

Fire and evacuation practices

Do you do an evacuation practice regularly involving as many of the children as possible? Do you know that while it is no longer a requirement of the EYFS 2012 to do evacuation practices, a lot of Ofsted inspectors still look for evidence of them?

If you do not do regular evacuation practices at the moment, I suggest that you schedule one every month. You can test the fire alarm at the same time. Teach the children to immediately stop what they are doing... go and stand by the nearest exit door... listen carefully for instructions etc. Then you should all go outside together (regardless of the weather) and stand in a safe place... praise the children... and write it up later.

Some childminders have an evacuation poster with pictures for the children. It shows -

A bell - when you hear the bell

Children standing / sitting and looking - stop what you are doing

Children by a door - stand by the nearest door

An ear - listen to your childminder

A fire engine - go outside and wait for the fire brigade

A lot of childminders have a 'grab bag' in their house for evacuations - but you don't always go out of the same door, so you might need to think carefully about that one. I have an emergency bag in a waterproof storage box on my driveway (but it could just as easily be in the boot of my car) which contains blankets, bottled water, first aid kit, a packet of biscuits etc.

Work through some emergency scenarios in your head (or on paper if you prefer) and think about solutions -

- You have 2 little ones - where do you put them? - make sure you have the double buggy set up in a safe place when you are working;
- It is raining and one child doesn't like wet feet - will this stop him from complying in an emergency? - ask parents to supply pumps for him to wear;
- The baby screams at loud noises - will this stop the other children being able to listen properly and cause the baby undue distress? - do a fire practice by saying 'ding-a-ling-a-ling' and save the bell for when baby is older or a real emergency situation;
- One of the older children refuses to comply / runs around screaming during your practices - how will that affect your safety and the safety of all the children? - do some fire safety planned activities with all the children to support their understanding about the dangers. Plan games such as crawling under smoke commando style and, without scaring the children, make sure they understand that they have to do as they are told in a dangerous situation.

It is not a requirement for childminders to label their doors 'fire exit' but a lot of childminders do have a couple of signs up during working hours and use them as a talking point with the older children. It is your house and therefore your choice what you do. I am not aware of any childminders being downgraded or receiving an action from Ofsted for not displaying signs.

It is a requirement of the Childcare Register to have a written emergency evacuation procedure. Some Ofsted inspectors want to see this displayed with a floor plan, but this is not a requirement. Your emergency procedure must reflect your business and how you work, your house layout etc. You should think carefully about who you look after on different days - how does your procedure need to be changed when you have 1 child or 3 children or 6 including after schoolers? You might find it helpful to do a variety of evacuation practices on different days just to see how you get on.

You should also take visitors including Ofsted inspectors through your emergency procedures and inform them if you are planning a practice during their visit. It might seem daft me suggesting that you tell your mum that you are not doing a fire practice today - but if you put it into context, by saying it regularly, you won't forget to mention it to your inspector!

It is not a requirement of the EYFS 2012 to record evacuation practices but a lot of Ofsted inspectors will want to see evidence that you do them and a written record is the easiest way of doing this. If you plan your record form carefully you should be able to get a year on a page - 6 months on each side of A4. You will probably find it useful to record the following details -

- Month -
- Date and time of drill -
- Adults present - I use initials - there are 2 of us plus my teens are sometimes here
- Children and ages - I put 'see attendance register'
- Exit door used - try to vary them
- Smoke alarm check - tick
- Time taken to exit - look at the clock before you go outside and make sure your phone is in your pocket
- Comments - keep them brief - are you all getting out quickly? Are any children causing problems? What can you do to help them?

Some childminders have a friend locally who they team up with. Once a month at a random time ring each other and say 'fire' - drop everything and get the children out of the house.

Here is a sample record form...

Year -

Month - January	Date and time of drill -
Adults present -	Children and ages -
Exit door used -	
Smoke alarm check -	Time taken to exit -
Comments -	
Month - February	Date and time of drill -
Adults present -	Children and ages -
Exit door used -	
Smoke alarm check -	Time taken to exit -
Comments -	
Month - March	Date and time of drill -
Adults present -	Children and ages -
Exit door used -	
Smoke alarm check -	Time taken to exit -
Comments -	

<p>Month - April</p> <p>Adults present -</p> <p>Exit door used -</p> <p>Smoke alarm check -</p> <p>Comments -</p>	<p>Date and time of drill -</p> <p>Children and ages -</p> <p>Time taken to exit -</p>
<p>Month - May</p> <p>Adults present -</p> <p>Exit door used -</p> <p>Smoke alarm check -</p> <p>Comments -</p>	<p>Date and time of drill -</p> <p>Children and ages -</p> <p>Time taken to exit -</p>
<p>Month - June</p> <p>Adults present -</p> <p>Exit door used -</p> <p>Smoke alarm check -</p> <p>Comments -</p>	<p>Date and time of drill -</p> <p>Children and ages -</p> <p>Time taken to exit -</p>

<p>Month - July</p> <p>Adults present -</p> <p>Exit door used -</p> <p>Smoke alarm check -</p> <p>Comments -</p>	<p>Date and time of drill -</p> <p>Children and ages -</p> <p>Time taken to exit -</p>
<p>Month - August</p> <p>Adults present -</p> <p>Exit door used -</p> <p>Smoke alarm check -</p> <p>Comments -</p>	<p>Date and time of drill -</p> <p>Children and ages -</p> <p>Time taken to exit -</p>
<p>Month - September</p> <p>Adults present -</p> <p>Exit door used -</p> <p>Smoke alarm check -</p> <p>Comments -</p>	<p>Date and time of drill -</p> <p>Children and ages -</p> <p>Time taken to exit -</p>

<p>Month - October</p> <p>Adults present -</p> <p>Exit door used -</p> <p>Smoke alarm check -</p> <p>Comments -</p>	<p>Date and time of drill -</p> <p>Children and ages -</p> <p>Time taken to exit -</p>
<p>Month - November</p> <p>Adults present -</p> <p>Exit door used -</p> <p>Smoke alarm check -</p> <p>Comments -</p>	<p>Date and time of drill -</p> <p>Children and ages -</p> <p>Time taken to exit -</p>
<p>Month - December</p> <p>Adults present -</p> <p>Exit door used -</p> <p>Smoke alarm check -</p> <p>Comments -</p>	<p>Date and time of drill -</p> <p>Children and ages -</p> <p>Time taken to exit -</p>