

## Playtime's over for school pupils and fire extinguishers



Pupils letting off fire extinguishers may be a thing of the past. Eastbury Comprehensive School in Barking is pioneering the use of tamper evident storage cabinets from Jo Bird & Co. Since installing five cabinets, the school reports an end to the practice of extinguishers being misused, helping to stem the growing cost of refilling which was resulting from pupils setting them off. There are plans to install more of the cabinets in areas of the

school where problems commonly occur.

The cabinets have a clear door and integral security seals to aid visual inspection. A single, quick release door catch allows access to the extinguisher, while two kinds of battery operated alarms offer instant warning of unauthorised access.

David Solvey, engineering manager for Ecovert, the facilities management company which introduced the cabinets into the school, explained the impact of the decision. "This large comprehensive has over 200 fire extinguishers sited throughout the complex which are a mixture of large and small units. The large ones are situated in all the main corridors in the school and are vulnerable to being tampered with by students. The problems have been with the water-filled extinguishers where we have experienced a high level of refills. We purchased and installed the cabinets for the school as a trial to combat false activations. There have been no reported incidents since, so we are already seeing savings in our maintenance costs as a result, and expect to be installing more over the coming months."

Nick Atkins, Jo Bird's UK sales manager, explained why the cabinets could benefit other facilities. "We are aware of the difficulties posed by the misuse of fire extinguishers in all types of public buildings from offices, schools, hospitals to leisure facilities and local and central government buildings. All too often they are either accidentally knocked off their wall fixings, used as doorstops or simply misused in a variety of ways."