

Whimple Victory Hall

Fire Safety Risk Assessment

Description of Premises

Whimple is a village of about 1700 inhabitants halfway between Exeter and Honiton in Devon. Whimple Victory Hall is a registered charity (charity number 291496) at the centre of this rural community and is run by a committee of volunteer trustees.

The hall was established in 1920 based on an old wartime building and comprises an entrance hallway with ladies and gents toilets and a disabled toilet, a main hall with stage, a second room with children's toilets, a committee room and a kitchen.

During the week the main hall is used by the nearby village school for P. E., drama and lunches. During the evenings and at weekends the main hall is used for recreational activities such as yoga, short-mat bowls, dances and receptions. The stage is used by the school and the village drama group. The second room is used by a toddler group, the preschool playgroup and a thriving over sixties club. The committee room is used by the parish council, mothers union WI. and others. The kitchen opens onto the committee room.

There is a substantial car park to the north of the building.

The Hall is regularly inspected as the Primary School operates in the main hall and the Village Play Group operates in the Billiard Room each weekday during the School term as does the Toddler Group one day a week.

The hall is hired by a range of voluntary organisations and private individuals and organisations for a variety of activities, some of which are licensable. A written agreement between the Village Hall and the Hirer forms the basis of the Hiring arrangement. The Booking Form and Rules of Hire draw the hirers' attention to the health and safety and licensing obligations that the booking places upon them.

A Member of the Management Committee only staffs the hall during a booked event when it is agreed necessary. Hirers are expected to provide attendants to meet the requirements of licensing conditions.

The Hall is not licensed for the sale of alcohol. The sale of alcohol for consumption on the premises may be permitted under the terms of a Temporary Event Notices (TEN) granted to a hirer by East Devon District Council. The number of TENs is restricted to a maximum of 12 events each calendar year.

Principle Uses of the Village Hall

The Village Hall is used for a wide variety of functions.

The Main Hall is used every day by the adjacent Primary School for P.E., lunchtime meals and the stage for occasional drama productions.

The Billiard Room contains a full size Snooker table which is used by an Over 60's club who meet in that room and by individual players.

In addition to the above, the Hall is used for Meetings, Dances, Discos, Live Music, Parties, Plays, Presentations, Receptions and many other social and fund raising activities..

The Village Hall Management Committee encourages all regular users of the Hall to carry out their own Fire Risk Assessment, highlighting the areas that pertain to their own Group of users and their activities.

This Fire Risk Assessment has been done by the Hall Management Committee to cover all aspects of the Hall, but in particular for those Hirers who are not familiar with the layout and equipment.

The Management Committee encourages hirers to make themselves aware of the exit routes, the fire fighting equipment and the plan of the Hall detailing the location of the equipment and the escape routes. The plan is available to all Hall users and is also on the Notice Board.

Who is at Risk of Fire

Employees. The Village Hall employs a cleaner who operates for approximately one hour each day at a time to suit the requirements of the Hall. It is normal that the cleaner will be on her own within the premises. The cleaner is familiar with the layout of the premises.

Hall Users (up to 200). These will be familiar with the public area as there are only three main rooms (plus toilets and kitchen) and users can very quickly assimilate themselves with these areas. The emergency signage is illuminated above Fire Exit Route doors. These users may need guidance from the event organisers or person responsible for the Hall booking.

Disabled Persons. At a typical function there may be a limited number of disabled persons. It is assumed these people will need evacuation assistance. The main Emergency Exit doors are on a level with the paths outside the doors being either concrete or paved.

Children. All Children within the Hall are supervised and as mentioned above, the three prime Groups (Primary School, Play Group and Toddler Group) have their own Fire Risk Assessment. The enclosed Play Area to the northern elevation is fenced at a level where an adult could lift Children over the fence.

Possible Causes of Fire

The ones identified by the Management Committee are:

- Main power supply
- Main Oil supply
- Portable electrical appliances
- Kitchen equipment (other than portable electrical appliances)
- Smoking
- Waste
- Stage lighting
- Soft furnishings
- Deliberate ignition

Control Measures

The primary and general control measures taken by the Management Committee are to ensure:

- that sufficient and correct fire fighting equipment is available and that a qualified practitioner inspects it at least once per year. A Certificate of Maintenance will be obtained for each inspection. The equipment currently consists of the following extinguishers:

Main Hall - Water extinguisher adjacent to main entrance door

Main Hall - Water extinguisher adjacent to north emergency exit door

Billiard Room - Water extinguisher adjacent to external door

Kitchen - Dry powder extinguisher adjacent to door to Committee Room

Kitchen - Fire blanket on wall by front windows

The Management Committee will use the advice of the inspection practitioner to increase, change or move location of the fire fighting equipment.

- that the location of the fire fighting equipment, emergency lighting and escape routes are clearly marked on a Plan that is available to all users and staff.

- that all Fire Exit doors are checked for illumination, ease of opening and that the Emergency Exit Routes are clear on a weekly basis. A test of continued illumination in event of a power failure will be done quarterly.

- that the Management Committee test the ease of access to and through the escape routes and to the assembly points at least once per year and log the results.

- that a qualified practitioner checks the internal electric installation once per year (including all portable electrical appliances and stage lighting system) and the overall power supply to the Village Hall at least once every five years. A Certificate of Inspection will be obtained for each inspection.
- that any furnishings that belong to the Village Hall and are less than one metre from the floor are made of a non-combustible material or a material that has been Fire Proofed to the standard applicable at the time of purchase. This applies to all curtaining on the stage irrelevant of distance from the floor level.
- that the Oil Boiler is maintained at least once per year and that during the inspection the engineer checks the sections of the oil pipeline that can be seen and all of the electrical functionality of the Boiler.
- that the Statutory smoking ban is strictly enforced. Statutory signs are placed at all entrances and additional signs are strategically placed.
- that the kitchen waste bin is emptied after each event, and any inflammable waste is placed in metal bins in the outside rubbish storage area or removed from site.
- that security lighting (sensor operated) is provided and maintained on the Northern elevation and the Car Park in order to discourage potential intruders.
- that a record of key holders and of those hirers that have been given temporary access to a key is kept by the booking secretary.
- that when the kitchen oven, grill or hob are in use, hirers are required to unlock the external kitchen door to provide an additional means of escape.
- that all Village Hall Users will be made aware of their responsibilities under the Premises Licence via the Booking Form.
- that all Regular Users will be advised that they should carry out their own Risk Assessment and that a copy should be lodged with the Management Committee. Whilst the Management Committee will advise and encourage, it cannot be held responsible for a group not carrying out their own Risk Assessment.

Note that the Assembly Point is:

The footpath and green on the corner of Church Road adjacent to Whimble Surgery.