

INSPECTING FIRE DOORS DURING HEALTH AND SAFETY INSPECTIONS

Fire doors are a vital part of the fire protection system built in to any school. They are designed to prevent the spread of fire and contain smoke to allow the safe evacuation of the building. Schools/employers should ensure that fire doors are inspected at least every six months, any more frequently in high-traffic areas. Ideally, these inspections should be carried out by a registered Fire Door Inspection Scheme (FDIS) inspector.

Health and Safety Representatives should inspect fire doors as part of their regular Health and Safety Inspections of the workplace and report any defects in the usual way. This applies even where schools have appropriate inspection systems in place.

Fire Door Checklist

1. Does the door fully close?

Fire doors must have a door closer to ensure they shut automatically. Open the door halfway, let it go and allow it to close. Does it close firmly without sticking on the floor or the frame?

Ensure the door leaf sits against the door stop and is free from distortion. If there are double doors, check they close in line if they are opened and released together.

2. Are the gaps around the door appropriate?

The top and sides of the doors should have a gap of less than 4mm from the frame. A pound coin can be used to check, as this is approximately 3mm in width.

From door to floor, the gap should be less than 10mm when the door is closed. As a rule, if light can be seen under the door, then the gap is probably too big.

If the gaps are too large, smoke will be able to get through and render the fire door useless.

3. Is the door frame suitable and free from damage?

Door frames must be firmly attached to the wall and free from damage. Fire door frames must also be purchased from the fire door manufacturer or from a company licensed to manufacture them. Health and Safety Representatives should seek assurances that this is the case, especially if the doors look very different from the frames.

4. Are seals in place?

Fire doors must be fitted with intumescent seals which expand when exposed to heat. These should be in place, well attached inside the groove in the frame or door leaf, continuous around the frame and free from damage.

5. Are the hinges sufficient?

Each fire door needs a minimum of three hinges, firmly fixed with all screws fitted and not broken. The screws should be the correct size (i.e. not too small or too big for the hinge) and the hinges free from metal fragments and oil leakage.

