

School fined £35,000 after child severely burned at carol concert

A London primary school has been fined £35,000 after a child received 45 per cent burns to their body at a carol concert.

The school was found guilty after a trial following an incident at a church on 11 December 2019.

During the carol concert, 60 Year 3 children from the school were waiting in costume, in a narrow corridor, holding 10-inch lit taper candles. As they were waiting, a seven-year-old boy wearing a home-made sheep costume made out of cotton wool balls, caught fire.

The fire was extinguished with some difficulty and the child received first aid at the scene before being taken by air ambulance to Broomfield Hospital and found to have sustained an estimated 45 per cent burns to their body.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that the school had failed to take appropriate measures to account for the risks inherent with giving lit candles to children, while wearing potentially flammable costumes.

The injuries sustained by the boy will require on-going, regular, invasive surgeries throughout his youth and into adulthood and have been life changing for him and his family.

The school pleaded not guilty to breaching Section 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act but were found guilty by a jury at Southwark Crown Court on 19 June 2023. At Southwark Crown Court on 30 June they were fined £35,000 and ordered to pay £25,970 in costs

Speaking after the hearing, HSE Inspector Sarah Whittle said: "This was a shocking and scary incident that could have so easily been avoided.

"Common sense alone should have been enough to see the risk. Mitigation in this case would have been the substitution of wax candles for flameless ones, thereby reducing the risk to zero. This was a step the school took after the incident but by then it was far too late for a young child who will be forever affected by this.

"The importance of a suitable and sufficient risk assessment has never been made so clear."

Notes to editors:

1. The [Health and Safety Executive](#) (HSE) is Britain's national regulator for workplace health and safety. We prevent work-related death, injury and

ill health through regulatory actions that range from influencing behaviours across whole industry sectors through to targeted interventions on individual businesses. These activities are supported by globally recognised scientific expertise.

2. More information about the [legislation](#) referred to in this case is available.
3. Further details on the latest [HSE news releases](#) is available.
4. Guidance on the use of candles safely from the London Fire Brigade is available: <https://www.london-fire.gov.uk/safety/the-home/candles/>