

THE FIRE DRILL ROUTINE

The fire drill routine in schools

The safe and effective response to a fire is based on a critical sequence of events.

This page details what should happen during the different stages in response to a fire in a school.

Alarm operation

Anyone discovering an outbreak of fire must, without hesitation, sound the alarm by operating the nearest fire alarm call point.

Calling the fire service

All outbreaks of fire or any suspected fire, however small, should be reported immediately to the fire service by the quickest means available. This task could well be designated as the responsibility of the school secretary as a telephone will be readily available at that location.

Evacuation

On hearing the fire alarm, pupils must be instructed to leave the building in single file and in a calm, orderly manner.

The person in charge of each class must indicate the exit route to be used and everyone must be directed to a predetermined assembly point.

Specific arrangements must be made for pupils with physical or mental disabilities to ensure that they are assisted during evacuation.

- No running is to be permitted. Running can lead to panic.
- On staircases everyone must descend in single file. Overtaking of classes or individuals must not be permitted.
- Lifts must not be used.
- Anyone who is not in class when the fire alarm sounds must go immediately to the assembly point.
- No one must be allowed to re-enter the building until told to do so by the senior fire officer in attendance, or, in the case of a fire evacuation drill the senior person in charge.

Assembly

An area outside the school premises must be designated as an assembly point. It must be clearly marked and easily identified by anyone who may be on the school premises. It must be far enough away from the school premises to give protection from the heat and smoke given off by a fire. It should be in a position that does not put pupils and staff at risk by emergency vehicles responding to the incident.

Roll call

One person should be nominated to have overall responsibility to ensure that a roll call is conducted in the event of a fire alarm. They should use the following instructions:

- Immediately after classes have assembled at the assembly point, a roll call or count must be made to check that no-one is left inside.
- Any visitors or contractors on the premises at that time must be included.
- The count at the assembly point must be checked with the attendance registers and visitors book to verify that everyone is out of the building.
- Attendance registers and visitors books should be held at a central point and must be brought to the assembly point when the alarm sounds.
- Each teacher must report to the nominated person in charge of the evacuation to verify that everyone in their charge is accounted for or to inform him/her of the number of people missing.

Meeting the fire service

The person in charge of the roll call must identify him/herself to the fire service on their arrival. This will allow the fire officer to decide the necessary actions to be carried out by the fire service.

Typical information the fire service will want to know:

- Is everyone accounted for?
- If anyone is missing: how many? What is their usual location? Where were they last seen?
- Where is the fire? What is on fire? (It may not be apparent)
- Are there any hazardous substances involved in the fire or stored in the building (e.g chemicals, solvents, liquefied petroleum gas or acetylene cylinders)?

Instruction, training and recording

During the first week of term or as soon as possible thereafter, all new entrants (pupils, staff and support staff) should be shown the primary escape routes of the school. They should also be informed of the school fire evacuation routine.

All members of staff should receive instruction and training appropriate to their responsibilities in the event of any emergency.

All members of staff should each receive a personal copy of written instructions. They should receive two periods of verbal instructions in each 12 month period. Such instruction should include details of how to call the fire service. In the case of new staff, instruction should be given as soon as possible after appointment.

A record of the training and instructions given and fire drills held should be entered in the log book and include the following:

- Date of the instruction or fire drill
- Duration
- Name of person giving the instruction
- Names of people receiving instruction
- Nature of instruction or fire drill

Fire drills, which may be combined with the instruction given above, should be carried out at least once per term. The fire drill should simulate that one escape route is not available. Each fire drill should be started by a pre-determined signal and the whole premises checked as if an evacuation was in progress.

In large premises, a specific person should be made responsible for organising staff training and nominating one other person to co-ordinate the actions of the staff in the event of fire. Effective arrangements should be made for a deputy or deputies to carry out the above duties in the absence of the nominated people.

In smaller premises, one specific person should be made responsible for organising staff training and for co-ordinating the actions of the staff in the event of fire. Effective arrangements should be made for a nominated deputy to be available to carry out the above duties.