

BISHOP'S HATFIELD GIRLS' SCHOOL

FIRE ALARMS DURING PUBLIC EXAMINATIONS

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School Based Policy	

Fire alarms during public examinations

A copy of this policy must be available in every examination room.

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Introduction

“There are many circumstances in which it may be appropriate to apply methods of filtering false alarms to prevent continual evacuation of people or summoning of the fire service.”

Chief Fire Officers Association – document at <http://www.cfoa.org.uk/docimages/4000.pdf>

Under most circumstances, this school is evacuated when the fire alarm sounds – even if it is almost immediately discovered to be a false alarm. This policy recognises that, in the special circumstances of public examinations, automatic evacuation may not be in the best interests of candidates. This policy also recognises that robust procedures must be in place to assess risk and protect human life, should there be a fire alarm.

See also – <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bomb-threats-guidance/procedures-for-handling-bomb-threats>

There will be a designated member of SLT (and a designated deputy in case of absence) whose function is to investigate the source of an alarm should an alarm sound. The designated person has the responsibility and the authority to decide if a full or partial evacuation of public examination rooms is necessary in the event of a fire alarm.

Before the examination season:

The Examinations Officer will supply the designated person and their designated deputy with a copy of the examinations timetable.

The Examinations Officer will ensure that invigilators are familiar with the emergency procedures contained in this policy.

Before each examination:

Students will be told to follow the instructions of the invigilator in case of emergency.

If the alarm sounds for more than a few seconds:

- 1) The invigilator will stop the examination in accordance with the procedures laid down in section 16 of the JCQ ICE booklet, ie s/he will:
 - a) compose him/herself before saying or doing anything
 - b) assess the situation in the immediate vicinity of the examination room and decide, **on their own authority**, to initiate an evacuation should they consider there to be any danger to human life (this action should be repeated frequently)
 - c) instruct candidates to close question papers and answer booklets
 - d) note the time that the examination was stopped
 - e) assure the candidates that they will be given the full time for the examination
 - f) assure the candidates that a special consideration request will be made to the board
 - g) assure the candidates that a senior colleague is assessing the situation and will inform them as soon as possible if evacuation is necessary
 - h) maintain examination conditions and explain the need for this to candidates
 - i) explain to candidates the need to maintain examination conditions if they are evacuated
 - j) ensure that candidates are ready for a speedy evacuation if necessary (shoes on)
 - k) instruct candidates that all materials should be left on their desk in the event of an evacuation
 - l) brief candidates on evacuation procedures as explained in 4 below
 - m) avoid re-starting the examination until given clear instructions by the Examinations Officer, the Assistant Examinations Officer or a member of SLT that it is safe and appropriate to do so.

- 2) The designated member of SLT will follow the procedures outlined below. As soon as possible, s/he will:
 - a) ascertain the cause of the alarm
 - b) decide if an evacuation of one or more examination rooms is necessary
 - c) **personally** communicate this decision to the invigilator in each examination room (a written or telephoned instruction is only acceptable if no other means is possible and as an emergency or temporary holding measure)
 - d) assist in the evacuation of the examination room if necessary
 - e) reassure candidates that there is no danger, if appropriate.

- 3) The Examinations Officer and Assistant Examinations Officer will follow the procedures outlined below. As soon as possible, they will:
 - a) go to the examination room (if more than one room, the Examinations Officer will go to the main examinations room, the Assistant Examinations Officer will go to the examination room with the next largest number of candidates)
 - b) assess and take charge of the situation
 - c) make decisions and follow procedures in accordance with those described in 1 above
 - d) re-start the examination in the usual formal fashion OR
 - e) take the lead in evacuation procedures OR
 - f) delay a final decision because, although there is no immediate need for evacuation, the overall situation is still unclear or it is too noisy to proceed.

- 4) If an evacuation is necessary, the person responsible and all other colleagues should:
 - a) conduct themselves in a calm and authoritative manner
 - b) consider and act on the specific physical and emotional needs of individual candidates (see 7 below)

- c) remind candidates that they must stay under examination conditions even when they leave the examination room
 - d) if possible, lock the examination room on leaving
 - e) escort the candidates out of the exam room onto the MUGA
 - f) position candidates at the back of the MUGA
 - g) line candidates up as they were seated in the examination room
 - h) constantly remind candidates of the correct conduct
 - i) seek the assistance of teaching colleagues without pastoral duties in maintaining examination conditions
 - j) register the candidates using the internal seating lists from the examination room
 - k) report any absences immediately to a member of SLT
- 5) If the school, but not the examination room(s) is evacuated, the Head of Centre will ensure that any disturbance of examination candidates is kept to a minimum during evacuation and re-entry procedures. The Examinations Team will assist with this if they are not required in an examination room.
- 6) When it is considered safe to re-start the examination, the person in charge should:
- a) ensure that no candidate needs a toilet break or a drink
 - b) inform candidates that the examination is shortly to re-commence
 - c) assure the candidates that they will be given the full time for the examination
 - d) assure the candidates that a special consideration request will be made to the board
 - e) give candidates a few moments to collect their thoughts
 - f) re-start the examination in the usual formal fashion
 - g) note the time that the examination was re-started and update the information board(s)
 - h) do all they can to prevent disruption as the rest of the school return to lessons (they may decide to delay the re-start of the examination until there is quiet outside for example)
- 7) Particular attention must be paid to any candidates who have a physical or emotional disability that may hinder swift and safe evacuation for themselves or others. It is the duty of the Examination Officer either personally or by formal delegation to make invigilators aware of any candidates who may require special assistance and the form that assistance should take. Wherever possible, the Examinations Officer will ensure individual supervision of and assistance to such candidates throughout any evacuation procedures.
- 8) Who is the “Designated member of SLT”?
- The designated member of SLT will normally be Ms Theo Nickson. Should she be absent it will be either Mr Adrian Dudley or Mr Alf Wood. Should all named be absent it will be the next most senior person in terms of responsibility on the staff.
- The duties and responsibilities of the “Designated member of SLT” take priority over all other duties and responsibilities in the event of a fire alarm during a public examination series.
- 9) Evacuation systems are currently under further review since the move to the new building. In the event of a “lock-down”, instructions will be relayed over the tannoy.