



Department  
for Education

# **Boarding schools**

**National minimum standards**

**In force from 1 April 2015**

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# Summary

## About this document

This document contains a statement of national minimum standards (standards) to safeguard and promote the welfare of children for whom accommodation is provided by boarding schools.<sup>1</sup>

These standards do not override the need for schools to comply with other legislation such as that which sets the standards for independent schools, and legislation covering health and safety, fire or planning regulations.

In these standards, 'have regard to' means that the school should be able to demonstrate that it either complies with the guidance, or has considered the guidance and has good reason for departing from it.

## Expiry or review date

This document will next be reviewed in March 2017. In the meantime the Secretary of State will keep the standards under review and may publish amended statements as appropriate.

## Who is this document for?

The standards apply in England to:

- all mainstream boarding schools for all age groups of pupils up to 18<sup>2</sup>, including any lodging arrangements organised by the school for residential pupils;
- any pupils over the age of 18 on the roll of the school who live alongside those who are under 18; and
- children accommodated at the school, other than pupils<sup>3</sup>.

These standards do not apply to:

- Children's Homes. Boarding schools which accommodate or arrange accommodation for any child for more than 295 days a year, or intend to do so. Such schools are required to register as children's homes with Ofsted and are

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<sup>1</sup> This statement is a revision of the statement published in December 2012, which came into force on 1 January 2013.

<sup>2</sup> Including schools where all boarders are 16 or over

<sup>3</sup> The school accommodates children other than its own boarders if the school, or any member of its staff as part of their work for the school, is responsible for looking after them during their stay at school. Visiting pupils staying in school accommodation, even accompanied by their own staff, should be regarded as temporary boarders.

required to comply with legislation and standards set for children's homes<sup>4</sup> rather than the standards in this document.

- Further Education Colleges funded by the Skills Funding Agency. There is a separate set of [national minimum standards for FE colleges which accommodate under 18s](#).
- Residential Special Schools. There is a separate set of [national minimum standards for residential special schools](#).
- Instances where another organisation is responsible for the children, such as when the premises are let during the school holidays. In such cases the organisation is responsible for their welfare rather than the school.
- The children of staff working at the school and living in their household.

## Main points

- This statement of national minimum standards for boarding schools is published by the Secretary of State for Education under section 87C(1) of the Children Act 1989 as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000 and the Education Act 2011.
- These standards contain arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children for whom accommodation is provided by boarding schools. They provide the minimum standards below which no school is expected to fall in securing outcomes for boarders.
- The school will be inspected against the standards in order to determine whether there is satisfactory compliance with the legal obligation to safeguard and promote the welfare of boarding pupils. In carrying out the inspection, the role of the inspectorate is to determine the extent to which the school promotes and safeguards the welfare of all boarders, rather than its compliance with structures and systems. Where terms such as adequate and suitable are used within the standards, inspectors will make judgements based on the adequacy or suitability for the specific needs of the boarders residing at the school, having regard to their ages, numbers and sex and any special requirements<sup>5</sup> they may have.
- Inspectorates will take account of the school's admission policy and statement of purpose, and to the views of parents who have chosen the school for their child.
- The Secretary of State will refer to these standards in any action s/he may take against an independent boarding school that fails to comply with its duty to safeguard

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<sup>4</sup> See [The Children's Homes \(England\) Regulations 2015](#) and the [Guide to the children's homes regulations, including quality standards](#)

<sup>5</sup> A student has "special requirements" if the student has any needs arising from physical, medical, sensory, learning, emotional or behavioural difficulties which require provision which is additional to or different from that generally required by children of the same age in schools other than special schools.

or promote the welfare of boarding pupils. Local authorities and the Secretary of State will also take the standards into account in any enforcement action taken in relation to a failure by a maintained school, academy or free school to safeguard or promote the welfare of boarding pupils.

- Minimum standards do not mean standardisation of provision. The standards are designed to be applicable to the many different types of boarding schools and are intended to support schools in developing their own ethos and approach that meets the needs of individual pupils.
- Although the standards are issued for use by inspectorates in assessing the quality of provision in boarding schools, they have other uses. They may be used by schools and staff in self-assessing their services; they may provide a basis for the induction and training of staff; they can be used by parents/carers, children and young people as a guide to what they should expect a school to do; and they can provide guidance on what is required when schools set up boarding or residential provision.

# National minimum standards for boarding schools

## Standard 1 – Statement of boarding principles and practice

1.1 A suitable statement of the school's boarding principles and practice is available to parents and staff, is made known to boarders, and is seen to work in practice.

## Standard 2 – Boarders' induction and support

2.1 There is an appropriate process of induction and guidance for new boarders.

2.2 Each boarder has a choice of staff to whom s/he can turn for personal guidance or for help with a personal problem.

2.3 The school identifies at least one person other than a parent, outside the staff, and those responsible for the leadership and governance of the school, who boarders may contact directly about personal problems or concerns at school. Boarders are informed who this person is, and how to contact them and they are easily accessible. Boarders are also provided with one or more appropriate helpline(s) or outside telephone numbers, including the Office of the Children's Commissioner, to contact in case of problems or distress.

## Standard 3 – Boarders' health and wellbeing

3.1 The school has, and implements effectively, appropriate policies for the care of boarders who are unwell and ensures that the physical and mental health, and emotional wellbeing<sup>6</sup> of boarders is promoted. These include first aid, care of those with chronic conditions and disabilities, dealing with medical emergencies and the use of household remedies.

3.2 Suitable accommodation, including toilet and washing facilities, is provided in order to cater for the needs of boarding pupils who are sick or injured. The accommodation is adequately staffed by appropriately qualified personnel, adequately separated from other boarders and provides separate accommodation for male and female boarders where this is necessary.

3.3 In addition to any provision on site, boarders have access to local medical, dental, optometric and other specialist services or provision as necessary.

3.4 All medication is safely and securely stored and proper records are kept of its administration. Prescribed medicines are given only to the boarders to whom they are

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<sup>6</sup> "wellbeing" means wellbeing within the meaning of section 10(2) of the Children Act 2004

prescribed. Boarders allowed to self-medicate are assessed as sufficiently responsible to do so.

3.5 The confidentiality and rights of boarders as patients are appropriately respected. This includes the right of a boarder deemed to be “Gillick Competent”<sup>7</sup> to give or withhold consent for his/her own treatment.

## **Standard 4 – Contact with parents/carers**

4.1 Boarders can contact their parents/carers and families in private and schools facilitate this where necessary. This does not prevent schools from operating proportionate systems to monitor and control the use of electronic communications in order to detect abuse, bullying or unsafe practice by boarders.

## **Standard 5 – Boarding accommodation**

5.1 Suitable sleeping accommodation is provided for boarders. It is well organised and managed with risk assessments undertaken and findings acted upon to reduce risk for all boarders. Where boarders are aged 8 years or over, sleeping accommodation for boys is separate from sleeping accommodation for girls.

5.2 Suitable living accommodation is provided for boarders for the purposes of organised and private study outside school hours and for social purposes.

5.3 Suitable toilet and washing facilities are provided for boarders, which are reasonably accessible from the sleeping accommodation. Separate toilet facilities are provided for boys and girls unless each toilet facility is provided in a separate room intended for use by one pupil at a time, the door to which is capable of being secured from inside. Toilet and washing facilities provide appropriate privacy for boarders.

5.4 Boarding houses and other accommodation provided for boarders is appropriately lit, heated and ventilated, cleaned and maintained, and reasonable adjustments are made to provide adequate accessible accommodation for any boarders with restricted mobility.

5.5 Accommodation is suitably furnished and of sufficient size for the number, needs and ages of boarders accommodated, with appropriate protection and separation between genders, age groups and accommodation for adults. Bedding is clean and suitable, and is sufficiently warm.

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<sup>7</sup> Gillick competence is used in medical law to decide whether a child (16 years or younger) is able to consent to his or her own medical treatment, without the need for parental permission or knowledge. A child will be Gillick competent if he or she has sufficient understanding and intelligence to understand fully what is proposed.

5.6 Boarders can personalise an area of their accommodation with suitable posters and personal items if they wish.

5.7 Boarding accommodation is reserved for the use of those children designated to use it, and is protected from access by unauthorised persons. Any use of school facilities by individuals or groups does not allow members of the public (including members of organised groups using school facilities) substantial and unsupervised access to pupils, or to boarding accommodation while occupied by pupils.

5.8 Any use of surveillance equipment (e.g. CCTV cameras) or patrolling of school buildings or grounds for security purposes does not intrude unreasonably on boarders' privacy.

## **Standard 6 – Safety of boarders**

6.1 The school ensures compliance with relevant health and safety laws by drawing up and implementing effectively a written health and safety policy<sup>8</sup>.

6.2 The school premises, accommodation and facilities provided therein are maintained to a standard such that, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of pupils are ensured.

6.3 The school ensures that the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy and appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified.

## **Standard 7 – Fire precautions and drills**

7.1 The school complies with the [Regulatory Reform \(Fire Safety\) Order 2005](#)<sup>9</sup>.

7.2 In addition, fire drills are regularly (at least once per term) carried out in 'boarding time'.

## **Standard 8 – Provision and preparation of food and drinks**

8.1 All boarders, including those with special dietary, medical or religious needs, are provided with meals which are adequate in nutrition, quantity, quality, choice and variety.

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<sup>8</sup> [Health and safety: advice for schools](#)

<sup>9</sup> SI 2005/1541 - There are amendments which are not relevant to these standards.

8.2 Suitable accommodation is provided for the hygienic preparation, serving and consumption of boarders' main meals. This may be situated in the main school provided it is adjacent to or reasonably accessible from the boarding accommodation.

8.3 In addition to main meals, boarders have access to drinking water and to food or the means of hygienically preparing food at reasonable times. Schools are sensitive to boarder's individual needs in this respect.

8.4 Pupils with disabilities are provided with appropriate assistance to eat, in a manner which promotes dignity and choice.

## **Standard 9 – Boarders' possessions**

9.1 Adequate laundry provision is made for boarders' clothing and bedding. Boarders' clothing is satisfactorily stored and issued to the right boarder following laundering.

9.2 Boarders are able to obtain necessary personal and stationery items while accommodated at school.

9.3 Reasonable protection is provided for boarders' personal possessions and for any boarders' money or valuables looked after by the school.

9.4. Any search of boarders' personal belongings should be carried out in accordance with section 550ZA of the Education Act 1996 and with regard to any guidance issued by the State Secretary of State<sup>10</sup>.

## **Standard 10 – Activities and free time**

10.1 There is an appropriate range and choice of activities for boarders outside teaching time, including sufficient and suitably timed free time each day. Suitable risk assessments are in place for any activities which may put boarders at risk of harm.

10.2 Boarders have access to a range and choice of safe recreational areas, both indoors and outdoors, and there are safe areas at school where boarders can be alone if they wish.

10.3 Schools where there are unusual or especially onerous demands on boarders ensure that these are appropriate to the boarders concerned and do not unacceptably affect boarders' welfare.

10.4 Boarders have access to information about events in the world outside the school, and access to local facilities which are appropriate to their age.

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<sup>10</sup> Advice on searching is set out in [Searching, screening and confiscation: Advice for headteachers, school staff and governing bodies](#)

## Standard 11 – Child protection

11.1 The school ensures that:

- arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and
- such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State<sup>11</sup>.

## Standard 12 – Promoting positive behaviour and relationships

12.1 The school has and consistently implements a written policy to promote good behaviour amongst pupils. This policy includes:

- measures to combat bullying, including cyberbullying, and to promote positive behaviour;
- school rules;
- disciplinary sanctions;
- when restraint<sup>12</sup>, including reasonable force<sup>13</sup>, is to be used and how this will be recorded and managed; and
- arrangements for searching pupils and their possessions.

12.2 The policy complies with relevant legislation and has regard to guidance<sup>14</sup>, and is understood by staff and pupils.

## Standard 13 – Management and development of boarding

13.1 The school's governing body and/or proprietor monitors the effectiveness of the leadership, management and delivery of the boarding and welfare provision in the school, and takes appropriate action where necessary.

13.2 There is clear leadership and management of the practice and development of boarding in the school, and effective links are made between academic and residential staff.

13.3 The school's leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role.

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<sup>11</sup> [Keeping Children Safe In Education](#); and [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#)

<sup>12</sup> In these standards "restraint" means using force or restricting liberty of movement.

<sup>13</sup> [Use of reasonable force: Advice for headteachers, staff and governing bodies](#)

<sup>14</sup> [School and college behaviour and attendance](#)

13.4 The school's leadership and management consistently fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the standards are met.

13.5 The school's leadership and management and governance actively promote the wellbeing of pupils.

13.6 Senior boarding staff have an adequate level of experience and/or training.

13.7 The school follows and maintains the policies and documents described in Appendix 1.

13.8 The records specified in Appendix 2 are maintained and monitored by the school and action taken as appropriate.

13.9 The issues specified in Appendix 3 are monitored, and action is taken to improve outcomes for children as appropriate.

## **Standard 14 – Staff recruitment and checks on other adults**

14.1 Schools operate safe recruitment and adopt recruitment procedures in line with the regulatory requirements and having regard to relevant guidance<sup>15</sup> issued by the Secretary of State.

14.2 For all persons over 16 (not on the roll of the school) who after April 2002 began to live on the same premises as boarders but are not employed by the school, an enhanced certificate with a barred list information must be obtained from the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS).

14.3 There is a written agreement between the school and any person over 16 not employed by the school but living in the same premises as children (for example, members of staff households). This specifies the terms of their accommodation, guidance on contact with pupils, their responsibilities to supervise their visitors, and notice that accommodation may cease to be provided if there is evidence that they are unsuitable to have regular contact with pupils. They must be required to notify an unrelated designated senior member of staff if they are charged with, or convicted of, any offence.

14.4 All persons visiting boarding accommodation (e.g. visitors, outside delivery and maintenance personnel) are kept under sufficient staff supervision to prevent them gaining substantial unsupervised access to boarders or their accommodation.

14.5 The school regularly monitors the suitability of any arrangements it makes for the appointment of guardians.

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<sup>15</sup> [Keeping children safe in education](#); and [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#)

14.6 Any guardians<sup>16</sup> appointed by the school are subject to the same safer recruitment procedures as staff, and their care of pupils is monitored.

## **Standard 15 – Staffing and supervision**

15.1 Any staff member or volunteer employed or volunteering in a position working with boarders has a job description reflecting their duties, receives induction training in boarding when newly appointed, and receives regular reviews of their boarding practice, with opportunities for training and continual professional development in boarding.

15.2 Any role of spouses, partners and/or other adult members of staff households within boarding houses is made clear.

15.3 The staff supervising boarders outside teaching time are sufficient in number, training and experience for the age, number and needs of boarders, and the locations and activities involved.

15.4 Boarders are at all times under the responsibility of an identified member of staff who is suitably qualified and experienced.

15.5 Staff know the whereabouts of boarders (or know how to find their whereabouts) in their charge at all times.

15.6 Staff working within the school know and implement the school's policy in relation to boarders going missing and their role in implementing that policy. Staff actively search for boarders who are missing, including working with police where appropriate.

15.7 There is at least one adult member of staff sleeping in each boarding house at night, responsible for the boarders in the house.

15.8 Boarders have a satisfactory means of contacting a member of staff in each house at night.

15.9 Suitable accommodation (consisting of accommodation in which meals may be taken, living accommodation and sleeping accommodation) and suitable toilet and

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<sup>16</sup> This standard applies where a guardian is appointed for a child under 18 by a school, by a member of staff as part of their work for the school, or by an agency or organisation on behalf of the school. Where a school provides lists of possible guardians, written documents should be clear as to whether the school or parent is responsible for the arrangements made and thus the welfare of the child. Guidance for schools on educational guardians is available in the 'Boarding Briefing' series published by the Boarding Schools' Association.

washing facilities are provided for residential staff. This accommodation is appropriately separated<sup>17</sup> from the accommodation and facilities provided for boarding pupils.

15.10 Any boarder access to staff accommodation is properly supervised and does not involve inappropriate favouritism or inappropriate one-to-one contacts between staff and boarders.

## **Standard 16 – Equal opportunities**

16.1 Boarders are not discriminated against, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the [Equality Act 2010](#)<sup>18</sup> or because of their cultural background, linguistic background, special educational need, or academic or sporting ability. These factors are taken into account in the care of boarders, so that care is sensitive to different needs.

## **Standard 17 – Securing boarders' views**

17.1 Boarders are actively encouraged to contribute views to the operation of boarding provision, are able to raise concerns and make complaints, and their views are given appropriate weight in decisions about the running of the school. Boarders are not penalised for raising a concern or making a complaint in good faith.

## **Standard 18 – Complaints**

18.1 The school has, and follows, an appropriate policy on recording and responding to complaints that is compliant with the relevant regulatory standards.

18.2 The school's written record of complaints identifies those complaints relating to boarding provision, and action taken by the school as a result of those complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld).

## **Standard 19 – Prefects**

19.1 Any prefect system (or equivalent) gives prefects (or equivalent) appropriate specific duties and responsibilities that are appropriate for them, with adequate staff supervision, training and measures to counter possible abuses of the role.

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<sup>17</sup> 'Appropriately separated' does not mean that the accommodation has to be in a separate building. But separation should mean that facilities are not shared.

<sup>18</sup> The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex (gender), sexual orientation.

## Standard 20 – Lodgings (long-stay)

20.1 Any lodgings arranged by the school to accommodate pupils provide satisfactory accommodation and supervision, are checked before use, and are monitored by the school during use including checks at least yearly.<sup>19</sup>

20.2 It is clearly stated to parents whether any lodgings accommodating pupils are to be arranged by the school or by parents themselves.

20.3 Schools alert the local authority to any arrangements made by the school that may constitute private fostering.

20.4 Any lodgings provided or arranged by the school are of a comparable standard to accommodation provided by the school.

20.5 The school visits all potential lodgings it may arrange, and interviews any adult who will be responsible for the accommodation of the pupils in each lodging, takes up references, and has recorded a satisfactory assessment, before any pupil is placed there. The school can demonstrate that members of the host family aged over 16 are subject to a DBS check completed at the standard level, with a satisfactory outcome known before any pupil is placed.

20.6 The school ensures that all adults providing lodgings for pupils on its behalf have undergone safeguarding training that is updated regularly as advised by the Local Safeguarding Children Board, and that they understand the school's policy in relation to pupils going missing and their role in implementing that policy.

20.7 The school has a satisfactory written agreement with each adult providing lodgings for pupils on its behalf.

20.8 The school provides satisfactory written guidance to host families accommodating pupils on behalf of the school, covering the school's policy and practice for lodging pupils.

20.9 At least once per school term a member of staff discusses their lodgings separately with each pupil accommodated by or on behalf of the school in lodgings, recording the pupil's assessment in writing and taking action on any concerns or complaints.

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<sup>19</sup> School arranged lodgings are those provided or arranged for a pupil under 18 by the school, or any member of its staff as part of their work for the school, or by an agent or organisation acting for the school, rather than by the pupil's parent or an organisation other than the school acting on the parent's behalf. They include term-time use of lodgings instead of on-site boarding accommodation, holiday lodgings arranged for pupils by the school, pupils lodging with staff members during holidays, and accommodation during either term or holiday time with school-arranged educational guardians. This standard does not apply for school trips.

## Appendix 1: List of policies and documents

The following policies and documents should be kept by the school:

### Policies:

1. Countering bullying, including cyberbullying
2. Child protection
3. Discipline (including sanctions, rewards and restraint)
4. Staff disciplinary, grievance and whistleblowing policy
5. Care of boarders who are unwell, including first aid, care of those with chronic conditions and disabilities, dealing with medical emergencies and the use of household remedies
6. Safety and supervision on school journeys
7. Access to school premises by people outside the school
8. Pupil access to risky areas of school buildings and grounds
9. Health and safety
10. Pupil access to a person independent of the school staff group
11. Provision for pupils with particular religious, dietary, language or cultural needs
12. Supervision of ancillary, contract and 'unchecked' staff

### Documents:

13. Staff Handbook/guidance for boarding staff (this document may include many of the policy documents listed above)
14. Statement of the school's boarding principles and practice
15. Requirement for staff to report concerns or allegations of risk of harm to pupils
16. Complaints procedure
17. Procedure for enabling pupils to take problems or concerns to any member of staff
18. Responses to alcohol, smoking and substance abuse
19. Plans for foreseeable crises
20. Staff induction, training and development programme
21. Prefect duties, powers and responsibilities
22. Key written information for new boarders
23. Job descriptions for staff with boarding duties

### Where applicable:

24. Clarification of whether any educational guardians or lodgings are arranged by the school or parents
25. Agreement with any adult providing lodgings to pupils
26. Guidance on welfare to host families accommodating pupils on behalf of the school

## Appendix 2: List of records

The following school records are required:

1. Child protection allegations or concerns
2. Major sanctions
3. Use of reasonable force
4. Complaints
5. Individual boarder's records (containing personal, health and welfare information)
6. Administration of medication, treatment and first aid (kept confidentially)
7. Significant illnesses
8. Significant accidents and injuries
9. Parental permission for medical and dental treatment, first aid and non-prescription medication
10. Risk assessments (for risky activities and in relation to premises/grounds)
11. Staff recruitment records and checks (including checks on others given substantial unsupervised access to children or residential accommodation)
12. Staff duty rotas
13. Staff supervision, appraisal and training
14. Fire precautions tests and drills
15. Risk assessments under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
16. Menus
17. Pocket money and any personal property looked after by staff
18. Care plans for pupils with special needs (where applicable)
19. Parental permission for high risk activities
20. Checks on licensing of relevant adventure activities centres
21. Assessments of lodgings arranged by the school
22. Assessment of off-site accommodation used by the school

## **Appendix 3: List of issues to be monitored by the school**

The following matters and records in relation to boarders, as described in the standards, must be regularly monitored by the head teacher or a senior member of staff, to identify whether review or change in welfare practice is needed:

1. Records of complaints and their outcomes
2. Records of major sanctions
3. Records of any use of reasonable force
4. Systems and management of medical welfare
5. Records of significant accidents
6. Records of all risk assessments carried out
7. Action taken in response to all risk assessments carried out
8. Suitability of any guardianship arrangements made

## Further information

This is not an exhaustive list of useful resources and organisations but is intended as a guide for users.

## Useful resources and external organisations

- [Ofsted](#)
- [Boarding Schools Association](#)
- [State Boarding Schools Association](#)
- [Independent Schools' Council](#)
- [Independent Schools' Inspectorate](#)

## Other relevant departmental advice and statutory guidance

- [Guide to the children's homes regulations, including quality standards](#)
- [National minimum standards for residential special schools](#)
- [Health and safety: advice for schools](#)
- [Keeping Children Safe In Education](#)
- [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#)
- [Use of reasonable force: Advice for headteachers, staff and governing bodies](#)
- [School and college behaviour and attendance](#)
- [Searching, screening and confiscation: Advice for headteachers, school staff and governing bodies](#)

## Other resources

- [The Children's Homes \(England\) Regulations 2015](#)
- [National minimum standards for FE Colleges which accommodate under 18s](#)
- [Regulatory Reform \(Fire Safety\) Order 2005](#)
- [Equality Act 2010](#)



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