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“Valuing every achievement”

1st May 2024

Dear Parents/Carers

As far as School Birthday’s go, that’s one we won’t forget and one I hope we don’t have to repeat!

That was the first time in my 25 year career that I have been a part of an evacuation of a school in that manner. When we have closed previously, the children are in their classes and we are able to co-ordinate from the school office; yesterday, we obviously lost the ability to manage that situation in the usual way.

I want to start by saying how amazing you all were at getting to us and how incredibly well the children and staff coped.

We are used to drills but yesterday was very different. This was a ‘real’ emergency. Due to the smell and the reading of ‘something’ combustible that was showing, we HAD to get everyone out. The gas was turned off immediately and as we couldn’t use the electric either, we all needed to be out and safe.

The first gas company that responded to us said we had done everything right and that our children were brilliant, as they were all on or around the MUGA and were just taking everything in their stride. We know our children are amazing but their response yesterday was beyond anything we could have imagined.

I can only apologise that your children came home without coats, bags and phones etc., but we were unable to return into the building until it was safe to do so in the afternoon.

There are a few things we have learnt from this as you can imagine! I have never experienced anything like this as I have said, so we are evaluating what happened and making some changes. Thank you so much to those of you who sent supportive messages to my work number during this



time and also afterwards, letting me know that you had or hadn't received a message in the day. This is really useful to know and obviously, we can't make changes unless we know where things have or haven't worked out! One of the biggest issues was the lack of phone lines. We only have 3 phone lines anyway, but we couldn't answer the office phones as we were evacuated out of the main building! However, we were already looking at another system that will enable us to transfer calls from the office on to another device so we will be pursuing this now!

Although we saw an awful lot of you yesterday as you collected, I appreciate some of you had children arriving home on transport. This had to be co-ordinated as well. When I 'Close My School' on the portal, it notifies WCC, WCF and the Transport team (as well as the Bromsgrove Advertiser it seems!). I don't like to rely on this system, although it is good and works, so I also called the transport team to ask that we were prioritised as it was an emergency situation. I also asked that the operators contacted the parents as well to check there was someone home to pass the children to. Please know, that in a situation where there isn't anyone home to have the child, they would not be left. The transport company can't do that. Transport assured me this would happen and even phoned back to give rough ideas on timings of the transport coming.

Thankfully we had a lovely day and the sun was shining on us! Staff were bringing out water for the children from the Post 16 building so this helped and we were able to access their facilities to make sure this unique situation was as comfortable as possible for everyone.


After all those stressful and worrying hours we were given the 'all safe' from the second gas company and we were able to get back into the building. The issue appears to have been something in the drains that had then filtered through into the heating system giving the smell of gas and then being picked up as combustible on the reader. This part of the investigation was still being sorted when I arrived to school at 7.00am today so I'd like to thank my Site Team for making themselves available to get this resolved before the start of today.

It was a very scary experience but one I feel we managed, controlled and rectified as quickly as we could.

I'd like to thank the whole staff team for their contributions yesterday.

Thank you so much for your messages and your understanding. As always, these are very much appreciated.

Yours sincerely



Tracey Smith
Headteacher

