

# £1m damage as blaze hits historic school

A £1million blaze at an historic public school in Wolverhampton has destroyed kitchen and science blocks. Explosions from chemistry and physics labs tore the roof off the building.

At the height of the blaze more than 100 firemen fought to contain the flames.

The prefabricated building, at the Royal Wolverhampton School in Penn Road, turned into a fireball when crews ran out of water for a crucial four minutes.

Magazines of live ammunition used by school cadets had to be removed by firemen from a nearby storage block and dozens of boarders were evacuated.

The blaze raged for more than two hours, and explosions from the first floor science blocks could be heard in nearby Goldthorn Road.

Staff and pupils watched helplessly as the block burned, destroying valuable equipment and exam classwork by more than 50 pupils.

Headmaster Mr Peter Gorring said: "This is a major blow, we have lost all our chemistry and physics classrooms and the kitchens."

"Our first priority is to find somewhere for the children to continue lessons and to see what we can do about lost exam work."



A fireman surveys the debris after the fire at The Royal Wolverhampton School

It is believed that the fire started in a section of the ground floor kitchens, and fire investigation teams were today trying to pinpoint the cause.

Station Officer John Morris, of Merridale Street fire station, said the first crews arrived shortly after 8pm and found the building heavily smoke-logged.

Four men were inside searching the science block but they could not find the seat of the fire, although the heat was intense," he said.

"Then our water supply failed and during the few minutes it took to restore it the fire took hold and the whole building went up

"The mains on the Penn Road are not very good and it was just unlucky that the supply petered out at that critical time," he added.