

# Harlaw Academy

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**Head Teacher:**  
**David Innes**

Thursday, 12 April 2018

Dear parent,

Prior to the Easter break we had a number of occasions where the fire alarm was intentionally set off at the school. I wanted to write to all families to ask for your support in ensuring this does not continue when school returns. My notes are brief and hopefully clear, I shall be asking staff to cover the points with pupils and ask that you do the same at home. I want all of our pupils and parents to be in no doubt about the measures we are taking to address this issue.

- 1 Setting off false alarms and tampering with fire equipment (such as fire extinguishers) are criminal offences and where we identify culprits we will involve the police in what is a criminal act
- 2 These offences are also seriously detrimental to the safety and good order of the school and will in all probability lead to the pupil responsible being excluded from school
- 3 Fire alarm systems and equipment exist to protect us from danger – tampering with equipment and false alarms put us in danger and deny us our right to a safe environment
- 4 False alarms disrupt learning – they deny us our right to an education and are an example of children taking away the rights of other children
- 5 We have in the school people with a variety of physical and emotional difficulties and the alarms give them particular challenges – those who set off the alarms are acting in a manner which places vulnerable people at particular risk and our response to false alarms will take this into account.
- 6 We also have staff cooking pupil meals or undertaking tasks which involve other risks when an alarm goes off – again our response to false alarms will recognise the additional danger/risk to our staff caused by false alarms.

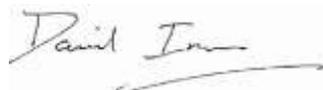
The law in Scotland assumes that secondary school children know the difference between right/wrong and are accountable for their actions. We are a Gold level Rights Respecting School and we expect our pupils to act in a manner which respects the rights of others (to be safe, to learn, to do the best they can). Our alarms cannot be set off accidentally and our fire equipment should not be tampered with. We view any tampering with equipment or alarms as a very serious matter and will deal with it accordingly. We will also view it as a criminal matter and I attach an extract from the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005 at the end of this communication for your reference.

In addition to raising awareness amongst pupils of the seriousness of these acts, I am also seeking the support of all pupils in reporting anyone who they know is involved in tampering with the fire equipment or the fire sensors/alarms. In a Rights Respecting School we need children to feel empowered to uphold their rights and to report other children who seek to deny them their rights. People who witness someone tampering with fire equipment or alarms has two options; to act as a witness and report it or, act as an accomplice and protect those responsible. Those who act as accomplices fall under the aspect of the law known as “joint enterprise” i.e. they are treated in the same manner as the person who committed the offence.



I very much regret having to put this note out to all families but with very important SQA exams due to start in May I want to make sure I have done all I can to put an end to the disruption we have had recently with false alarms. Ideally we will not have any more but if we do I would hope to quickly get the information we need to take appropriate action.

Yours sincerely,



David Innes  
Head Teacher

**Fire (Scotland) Act 2005**  
**Section 85 False alarms**

*(1) A person who knowingly gives or causes to be given to a person acting on behalf of a relevant authority a false alarm of—*

*(a) fire;*

*(b) a road traffic accident; or*

*(c) an emergency of another kind, shall be guilty of an offence.*

*(2) A person guilty of an offence under subsection (1) shall be liable on summary conviction—*

*(a) to a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale;*

*(b) to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 3 months; or*

*(c) to both.*

**(Level 5 (£5000))** - Offences which attract this penalty should be of a similar gravity or severity to the offences triable either summarily or on indictment i.e. offences which are serious enough that may require prosecution on indictment. Level 5 offences must cause, or be liable to cause, substantial and direct damage to the property or interest of others or of the community as a whole.)