

The Harefield Academy

Achievement through Active Learning

Northwood Way, Harefield, Uxbridge, Middlesex, UB9 6ET

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Headteacher: Tash Hurtado BA PGCE



1st March 2022

Dear Parents/Carers,

As we emerge from the restrictions imposed over the last couple of years of the pandemic, I am delighted that we have been able to steer our daily routines and experiences back towards our intended offer and ethos. I hope you will have noticed the increasing provision of extra-curricular and enrichment trips and activities. We are particularly pleased to have sports fixtures and residential trips back in the calendar to ensure students have a wide range of opportunities to develop their cultural capital through secondary school.

In addition to returning to a more normal Curriculum provision, we are also ensuring that all of our Health and Safety and Safeguarding drills that were not permitted in their full breadth during the period of social distancing, are now fully back on track. This includes:

- An annual knife arch in conjunction with the metropolitan police
- Full fire drills once a term
- Emergency site evacuation once a year (for threats such as explosive devices/terror alerts)
- Emergency invacuation/lockdown once a year (for threats such as intruder/firearm/weapon)

I am sure you are well familiar by now with the positive reasons we collaborate with the police, along with the majority of secondary schools supporting the initiative, to host a knife arch. This is a mechanism for reassuring all of our students as well as a means to educate about an ever-growing societal issue around knife crime. Fire drills are standard practice in all schools and workplaces and a routine our students always show exemplary compliance and maturity with.

I would like to take this opportunity to contextualise the 2 latter drills, which may sound a little more disconcerting. The advice to schools in recent years has been to have procedures in place to be prepared for any level of threat that may emerge either within, or local to, a school that may put the community at risk. Whilst we know that the location of a school can make it more or less susceptible to such extreme and unlikely threats, we also know that to best protect our community we must always be prepared for any threat to ensure we safeguard our students at all times, regardless of how unlikely these extreme threats may be.

As such we routinely prepare, update and share with staff, procedures for the management of all levels of risk within our school community. Prior to Covid we had been training staff in readiness for training students, on how to respond in such emergency drills. These drills unfortunately needed to be deferred but we are now able to ensure that we conduct each of these 2 more serious drills annually.



The first of these drills will take place this term (invacuation) and the second in the summer term (full site and grounds evacuation). Students have already had or are due to have, assemblies delivered to them in advance of each to support their understanding of how unlikely it is that we would have to respond to such an incident in reality, but equally the importance of them being prepared to follow the best government and police advice in the event of such an emergency so that they stay calm and safe from danger.

Please find below the broad advice and actions that follows in each of these emergency drills. It would be most helpful if you could support dialogue at home with reassurances about the importance of knowing how to keep yourself safe in any kind of emergency situation:

Emergency invacuation/lockdown drill

Type of threat: Isolated but extreme threat on site such as an intruder/firearm/weapon
Broad Advice: 'Run, hide, tell'. i.e., run from the threat, if possible, hide if escape is not possible, tell the police.

School drill: Within school we follow this police advice. We have systems in place for communicating to staff without installing panic and without inadvertently alerting the intruder of our actions. We have a system for ensuring the police are contacted immediately with designated responsibilities for managing and continuing these communications. We assume the worst-case scenario in practicing a drill so that we are prepared for the worst. As such we assume that 'running' is not an immediate possibility and that we will work with the police to facilitate 'escape' at the earliest opportunity once the level of threat is established and we are sure that exit routes are safe (i.e., running away from danger and not towards it). We therefore rehearse the 'hide' element of the police advice so that students and staff know how to respond if they are in the most likely scenario (in a classroom or an office) at the point of threat. This is the most important part to rehearse so that teachers can practice the best place for students to take cover in their room and be out of visibility range. It enables students to practice staying calm and responding swiftly to instructions. The drill involves locking classroom doors temporarily so that external threat cannot easily get in. As well as assemblies preparing students for the drill, we have allowed time after the drill for students to discuss any concerns or queries with their teachers. As with all drills we will take on board any learning opportunities that emerge. This drill will now be run annually commencing this half term.

Emergency evacuation due to bomb threat rather than fire

Type of threat: Extreme threat of explosion on site or in range of the site such as a bomb threat/suspicious package/chemical/biological threat

Broad Advice: Police are called immediately, and their advice followed. It is most likely that we would need to evacuate the site further away than the green outside the school and that we may have to deviate from the usual evacuation routes of a fire drill due to the location of the threat.

School drill: When sounding an alert, staff will be advised of which fire exits to use/avoid and then students and staff will evacuate the site and be registered at the Harefield Village Green. This drill will take place in the final half term of the year and will be repeated annually.

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Whilst the nature of threats associated with these drills can cause concern, the reason for such drills is indeed to reassure students of how unlikely a real emergency would be, but the value of being properly prepared for any such threat. The advice and practice associated with this drill should also serve to support our students' management of emergency situations they may find themselves in when not in school, by using good judgment, remaining calm, and following police/national advice.

As always, we are happy to answer any questions you may have so do please contact your student manager or Head of Key Stage in the first instance if you would like more information.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tash Hurtado'.

Tash Hurtado, Headteacher