



St Joseph's Catholic Primary School
Coast Road, Blackhall, Hartlepool, TS27 4HE

Tel/Fax: 0191 586 4308 Email: office@stjosephsblackhall.net

Website: www.stjosephsblackhall.net

Head Teacher: Mrs L Ashton Chair of Governors: Clare Sutherland



Monday 30th March 2026

Dear Parents/Carers,

ICECATS Programme (Lockdown and Evacuation Procedures)

At St. Joseph's, the safety and wellbeing of our children is always our highest priority. As part of our continued commitment to safeguarding, we regularly review our procedures to ensure they remain clear, effective and reassuring for everyone in our school community.

To support this work, we will be welcoming ICECATS, a nationally recognised organisation who specialise in helping schools develop calm, practical and child-friendly approaches to lockdown and evacuation procedures. ICECATS have supported many schools across the UK and we are pleased to have the opportunity to work with them.

They will be visiting our school on **Thursday 23rd April** to work with staff and children in a gentle and age-appropriate way. Their sessions are designed to help children feel confident and secure, without causing any worry or distress.

As part of their visit, ICECATS would like to invite parents and families to an information session to explain how the programme works in schools and how it supports a safe and reassuring environment for children. This meeting will take place on **Thursday 23rd April from 9:10–9:40am in the school hall**. We warmly welcome all who would like to join us.

We understand that the idea of lockdown procedures can sometimes feel concerning. Please be assured that our aim, in working with ICECATS, is to ensure our approach remains supportive, transparent and calm for everyone involved. Their input will help us to communicate procedures in a clear, confident and non-threatening way.

A further letter from ICECATS is overleaf for your information.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Ashton
Executive Headteacher



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Dear Parent/Carer,

I am writing to you with regards to the ICE CATS Program... Your school has decided to use the program to help support staff and children in school to learn how to respond to evacuation, invacuation and lockdown procedures. These are things that legislation requires schools to be planning for and implementing... And with Martyn's Law being a legal requirement from April 2027 for premises with more than 200 people on site, we pride ourselves on knowing that our training not only meets but exceeds the expected standard.

I am a Liverpool resident with children of my own, my youngest being 14YRS of age. I have been in school governance for 24 years and I am fortunate to have a background in security and education. I have used my experience to create a simple 30minute session that is a fun and active lesson, it works with curriculum and teaches children to respond to guidance in a worst-case scenario situation. Whilst as a parent myself, I understand the dangers we face in modern society are very real. I acknowledge the chance of this happening here in school is very slim, but ... What If...!!!

By teaching young children and adults to respond, with simple international commands and signals, it will become second nature and may very well save lives. They are a life skill that can be used in any environment outside school, but also in any country you may visit. I would like to stress that at NO point guns, knives, bombs or terrorism are mentioned in the training with children. But should children have questions about their safety they will be answered tactfully or privately with teachers and parents. As a parent I entrust the safety of my children to the school they are assigned and believe that school is an extension of family that they will care for my children with the same care and diligence I would provide myself...

Currently we are facing unprecedented times, safety and provision of care being the utmost priority in education, but due to Martyn's Law gaining Royal assent in April this year, we have 2-years until it is passed by parliament to be implemented April 2027. The law looks at Lockdown response in accordance with terrorism activity foreign or domestic and any setting with more than 200 people on site must have a suitable system in place regarding risk management and risk escalation. ICECATS is tailored for children, before and through COVID 19, incorporating new global threats, and I can assure you, this has no impact on training or how it has been delivered for the last ten years.

I welcome any questions and feedback... I understand parents and care givers feel unsure of this situation and guidelines currently available and I believe that transparency of the program is of the utmost importance, I will be available at school on; Wed 21st / Thurs 22nd January or you can also contact me anytime by phone, messenger, WhatsApp or email.

Kindest regards

Jo Carter (Executive Director)

get in touch...
www.icecats.co.uk
info@icecats.co.uk
0191 586 4308