



St Vincent's Special National School **Fire drill and evacuation**



Introduction

The fire drill/evacuation policy of St. Vincent's Special School has been produced in consultation with the Principal, In- School Management Team and staff.

Rationale

A policy on Fire Drill and Evacuation is necessary to ensure that procedures which comply with the Health, Safety and Welfare at Work Act 2005 are in place. The Board of Management has a duty to safeguard the health and safety of staff and pupils.

School Ethos

In providing a safe and secure school environment, the main concern of each staff member is to ensure that all pupils under his/her care at the time of evacuation are safely removed from the building and assembled at the middle of the front car park, the designated assembly area. St. Vincent's Special School and the Development Education Centre (DEC) share premises and both evacuate on the activation of the fire alarm.

Aims:

This policy aims to:

- To prevent panic
- Ensure the safe, orderly and efficient evacuation of all the occupants of the school using all the exit facilities available.
- To develop procedures for the controlled movement of pupils and staff area in the minimum possible time, exposing them to the least possible risk.
- Enable the school to provide for the immediate needs of students, staff and visitors in the event of a fire
- Ensure a safe school environment for all
- To utilize outside agencies (local fire station, fire officer) and safety staff from the Daughters of Charity Service for training and staff development, so as to enhance safety procedures.
- To develop a framework to ensure the safety of all school personnel in the event of a fire.

Guidelines

At all times during the fire drill the welfare and safety of the pupils are the primary responsibilities of the staff. No pupil should be left unattended at any time. The evacuation of pupils is practiced informally so that in an emergency, pupils will know what is expected of them and staff may identify any possible issues, which may arise with our pupils. Feedback on any issues and possible solutions will be discussed after the fire drills.

Current Situation

- St. Vincent's Special School is a two storey building.
- The school has a comprehensive addressable fire detection and alarm system and emergency lighting.



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- There are 10 classrooms (2 ASD classrooms located to the left of the main reception area), 1 kitchen, 1 staffroom, 2 resource rooms, 1 soft play room, 2 offices, 1 store room, 1 snoozeleen and 1 therapy office (beside the ASD classrooms).
- No pupils in wheelchairs are permitted upstairs at any time.
- MDT members and visitors are asked to sign in so that the Principal is aware of their presence, in the event of a fire
- Fire drills are held on a termly basis
- A record of proceedings is kept.
- Staff and pupils are informed of their efficiency following the evacuation drill
- It is the responsibility of all staff to ensure they are aware of the designated routes for evacuation of pupils.
- A laminated copy of the evacuation routes is displayed in each classroom and locations around the school.
- The Deputy Principal reports to the Principal at the assembly area that all classes and staff from the building are present.

Each staff member will:

- Be aware that the designated route(s) to evacuate pupils in his/her care.
- Try to ensure that the pupils are familiar with each route.
- Ensure the roll books are marked.
- Take the roll books when evacuating the room.
- Be familiar with the Fire Drill and Evacuation Policy so that he/she may confidently follow through the procedure.
- Familiarize the pupils with as much of the procedure as is possible and necessary.
- Quickly determine the appropriate evacuation route taking into consideration the safety of the pupils and the speed with which the evacuation can take place.
- Be aware that during break times they have a duty of care for the pupils and get paid for breaks. Therefore, they are not permitted to leave the building for lunch.

The Principal or Deputy Principal will ensure that:

- The evacuation signal is sounded
- The appropriate authorities are contacted
- Main reception and DEC are contacted
- Regular service of fire extinguishers/fire hose
- Fire doors are unlocked at all times, whilst remaining securely closed by the fob system.
- No items are obstructing exits or exit routes. All noted obstructions should be reported immediately to the Principal.

Evacuations will be of two types:

- Notified and scheduled
- Un-notified and un-scheduled.

FIRE DRILL AND EVACUATION PROCEDURE

A fire drill will be held at least once per term.



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In the event of a fire, the following steps must be taken:

ACTION ON HEARING THE FIRE ALARM the staff and pupils will:

- Teachers and SNAs immediately evacuate pupils by the nearest exit and go to the assembly point. Pupils should be instructed by the staff to follow the exit route, keeping to the left side of the corridor/stairwells at all times.
- Pupils should leave the classroom in an orderly, brisk manner, with minimum fuss to the designated assembly point. Pupils must not run or attempt to pass others.
- The class teacher and SNA(s) will assist and direct pupils.
- The SNA follows at the rear, closing the door of the classroom and the teacher leads the pupils with the roll book.
- All staff must check the class toilets before vacating the room and take the roll book.

ACTION ON HEARING THE FIRE ALARM the Principal and School Secretary will:

- A) The fire alarm will sound, and the fire panel will be activated.
- B) In the absence of the Principal in the main foyer area, the School Secretary will check the panel in the reception.
If safe to do so, the Principal/ or School Secretary upon identifying the location of the fire as displayed on the fire panel, will approach the area indicated to establish if there is a fire.
- C) If a fire is discovered or suspected, the Principal/School Secretary will dial 999 and request a fire brigade and will proceed to evacuate.
- D) If a fire is not discovered the reception of St. Vincent's Centre must be contacted and informed of the situation, as will the DEC.

The School Secretary will bring the following 5 books with her upon evacuating the building:

1. The Communication/Staff Daily Attendance Book
2. The Visitors Book
3. The Pupils leaving early Book
4. The Social Outings Book
5. The MDT/pupils book.

ACTION ON DISCOVERING A FIRE

- A) Raise the alarm using the nearest break glass/key unit.
- B) Call 999 and ask for the fire brigade.
- C) Evacuate the pupils away from the fire.

The school has 4 main exits,

- Exit 1: the main entrance,
- Exit 2: the exit in front of the stairway, the one adjacent to the school hall,
- Exit 3: exit doors leading to the two ASD classes.
- Exit 4: the side exit from the assembly hall



Fire exits will open automatically in the event of a fire
Pupils will walk under the supervision of their teacher/SNA to the nearest exit.
Once outside no one will re-enter the building until the all clear is given.

EVACUATION ROUTES

The school has two stairways. These are protected from the corridors by fire resistant doors. These doors should always be closed. The lift must not be used.

Classes 2, 7, 8, reception and office occupants will use the main entrance, Exit 1.
Classes from rooms 1, 3,4,5,6 will use Exit 2.

Persons occupying the home economics room, staff room, resource room and soft play room will use Exit 2.

Classes 9 and 10 and pupils in the therapy room will evacuate through Exit 3.

Hall occupants will use the side exit in the assembly hall, Exit 4.

ASSEMBLY POINTS

Main Assembly Point 1:

All classes will assemble in the middle section of the car park at the front of the school.

Teachers will take a roll call at the assembly point and notify the person in charge. The Principal will take charge of the car park. In the absence of the Principal, the Deputy Principal or most senior teacher on site will do so.

The Resource Teacher(s) will assume responsibility for patrol of the main entrance, gate to the school.

Assembly Point 2 (only used at official break/lunch times)

When official playtime all pupils and staff will assemble at the bottom of the main school yard (**ASSEMBLY point 2**). All other staff on break/lunch must exit the school using the nearest exit and go round the back of the school and enter at the back gate.

Points to note:

- Do not return for anything.
- No-one may leave the assembly point to retrieve belongings.
- Staff evacuating classrooms will direct any pupils who are in the corridor to exit with that class and proceed to their own class line at the assembly point.
- If transitioning around the school with pupils please proceed with pupils to the nearest exit and the pupils then join their own class lines.
- Members of staff not in charge of pupils, on hearing the alarm, should go immediately to the assembly point.
- Pupils/staff can only return to the classroom once permission has been given to do so.



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- Pupils and staff in the main yard must exit through the back gate of the yard and walk around to the assembly point.

Role and Responsibilities:

All staff members are responsible for the safety and well being of the pupils in their care. Fire drill procedures are part of the post of responsibility within the in-school management structure of St. Vincent's Special School.

Ratification, Communication and Review:

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management 22nd June 2020 and communicated to the school community thereafter. This policy will be reviewed in 2 years' time and amended as necessary by means of a whole school collaborative process.