

BOMB THREATS AND SUSPICIOUS PACKAGES POLICY

Introduction

Under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 the governors of Pippins School ensure that appropriate procedures are in place in the event of serious and imminent danger. A duty of care is owed to all staff, pupils and visitors to safeguard them from risks to their safety. Risks from suspect packages or bomb threats via telephone, text message, email or social media depend on a number of factors, including the political climate, the fact we are a school, and our location in the community.

Our evacuation plans are appended to this document (appendix 2 and 3) and stated in the school handbook. Although the plans will hopefully never be needed, it is essential to have arrangements in place for dealing with bomb threats and suspicious packages so that staff know how to act should the occasion ever arise.

Objectives and targets

This policy provides procedures and action to be taken by staff and students. These details complement other emergency preparedness aspects such as fire, first aid, lockdown, site security and school crisis plans. Although any bomb threat or suspect item may be a hoax or false alarm, instances are taken seriously. Our aim is to ensure that our local procedure, while effective, is not needlessly disruptive.

We aim to process all incoming mail, dispatch and courier deliveries at one point only. The office that receives mail is in an area that can be isolated and in which deliveries can be handled directly without taking them through other parts of the building.

Action plan

All members of staff are trained in evacuation procedures.

Attached to our policy are the following forms:

- Action plan on receipt of a bomb threat (appendix 1).
- School evacuation plan: bomb threat (appendix 2).
- School evacuation plan: suspicious postal package or bag (appendix 3).
- School evacuation training log (appendix 4).

Bomb threat procedures

Staff members undertake a wide range of duties, some of which bring them in direct contact with an outside line on the telephone system. All staff have access to email and social media. It is foreseeable, therefore, that individuals could receive a bomb threat. The following procedures must be implemented should any member of staff ever receive such a communication. It is fully appreciated that someone receiving a communication of a bomb threat may well be caught off-guard. We therefore ask all line managers to remind team members of the need to be diligent at all times and to be prepared to follow these procedures. Refer to Appendix 1 – Action plan on receipt of a bomb threat, and complete as much as possible of the checklist depending on how the threat is received.

On receiving a telephone call

- Stay calm and listen carefully to the caller without interrupting.
- Try to have the checklist of things to remember close at hand (see appendix 1) and make a note of:
 - The time of the call and what is said.
 - The caller's telephone number or caller ID if possible.
 - The caller's tone of voice (eg aggressive, calm).
 - The possible nationality and approximate age of the caller.
 - Any background noises such as traffic, other people in the background, music, machinery being operated.
- Before the person rings off, try to ascertain:
 - Where the bomb is, ie the name of the building and in which area.
 - What time it will explode.
 - The type of package or container.
 - Who is calling, eg name of individual, terrorist group, etc.
- Try to alert a colleague to dial 999 and keep the caller on the line if possible.
- Try to take the caller's number if displayed or dial 1471 immediately afterwards.
- Notify the headteacher or the person in charge immediately.
- Indicate that you have received a bomb threat and give:
 - Your name.
 - Telephone extension number (if appropriate).
 - Your exact location in or around the building.
 - Outline brief details of what has been said.
- Keep your telephone line clear and await further instructions; you may be telephoned for further clarification.

If for any reason there is a delay, eg if persons receiving the call cannot contact the headteacher/person in charge and the manner, tone and urgency of the caller makes you consider the call to be a real threat, then sound the fire alarm at the break glass and initiate evacuation of the building.

On receiving a recorded message, an email, text message or other electronic form of communication

- Write down as much detail as possible of a recorded message and retain for the police to secure.

- Do not reply, forward or delete anything related to a text message, email or other electronic communication received because they may be needed as police evidence.
- Notify the headteacher or the person in charge immediately to advise them that you have received a bomb threat.
- Note the sender's telephone number, if possible, email address or username/user ID.
- Ensure that all web log files for the school are kept in order to help the police investigation (as a guide, seven days before the threat message and 48 hours after).
- If you cannot immediately contact the headteacher/person in charge and the manner, tone and urgency of the communication makes you consider the call to be a real threat, then sound the fire alarm at the break glass and initiate evacuation of the building.

On receiving a face-to-face bomb threat

- Try to remember as many details as possible as outlined in the telephone call threat above and as much as possible about the physical appearance of the person making the threat. For guidance, refer to Appendix 1 – Action plan on receipt of a bomb threat.

On receiving a bomb threat as a note or similar

- On receiving a threat on paper immediately place the paper in a plastic bag to prevent others handling it and treat as police evidence before following the checklist procedures (appendix 1).

Bomb threat alarm

The signal that indicates a bomb threat has been received is: continuous alarm ringing.

On hearing the alarm all staff should:

- Inspect briefly your work area for any suspicious packages, objects, etc. Do not touch suspect items.
- Evacuate the school carrying out routine fire drill procedures (see paragraph below on evacuation and Appendix 2 – School evacuation plan – bomb threat).
- Report anything suspicious to the headteacher/person in charge on arrival at the assembly point.
- Stay in the assembly point and await further instructions from the headteacher/person in charge who will liaise with the emergency services.

Assembly points

All staff and pupils must move in an orderly fashion and purposefully to their clearly identified assembly points.

The police will take control of the school and no one should be allowed back into the buildings until the headteacher/person in charge has received the all clear from the police.

Individual responsibilities

The headteacher/person in charge

- The headteacher/person in charge will judge whether the bomb threat could be a hoax and decide whether to evacuate the building and sound the alarm within minutes of receiving information that a bomb threat has been given.

- The alarm is to be set by following the appropriate school procedures.
- Headteacher/person in charge should then proceed to the clearly recognised assembly points.

If threat is received by reception

- Immediately notify the headteacher/person in charge outlining details of the bomb threat and the name and telephone number of the person receiving the call.
- Notify the police using the emergency telephone number.
- Maintain telephone access (mobile or land line) which is not connected with the bomb threat, to enable vital communications to take place, until such time as reception is evacuated.

Support staff

- Upon hearing the alarm site/support staff should immediately open all gates on site, including pedestrian gates.
- One person should be sent to man each gate and should prevent anyone other than emergency services entering the site by these gates.

Class teachers (supervisory staff at break/lunchtime)

- Ensure quiet and orderly evacuation and assembly in correct area.
- Check register and report to team leader.
- Do not allow pupils to move away from line until headteacher/person in charge gives further instructions.

Suspicious packages

Suspicious packages may be received in the post as mail, or may be discovered in any part of the building as unattended and unidentified packages or other items, for example unattended baggage.

Anyone discovering a suspicious package on site should make an appraisal of the situation and decide whether any further action is needed. Staff should draw on their awareness-raising training to decide the actions they must take when packages or other unattended items are reported to them. They will need to assess whether the package should be treated as suspicious. Steps that can be taken include making every effort to find the owner as quickly as possible.

Staff members should consider:

- Not to use mobile phones or radios within 10 metres of any suspect package.
 - Is the package hidden or does it appear to be simply left behind as lost property?
 - Is it clearly suspicious eg batteries, wire, tape etc visible?
- Whether or not it is typical of the environment in which it is found (eg a carrier bag left in the entrance hall).
- Whether there has been a specific threat to the school or to the local authority (LA) or community.

A judgment will then be made whether or not to evacuate the premises and seek police assistance – see Appendix 3 – School evacuation plan – suspicious package or bag.

Staff procedures for handling post

Letter bombs may be explosive or incendiary; or chemical, biological or radiological (CBR). If we receive a suspicious delivery it is unlikely we will know which type it is, so procedures have to take into account all eventualities.

Our risk assessments give a good idea of the letter bomb threat to our premises – generally the school and community are a relatively low risk target. We may also receive advice from the police on the level of threat.

Staff members whose job it is routinely to handle post will be alert to possible risks and will be familiar with the possible indicators of a suspicious package such as a letter bomb. Line managers will ensure that these staff members are particularly aware of specific guidance and procedures. In addition:

- We ensure that all sources of incoming mail (eg royal mail, courier, hand delivery) are included in our screening process.
- We ensure that all staff who handle mail or hand-delivered items are briefed and trained.
- The office that receives mail has ready access to washing facilities, including soap and detergent.
- Members of our office staff are aware of the usual pattern of deliveries and types of item and are briefed of any unusual deliveries.

We advise all staff to:

- Open post with letter openers or other implements.
- Open packages with the minimum movement.
- Not blow into envelopes or shake out the contents.
- Keep their hands away from their noses and mouths while opening mail.
- Always wash their hands after opening mail.

Members of staff are aware that, should packages suspected of containing biological, chemical or radiological material ever be received, they should ideally be placed in a double sealed bag.

We do not consider, at this time, that staff members handling post need personal protective equipment such as latex gloves and face masks. However, should a need ever be identified such equipment will be provided.

We have prepared signs for display in the event of a suspected or actual attack.

Evacuation

The purpose of evacuation is to move people from an area where they might be at risk to a place of lesser risk. Evacuation will not always be the first response. Advice will be sought from the police where possible. Limited evacuation of sections of the building may be appropriate where suspicious packages are found. Evacuation may need to take place in response to:

- A threat call directly to the building.
- A threat call received elsewhere and notified to you by the police.
- The discovery of a suspicious item in the building or the discovery of a suspicious item or vehicle outside our building.
- The discovery of a suspicious item elsewhere notified to school by the police or neighbours.

The headteacher/person in charge will determine whether or not to evacuate the school based on the available information, including advice from emergency services. The routine fire assembly point may not be the appropriate place to evacuate to, although this might be used as an initial staging post before redirecting occupants elsewhere. The school's car park may not be the most appropriate place to evacuate to in the instance of a bomb threat; an evacuation route which would take people past a suspect device or vehicle outside school, or through an area believed to be contaminated by CBR materials, may be the riskiest course of action.

Alternative evacuation plans will be brought into effect should the need arise. The use of alternative evacuation plans will be practised as part of our normal procedures to ensure there is safe and efficient movement away from the building.

Our evacuation plans address:

- Full evacuation outside the building.
- Evacuation of part of the building if the device is small and thought to be confined to one location (eg a letter bomb discovered in an office).
- Evacuation of all staff apart from designated searchers.
- Full or partial evacuation to an internal safe area.

See Appendix 2 – School evacuation plan – bomb threat and Appendix 3 – School evacuation plan – suspicious package or bag, as appropriate.

Staff receive training in how to evacuate the buildings safely and their roles in any evacuation. A training log is kept. See appendix 4 – School evacuation plan – training log.

Social media

Staff and pupils should not reveal details about specific incidents through social media or to other media sources without prior consultation with police. Releasing details could give a hoaxer more credibility, cause unnecessary alarm, encourage copycat incidents at the school or other places and adversely affect any subsequent police investigation.

Monitoring and evaluation

This policy will be monitored regularly for any changes in legislation which may have an effect and will be evaluated in the light of any changes to evacuation drills, procedures or risk assessments undertaken.

Reviewing

The headteacher and governing board will carry out a review of this policy after the post-incident evaluation if any relevant incident occurs, otherwise on a regular basis to ensure that any new or changed legislation is adhered to.

APPENDIX 1

Action plan on receipt of a bomb threat

Telephone call

- Remain calm and talk to the caller.
- Note caller's number if displayed or dial 1471 immediately after the call if possible.
- Record the call if possible.
- Write down the exact wording of the threat.

Text message, email or social media communication

- Do not reply to, forward or delete the message.
- Note the address of the email, and application and user/ID if social media is used.
- Ensure that all web log files for the school are kept in order to help the police investigation (as a guide, seven days before the threat message and 48 hours after).

Checklist

Caller's number or user/ID	
Questions to ask the caller	
Where exactly is the bomb right now?	
When is it going to explode?	
What does it look like?	
What does the bomb contain?	
How will it be detonated?	
Did you place the bomb? If not you, who did?	
What is your name?	
What is your address?	
What is your telephone number?	
Do you represent a group, or are you acting alone?	

Why have you placed the bomb at our school?	
Time call completed	

Inform site manager and headteacher.

Dial 999 and inform police

Name and telephone number of person informed	
Time informed	

This part should be completed once the caller has hung up and police/ relevant staff have all been informed.

1. Where exactly is the bomb right now?

7. What is your name?

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2. When is it going to explode?

8. What is your address?

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3. What does it look like?

9. What is your telephone number?

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4. What does the bomb contain?

10. Do you represent a group or are you acting alone?

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5. How will it be detonated?

11. Why have you placed the bomb?

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6. Did you place the bomb? If not you, who did?

12. Record time completed:

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Date and time of call:

Duration of call:

received the call:

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Remarks

Date:

Retention period: 7 years

APPENDIX 2

School evacuation plan – bomb threat

This evacuation plan has been discussed with the emergency services.

How the evacuation will be communicated to staff.
Designated routes and exits.
Designated members of staff to act as marshals during the evacuation and as contact points once the assembly area is reached.
How this plan is compatible with any plans made by others who share the premises.
Designated routes and exits to an alternative assembly point.
Welfare of staff/students while the building is evacuated.

If the threat is confirmed as a hoax, the headteacher/person in charge will communicate that it is safe to re-enter the building. Routes and exits used to evacuate the building should be used for re-entry.

NO-ONE SHOULD RE-ENTER THE BUILDING UNTIL TOLD TO DO SO.

If the threat is real, staff and pupils will be moved to a safe location and emergency communication systems will be deployed.

After care: counselling will be provided for any staff or students who may feel anxious following the incident.

APPENDIX 3

School evacuation plan – suspicious package or bag

This evacuation plan has been discussed with the emergency services.

Instruction to staff not to use mobile telephones or radios in the vicinity (around 10m) of any suspect package.
How the evacuation will be communicated to staff.
Designated routes and exits.
Designated members of staff to act as marshals during the evacuation and as contact points once the assembly area is reached.
How this plan is compatible with any plans made by others who share the premises.
For incidents thought to involve explosives, details of an alternative assembly area at least 500m from the school building.
Designated routes and exits to this alternative assembly point.
Welfare of staff/students while the building is evacuated.

If the suspicious package is confirmed as benign, the headteacher/person in charge will communicate that it is safe to re-enter the building. The routes and exits used to evacuate the building should be used for re-entry.

NO-ONE SHOULD RE-ENTER THE BUILDING UNTIL TOLD TO DO SO.

If the suspicious package proves to be a real threat, staff and pupils will be moved to a safe location and emergency communication systems will be deployed.

After care: counselling will be provided for any staff or students who may feel anxious following the incident.

APPENDIX 4

School evacuation plan – training log

The training log should be updated half-terminly or more frequently if directed by the evacuation officer.

Designation Of staff	Date of last training
Leadership team – whole school management.	
Leadership team – individual roles including liaison with the police.	
Permanent full-time teachers and teaching assistants.	
Permanent part-time teachers and teaching assistants.	
Newly appointed teachers and teaching assistants.	
Temporary teachers and teaching assistants.	
Permanent full-time office/administration staff.	

Designation Of staff	Date of last training
Permanent part-time office/administration staff.	
Newly appointed office/administration staff.	
Temporary office/administration staff.	
Permanent full-time premises/catering/supervisory staff.	
Permanent part-time premises/catering/supervisory staff.	
Newly appointed premises/catering/supervisory staff.	
Temporary premises/catering staff/supervisory staff.	