) | Seats in Rows(2x gangways) |
| 300 to 324 mm | 7x seats | 12x seats |
| 325 to 349 mm | 8x seats | 12x seats |
| 350 to 374 mm | 9x seats | 12x seats |
| 375 to 399 mm | 10x seats | 12x seats |
| 400 to 424 mm | 11x seats | 12x seats |
| >425 mm | 12x seats | 12x seats |

NB: Where feasible it is strongly recommended that maximum widths are allowed for in each seatway, e.g. 424mm for 7x seats, 374mm for 9x seats and so on.

During the festive season and for school gatherings, plays, carol services etc., please refer to the above guidance when setting up your venue. If your chairs are not lockable please consider temporary measures i.e. cable ties etc.

Actual capacity will be determined by your risk assessment and after considering available exits, distances to be travelled and the abovementioned gangway, seatway and setting out recommendations.

## Employees

Employees are required to follow the above guidance in line with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 and recommendations from BS 9999:2017.

## Version Control and Change History

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Version Control** | **Date Released** | **Date Effective** | **Amendment** |
| 1 | Dec 2015 | Dec 2015 | Document created |
| 2 | Oct-2021 |  | Hyperlinked external document reference.Added reference to and guidance from BS 9999:2017 - guidance regarding gangways, seatways and seating and amended slightly to account for HBC’s not more than 12x in a row limitation. |