

## **EMERGENCY EVACUATIONS REVIEW**

2022 has been a year where we faced a number of challenges, both in the greater community and within the school itself. Cambridge High School is proud of the positive, resilient approach that all associated with the school have displayed in these areas.

Having faced both a bomb threat and a police-initiated lockdown in the second half of this year, it is an opportune time to provide an overview and some reassurance around our procedures.

We are aware that all of our messaging is available immediately to media. For this reason we will share minimal details of situation, while keeping our community informed of the essential details.

### **OVERVIEW**

We held detailed debrief sessions with the police after each incident at CHS (following the July bomb threat and September lockdown) and in these meetings the authorities praised the response of the school, its staff and students. However, we remain committed to a culture of continuous improvement in this area and asked for feedback from our community. The following is a highlight of the key learnings from the experiences.

In general, we recognise the need for more regular emergency drills and the deliberate training of our responses in these situations. These drills will cover evacuations (for cases such as a bomb threat or fire), and in-class threats such as lockdowns and earthquakes.

Procedures are embedded at CHS for all of these scenarios, however with new staff and students joining our whaanau in January, it is important for us to ensure that all are of our community are familiar with our protocols.

Please note that we need to keep some internal details confidential, for security reasons, however the following summarises our learning this year:

### **EVACUATIONS**

Once the alarm is raised, students and staff move quickly and calmly to our designated evacuation area. They then assemble in house groups (these are clearly signposted), and a roll is taken. Maps of the school indicating required movements are displayed in every venue in the school. Wardens are assigned to sweep buildings where it is safe to do so. In most cases those evacuating will not be able to take their belongings with them as they nature of the threat will not always be clear.

Students and staff then await further direction from the authorities, be they the Fire Service or Police. Whenever possible, we will create a command and communication centre, however, the safety of all people onsite must be a priority, and this may delay communication with home as we may not have access to devices for some period of time. As soon as possible, communication with parents and caregivers will take place through an initial text message, followed by email updates and posting on our official Facebook page.

If we link this to our example of the bomb threat, you can see why decisions such as not allowing students back into classes were taken. In general, the feedback from this incident was very positive and parents and staff were understanding, even though some of the measures caused disruption. We noted some ways in which we communicated well and some areas to improve upon, such as identifying the initial text as coming from Cambridge High School. The process for this instance was to evacuate the school and contact the Police, then make contact with the Ministry of Education (in case other schools locally and further afield are affected). When the Police arrived onsite the staff and students were safely evacuated, and we were able to support them in managing the security of the site. The Police took the lead and operated with an abundance of caution, treating it as a potential safety risk until it was proven to be a hoax originating from the USA.

## **LOCKDOWN**

A lockdown is either initiated internally or externally through communication from the authorities. Once the alarm is raised, our immediate priority becomes the safety of those onsite and securing facilities where possible. Detailed lockdown procedures are available to staff in both hard copy and electronic versions. We do not make these publicly available for security reasons. A lockdown necessitates police involvement, and the school site becomes their responsibility to manage. The school has organisational contingencies in place to retain open internal communication channels. Students are aware of their responsibilities in terms of ensuring they are out of sight, quiet, and are to remain calm until the lockdown is lifted by the police. Students and staff outside of class are to make their way into the nearest suitable building. Like with the evacuation, we will communicate with community as soon as it is safe and practical to do so. Please note, that in the event of a serious lockdown threat the Police will take total control of the school site and no one will have the ability to update the community. If this is not the case, staff have designated responsibilities, including making contact with parents and caregivers through an initial text message, email messages and updates on our official Facebook page. No one is allowed to leave the site or buildings at any point for any reason, until the Police deem it safe to do so and lift the lockdown.

Here are the details of what occurred on the day of our lockdown. A member of the public contacted Police as they witnessed what appeared to be a youth firing a pistol and then going on campus. The description of the weapon sounded like a BB gun, but the Police again acted with caution, locking down Cambridge High School and working with school leadership until they could confirm that there was no real threat. Again, we sought feedback from the community and the feedback was very positive. We received some feedback around communication, but we would not be able to improve on this in a serious threat as the Police would take total control of the situation including any communications. We were also able to identify and remedy challenges associated with our integrated bell and alarm system and the running of examinations. Internally, we have made a few changes to procedure and the ability to fully secure some rooms.

## **EARTHQUAKE**

The school follows the [Get Ready](#) guidance from the government website, and adopts the Drop, Cover, Hold - Long & Strong, Get Gone approach as recommended. Students are further advised to be prepared for tsunamis and other potential emergency situations which may occur when they are not at home. The school supports the annual [ShakeOut](#) initiative and participate in the associated drills.

Kind regards

Paul McAvoy

Deputy Principal