

Policy and procedures for fire safety awareness and fire prevention:

Date of issue: April 2014

Date of review: April 2016

Policy number: HS 11

Policy prepared by EH Policy reference group

Background to the policy statement

Cole, Crandell and Kourofsky (2004) stated that *one in four fires is started by children aged six and under*. Fire safety awareness, including awareness of fire prevention and fire evacuation procedures are vital aspects of saving lives. Fire safety can be taught to children at a very young age, to ensure that children understand concepts about fire and build awareness of their role in preventing fire danger.

Aims of the policy statement

- To ensure, through fire safety awareness and fire prevention measures, that outbreaks of fire do not occur in the school/preschool setting;
- To practice emergency preparedness i.e. to ensure that all staff are fully aware of their roles and responsibilities in the case of an emergency situation;
- To increase awareness of the importance of having a 'rehearsed' evacuation procedure, which is regularly practised and **evaluated**;
- In the case of an outbreak of fire, to support staff in being able to rapidly detect and report the outbreak;
- To ensure children and staff are evacuated from endangered areas promptly to designated places of safety;

Policy statement

Staff at EtonHouse International schools and preschools want to ensure safe environments for children and adults at all times. Therefore, all staff will actively work towards enhancing emergency preparedness; fire safety planning and prevention and fire safety awareness programs in place in each setting i.e.

- **Engaging in practices to ensure a fire safe environment**
- **Planning for regular fire safety evacuation procedures**
- **Discussing with children aspects of fire prevention**

EtonHouse staff will demonstrate their responsibilities in relation to fire safety for children, colleagues and families by ensuring that all statutory/licensing requirements are met in premises owned and occupied by EtonHouse.

Implementation procedures and practices

Emergency preparedness - Staff roles and responsibilities:

- School teams should, wherever possible, receive annual/ongoing in-service training in fire detection and control. This training must include how to use fire extinguishers and fire alarm systems. Staff must also be made aware of and understand the characteristics of fire, smoke and toxic fumes and must be familiar with appropriate extinguishing agents for each fire type e.g. liquids should never be used on electrical fires;
- Staff must receive information and training in their roles and responsibilities (individually and collectively) if fire/smoke is detected in the school/preschool building;
- Training in fire detection and control (including the use of fire extinguishers) should commence at the beginning of the school/preschool year; **All staff must be familiar with the siting of all fire emergency equipment;**
- Emergency contact numbers must be displayed in the office for easy reference. In Singapore contact numbers must include Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF) the ambulance service, police, National Environment agency (NEA) and the nearest hospital/clinic;
- The Principal or their delegate must ensure that fire extinguishers are positioned at an acceptable level (in Singapore, the Singapore Civil Defence (SCDF) recommend as follows i.e. portable extinguishers with a gross weight not greater than 20kg should be installed so that the extinguisher is sited 1m above the floor level; where portable extinguishers have a gross weight of 20kg or less, they should be installed so that the top of the extinguisher is not more than 1.5m above the floor);
- The Principal must ensure that fire extinguishers are serviced regularly (at least annually) and certified effective. **Maintenance can only be undertaken by an approved servicing agency or company** and should include an examination of working parts, cleaning and replacement of any defective parts, reassembling, recharging and where necessary re-pressuring of the extinguisher;
- The Principal or their delegate must ensure that all staff (including relief and shadow/support staff and training placement students) are familiar with emergency evacuation procedures; exit points and designated meeting places for fire evacuation procedures. Consideration should also be given to the siting of a designated meeting place for children and staff in the case of a real emergency;
- A fire evacuation plan must be prepared for each school/preschool setting. Government Licensing agents and fire safety officers may be asked to assist in the development/review of emergency evacuation plan;

- The Principal must ensure that fire evacuation plans are **prominently displayed** in all areas of the school/preschool including **meeting rooms** and **general assembly areas**. **Please note: emergency evacuation plans must clearly indicate fire evacuation routes and the location of designated assembly points;**
- Emergency evacuation plans and procedures must also be highlighted to all visitors e.g. student teachers; and parents. (This includes, attendees at meetings/events at the school/preschool);
- The Principal or their delegate will be responsible for ensuring a **fire emergency kit** is well maintained at all times. This kit must contain **regularly updated children's and staff emergency contact information** (including EH head/regional office; current parent emergency details; staff emergency contact details);
- The fire emergency kit must be **readily accessible** in an emergency (the siting should be decided by the Principal in consultation with teaching and front office staff);
- There must be a staff member designated to contact families in the case of an emergency (it is suggested that this be the Principal or a **senior staff member** designated by the Principal); The designated staff member must have access to a fully charged mobile phone at all times;
- Principals must ensure appropriate storage of all flammable/combustible materials; safe storage of compressed flammable gases; appropriate maintenance and use of electrical equipment. Special consideration must be given to safe storage of kitchen fuel supplies;
- All entrances and emergency exit points must be kept clear at all times (i.e. must not be barred, wedged open or; locked at any time);
- The Principal must ensure that exit capacities of the building are not breached at any time;
- The Principal must ensure that power points are checked regularly and power boards are not overloaded at any time;
- Use of candles must be monitored by adults at all times. Candles (e.g. birthday candles; tea lights) must be kept well away from anything that can catch light and children need to understand the safety aspects of using candles and lighting devices. Lighters and matches must be kept away from children at all times, preferably in a locked/child proof storage container;
- Staff must observe a non smoking on school/preschool campus policy. Lighting devices (lighter/matches) must be kept out of children's reach at all times, preferably in a locked/child proof storage container;

Fire emergency evacuation procedures:

- To ensure that children and adults are familiar with emergency evacuation procedures, these should be regularly practised i.e. it is suggested that fire drills be held at least twice per term;
- There must be alternative evacuation routes and meeting points established/practised, so that children and staff are well prepared to evacuate the school/preschool from all vantage points. The Principal or their delegate should seek to 'complicate' regular fire drill procedures by considering a variety hazardous situations e.g. if the outbreak of fire was situated near the normal evacuation point requiring use of alternate routes and meeting point;
- The Principal or their delegate will initiate the fire alarm. **Please note:** the alarm should be activated by a different person in authority each time, to ensure that the procedure is not dependent on one person;
- Upon hearing the alarm, school/preschool personnel will instruct all people in the area to exit the building. Teaching staff will support children in leaving the building quickly and to gather at the pre-designated meeting place(s);
- Teaching staff or delegated personnel e.g. school/preschool office staff will take the class register/class list with them to the emergency evacuation point to assist in accounting for all students. This record must have regularly updated emergency contact details for all children in the class;
- The Principal must be aware of staff attendance/absence each day, so that they can be fully responsible for their staff teams in the case of an emergency.
- Office staff will be responsible for checking the presence of any 'signed in' visitors (including parents) into the school/preschool;
- Staff must assess the safety of evacuation pathways before evacuating children e.g. test closed doors with the back of their hand to check for heat/fire on the other side of the door; if heat is detected, an alternate route must then be taken;
- Upon reaching the designated meeting area, a roll will be called by class teachers to ensure that all children are accounted for. Children and staff members must wait there at the designated meeting place until a check is made to account for all people in the building;
- No one must return to the school/preschool buildings until directed to do so by the Principal or their delegate;

- The Principal or their delegate will take with them a fire emergency kit containing information that would be necessary in a real fire situation e.g. emergency contact information (children and staff; mobile phone);
- A written record of each evacuation must be maintained. A written evaluation determines the success of each evacuation procedure and highlights areas for improvement. Should specific problems be encountered (including any specific delays noted in the evacuation procedure), the emergency evacuation procedure should be undertaken again shortly afterwards e.g. in the following week;
- The evaluation must include the date and time of each drill, the time taken for each evacuation procedure; problems encountered and how these problems were addressed;
- With very young children (especially at the beginning of the school/preschool year) it is suggested that 'silent' drills be conducted. The 'silent' drill follows all of the above procedures, except that the fire alarm is not sounded. The timing of the initial drill needs to be negotiated by staff members to reflect sensitivity to very young children's settling in issues. If the fire evacuation drill is held too early in the school/preschool year, it may provide undue stress to very young children. However, fire incidents can happen and all children need to be well prepared;

Procedures for persons with special rights:

Some persons may need special assistance during evacuation procedures, because of cognitive or physical limitations which make them unable to proceed independently to a place of safety.

Fire safety for these persons will depend on pre-planning and on their awareness of fire protection measures. The Principle will identify those persons requiring additional assistance and give attention to the support needs of these persons during emergency evacuation procedures. It is essential that all fire safety evacuation plans/procedures be shared with all shadow/support staff working with children with special rights. (Shadow/support staff should also be included in evacuation drills). A person with special rights is NOT to be left unattended at any time during a fire drill or emergency situation

Building awareness of fire prevention in young children:

Many of the common causes of fire can be prevented by building children's awareness of fire prevention. Involving young children (via inquiry projects) supports their understanding of fire safety/evacuation procedures.

- Schedule discussions about fire safety with children in the first few weeks of the new school year, in preparation for the first evacuation drill. Discuss with older children the fire equipment and signage; older children can become familiar with emergency numbers to call;
- Talk with children to find out what they currently know about fire safety to assess their prior knowledge. Support children's communication by languages other than oral speech i.e. children can draw or show you what they understand.

- Talk about the fire evacuation plan and why the alarm is so loud.
- Discuss how fires can be prevented e.g.
 - Matches and lighters are for adult use only. Should children find these items lying around, they should inform an adult immediately
- Share with children the procedure for *stop-drop-roll* (Cole, Crandall and Kourofksy 2004). In the case of a fire emergency, children need to understand that if their clothes catch fire, they need to stop where they are; drop to the ground and cover their face and roll over back and forth to smother the flames. They should then use water to cool the burned area and call for help;
- Where possible, professional fire fighting staff may be called in to visit and talk with children about fire awareness and prevention measures;

Evaluation of this policy

A review of this policy and implementation procedures will be conducted every two years. This review will be undertaken collaboratively between Principals and staff of the EtonHouse Education Centre (the policy reference group).

References

Cole, R. Crandell, R & Kourofksy, C. (2004) We Can Teach Young Children Fire Safety *Young children*. Vol 59 (2) p 14-18.

www3.fire.org.nz/cms.php

www.adtsecurity.co.nz/home_security/home_safety_centre/fire_prevention