



## **St Mary's Catholic Primary School Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan(PEEP) Overview**

### **Background.**

The aim of a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) is to provide people with any form of disability, who cannot be adequately protected by the standard fire safety provisions within a premises, with a similar level of safety from the effects of fire as all other occupants.

### **Responsibilities**

Head Teachers should identify persons who may need additional help in evacuating from the school in the event of an emergency and ensure they are able to offer suitable practical assistance. However, the aim should be to facilitate independent escape wherever possible.

For pupils, staff, contractors and regular visitors, once it has been identified that a person would require assistance in the event of a fire, the Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan Questionnaire contained in Appendix 1 should be completed, and the individual's needs determined from the information supplied i.e. the number of assistants (including deputies) and methods used.

**These assistants may require specialist training.** The potential for lone working also needs to be considered here.

A simple strategy for providing appropriate assistance be determined and recorded on the Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan - Required Action sheet contained in Appendix 2.

The responsible person preparing the plan should not make assumptions about the abilities of the disabled person. They are likely to know what they can achieve. It is also important though that the disabled person does not feel pressured to do more physically than they would generally be able to achieve. Some negotiation skills, sensitivity and level of discernment are required by the person carrying out the PEEP. Training is essential.

For occasional visitors, contractors, events such as open evenings or school plays etc. a range of standard PEEPs can be used to ensure the safe evacuation of disabled people. Examples of standard PEEPs are available on the saferschools website [www.StMaryscatholicprimaryschool.taw.org.uk](http://www.StMaryscatholicprimaryschool.taw.org.uk). These contain some standard options but may need to be tailored to the schools individual circumstances.

### **Supporting Information**

#### **Pupils**

When a child is enrolled in the school, their escape plan should be developed

as part of the admission process. Care should be taken that all disabled children are provided with a plan if they need one, whether they have been provided with a statement or not.

Pupils with learning difficulties may need to practice their routes for escape more regularly than termly. If so, this should be written into their PEEP.

All people involved in the escape plans for PEEPs involving pupils will need to practice. However, to avoid unnecessary distress or risk to some pupils, simulated escape may be more appropriate.

### **Staff**

The SENCo and Class teacher should complete the PEEP in consultation with the school without delay, if such a plan has not already be completed or when there is a change in a person's ability to make their way out of the building (temporary or permanent). For all new staff this should form part of the induction process. This should be in confidence and it should be made clear that if they need help, it will be provided.

Some people may have difficulty in evacuation situations that they would not normally have e.g. people who have asthma may be affected in smoky conditions caused by fire, or people may be affected by the stress of an emergency situation.

Where a disabled person has elected to make an exceptional effort to get out unaided, it may not be practical for them to practice during drills. However, timing a short section of the escape will assist in establishing how long a full escape might take (see time needed to escape later).

### **Occasional visitors/contractors**

The HM Govt publication 'Means of Escape for Disabled People', which is endorsed by the Disability Rights Commission, details escape measures for ten disability groupings:

- Electric wheelchair user
- Wheelchair user
- Mobility impaired person
- Asthma and other breathing / health issues
- Visually impaired person
- Hearing impaired person
- Dyslexic/orientation disorders
- Learning difficulty / autism
- Mental health problems
- Dexterity problems

3. These groupings have been collated to produce four standard PEEPs for use at St Marys which are available on the schools website

[www.bexley.gov.uk/saferschools](http://www.bexley.gov.uk/saferschools). As previously indicated, these contain some standard options but may need to be tailored to the individuals circumstances.

A prominent notice should invite persons entering the premises to declare if they require assistance. The notice should read:

**“We operate a system of assisted evacuation for disabled persons and others who may need help in an emergency. Please speak to our staff and we will provide you with a suitable strategy.**

**We have trained members of staff who are able to assist you if it is necessary to evacuate. These staff will be constantly aware of your location in the premises, as they are with other persons. In the event of an emergency, we want to ensure that we provide you with assistance in the most appropriate way for you.**

**Staff will ensure that children in their care are evacuated safely. You must follow instructions given by staff for your own safe evacuation.”**

The PEEPs can be held at reception and are offered to people as part of the procedures for visitors as an extension to the signing in process.

The disabled person can then choose the escape option to suit them and can be given suitable instructions. A suitable plan should include consideration of what the building, management and disabled person can offer. It is also the responsibility of the disabled person to identify themselves when they are informed of the availability of a choice of evacuation plan and to cooperate with the school by giving any information necessary for the safe execution of the plan.

All reception staff should be trained in disabled etiquette. In the main however, visitors to the school are unlikely to spend time alone. All staff are responsible for ensuring visitors leave the building safely, whether or not they have a disability and should point out the escape routes. It should not be assumed that because a person has a disability that they will need or ask for a PEEP. Some will be confident that they can get out of the school building unaided. Conversely there should be an opportunity for other people who may not be considered as having a disability to request an escape plan e.g. epilepsy, asthma, heart disease or emotional problems.

4

**School plays, public events & open days etc.**

In the event of a school play, public event or open day etc. unknown visitors may enter the school and it may be more difficult to gather the information prior to the need to escape. In addition, it may be impossible to know how many disabled people are present at any one time or their level of disability. In these instances, a system of standard PEEPs should be used and advertised.

***It is suggested that when letters are sent out regarding events, a similar phrase to the one posted in reception is sent out to give you advanced notice of anyone who may need assistance.***

Training of staff is vital at such events as they will have to provide assistance and advice to disabled users of the building as the incident develops. The

plans to enable them to safely leave the building need pre-planning and the assessment of the types of escape that be provided within the building. Staff will need to understand all the options and standard PEEPs and be able to communicate these effectively to disabled people at the time of the escape. This will enable them to give maximum assistance to disabled people, irrespective of the nature of their impairment.

In order to do this they would need to receive disabled etiquette training, see appendix 3. This should form part of the schools fire risk assessment. Regular simulated practice should take place alongside moving, handling and disability evacuation etiquette training.

**Training is very important and must be regularly carried out to ensure staff involved in the escape plans feel confident in their skills and disabled people should feel that they can trust the process.**

### **Time needed to escape**

The appropriate time required to make the disabled person's escape should be identified. Disabled people should not automatically be required to wait for the main flow of escape, but if they are likely to cause obstruction for other people, or there might be a risk of injury to themselves or others, it will be safer for everyone if they follow the main flow of people.

Wherever possible the escape plan should accommodate both fast and slow moving people, however, where they may need to rest or they feel threatened by people behind them, it may be appropriate to design a plan that allows for this e.g. resting in refuges provided along the route (see later).

Where a person can make their escape unaided, it may take them longer than the three minutes generally accepted as the time taken for non-disabled people to make their escape in case of fire. They should be given the opportunity to take the safest route, which offers them the longest period of safety, for example through to an adjacent fire compartment, which has a one hour fire-resisting rating, and then down the escape stair, which has a 30-minute fire-resisting rating. It is important therefore that all school users keep fire doors shut and observe good housekeeping practices to ensure this maximum time is available to them.

### **General**

The provision of suitable assistance is by nature a very practical issue, which calls for a degree of pragmatism. The fact that the school can call on the assistance of physically fit, trained, and capable staff means that it is unlikely that any special measures will be needed to assist with any persons evacuation, other than the provision available from those staff. However, the aim should be to facilitate disabled people's independent escape as far as possible, also this reduces the chances of confusion and the chance of a plan breaking down. In this instances the person may rest along the way in refuges (see below).

It should be made clear to the disabled person that the circumstances of escape are considered to be exceptional e.g. allowing escape by going down the stairs on their bottom would not be appropriate in most circumstances and support or assistance usually given at other times will still be available.

## **Evacuation in an Emergency**

Any staff assisting in the evacuation of the disabled will need to have an understanding of the technical building information, including; the fire safety systems, building layout and fire protection, refuges, safe routes and equipment etc. to enable them to fully understand the options open to them and places where they will be safe during the evacuation.

### *Temporary Refuges*

A refuge is a designated temporary safe space where people can wait for assistance. A refuge area must be clearly signed and should be of sufficient size to accommodate both people using it as a refuge and any people passing through on their way out of the building. A refuge may be equipped with a suitable means of communication. Most refuges will only accommodate one wheelchair, but in the event that there is more than one wheelchair user, provided there is a suitable evacuation strategy in place this should not be a problem – as one person progresses on their journey, the next person will take their place in the refuge.

Refuges should only be defined after consultation with a fire surveyor as the requirements for fire separation and structure are very specific and the inclusion of a refuge in the building may also require alteration to your school's Fire Risk Assessment.

6

A refuge can only be defined if there is also a specific procedure implemented to ensure that users are able to evacuate from the refuge under safe and controlled conditions.

Where the refuges are defined as part of the PEEP any volunteers for disabled who require assistance in escaping need to have a pre-arranged meeting place. If the disabled person is likely to move around the school, a means of communication will be necessary between the escape volunteers and the disabled person. They can then arrange to meet at a particular refuge point during the escape.

In some cases a disabled person may not be able to get to the refuge without assistance, and in this case the volunteer needs to go straight to the disabled person location at the beginning of the evacuation procedure. The assistant could be someone that works closely alongside the disabled person (buddy system) and they can set off on their escape journey together. This is likely to be the case for pupils.

People should never be left in a refuge point to wait for the fire and rescue service, it is the responsibility of the Head Teacher to ensure that all users of the school building are evacuated and not dependent on the assistance of the Fire & Rescue Service.

A PEEP should contain details of the escape route(s) the disabled person will be expected to use. Clear unobstructed gangways and floor layouts should be considered at the planning stage.

If possible horizontal evacuation routes should be sought out so that the evacuating person can move freely into an adjacent building/area without

having to negotiate steps and stairs, of which there are none at St Marys. Although the lips on many of the external door can prove difficult for wheel chair users to negotiate themselves, so assistance may be required.

.

7

#### *Equipment*

Communication is essential and may include the use of telephones, and hand held portable radios, kept in the office etc.

#### **Mobility impaired people**

There is a vast range of people who fit into this category, and it may be relevant for people who have heart disease, asthma or heart conditions. The preferred option for escape is horizontal evacuation to outside the building, horizontal evacuation to another fire compartment or evacuation lift, eventually arriving at a place of ultimate safety outside the building. Within this group, many people will be able to manage stairs, and to walk longer distances, especially if short test periods are built into the escape procedure. Consider the provision of suitable handrails e.g. one may be needed to the left or the right side of the stairs depending on the individual, and step edge markings (these would be considered reasonable adjustments and reduce the need for assistance). Information regarding the position of the fire is also useful so that there are no false starts or the necessity to change direction during the escape.

8

As St Mary's has no stairs the evac chair of need to carry a person and there chair is not necessary.

.

9

#### **Deaf and Hearing Impaired persons**

Deaf people working alongside hearing colleagues/pupils may not require special equipment and a buddy system may be the most appropriate method for alerting them of the operation of a fire alarm. This must not be done on a casual basis in case everyone assumes that someone else has given the warning.

Providing they have been made aware of what to do in the event of a fire, they will be able to see and understand the behaviour of those around them.

However, deaf or hearing impaired persons working alone or outside normal school hours may need an alternative method of being alerted to an emergency. for example many alarm systems have visual indicators in the form of a flashing light, or vibrating pager systems can be used.

Sound enhancement systems for alarms/PA systems may also be provided in the school to transmit the message through that system e.g. via a hearing loop or radio paging receiver. Flashing beacons or paging systems are the preferred option (ensure other lighting does not conflict with flashing beacons). Pager systems may also tell them in which direction to travel.

It is advised that flashing beacons are also placed in toilet facilities where a person with hearing impairment may be alone, and may have removed their hearing aid in the toilets in order to clean it.

It is important to consider the deaf and hard of hearing in any sweep of a building by fire marshals. Fire Marshals should not expect a vocal call to be sufficient and should be trained to physically check all areas for which they have responsibility, provided it is safe for them to do so.

A person in this case may become obvious as they do not react in a logical manner during the escape as they may not have heard the alarm. Shouting is unlikely to help. It may be necessary to walk right up to the person and explain what is happening with signs or even a written note or pre-prepared short written instruction.

For staff, regular visitors or pupils a British Sign Language Interpreter should be considered to explain the instructions for them in the event of a fire.

Other forms of communication can also be used in addition e.g. intranet, telephone systems etc.

### **Blind and Visually impaired people**

Staff, Visitors and pupils should be accompanied by designated staff to assist with evacuation and orientation training may also be necessary. People who are visually impaired are helped to escape by the provision of good signage and other orientation clues.

Most visually impaired people have some sight and will be able to use this during the escape in order to make their own way out of the school as part of 10

the crowd. Where the physical circumstances are appropriate, they will have no problems leaving the building.

Consider the use of specialist orientation information e.g. tactile information and audio signals. Other building design features on escape routes or stairs that may assist them are: good colour contrasts, handrails, step edge markings, contrasting nosing on stairs, colour contrasted or different textured floor coverings or way finding information or signs. Visually impaired people will need to be informed of these features as part of the PEEP and information provided in advance of the person starting at the school. Where there is a lack of orientation information staff assistance will be necessary to provide guidance out of the building.

Other than occasional visitors, school plays etc. good familiarisation should take place so that the visually impaired have good orientation information available to them and are aware of alternative routes to leave the building. Instructions available in Braille, large print or audio tape will assist in providing fire instructions. It can also be useful to provide a tactile map of the escape routes and to provide orientation training to visually impaired staff, pupils or regular visitors.

When school furniture is re-arranged and escape routes are affected, it is important that these changes are documented and made known to visually impaired people in the school.

### **Assistance for the person and their dog**

Where a person uses a guide dog, they may prefer the dog to assist and only need escape routes pointed out to them. Others may request a human assistant so a buddy needs to be allocated. It may also be necessary to provide a person to look after the dog. This may be provided in a formal or informal manner.

### **Assistance with opening doors**

Some people may need assistance with opening doors e.g. upper limb

disorders. A formal or informal arrangement can be made here, but the potential for lone working must be considered here.

### **People with cognitive disabilities**

People with cognitive disabilities, including dyslexia, dyspraxia and autism often have problems comprehending what is happening in escape conditions, or may not have the same perceptions of risk as non-disabled people.

Provision of good orientation facilities and measures within the building is essential. There may be a reluctance by some to take an unknown route from the school building. The PEEP should be used to give them an opportunity to understand the possible need for choice and change of direction during an escape.

11

Orientation information and colour coding of escape routes can also provide a useful tool. Practice of route options can dramatically reduce the requirement for staff assistance. Practice is essential for this group of people, especially in school situations where one person is responsible for a number of pupils. Use of escape routes for general circulation is an advantage as they will be familiar.

This group may need fire instructions read to them or a DVD or video may help. A photographic explanation of the route can also be useful.

It is important to ask the group what they understand and to develop the plan based on how they will find the escape routes.

Sometimes people with cognitive disabilities may move slower than the main flow and there may be a need for a fast and slow lane in an escape stair.

Members of the public who come to school events may have cognitive difficulties and it cannot always be assumed that they will have a carer or helper with them, so efforts should always be made to enable the disabled person to leave the building rather than assume a carer or helper will undertake this role.

It may not be possible to tell that a person has an impairment that affects their ability to orient themselves around the building, and staff should be made aware of such possible situations and to be tactful when assisting a person who may seem lost or unsure of what to do during an escape.

### **Training**

To be effective, any emergency evacuation plan depends on the ability of staff to respond efficiently. Staff will therefore require instruction, practical demonstrations and training appropriate to their responsibilities.

This should include the following elements:

- Fire drills.
- Fire Awareness Training
- Specific training for Fire Marshals.

**Maintenance**

The Head Teacher is responsible for the maintenance and testing of mobility equipment used for evacuation purposes e.g. Evac-Chairs and Stair Climbing Devices, hand held portable radios etc.

**Public Areas**

Some parts of school may be in use out of normal office hours or may also be open to the public. Even when devices are provided to assist with evacuation of disabled persons these areas may not be staffed at a sufficient level for the required number of trained operators to be available.

It is a matter for the individual Head Teachers of such schools to either prohibit or restrict the numbers of persons allowed within the building who may require assistance.

**Co-ordinated information**

Once each PEEP is written these should be held by the Head Teacher as the responsible person. This will ensure that the plans for each school building and its occupants can be co-ordinated. This is especially important where there is potentially a high number of pupils and staff to evacuate to ensure there is no conflict. The proposals for PEEPs should be shown to any competent person carrying out the schools fire risk assessment and their assistance may be needed in identifying escape routes, refuges etc.

**Language difficulties**

Language difficulties must be considered and use of signs, translated material etc. can be used to assist.

*Love one another*

**Appendix 1**

**PERSONAL EMERGENCY EVACUATION PLAN  
QUESTIONNAIRE**

Name of Person:

Date:

**\* strike through any sections that do not apply.**

**Mobility Impairment**

Can you leave the building unassisted?

(Circle appropriate answer)

**Yes No**

Can you move quickly in the event of an emergency? **Yes No**

How far can you walk unaided? **Distance:**

Do you find stairs difficult to use? **Yes No**

Are you a wheelchair user? **Yes No**

Is the wheelchair required for all circumstances **Yes No N/A**

Can your wheelchair be dispensed with for short periods?

**Yes No N/A**

Is the wheelchair a standard size or an electrically powered type with wider dimensions?

**N/A**

**Normal Electrical Width.....**

If yes to any of the above, we have a high ratio of staff that are physically fit, suitably trained, and strong enough to carry all but the heaviest people with ease. These staff will be constantly aware of your location in the premises, as they are with other persons. In the event of an emergency, we want to ensure that we provide you with assistance in the most appropriate way for you.

What kind of assistance do you require?

'Wheelie' down the stairs with the wheelchair tilted onto its rear wheels

**Yes No**

Carried down the stairs in your wheelchair **Yes No**

Assisted from your wheelchair and a suitable number of helpers carry you down the stairs

**Yes No**

Assisted to walk down the stairs with one assistant holding each arm

**Yes No**

Assisted to walk down the stairs with one assistant and the use of the handrail

**Yes No**

Provided with supervision as you move down stairs on your bottom, unaided

**Yes No**

Self transfer to an evacuation chair/stairclimber? **Yes No**

Could the medical nature of your condition be aggravated by the use of such a device

**Yes No**

Has a member of staff and a deputy be assigned to assist you in an emergency?

**Yes No**

How might your mobility be worsened e.g. by smoke etc.?

**Details:**

14

Any other problems/observations/or solutions? **Details:**

**Hearing Impairment**

Would you hear the fire alarm/an announcement informing you that there was an emergency?

**Yes No**

Would a visual indicator assist? **Yes No**

Is there to your knowledge any special or purposely designed hearing system or device available which might assist you in hearing the fire alarm more clearly?

**Yes No**

**If yes, details:**

Would your response to a fire alarm being activated be helped by an assistant(s) who could provide support in the fire evacuation procedure?

**Yes No**

Would a vibrating pager unit that operated when the fire alarm was actuated be of assistance?

**Yes No**

**Visual Impairment**

Do you have strong enough eyesight to see your way out of the premises unaided?

**Yes No**

Can you read the escape instructions?

If not, what format do you need them in?

**Yes No**

**Details:**

Do you require aid to help you move around the building for example: a cane, guide dog or other equipment?

**Yes No**

How long does it take you to leave the building in normal circumstances?

**Time in minutes:**

Could you find your way out of the building by an alternative route should your normal route be unavailable?

**Yes No**

Do you think the speed at which you leave the building may have the potential to hold up other

people leaving the building in corridors and stairways, or that they may cause you injury as they pass you more quickly?

**Yes No**

Would tactile signage or floor surface information be of assistance to you? **Yes No**

Is there any other disability that may prevent you from evacuating without assistance?

**Yes No**

**Details:**

15

### **Cognitive Impairment**

Are you able to understand what is happening in an emergency?

**Yes No**

Do you understand the risks? **Yes No**

Do you understand the possible need for choice and change of direction during escape?

**Yes No**

How long does it take you to leave the building in normal circumstances?

**Time in minutes:**

### **General Information**

Do you understand the concept of a fire refuge area? **Yes No**

Might the measures needed for you to escape from the building in an emergency adversely affect the safe escape of other occupants?

**Yes No**

Do you think any special staff training is required to give you the assistance that you would need in an emergency?

**Yes No**

Are you aware of the emergency evacuation plan which operates in the school?

**Yes No**

Do you understand the escape instructions? **Yes No**

Do you require a written copy of the emergency evacuation plan?

**Yes No**

Are the signs which mark the emergency exits and the routes to the exits clear enough?

**Yes No**

Could you raise the alarm if you discovered a fire? **Yes No**

Are you likely to move around the building? **Yes No**

Do you work out of hours? **Yes No**

Do you work alone? **Yes No**

Assessment carried out by:

Date:

**Notes:**

16

## Appendix 2

### **PERSONAL EMERGENCY EVACUATION PLAN REQUIRED ACTION**

The required action has been determined from discussion with the person requiring additional help.

Staff will ensure that the location of the following person is always known.

**Name:** **Department:**

**Working location:**

**Recognisable by:**

In the event of a fire or other emergency requiring evacuation of the premises, this person will be assisted to escape by the following means:

**Awareness of the procedure:**

I am alerted of the need to evacuate the school by:

Existing alarm system **Yes/No**

Pager device **Yes/No**

Visual alarm system **Yes/No**

Other, please specify

**Designated assistance:**

The following people have been designated to give me assistance to get out of the school building in an emergency:

Name(s)

Contact details

**Refuges:**

The nearest doorman/designated assistant will assist me immediately into the nearest available refuge area, where provided.

**The refuge areas are:**

**Safe route(s)**

(Attach plan if appropriate and include refuges, safe routes & alternative routes)

17

**Insert exact method of assistance required:**

(Transfer procedures, methods of guidance etc.)

**Equipment provided:**

(Evac chairs, Stairclimber device, hand held portable radios, visual indicators, pager systems, tactile signs, handrails etc.)

**Training provided:**

(include orientation training where appropriate)

Details of any other action taken:

**Plan to be reviewed** .....(insert date)

18

## Appendix 3

**Disabled etiquette:**

- **The person with the disability is the main stakeholder – their views count.**
- **A suitable plan should be negotiated and the person consulted about their evacuation plan**
- **It should be made clear that requesting a plan will not result in restrictions on movement around the building**
- **The time required for escape should be identified**
- **If they need it - rest places may be provided on the route**

- **Staff volunteers should be given training and support**
- **Cover etiquette, moving, lifting and handling techniques**

*Love one another*