WEBINAR SUMMARY

The First Ten Minutes

What to Do When a Threat Comes In

A summary for everyone who registered: the main points, your questions, and how to build your school's pack.

SPEAKERS



Rachel O'Connor
Deputy Director, NAPD



David McCarthy
Founder and CEO, Ark HQ

WITH THE ARK HQ TEAM

PRACTICAL BASICS
John Armstrong
SafeSchool™ Programme Manager

HOST
Sarah Fitzgerald
Customer Success Manager

YOUR QUESTIONS
Leanne Lyons
Account Manager

INSIDE

PAGE 2
Five things to do next
Who to ring, where guidance comes from, and the next steps for your school.

PAGE 3
Preparedness and action cards
Rachel's view as a former principal, and the cards that make up the pack.

PAGE 4
Basics, questions, your pack
John's practical checks, the Q&A, and how to build your pack.

FOR EVERYONE WHO REGISTERED

Thank you for joining us

More than 230 school leaders registered for this conversation. This summary sets out the main points from Rachel, David and John, your questions, and how to build your school's pack.

IF A THREAT COMES IN

Ring 999 or 112, not your local Garda station.

Rachel confirmed on the morning of the webinar that this is now the agreed advice. Calls reach a central control room, which can see when the same threat is reaching schools across the country.

WHERE GUIDANCE COMES FROM

Your management body leads on health and safety advice.

Management bodies are working with the Department, the HSA and NEPS, and further clarification will reach you through them. This summary and the pack sit alongside that guidance. When the Department issues guidance, it takes precedence.

FIVE THINGS TO DO NEXT

1. **Convene your critical incident management team next week**
   Include your school secretary. NEPS critical incident templates are free to download: add your crest and adapt them. Agree who does what, then tell all staff.

2. **Put it on your next board of management agenda**
   A full, frank discussion with the board, which carries the health and safety duty.

3. **Add it to your risk assessment**
   A threat to the school is now a foreseeable risk. Ask your management body where it fits best. Rachel's view is that it sits most naturally in your health and safety statement.

4. **Revisit your evacuation procedure and plan a drill**
   Aim for at least one drill a year for this kind of event. The drills that go badly teach you the most.

5. **Build your pack, print it, and talk it through**
   Fill in the action cards for your school, agree them with your board and your management body, then walk staff through them once this term. Details on page 4.

THE SCHOOL LEADER'S VIEW

Preparedness, not perfection

Rachel O'Connor, Deputy Director, NAPD, speaking as a former principal

- No school can be ready for every eventuality. What matters is your level of preparedness: the systems and structures you already have, starting with your safety statement and risk assessments.
- Rate your preparedness from 0 to 10 and work to move it up. If you're at one today, getting to four or five is real progress.
- Agree roles in advance, with people rather than for them: who speaks to the media, to parents, to staff, to each year group. Then share the plan with all staff. It shouldn't be a secret.
- You are under no obligation to speak to the media. Take a message rather than answering on the spot, and keep holding statements ready, drafted from the last incident.
- A call logged at 8am may not be confirmed as a hoax until calls come in from elsewhere, sometimes hours later. Follow the Gardaí's instructions while they assess it.
- Communicate with parents calmly. Afterwards, look at what you sent and how it landed, and adjust the tone for next time.

THE FRAMEWORK

Action cards, kept where they're needed

Fire and rescue services drill constantly, yet at the scene they still work from a card: standard operating guidance. Cards suit events that are rare and stressful and need the same few steps every time. The pack gives each person a card, kept where they'll need it. Take some, none or all of it, and work it through with your board and your management body.

1 **Office card** BY THE OFFICE PHONE
Printed and laminated. What to capture from a call, an email or a social media post (take a screenshot), so the same details go to the principal and to 999.

2 **Principal's card** OFFICE AND GRAB BAG
The response options, your team and the numbers you need, filled in ahead. Keep a copy on your phone and in your cloud storage too.

2A **Record card** GOES WITH CARD 2
Tick each step and write the time. It shows the information you had when you made each decision, for when the Gardaí or the board ask later.

2B **Communication card** GOES WITH CARD 2
Holding statements for staff, parents and the media, written and talked through well in advance.

3 **Teacher's card** EVERY CLASSROOM
On the door or in the desk drawer. What each signal means, what to do, and how to report the roll.

> **The grab bag.** John described what goes in it: the cards and key documents, hi-vis vests, paper and pens, torches for winter afternoons and a loudhailer. Keep it at reception, where anyone can reach it.

BEFORE ANYTHING COMES IN

Practical basics

John Armstrong, SafeSchool™ Programme Manager

- Walk the building and the perimeter regularly. Check boundary walls and fencing, and repair gaps.
- Keep vehicles and pedestrians apart on site.
- Keep the key-holder list up to date. If keys aren't returned, consider changing the locks, depending on the risk.
- Once everyone is in, keep external doors closed, not propped open.
- Ask every staff member to approach visitors they don't recognise: "Can I help you? Do you have an appointment?" Then walk them to reception.
- Check CCTV covers entrances, car parks, the perimeter and bin stores, with clear signage. Signage is a data protection requirement and a deterrent.
- Keep skips and bins at least 6 metres from the building, ideally in a locked store.

> The duty is to do what is reasonably practicable. Some things are outside a principal's control. Start with what you can do now.

YOUR QUESTIONS

From the Q&A

Should this go into our risk assessment or child safeguarding statement?

Yes. It is now a foreseeable risk, so document it, even as a single line you build on. Check with your management body where it fits best.

What goes under "accounting for everyone" on the principal's card?

Your existing evacuation procedure. Each teacher accounts for their class, the office brings the sign-in record, and your attendance system fills gaps. It can't depend on the principal being on site.

How much should we tell parents?

What you know, what you don't know yet, and when you'll update them: you've taken Garda advice and put your plan in place. Draft these messages in advance.

What if we need to move further away than the assembly point?

Get everyone out safely first. If you need to move further, the Gardaí and fire service should be there to support you. It is a judgement call.

BUILD YOUR PACK

Work on the plan with your board of management and your management body.

Treat the pack as a draft. Your board carries the health and safety duty, and your management body is working with the Department, the HSA and NEPS on guidance. Work through each card with them.

SAFESCHOOL™ SCHOOLS

Sign in at app.thearkhq.com and open Threat Readiness. Answer the setup sheet once, and your Programme Manager will go through it with you.

EVERY OTHER SCHOOL

Sign up free at app.thearkhq.com/threat-readiness/sign-up. Find your school and enter the code we email you.

1. **Bring the draft to your board of management and your management body,** and agree it with them before you print and share it.
2. Issue and print the pack, put each card where it's needed, and practise it with staff once this term.
3. When the Department issues guidance, it takes precedence. Update your pack to match.

If in doubt, ring 999 or 112. Then put it on your next board of management agenda, set up your critical incident management team, and be confident your preparedness is rising.

Rachel O'Connor's closing advice

Questions about the pack sales@thearkhq.com 021 601 9319 thearkhq.com