Bomb Threats and Suspicious Packages Policy

This policy should be read in conjunction with the emergency procedures in the school handbook and with reference to the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, section 8.


Background

Under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, schools need to ensure that appropriate procedures are in place in the event of serious and imminent danger such as fire, bomb threats etc.

Staff members undertake a wide range of duties, some of which bring them in direct contact with an outside line on the telephone system. It is foreseeable, therefore, that individuals could receive a telephone call which is a bomb threat.

A suspicious package is a package or envelope found or received, normally by mail or courier or delivered in person, which arouses the suspicion of the receiver because of some indicator or indicators. It may or may not be preceded by letter or telephone threats or warnings. It may simply be poorly addressed, or it may be a hoax.

The likelihood of receiving a package or letter containing suspicious substances is remote. However, it is important for staff to be aware of the characteristics that are common to suspicious packages and the procedures to be followed.
BOMB THREATS AND SUSPICIOUS PACKAGES

Introduction
Under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 Sandwell Valley School and Sandwell Community Care Trust Training ensures that appropriate procedures are in place in the event of serious and imminent danger. A duty of care is owed to all staff and visitors to safeguard them from risks to their safety. Risks of telephone bomb threats or suspect packages depend on a number of factors, including the political climate, the fact we are a school and our location in the community.

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 or 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.

All incoming mail, dispatch and courier deliveries are filtered through the hotel reception on the ground floor. Once arriving with us on the 2nd Floor, the office that receives mail is in an area that can be isolated.

Attached to our policy are the following forms:
- School evacuation plan: bomb threat.
- School evacuation plan: suspicious postal package.
- School evacuation plan: suspicious bag.
- School evacuation training log.

Action plan
All members of staff are trained in evacuation procedures. A training log is kept within the same folder as this policy.
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. It is foreseeable, therefore, that individuals could receive a telephone bomb threat. The following procedures must be implemented should any member of staff ever receive such a call. It is fully appreciated that someone receiving a telephone 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.

On receiving the telephone call:

Listen to the caller without interrupting and make a note of the time of the call and what is said. Before the person rings off, try to ascertain:

- Where the bomb is, i.e. the name of the building and in which area.
- What time it will explode.
- The type of package or container.
- Who is calling, e.g. name of individual, terrorist group, etc.

Notify the Principal 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, e.g. if persons receiving the call cannot contact the Principal/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.

**Bomb threat alarm**

*On hearing the alarm:*

- 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.
- Report anything suspicious to the Principal on arrival at the assembly point.
- Stay in the assembly point and await further instructions from the Principal who will liaise with the emergency services.

**Assembly points**

All staff and students 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 Principal has received the all clear from the police.

**Individual responsibilities**

*The Principal:*

- The Principal will decide on evacuation 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.
- Principal should then proceed to the clearly recognised assembly points.
If threat is received by reception:

- Immediately notify the Principal/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 exits on site.
- 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 students to move away from line until Principal 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:

- Is the package hidden or does it appear to be simply left behind as lost property?
- Is it clearly suspicious e.g. batteries, wire, tape etc. visible?
- Whether or not it is typical of the environment in which it is found (e.g. 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 judgement will then be made whether or not to evacuate the premises and seek police assistance.

**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 (e.g. 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 to 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 suspect 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 Principal 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. If, for example, an evacuation route would take people past a suspect device or vehicle outside school or through an area believed to be contaminated by CBR materials, evacuation 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 (e.g. a letter bomb discovered in an office).
- Evacuation of all staff apart from designated searchers.
- Full or partial evacuation to an internal safe area.

Additional Guidance can be found below:
- WMP Hoax Bomb Threat Guidance Note - January 2016.pdf
- WMP Hoax Bomb Threat Update - 3 June 2016.pdf

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 Principal and governing body will carry out a review of this policy on a regular basis to ensure that any new or changed legislation is adhered to.

Date: October 2016

Review Date: October 2017
How the evacuation will be communicated to staff.

The Principal, or in their absence the most senior member of staff available, will inform the fire marshals, Jennifer Hall, Manjit Kaur and Chris Byrne, of the threat in person. Two of these members of staff will then proceed to sweep the building in a circular motion and calmly inform all other present members of staff. They will be vigilant for any suspicious packages or anything else out of place as they do so.

Evacuation procedure

After informing the marshals the Principal will proceed to inform hotel reception of the threat on foot, sweeping the front entrance/fire exit on the way to ensure it is clear for evacuation. At the same time the third marshal will sweep the rear exit to ensure it is clear. If either exit is not clear the Principal/marshal should return immediately, inform the other marshals and proceed to direct the evacuation through whichever exit is clear. The Principal should proceed to gain access to and inform hotel reception of the threat wherever possible. The normal fire evacuation procedure will be followed and co-ordinated by the marshals unless anything suspicious has been noted within the building as above, once clear of the building the third marshal will be responsible for calling 999 and reporting the threat.

Should it not be possible to use either exit, the two marshals coordinating the evacuation and informing staff should direct all those present to the room in the building that they deem to be the furthest away from anything suspicious that has been discovered.

The third marshal will then be responsible for calling 999 using a landline phone, informing them of the situation and then following and relaying any further advice given.

Designated members of staff to act as marshals during the evacuation and as contact points once the assembly area is reached.

Jennifer Hall, Manjit Kaur and Chris Byrne
How this plan is compatible with any plans made by others who share the premises.

It follows the procedure of no mobile phone use and seeks to inform hotel reception of any threat immediately.

**Designated routes and exits to an alternative assembly point.**

The designated exits are the same as with a regular evacuation, unless an alternative is required as stated above.

The alternative assembly point will be at the start of the pedestrian zone of West Bromwich High Street across the road from the premier inn, the marshals and other staff will ensure the roads are crossed in a safe manner.

If the threat is confirmed as a hoax, the Principal/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 threat is real, staff and students 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.
### SCHOOL EVACUATION PLAN – SUSPICIOUS POSTAL OR OTHER

| How the evacuation will be communicated to staff. | The person who has found the packaged will inform the Principal, or in their absence the most senior member of staff available, and the fire marshals, Jennifer Hall, Manjit Kaur and Chris Byrne, of the threat in person. Two of these members of staff will then proceed to sweep the building and inform staff in a circular motion starting with those rooms closest to the package. |
| Evacuation procedure | On informing staff of the treat the fire marshals will also direct them towards the route and exit that is furthest away from the package. The third marshal will the proceed to inform the hotel reception on foot. The two remaining fire marshals will coordinate the evacuation, following the fire evacuation plan as closely as possible whilst taking into account the location of the suspicious package. |
| Designated members of staff to act as marshals during the evacuation and as contact points once the assembly area is reached. | Jennifer Hall, Manjit Kaur and Chris Byrne |
| How this plan is compatible with any plans made by others who share the premises. | It follows the procedure of no mobile phone use and seeks to inform hotel reception of any threat immediately. |
For incidents thought to involve explosives, details of an alternative assembly area at least 500m from the school building.

The fire marshals will lead everyone present down the pedestrian area of West Bromwich High Street to the junction where the High Street meets St Michael Street and New Street. They will then assemble in the open paved area on St Michael Street behind the post box.

If the suspicious package is confirmed as benign, the Principal 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 is real, staff and students 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.