



**An Daras Trust**  
Igniting Curiosity Growing Capabilities

# **An Daras Multi-Academy Trust**

## **Critical Incident Policy**

(and attached appendices)

The An Daras Multi Academy Trust (ADMAT) Company

An Exempt Charity Limited by Guarantee

Company Number/08156955

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Recommended	
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**Purpose:**

The purpose of this policy is to minimise the impact of critical incidents on the emotional and physical wellbeing of the school community through clear and timely communication, secure emergency planning and good after-incident procedures and welfare.

A critical incident is defined as “any sudden and unexpected incident or sequence of events which causes trauma which overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of a school or of the MAT”.

Critical incidents happen when least expected. When a school is affected by a crisis – all staff have an important role to play in supporting the emotional health and well-being of their school community and in maintaining control of the situation.

**Aims:**

- Support staff in identifying incidents which may be critical for the MAT or school community
- Ensure any response to a critical incident is delivered in an informed manner
- Create an open, positive communicative climate where the needs of pupils and staff are met in critical incident situations
- Outline critical incident emergency planning tools and guidance to support school leaders deal with difficult situations
- Promote active coping for pupils, parents and staff
- Support establishment of positive working relationships and dialogue with outside

**Scope:**

The policy covers the approach taken during any critical incident and emphasises the importance of risk management before any event. This policy also encompasses any school specific lockdown procedures that are in place based on the Trust guidance – see **Appendix 11**. It provides as appendices the policy Emergency Management Planning tools and additional relevant guidance.

The Critical Incident Emergency Management Plan must balance the twin objectives of managing the incident and meeting the needs of the whole community. The Emergency Management Plan tool should identify the key tasks that need to be dealt with at various stages of a critical incident. These key tasks will include:

- A school response depending on the nature of the incident
- Need for possible school closure and emergency contact
- Essential tasks, contingency arrangements and staff deployment
- Clear lines of communication
- A resource contact list of external agencies
- Support for staff and pupils
- Security arrangements
- Procedures for dealing with the media
- Plans for long term follow up support
- Necessary actions for critical incidents during weekends or school holidays

The appendices attached to this policy statement are practical strategies or support to be used during any critical incident. The policy and procedures must be adhered to by all Senior Leaders in the Trust in the event of a critical incident. They have been created through consultation with the wider MAT leadership structure.

## **Types of Critical Incidents which can affect schools**

- Sudden death of pupil, staff member or parent
- Sudden disappearance of pupil, staff member or parent
- Death or injury to pupil or staff member on school visit
- Severe injury to pupil or staff member due to road traffic accident
- Serious assault on pupil or staff member in school
- Disturbed intruder on school premises during school day
- Serious damage to school building or property through fire, flood or vandalism
- Civil disturbance in the local community
- Pupil, staff member or parent with contagious and dangerous illness
- Any immediate evacuation of the school with no likelihood of return for a number of hours or days

## **General Policy Principles**

### **Before an Incident**

Whilst the MAT or individual academy can take every precaution against critical incidents and some can never be planned for, the Trust understands the importance of being proactive and preparing for such events. Risk assessments must be completed at school level when there is any event or activity that could lead to a critical incident scenario.

**Appendix 2** is our Critical Incident Management Strategy Emergency Plan tool. The procedures highlight the importance of excellent and measured communication and the involvement of multi-agency services in difficult situations. The procedure makes clear the roles and responsibilities of key individuals during a critical incident.

All aspects of Safeguarding and Health & Safety (see policies) are an absolute priority in all academies in the Trust. Each school has a planned Critical Incident Management Team with defined responsibilities - see **Appendix 1**. Each academy conducts regular fire practices and lock downs and the effectiveness of this, and the plan, is reviewed by the school Senior Team/LGAB regularly across the year.

Each individual academy has a detailed whole school Emergency Plan which is regularly reviewed by Heads of School, staff and Local Governing Bodies as part of their delegated responsibilities.

### **During an Incident**

Whilst no two incidents will be the same, some similarity in approach can be planned for. As soon as an individual academy becomes aware of any incident that might have an impact, the CEO or Executive Head Teacher (EHT), or Head of School (HoS) in their absence, should establish the facts and assess its significance for the individual academy and the MAT.

At this point the Critical Incident Management Plan will be triggered by either the CEO, EHT or HoS. The key tasks are listed in the plan. As stated above, the emphasis is on clear and timely information and the need to minimise the psychological impact to all, through a highly supportive and well organised response.

### **After the Incident**

The aim of the work carried out in an individual academy during the following days, weeks and months is to help the immediate and broader community come to terms with the incident.

A return to normal routine requires sensitive planning, timing and implementation. All staff should monitor pupils' emotional well-being and be attentive to any on-going difficulties, particularly amongst those most directly affected and vulnerable groups. Staff should also, be mindful of the well-being of colleagues and report any concerns to the Senior Team.

Some staff and pupils may need more support in adjusting to normal routines. A sensitive approach to encouraging this via home visits, rotas of support, phased returns may be implemented as appropriate.

Following any critical incident, the Trust will carry out a review. The review should consider the following: -

- What went well, what was most/least helpful?
- Were there any gaps?
- Have all necessary referrals to support been made?
- Is there any unfinished communication (e.g. insurance, press)?
- Have all records been secured?
- Have any identified training needs been identified?
- Does the Critical Incident Management Plan need to be reviewed?

All leaders in the Trust will be prepared to lend support to any other academy in the group during and after a critical incident.

#### **Appendices to Policy (numbered 1 to 11)**

Detail resources, guidance and templates which support implementation of this policy and the Emergency Management Plan template required to deal with any critical incidents.

## **Appendix 1**

### **Key Responsibilities**

#### **Lead Co-ordinator**

The CEO, Executive Head teacher or Head of School (delegate in their absence) will be the Lead Co-ordinator for any incident or event under this procedure. They will:

- Overview the situation and delegate tasks and roles below to appropriate staff with the relevant skills and competence;
- Be the central point of contact for information both internally and externally, but may not be the person leading direct communications with these parties;
- Ensure the relevant authorities are informed of the incident.

#### **Welfare**

It is important that a member of the Senior Leadership Team is given the responsibility for determining appropriate actions to ensure the welfare of pupils and staff. There may be a need for both immediate and long-term actions following an incident. This person will coordinate post incident care and support.

#### **Communications**

Good internal and external communications are vital for the efficient management of an incident or event. The Executive Head teacher/Head of School will nominate individuals with clear responsibilities for internal and external communications and these may include Central MAT staff. Specific communication requirements are detailed later in this document.

#### **Resources**

Generally, the Academy Central Team will be tasked with ensuring resources are managed during, immediately after and longer term following an incident. This will include ensuring good access to and exit from site and how to shut off electricity, gas and water supplies appropriate to the incident. Provision of temporary classrooms, canteen facilities, information technology, furniture and stationery etc. will be the responsibility of this team.

## Appendix 2

### Emergency Management Plan Tool – Not exhaustive and not all elements are applicable to critical incident situation

<b>Action</b> 1. Identify the Emergency 2. Ensure all shaded boxes have been actioned 3. Consider if any further actions need taking		<b>Delegated to: Initials</b> <b>Actioned: ✓</b>					
		Fatal or Serious Injury	Damage to the Building	External Incidents (Visits)	Internal Incident Affecting School	Security or Lockdown Incident	Media Issue
<b>IMMEDIATE</b>	Phone Emergency Services (Police/Ambulance/Fire)						
	Make sure the site is safe for pupils and staff						
	Sweep site for any issues (go in groups of 3)						
	Contact the CEO or another Executive Head teacher in the Trust						
	CEO will ensure that the Chair of Directors/LGAB and other relevant people are informed						
	Make sure all senior leaders are on site and aware if not on-site contact them						
	Shut down areas where the incident has happened and stop foot traffic						
	Decide if a full lockdown is needed						
	Make sure computer systems working and MIS can be accessed						
	Setup Incident Rooms and Interview Rooms						
	Contact parents of any student directly involved or any next of kin						
	Ensure any injured party is accompanied until their family arrive						
	Make sure the external site is safe for students and staff and that all are accounted for						
	Keep all students and staff in one area that is secure and accessible						
	If necessary arrange additional staffing from elsewhere in the Trust						
	Risk assess – is a statutory investigation likely – See Appendix 7						
<b>COMMUNICATION</b>	Inform all staff of the incident (start with all						

	staff not teaching) – See Initial Staff Briefing Guide Appendix 3						
	Brief reception to field calls and provide a script and ensure a dedicated phone line is available						
	Inform pupils – See appendix 4						
	Provide reception with additional staff (away from reception if possible)						
	Give additional staff roles to monitor site						
	Inform teaching staff and pupils via a short memo inform about use of phones						
	Update the website						
	Prepare and send text message						
	Setup and agree a media strategy including a media/press statement – See Appendix 6						
	Have a follow up staff briefing the next morning						
	Send a letter to all parents – See Appendix 5						
	Have a parent's briefing						
	Contact Children's' Services/LADO						
<b>WELFARE</b>	Make sure food and drink is available for classrooms if needed						
	Assess initial impact on staff/pupils						
	Is there food and drink available for staff						
	Inform canteen of any changes to the school day						
	Arrange monitoring and support for any pupils or staff directly impacted						
	Make sure a copy of all incident and witness reports are made						
	Designate areas for break and lunch and times for year groups						
	Exit plan for pupils agreed						
	Decide when normal routine can be re-established						
	Consider religious or cultural issues which may affect individuals or communities						
<b>EXTERNAL</b>	Contact Counsellors						
	Contact HR for Media Support						

NEXT DAY/WEEK	Contact Insurance Company						
	Contact HSE						
	Contact other schools to inform them of issues						
	Contact further Local Governors/Directors						
	Is additional security needed						
	If the site is safe continue normal operations						
	Arrange a meeting with parents						
	Arrange a meeting with Insurance company						
	Keep in regular contact with any affected staff or students who are absent						
	Debrief and review plan and update where necessary						



## **Appendix 3**

### **Initial Staff Briefing Guide;**

- Give a brief statement of factual information
- Outline the schools initial response and proposed plan of action
- Allow staff to ask questions and to get a response
- Outline staff responsibility for monitoring pupil and staff welfare
- Identify vulnerable staff and pupils who may be at risk
- Advise staff on procedure for dealing with media enquiries
- Advise staff on agreed procedure for informing pupils and parents
- Inform staff of support services available
- Reassure staff that they will be supported
- Advise staff of time/place of next briefing

## Appendix 4

### Informing Pupils Guide;

- Important to inform pupils of a critical incident as soon as possible. Attention needs to be paid by the Critical Incident Leader as to what needs to be communicated and how it is communicated – See **Appendix 8** for further guidance
- Consideration to pupil needs must be given. Very young pupils and those with special educational needs must be informed in a way which is appropriate, using language and communication methods familiar to them
- To reduce the potential for creating a highly charged emotional atmosphere consider informing pupils in small groups – for example siblings, close friends, class group preferably in their normal class setting.
- The best person to communicate with pupils is their normal class teacher. Staff may decline this task if they feel unable to do it.
- When there has been a death it is important that the bereaved families right to privacy is respected. Any announcement should advise pupils of what support services or arrangements are in place and how these can be accessed.
- Staff need to be aware that young children’s understanding of death will depend on their cognitive and developmental stage – guidance attached provides information on the concept and common reactions to death in various age ranges – see **Appendix 9**.
- In case of suspected suicide there a number of issues that need to be considered these are outlined in guidance attached – see **Appendix 10**.
- If there are pupils absent from school will also need to be considered – early contact with the parents is essential to ensure pupils can be informed quickly and sensitively
- Vulnerable pupils will also require extra consideration of how information is communicated to them, They can include:
  - Close friends and relatives of those affected
  - Pupils with a history of self-harm or suicidal ideation
  - Pupils who have experienced recent bereavement or separation
  - Pupils with mental health issues
  - Pupils with a history of substance abuse.
  - Pupils with child protection needs.
  - Pupils with learning, communication or sensory issues.

## **Appendix 5**

### **Informing Parents Guide;**

- The type of critical incident will determine the nature of the contact with parents and the urgency with which this is done.
- Parents of pupils directly involved should be telephoned or visited
- Other parents may be informed, and this is most likely done most effectively by letter.  
Examples are attached below
- When contacting parents, it is important that that any information must be factual and accurate. School should ensure it considers the needs of parents who do not speak or read English.
- School should have as part of their whole school emergency plan or lockdown procedure a mechanism which allows them to contact all parents as a matter of urgency.

## **Appendix 6**

**Informing the Media. Before making any media statement it is strongly recommended that;**

- A check is carried out with any emergency services involved with the incident.
- A decision is made on who will handle all initial and subsequent media relations.
- An accurate, factual report is prepared as a background to any questions.
- Ensure no other staff make comment or provide comment on the incident in any way including social media.
- News media should not be permitted on school property without the prior approval of the senior leader. This applies to television, radio, print media or photographers.

## **Appendix 7**

### **Statutory Investigations;**

- School and critical incident lead needs to be aware that a critical incident may lead to a statutory investigation by the relevant regulatory or statutory body.
- It is important that schools anticipate being asked to contribute information about the incident and have taken steps to ensure all relevant records or evidence is secured.

## **Appendix 8**

### **Breaking News to Pupils;**

- Before telling the pupils about an incident consideration needs to be given to issuing the “Information sheet for Pupils” and allowing time for discussion.
- If the incident involves the disappearance or sudden death of a pupil or member of staff it is important to consider the wishes of “the family” and remember their right to privacy.
- Teachers should relay the information, agreed at the staff briefing, to pupils at schools - preferably at the same time. Relaying the information to vulnerable pupils and pupils absent from school also needs to be considered. Any “news” should contain appropriate language and factual information only with clear, concise, “bite size” explanations delivered in a calm manner.

### **REMEMBER;**

- Be patient - you may have to repeat the information many times. Be honest, specific and straightforward - it is acceptable to say you do not have all the answers.
- Be available for the pupil. Monitor initial reactions. Allow time for pupils to discuss their feelings. Provide reassurance and information about the school support which is available. Inform pupils of a designated area should they be unable to stay in class.
- Monitor ongoing and developing reactions. Refer on for additional support if in doubt.
- Share your own feelings, if appropriate; acknowledge the pupil’s feelings: if necessary, use pictures and social stories to aid understanding.
- Be prepared that a pupil may come back and ask more questions.
- Be proactive: if you can, have information ready for possible questions. Assure pupils they will be kept updated.

## Appendix 9

### Children's Understanding of Death;

- Children's understanding of death will depend on their cognitive and developmental stage. They will revisit the loss as they mature, reach significant milestones and become more able to talk about their experiences.
- Children with learning or cognitive delay will progress through the developmental stages at a slower pace or indeed may remain at an early stage in their understanding of death
- Children do experience similar feelings to adults following a death but often express their feelings differently depending on their development stage
- There is no right or wrong way to grieve. It is important to allow children to grieve in their own way and in their own time. They may see-saw in and out of grief, needing time to play and have fun as well as cry.

Age	Concept of Death	Possible Reactions
2 to 5 years	Death seen as reversible May feel they have caused death Magical thinking – make up fantasies to fill gaps in knowledge	Fears abandonment and separation Loud protest Despair Indignant at changes in patterns or routine Sleep problems Reversion to “baby” behaviours
5 to 11 years	More exposure to death and understanding of death as permanent	Withdrawal, sadness, loneliness, depression Anger, guilt, temper tantrums, nightmares Behaviour, learning or longer-term school problems Perfect child – appears brave and in control Pre-occupied with death
Over 11 years	Death permanent Denial – it can't happen	Withdrawal, sadness, loneliness, depression Anger, rejection, guilt Joking, sarcasm Dependence or regression Insecurity, low self esteem

## Appendix 10

### Death by Suspected Suicide – Information for staff

- The term suicide should not be used by a school until it is determined by the Coroner's Office. Where an inquest is required it may be a considerable period of time after the death.
- When providing support for vulnerable pupils, it would be prudent to make a working assumption of suicide, if all reasonable indicators suggest that this might be the case. Pupils and members of the community may be inclined to describe a death as a suicide before this has been established. Phrases such as 'tragic event' or 'sudden death' should be used by the school when talking to pupils.
- In the aftermath of a sudden death within the school community pupils' vulnerability may increase. Teachers should realise that some pupils may develop suicide ideation and/or self-harm.
- Staff need to be proactive in identifying and monitoring these pupils. Pupils considered to be 'at risk' should be immediately referred to the Designated Teacher for Child Protection who will then notify parents and advise them of the referral pathway to obtain support for their child. This will include the child's doctor and the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services.
- Schools should maintain contact with parents to ensure that appropriate action has been taken to protect and support the pupil. Careful records should be kept and securely stored as set out in the school's data protection guidelines. Action must also be taken to identify other at-risk groups in the school, including close friends and relatives and to direct them to appropriate support. At any time, parents, school staff or pupils can contact the "Lifeline 24/7" crisis response helpline service (Tel: 0808 808 8000).
- Where there appears to be an emerging cluster of perceived suicides in a school or a number of schools in close proximity, the LA's Critical Incident Response Teams will liaise with the relevant Health and Social Care Trusts. This coordinated response will ensure an appropriate community response to the situation while minimising sensationalism and avoiding the glamorising of suicidal behaviour.
- As with any death, schools may wish to remember the person who has died and to pay tribute to their memory. When an apparent suicide has occurred, schools should be careful to remember the person without condoning the means of death.
- It is important that events are reported in a sensitive and measured way so that other vulnerable young people are not put at risk. The language used is very important.
- Schools should remember to be vigilant around the time of the inquest, court cases and the anniversary of a death and access any support services as may be required.

### Responding to a Distressed Pupil

- **Listen.** It can be very difficult for a young person to disclose distress, so it is essential that he/she is given time and attention. Privacy is also important.
- **Take it seriously.** Disclosures of distress should never be minimised. The young person should be taken seriously but the adult should not express alarm. The young person needs to feel safe and have confidence in adults.



- **Accept the possibility of suicidal thoughts.** These feelings are real and should not be dismissed.
- **Do NOT promise confidentiality.** Ensure that the young person knows that the information will be handled sensitively but that it must be shared with others to safeguard them. Show a caring attitude. It is acceptable to express care for the young person and a commitment to their well-being.
- **Be open.** If suicidal intent is suspected it is appropriate to ask the young person whether they are thinking of harming themselves and have any plans.
- **Supervise closely.** Keep the pupil with you until you can deliver them to the care of the Designated Teacher for Child Protection (or appropriate alternative). Sometimes it is more helpful for the teacher to whom the pupil expressed their distress to be the one who stays with him or her while the designated teacher makes safeguarding arrangements.

## Appendix 11

### Lockdown Procedure Guidance for Education Settings in An Daras MAT;

#### Introduction

It is required that all MAT schools should have effective lockdown procedures and that they are regularly tested. This guidance is intended to be used both by schools which already have lockdown plans, to inform their development as necessary, and by those MAT schools where no such plans currently exist. **Note: This guidance is not an actual lockdown plan.**

Lockdown procedures can also be known as ‘**sheltering in place**’, and this may be a more suitable term to use with pupils. Additional advice can be sought from NaCTSO

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/national-counter-terrorism-security-office>

#### Guidance for Schools on Creating Lockdown Procedures

All MAT schools should consider the need for robust and tested **school lockdown procedures**.

Lockdown procedures should be seen as a sensible and proportionate response to any external or internal incident which has the potential to pose a threat to the safety of staff and pupils in the school. Procedures should aim to minimise disruption to the learning environment whilst ensuring the safety of all pupils and staff. Lockdown procedures may be activated in response to any number of situations, but some of the more typical might be:

- A reported incident/civil disturbance in the local community (with the potential to pose a risk to staff and pupils in the school).
- An intruder on the school site (with the potential to pose a risk to staff and pupils).
- A warning being received regarding a risk locally, of air pollution (smoke plume, gas cloud etc) or chemical, biological or radiological contaminants.
- A major fire in the vicinity of the school.
- The close proximity of a dangerous dog roaming loose.

#### Lockdown Arrangements

Lockdown arrangements should be determined by MAT schools on an individual basis, as they will be dependent to a large extent on local circumstances such as premises design and layout, class arrangements, resources available, etc. Schools should consider having two types of lockdown; ‘**partial**’ and ‘**full**’.

##### 1. Partial Lockdown

**Alert to staff:** ‘Partial lockdown’

In a partial lockdown staff and pupils should remain in the school building and all doors leading outside should be locked. No one should be allowed to enter or leave the building; however teaching and work can continue as usual. This may be as a result of a reported incident / civil disturbance in the local community with the potential to pose a risk to staff and pupils in the school. It may also be as a result of a warning being received regarding the risk of air pollution, etc.

##### Immediate action

- All outside activity to cease immediately, pupils and staff return to building. (There needs to be a means of communicating the alert to duty staff at break times).
- All staff and pupils remain in building and external doors and windows locked.
- Free movement may be permitted within the building dependent upon circumstances.

- In the event of an air pollution or chemical, biological or radiological contaminants issue, air vents, fans, heating and air conditioning systems should be closed or turned off.
- Use anything to hand to seal up all the cracks around doors and any vents into the room – you aim to minimise possible ingress of pollutants.
- Staff should await further instructions. All situations are different. Once all staff and pupils are safely inside, senior staff will conduct an ongoing and dynamic risk assessment based on advice from the Emergency Services. Inform your **Area Schools Support Team** and the **MAT Central Office**.

A 'partial lockdown' may also be a precautionary measure, but puts the school in a state of readiness (whilst retaining a degree of normality) should the situation escalate. Emergency Services will advise as to the best course of action in respect of the prevailing threat.

## 2. Full Lockdown

### **Alert to staff:** 'Full lockdown'

This signifies an immediate threat to the school and may be an escalation of a partial lockdown. The aim of a full lockdown is for the school and its rooms to appear empty.

### **Immediate action**

- All pupils/staff stay in their classroom or move to the nearest classroom.
- Office staff should remain in their office.
- External doors locked. Classroom doors locked (where a member of staff with key is present).
- Windows locked, blinds drawn, internal door windows covered (so an intruder cannot see in).
- Pupils/staff sit quietly out of sight and where possible in a location that would protect them from gunfire (bullets go through glass, brick, wood and metal. Consider locations behind substantial brickwork or heavy reinforced walls).
- Lights, smartboards and computer monitors turned off.
- Mobile phones turned off (or at the least turned onto silent so they cannot give away your position).
- A register to be taken of all pupils/staff in each classroom/office.
- Communicate register of staff/pupils to a pre-agreed central office.
- Staff should await further instructions.

Staff and pupils remain in lock down until it has been lifted by a senior member of staff/emergency services. At any point during the lockdown, the fire alarm may sound which is a cue to evacuate the building.

During the lockdown, staff will keep agreed lines of communication open but not make unnecessary calls to the central office as this could delay more important communication.

Examples of discreet communication channels might be:

- Where staff have access to an internal e-mail system, they could access their account and await further instruction. In practical terms, staff would need to be familiar with accessing their account through a variety of means e.g. laptop, smartphone or tablet.
- Where a school uses 'Parentmail' or other similar communication tool then staff could be put into a defined user group. This could then be used to communicate instructions via text message in an emergency.

## School Lockdown Plan

It is not possible to prescribe a generic school lockdown plan as there are a number of variables that will dictate exactly how an individual MAT school responds to those situations identified, for example:

- Access to school bell controls to raise an alarm in an emergency.
- Other means of internal communications - messenger, two-way radios, mobile phone, internal e-mail, texts etc.
- School site plan e.g. the layout of buildings and their proximity to one another.
- Age of students.
- Geographical location – urban/rural, presence of secure perimeter fence.

Nonetheless, it may be helpful to incorporate the following basic principles in their plans:

- A member of staff is nominated as lockdown manager (plus deputies in their absence) to initiate, manage and conclude the lockdown. They will also communicate with emergency services. Their roles and responsibilities should be documented.
- Staff are alerted to the activation of the plan by a recognised signal, audible throughout the school.
- The use of the fire alarm should be avoided to reduce the incorrect response to an incident.
- Pupils/staff who are outside of the school buildings should be brought inside as quickly as possible.
- Those inside the school should remain in their classrooms or proceed directly to the nearest classroom.
- All external doors and, as necessary, windows are locked (depending on the circumstances, internal classroom doors may also need to be locked).
- Blinds/curtains drawn and windows on internal doors covered.
- Once in lockdown mode, staff should notify the office immediately of any pupils not accounted for and any additional pupils/staff in their classroom via the agreed communication channel.
- Staff should encourage the pupils to keep calm.
- As appropriate, the school should establish communication with the Emergency Services as soon as possible.
- Cornwall Council should also be notified via the Emergency Management Duty Officer. (020 3162 2240 ) and the MAT Central Office should be notified (01566 777503)
- If necessary, parents should be notified as soon as it is practicable to do so via the school's established communications system.
- Pupils must not be released to parents during a lockdown.
- If it is necessary to evacuate the building, the fire alarm should sound.
- Ensure procedures are in place for members of staff who do not have a regular office or classroom.
- Ensure visitors/volunteers/peripatetic staff are included in your school lockdown plan.
- Establish an official lockdown termination announcement/signal so that all staff know that it is authentic.
- Specific arrangements should be made for pupils/staff with different needs (i.e. hearing/visual impairment or mobility needs).
- Areas in the school that cannot be effectively locked down should be identified and the lockdown procedures should include instructions on removing staff and pupils from these areas to a place of safety (i.e. toilets/outbuildings).
- Establish agreed methods of communication from staff to the lockdown manager should a dangerous intruder be located on the school premises.

- An overview sheet outlining the school's procedures will be displayed in the staffroom and other places throughout the school as appropriate (see Appendix A).

In the event a school is in lockdown and the fire alarm sounds, the school should contact the emergency services as in a normal fire alarm activation. A nominated member of staff who has a means of remote communication (e.g. a walkie talkie) should go to the fire alarm panel to establish what zone has been activated. Once the zone has been identified, the alarm should be silenced and another person sent to the area to investigate. They will need to approach with caution as there may be a fire or an intruder may have activated the alarm. If a fire is discovered this information should be communicated back to the person at the fire alarm panel, who should resound the alarm, update the emergency services and evacuate the school.

Due to the fast-moving nature of incidents that require lockdown it is important that all staff are able to act quickly and effectively. Staff should have clear roles and responsibilities and it is of vital importance that the school's lockdown procedures are familiar to members of the senior management team, school administrators, teaching staff and non-teaching staff. Depending on their age, pupils should also be aware of the plan. (Regular practices will increase their familiarity).

Staff's understanding should be regularly checked with regular training refreshers. A lockdown drill should be undertaken at least once a year (or possibly termly dependent on risk analysis) and thoroughly debriefed to monitor the effectiveness of your arrangements. Parents too should know that the school has a lockdown plan and that it will be regularly tested. **However, it is not advisable to share the school's full lockdown plan.**

It would also be good practice to:

- Conduct a number of table top exercises with the senior leadership team to test the procedures against various scenarios.
- Rehearse lockdown arrangements with all staff and pupils.
- Display lockdown drill information in every classroom alongside information relating to fire drills.

### **Communication between Parents and the School**

Arrangements for communicating with parents in the event of a lockdown, should be routinely shared either via newsletter or the school website.

In the event of an actual lockdown, it is strongly advised that any incident or development is communicated to parents as soon as is practicable. It is obvious that parents will be concerned but regular communication of accurate information will help to alleviate undue anxiety.

Parents should be given enough information about what will happen so that they:

- Are reassured that the school understands their concern for their child's welfare, and that it is doing everything possible to ensure his/her safety.
- Do not need to contact the school. Calling the school could tie up telephone lines that are required for contacting emergency support providers.
- Do not come to the school. They could interfere with emergency support provider's access to the school and may even put themselves and others in danger.
- Wait for the school to contact them about when it is safe to collect their children, and where this will be from.
- Are aware of what will happen if the lockdown continues beyond school hours.

The 'communication with parents' section of the school lockdown plan needs to reassure parents that the school understands their concern for their children's welfare and that everything that can possibly be done to ensure children's safety will be done. However, it may also be prudent to

reinforce the message that **‘the school is in a full lockdown situation. During this period the switchboard and entrances will be un-manned, external doors locked and nobody is allowed in or out...’**

Should parents present at the school during a lockdown under no circumstances should members of staff leave the building to communicate directly with them.

### **Emergency Services**

It is important to keep lines of communication open with Emergency Services as they are best placed to offer advice as a situation unfolds. The school site may or may not be cordoned off by Emergency Services depending on the severity of the incident that has triggered the lockdown. Emergency Services will support the decision of the Headteacher/Head of School with regarding the timing of communication to parents.

In the event of a prolonged lockdown or more severe scenario, emergency services, local authorities and voluntary sector organisations will work together to co-ordinate practical and emotional support to those affected by any emergency, also referred to as humanitarian assistance. A reception centre for friends and family could be set-up outside of the cordoned area.

### **Useful contact numbers**

#### **If you are a member of school staff:**

Please contact the MAT Central Office on 01566 777503

Please contact your Area Schools Support Service, or the Duty “Out of Hours” Emergency Management Officer. If you do not have access to these telephone numbers please call the Cornwall Council Contact Centre (0300 1234 100) in the first instance.

#### **If you are a member of the public:**

Please contact Cornwall Council Contact Centre on 0300 234 100.

**NOTE:** This guidance forms an appendix to MAT Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and the MAT Critical Incident Policy.