

## **ST JOSEPH'S PRIMARY SCHOOL**

### **EMERGENCY EVACUATION OF THE SCHOOL BUILDINGS**

#### **Introduction**

There may be any number of reasons necessitating the evacuation of part or the whole of the school building. The nature of the reason may have implications on how the normal evacuation can be adhered to and it may therefore require a degree of flexibility for decisions to be taken instantly. It is not possible to give a comprehensive analysis of every eventuality but the aim of this document is to outline general points to be followed as closely as the situation will allow, minimising confusion, misunderstanding and danger.

#### **Fire evacuation**

The school has a modern and well-maintained fire alarm system installed throughout the school. There is an agreed and understood evacuation plan to be followed in respect of the evacuation of the building (detailed below). Regular fire drills occur throughout the school year to ensure that everyone knows what they are to do and to identify any difficulties that may arise with the procedure.

If there is a real emergency then the plan will need to be adapted according to the time of day (e.g. if the children are in the dinner hall, sports hall or playground as opposed to their classroom) or the position of the fire (e.g. normal escape routes may be blocked by the fire). In such instances the principal and building supervision will endeavour to direct pupils and staff along a safe route. Teachers may also have to use their judgement and discretion as to what may or may not constitute a safe route.

#### **IN CASE OF FIRE**

1. On all occasions when the fire alarm sounds the building must be evacuated. This includes support staff or visiting adults.
2. The following procedure operates when the fire alarm is sounded:
  - Children are lined up in the classroom
  - Teacher to take the attendance register with them
  - Move in single file to the assembly point in the front playground of the school. No coats or bags to be brought out; no running.
  - Class to be lined up at assembly point
  - Check roll from attendance register
  - Anyone missing to be reported to the appropriate fire warden who will then inform the principal (fire marshal)
  - If forced to use an alternative exit, proceed to the designated assembly point.
  - All doors (classroom and fire doors) are to be closed after a class passes through
  - No person must re-enter the building until the principal has given permission for this to happen
  - If total evacuation of the grounds becomes necessary all classes will assemble on the footpath opposite the back gate of the school

- No person must leave the assembly point for any reason until permission has been given by the principal or by the NIFRS fire officer in charge.

It is the duty of ANYONE discovering the fire to operate the nearest fire alarm. If the fire is small and the adult is happy to operate a fire extinguisher then this is permissible; however, it is essential that preservation of life is of paramount importance. No one should place themselves or anyone else at any unnecessary risk.

### **Roles and responsibilities**

The principal will act as a fire marshal. She will ensure that they know when everyone has been safely evacuated from the building and will liaise with both the building supervisor and the NIFRS fire officer in charge.

The secretary will identify the source of the alarm activation from the panel in the entrance hall, and pass this information to both the principal and the building supervisor. If Miss Weir is not in the school then the secretary will cover her fire warden checking area.

The building supervisor will locate the source of the fire and if appropriate use a fire extinguisher to put the fire out. If this is not appropriate then he will ensure that people are directed away from this location.

The classroom assistants will initially assist the teacher to evacuate the class and then check specific areas to ensure that no one has been left behind. Mrs. Morelli will check Foundation Stage area. Miss Wilson will check the Key Stage 2 area. Mr. Mc Cann will check the mobile area. If one of these named assistants is not in school, Mrs. Casimero will check this area.

### **In case of other emergency**

In the case of an emergency other than a fire, the bell will be rung in seven short rings, followed by seven more short rings and the following procedure operates:

- Children are lined up in the room
- Teacher to take the attendance register with them
- Move in single file to the assembly hall, no coats or bags to be removed; no running allowed
- Check roll from attendance register
- Anyone missing to be reported to the principal
- No person must leave the assembly point for any reason until permission has been given by the principal.

### **Bomb warning**

It is unlikely, but sadly not unheard of, for a bomb warning to be given to a school. In all such cases the following procedure should be followed:

**Person receiving a bomb warning** (typically the secretary, teacher or principal)

- If the warning comes by telephone, email or post the person must treat this seriously as a credible threat
- The person receiving the information must immediately inform the principal or vice-principal and building supervisor and telephone the PSNI:-  
St. Joseph's Primary School in Slate Street, Belfast has received a

bomb warning. Our address is 1 Slate Street, Cullingtree Road, Belfast. BT12 4LD. Telephone number is 02890 323683

If you have an indication as to where the caller has said that the device has been left, then tell the operator.

“We are now evacuating the building.”

**Principal-** the principal or vice principal will immediately instigate an evacuation of the building using the emergency evacuate alarm signal – the school bell will be rung in seven short rings, followed by seven more short rings. The children will all assemble in the assembly hall and the principal will inform staff of where they are to take the children.

Obviously if there is knowledge of an area of the school that is unsafe then children will be directed away from this area. A decision to evacuate the pupils outside or to move the pupils further away from the school will be taken by the principal, vice-principal or senior teacher depending on the perceived risk prior to the arrival of the PSNI. The PSNI will take charge of the situation as soon as they arrive on scene.

If it is necessary to move further away from the school then this will be done in a safe and orderly manner. Teachers should endeavour to keep the children calm and safe in their class groups. Everyone will initially need to find a safe space on the foot path until a decision is taken and the arrangements made by the principal or vice-principal to move to an alternative venue.

If parents arrive to collect their children during this movement then it is essential that teachers only release their child to a responsible adult, and makes a note of who has gone and who has taken the child. This will ensure that no child is unaccounted for in any confusion that may occur.

The school will either be declared safe and pupils will return to their normal activities, or it will become obvious that there will be a long delay in returning to normal business and the principal will make the decision to dismiss the pupils for the day. No one will be permitted to re-enter the building until the PSNI have given permission for this to happen.

The school will have an up-to-date emergency contact list which will be brought with the secretary, principal and vice-principal. The principal will endeavour to gain permission to use Grosvenor Recreation Centre (Permission has been granted October 2013) to assemble the children until they can return to school or be dismissed with their parent.

The principal will endeavour to contact the Belfast Education and Library Board and the chair of governors at his earliest convenience to appraise them about the developing situation.

## **Evacuation of the building due to threat of violence or harm to a pupil or member of staff by a pupil or adult**

### **Visitors**

The exterior doors of the school should always be locked except for standard school opening and closing times. The CCTV system will enable the possibility of an intruder entering the building to be limited. It is virtually impossible to determine if a visitor is planning to enter the building to cause harm to others by observing them on the CCTV and so it is possible that such a person may be legitimately allowed access to the school.

All visitors are requested to present themselves to the secretary in the office on entry and this will help to determine the nature and attitude of the caller. If a visitor does not come to the office and is not known to the school then the secretary will call them back to find out the reason for their visit.

If the person does not stop, appears agitated, or the secretary has concerns or suspicions then she will inform the principal who will then deal with the situation in a calm and reasoned manner. The secretary will call the building supervisor or another teacher to assist if necessary.

The PSNI will be called if it is felt that there is any danger to a member of the school community.

### **Pupils**

The school has agreed mechanisms (use of reasonable force and discipline policies) for dealing with situations involving pupils threatening staff or other pupils.

In both of the above situations the principal will make a judgement as to the likelihood of risk to those on the premises, and endeavour to limit that risk. The outcome will depend on the nature of the situation (who the visitor or pupil is attempting to harm and their location). It may be possible to isolate the perpetrator in a safe way in a location away from others. It may be necessary for the children to be evacuated off site, or to remain in their rooms until the situation has been made safe. These decisions will be taken locally by a senior member of staff based on their view of what would be best for those on site.

Once the incident has been resolved either by the staff or by the PSNI, a written report of the incident will be completed and a review as to how the matter was addressed will be carried out.