



**The John Roan School**

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# Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) Policy Statement

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## **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**

Principals 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 students, 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 intranet. These may need to be tailored to an individuals' circumstances.

## **Supporting Information**

### **Students**

When a student is enrolled in the school, their escape plan should be developed as part of the admission process. Care should be taken that all disabled students are provided with a plan if they need one, whether they have been provided with a statement or not.

Students 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 students will need to practice. However, to avoid unnecessary distress or risk to some students, simulated escape may be more appropriate.

### **Staff**

Existing staff identified should complete the PEEP in consultation with the school without delay if such a plan has not already been 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

These groupings have been collated to produce four standard PEEPs for school use which are available on the intranet. As previously indicated, these contain some standard options but may need to be tailored to individual 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 reception 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 co-operate 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.

## **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 of 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 school's 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.**

Sometimes it can be difficult to recruit volunteers as they will want to be sure that their own safety is not compromised by helping the disabled person to escape. It may be necessary to raise the awareness of staff prior to the recruitment of volunteers so that they understand that their own safety will not be compromised.

## **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 instance, 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*

Maze Hill is equipped with 2 refuge points within the main building, and Westcombe Park has 7 refuge points

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.

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 students.

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

### *Lifts*

The lifts located at Maze Hill and Westcombe Park cannot be used in the event of an evacuation. Lifts are programmed to return to the ground floor and open the doors in the event that an evacuation takes place.

### *Safe Routes*

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.

### *Equipment*

Equipment such as Evac-Chairs may be used to assist disabled people to use stairways and are located in stairwells. However, timing and obstructing the escape of others must be a prime consideration here.

These devices provide an alternative to carrying a mobility impaired person to a place of safety. The potential user **self-transfers** into the device, wherever possible, and just one trained operator is required to manoeuvre the equipment out of the building.

Evac-Chairs are most suited to people who can self-transfer and who weigh less than 160kg.

Other solutions will need to be considered for those that are unable to do so or who are unsuitable due to weight restrictions or who may need to remain in their wheelchair due to built in life support equipment.

Some wheelchair users may be unhappy about being moved in one of these devices as they may feel insecure or may be afraid of heights. This is understandable as many wheelchair users will have little or no experience of staircases.

In part this anxiety can be addressed by having a second person walk in front of the chair as it is moved on the staircase.

It is essential that operators and users are trained and practice use respectively.

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

### **Mobility impaired individuals**

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.

Where people will be slower down the stairs or they need to shuffle down the stairs on their bottom, they will need to wait until the main flow of people have been evacuated for their own safety and the safety of others. Wherever possible they should be monitored to ensure that there is no problem with their progress.

As escape within 2 to 3 minutes may not be possible, it is important to explain which escape routes have a degree of fire and smoke resistance and the level of fire protection available. This should therefore include an explanation of elements such as compartmentation, refuges and fire alarm zoning within the building which will help buy the time required for disabled people to either facilitate their own escape or leave with assistance.

The fire marshal should report to the incident controller (Cluster Facilities Manager/Deputy Facilities Manager) that a disabled person is slowly making their way out of the building. This information can then be passed onto the fire and rescue service on their arrival, if necessary.



## **Carry-down procedures**

This may be by:

- Using an Evac chair (see earlier)
- Carry down in the person's own wheelchair (carry down by 2-4 people holding the wheelchair at one of the fixed points situated in each corner of the wheelchair)
- Carry-down using an office chair (a stable chair, preferably one with armrests carried in the same way as a wheelchair)
- Carry down using wheelies (tilting the wheelchair on its axis so that it is virtually weightless – some wheelchair users are able to do this unaided). This method is only practical on a short flight of stairs.

None of the above techniques should be attempted without appropriate training. All types of carry-down escape techniques require a risk assessment and professional moving and handling training for the operators.

An important issue to consider when planning means of escape for people who require carry-down by four people is that the width of the stair will need to be sufficient for all of the team to move freely and safely.

Some wheelchair users are strong enough to tip their chair onto its axis and go down the stairs in this way. Others can do this with assistance. Where this method is considered, expert training will be required and the technique should be practiced regularly. Again, the escape should take place after the main flow of people leaves the building. It is only acceptable for short flights of stairs.

## **Electrically powered chairs**

This group is likely to require more assistance, though don't assume this. It may be impractical to expect this group to take their chair with them, due to its size and weight, unless horizontal escape is possible. The use of an Evac chair may be an option here.

## **Deaf and Hearing Impaired individuals**

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 e.g. 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 individuals**

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

## **Individuals 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.

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 Wardens
- Specific training in the use of Evac-Chairs and Stairs Climbing Devices etc.

## **Maintenance**

The Cluster Facilities Manager is responsible for the maintenance and testing of mobility equipment used for evacuation purposes e.g. Evac-Chairs, 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.

With regard to public events and lettings the Cluster Facilities Manager and Principal may need to consider either to 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 placed in the evacuation folder which is held at reception on both sites. 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 students and staff to evacuate to ensure there is no conflict. The proposals for PEEPs should be shown to any competent person carrying out the school's 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.

**PEEP Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan Checklist**

**General information**

<b>Name of Assessor:</b>	
<b>Name of Person Plan Prepared For:</b>	
<b>Building PEEP Relates To:</b>	
<b>Date of Assessment:</b>	
<b>Nature of Impairment(s):</b>	

**Hearing Impaired Persons:**

<b>Question</b>	<b>Action/Notes</b>	<b>Who To Complete and By When</b>
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1.	Can you hear the fire alarm in normal circumstances?		
2.	Do you require the building emergency procedures to be provided to you in an alternative format to the standard written instructions?		
3.	Are you provided with a vibrating pager?		
4.	Is there a flashing beacon linked to the fire alarm?		

**Visually Impaired Persons**

Question		Action/Notes	Who To Complete and By When
5.	Do you make use of any aids or “assistive” technologies (cane, guide dog etc.) to normally help you access a building? If yes, please provide details.		
6.	How long would you estimate that it would take to evacuate the building under assessment, unaided (other than with the		

	help of any items identified in 3.1 above), in the event of an emergency?		
7.	How many escape routes are available to you in the event of an emergency?		
8.	Have any hazardous “projections” or other structural components been identified on your escape routes?		
9.	Are all escape routes clearly sign posted to meet YOUR requirements?		
10.	Where applicable, are all escape corridors so designed as to prevent visual confusion in YOUR circumstances?		
11.	Where applicable, are all escape staircases fitted with adequate colour contrasting nosings?		
12.	Have you been provided with comprehensible written or verbal instructions detailing the emergency procedures for the building requiring access?		
13.	Who will be providing this assistance?		
14.	Who will cover this “help” role when your normal helper is absent e.g. due to sickness, leave etc.		
15.	Are there any other measures that could further aid your evacuation.		

### **Mobility Impaired Persons**

This assessment includes persons who, because of other impairments, have a reduced ability to evacuate a building or area unassisted.

<b>General Questions – All mobility impaired persons</b>		<b>Action/Notes</b>	<b>Who To Complete and By When</b>
16.	Do you use a wheelchair or any other device to aid your mobility?		

17.	Is your wheelchair required in all circumstances or can it be dispensed with for short periods?		
18.	What type of wheelchair do you have?		
19.	What is the approximate width of your wheelchair?		
20.	If you use another type of mobility aid, what is it?		
<b>Activities on the Ground Floor</b>			
21.	At the intended time of use, how many fire exits are available for you?		
22.	If only one emergency exit is available, how far, approximately, is it from your starting point?		
23.	How long, approximately, would it take you to evacuate, unaided, the building? (Please record a time for each of your available exits up to 4.)		
24.	Are the escape routes free from any structural features that will be a hazard or a barrier to you using any of the available fire exits?		
<b>The following questions need to be answered by all "ground floor based" mobility impaired persons that will be using / provided with full time "helpers".</b>			
25.	Who will be providing this assistance?		



26.	Who will cover this “help” role when your normal helper is absent e.g. due to sickness, leave etc.		
27.	Are there any other measures that could further aid your evacuation.		
<b>Activities based above the ground Floor</b>			
28.	Have all possibilities for locating the activity or service provision on the ground floor (of this or any other building) been exhausted?		
29.	At the intended time of use, how many fire exits are available for use?		
30.	Do any of the escape routes involve escape into an adjoining building?		
31.	Have refuges been provided on, or adjacent to, each fire escape route (where applicable)?		
32.	Where refuges are provided, does the provided fire escape signage clearly lead you to those refuges?		
33.	Do refuges have communication points that are accessible or you to use?		
34.	Are you able to use a proprietary “evacuation” chair?		
35.	Is there an evacuation chair provided at, or adjacent to, the refuge?		
36.	Are the escape routes free from any structural features that will present either a hazard or a barrier to you using any of the available fire exits?		

37.	How long, approximately, would it take you, unaided, to reach a place of safety in an emergency? (Please record a time for each of your available exits up to a maximum of 4.)		
<b>The following questions need to be answered by all “non-ground floor based” mobility impaired persons that will be using / provided with full time “helpers”.</b>			
38.	Who will be providing this assistance and have they been trained.?		
39.	Who will cover this “help” role when your normal helper is absent e.g. due to sickness, leave etc and have they been trained.		
40.	Do you have any other suggestions that you believe could be implemented to ease your evacuation from the building? If you are unable to identify any other measures please state NO.		
41.	Have you received the emergency plan in a format specific to your needs		

## **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 technique**

