

EMERGENCY EVACUATION POLICY

2026 – 2027

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Prepared By	Valmiro Fernandes
Approved By	Inderjot Singh
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1. Introduction

At Small Steps, we are committed to ensuring the safety and well-being of all students, particularly those with Autism and related disorders. This Emergency Evacuation Policy outlines the procedures and responsibilities for safely evacuating Small Steps students in the event of an emergency at any of our host schools within the GEMS network.

2. Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of this policy is to establish a clear and effective framework to support the safe evacuation of all Small Steps students during emergency situations. Special attention is given to students with unique needs to ensure they receive appropriate support and assistance. This policy also facilitates coordination among Small Steps staff, GEMS school staff, and emergency personnel to ensure a seamless and effective evacuation process. By defining roles, responsibilities, and communication protocols, this policy aims to minimize risk and safeguard student well-being in all emergency scenarios, thereby promoting a secure and supportive learning environment.

3. Aims and Objectives

The objectives of this policy are to:

- Ensure the safety and well-being of all Small Steps students during emergencies.
- Provide clear procedures and protocols for evacuating students, particularly those with physical disabilities, sensory sensitivities, or communication challenges.
- Promote collaboration between Small Steps staff, GEMS school staff, and emergency services.
- Regularly review and update evacuation plans to reflect any changes in student needs, staffing, or school infrastructure.

4. Scope and Responsibility

This policy applies to all Small Steps staff, GEMS School SEN teams, parents, and other professionals involved in the care and support of Small Steps students. All personnel are responsible for familiarizing themselves with medical support plans, emergency evacuation procedures, and their designated roles during emergencies.

5. Policy Components and Implementation

5.1 Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs)

- Each Small Steps student will have a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) created at the start of the academic year.

- The PEEP will detail the student's individual needs, identify the primary and secondary evacuation support persons, and specify the type of assistance required.
- Any concerns regarding student needs will be addressed collaboratively with the SEN and operations teams.

5.2 Participation in Drills

- All students and staff will participate in fire safety and emergency evacuation drills as scheduled by the host school, to ensure preparedness and familiarity with the evacuation process.

5.3 Identified Areas and Exit Plans

- Route Familiarization: All support staff and therapists will be briefed on designated exit areas and customized evacuation routes according to each student's needs.
- Students in Mainstream Inclusion: These students will evacuate with their peers. The assigned therapist will serve as the primary support, with the SEN teacher or class teacher acting as secondary support.
- Support for Students with Advanced Needs: Students requiring physical assistance or with transition difficulties will be assisted by the on-site supervisor or designated senior therapist.

5.4 Small Steps Classroom Placement

- Classrooms will be strategically located near exits and the clinic to enable quick and efficient evacuation.
- Wherever possible, Small Steps classrooms will be placed on the ground floor to reduce travel distance and avoid congestion or delays during emergencies.

5.5 PEEP Review and Updates

- PEEPs will be reviewed regularly by case supervisors to accommodate changes in student needs or staffing.
- Updated PEEPs will be stored in the Small Steps, Inclusion, and mainstream classroom folders, along with emergency contact details for therapists, teachers, and supervisors.

5.6 Communication Channels

- Each classroom will maintain up-to-date emergency contact information to support swift coordination during evacuations.
- Communication will be facilitated through Slack, email, MS Teams, and regular team meetings to ensure timely dissemination of updates to evacuation procedures.

5.7 Compliance and Accountability

- Case supervisors will oversee daily implementation of this policy and ensure adherence by all staff.
- At the beginning of each academic year, all therapists and staff will undergo orientation and policy review sessions, which will include training on school policies, emergency procedures, safeguarding, and related guidelines.

6. Monitoring and Review

The Emergency Evacuation Policy will be reviewed annually by the Small Steps Program Director and Head Of Operations, in alignment with GEMS policies. This review process will include feedback from staff, analysis of drill outcomes, and updates based on identified areas of improvement. Regular training will be conducted to ensure staff readiness and reinforce a culture of safety, responsiveness, and preparedness within the Small Steps community.

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