

# NORTHUMBERLAND

Northumberland County Council

## School Emergency Planning Guidance

**A practical guide for schools in  
Northumberland (Version 2.0 October 2015)**

Developed by:  
Northumberland County Council  
Civil Contingencies Team  
Fire and Rescue HQ  
West Hartford Business Park  
Cramlington  
NE23 3JP  
Tel: (01670) 621206  
Fax: (01670) 621183  
Email: [eplan@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:eplan@northumberland.gov.uk)  
Web: [www.northumberland.gov.uk](http://www.northumberland.gov.uk)

Parents and carers trust schools to keep their children safe. Thanks to the efforts of staff and governors, schools normally remain a safe haven for children; but they can become involved in an emergency at any time.

The Department for Education recommend that schools create and maintain an emergency plan.

This document and its associated resources have been designed to help schools:

- Develop and review an emergency plan
- Provide training to staff who could become involved in an incident
- Organise emergency planning exercises.

They are based on examples of good practice from local authorities across the country and have been developed in collaboration with the Department for Education and the Cabinet Office. If your school already has an emergency plan you may wish to use these resources to review your current arrangements.

Planning for emergencies can save lives. It can prevent an incident getting worse, provide confidence to staff, governors, parents, carers and pupils and enhance your school's reputation as a safe place to learn and work. Plans which deal with the consequences of large-scale emergencies also help staff to deal with the smaller (but nevertheless potentially distressing) incidents that schools can experience on a regular basis.

## Contents

<b>SECTION</b>	<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
	<b>Risk Assessment</b>	<b>4</b>
	<b>Planning</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>1</b>	Contact Details	<b>5</b>
<b>2</b>	Activation	<b>6</b>
<b>3</b>	Roles and Responsibilities	<b>6</b>
<b>4</b>	Post Incident Support	<b>9</b>
<b>5</b>	Business Continuity	<b>11</b>
<b>6</b>	Site information	<b>13</b>
<b>7</b>	Evacuation	<b>14</b>
<b>8</b>	Shelter	<b>16</b>
<b>9</b>	Lockdown	<b>16</b>
<b>10</b>	Closing the School	<b>17</b>
<b>11</b>	Communications	<b>18</b>
<b>12</b>	Bomb Threats	<b>19</b>
<b>13</b>	Suspicious Packages	<b>19</b>
<b>14</b>	Log-Keeping Guidelines	<b>20</b>
	<b>Training</b>	<b>21</b>
	<b>Testing Your Procedures</b>	<b>24</b>
	<b>Reviewing</b>	<b>29</b>
	<b>Annexe 1 – Links to the National Curriculum</b>	<b>31</b>

# Introduction

The aim of a school emergency plan is to help staff respond effectively to an emergency at school or on an educational visit.

An emergency plan should be generic enough to cover a range of potential incidents that could occur. Examples include:

- Serious injury to a pupil or member of staff (e.g. transport accident)
- Significant damage to school property (e.g. fire)
- Criminal activity (e.g. bomb threat)
- Severe weather (e.g. flooding, snow)
- Public health incidents (e.g. influenza pandemic)
- The effects of a disaster in the local community.

Your plan should cover procedures for incidents occurring during school hours and outside school hours, including weekends and holidays. Emergency procedures for extended services should also be included.

## Template school emergency plan

A template school emergency plan is available in an editable format and can be downloaded from [www.northumberland.gov.uk](http://www.northumberland.gov.uk).

The information within this document relates directly to this template. Whether you adopt the template or choose to use your own, this guidance should be used to adapt your plan as appropriate to your school and circumstances.

## The planning process

Preparing for emergencies is an ongoing process which involves:

- Risk assessment
- Planning
- Training
- Testing your procedures
- Reviewing.

Throughout each stage of this process it is important to consult members of staff and governors to gain their involvement and support.

## Support from the local authority

Some schools have a nominated emergency contact within the local authority that can offer advice on emergency planning issues.

The amount of support local authorities can provide, before and during an incident, will depend on your type of school. Independent schools will not be able to rely on the support of local authorities to the degree that non-independent schools can. If in doubt please consult your local authority for advice.

### Links with other areas of work

Many aspects of work carried out by schools have some relation to emergency planning. Examples include:

- First aid arrangements
- Evacuation procedures
- Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs)
- Fire safety management procedures
- Policies for supporting those with medical needs or Special Educational Needs (SEN)
- Procedures for educational visits
- School security procedures
- Health and safety documentation (e.g. risk assessments, asbestos management)
- Safe practice in Physical Education (PE)
- Pandemic influenza planning
- Remote learning arrangements
- Grief and bereavement guidance.

It can be useful to include related information within your emergency plan. In other cases, it may be more suitable to keep this documentation separate and provide a reference where appropriate.

### Plan distribution

All staff and governors should have a copy of the plan which can be referred to during school hours and outside school hours (including holidays and when on educational visits). Depending on the content it may also be appropriate to distribute it to other parties, such as extended services or the local authority.

As most emergency plans contain sensitive information (e.g. contact details) it is important to keep them secure. All versions of the plan, including hard copies and electronic versions, must be controlled. Hard copies will need to be locked away when unattended and electronic versions should be password protected.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Your plan will need to be reviewed regularly. It may be useful to keep hard copies of the plan in a ring-bound folder so that frequently updated sections of the plan (e.g. contact details, can be easily replaced).</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Consider distributing electronic versions of the plan on an encrypted memory stick, which staff can keep with them at all times</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Staff may find it useful to have a summary of the plan (containing those sections deemed most important) on one piece of paper, which can be easily carried around.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Remember to provide new members of staff with a copy of the plan.</li></ul>	<b>SUGGESTIONS</b>
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## Grab Bags

Having the necessary resources available during the onset of an emergency can prove very beneficial to the response. It may be helpful to prepare a number of grab bags which contain potentially useful items:

- A first aid kit
- Torches
- Two-way radios
- Batteries
- A whistle
- A loud hailer
- A disposable camera
- Armband/high-visibility tabards
- Blankets
- Gloves
- Wellies
- Log books
- Stationery
- Petty cash

Important documents, such as your emergency plan or insurance policies, could also be included.

It is recommended that the contents of the grab bag are checked annually and after any equipment has been used.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Grab bags should be stored securely but made easily accessible to staff should an incident occur. Consider storing one in the school building (e.g. office, staff room) and one outside the main building in case the site becomes inaccessible.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Other items impractical to keep within a grab bag (e.g. keys) could be stored elsewhere. It may be useful to add a note within the grab bag to ensure staff do not forget these crucial items when in a hurry.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Staff on educational visits should consider taking a grab bag with them, containing similar items (but not necessarily identical) to the list above.</li></ul>	<b>SUGGESTIONS</b>
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# Risk Assessment

Schools are potentially susceptible to a variety of risk; these vary in severity and likelihood.

Before developing an emergency plan it is useful to consider those risks your school could be particularly vulnerable to. When identifying risks to your school it may be useful to obtain a copy of your community risk register; this is available online at [www.northumberland.gov.uk](http://www.northumberland.gov.uk).

Note that an emergency plan should be designed to help the school respond to a variety of incidents; it is not necessary to develop a separate plan for each risk.

## Risk prevention and mitigation

Risk can be assessed based on a combination of the likelihood of an incident occurring and the potential impact of that incident should it occur. The combination of these two factors determines the level of risk (e.g. 'high', 'medium', 'low').

Wherever possible, measures should be taken to prevent or mitigate risks, especially for those deemed 'high'. Examples include purchasing flood protection equipment or ensuring sufficient stocks of grit/salt have been procured for use during periods of cold weather.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Any specific hazards relevant to your school (e.g. the location of chemical stores on the premises, nearby watercourses that flood) could be documented within your plan.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> If vulnerable to flooding consult the Environment Agency for advice at <a href="http://www.environment-agency.co.uk">www.environment-agency.co.uk</a>. It is also recommended that you sign up to the Environment Agency Floodline Warning Direct Service.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> The Met Office provides an email alert service for severe weather warnings. Schools can register online at <a href="http://www.metoffice.gov.uk">www.metoffice.gov.uk</a></li></ul>	<b>SUGGESTIONS</b>
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# Planning

## SECTION 1 – CONTACT DETAILS

The Department for Education emphasise that schools should maintain up-to-date contact details for use during an emergency. Knowing who to contact, and being able to contact them, is fundamental in responding successfully to an incident.

Your plan should contain up-to-date contact details for all those who may need to be contacted during an emergency. Examples include:

- School staff
- Governors
- Pupils
- Parents/carers
- Extended services
- The emergency services
- The local authority
- Local radio station

Arrangements for contacting people during school hours and outside school hours often vary so it is important to make such distinctions within the plan. Alternative methods of contact for staff (e.g. mobile phone number, home telephone number) and back-up contact details for organisations should be included wherever possible.

This is the important section of your emergency plan and must be updated on a regular basis.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> At least one copy of the plan held off-site should include contact details of pupils and parents/carers.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Specific arrangements for contacting pupils and parents/carers (e.g. telephone trees, text messaging systems) can be documented in section 11 of the template school emergency plan.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> It is important the emergency services and local authority are able to contact a member of staff if an incident occurs outside school hours. Ensure that your local authority is provided with up-to-date emergency contact details on a regular basis. During school holidays it can also be useful to know when key holders are unavailable.</li></ul>	<b>SUGGESTIONS</b>
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## **SECTION 2 – ACTIVATION**

Potentially any member of staff could be notified of an emergency so it is important that all employees are aware of the plan and a copy is made readily available (e.g. near the telephone in the school office). Throughout the response to an emergency staff should maintain an incident log.

When an incident occurs the priority is to safeguard those on-site (i.e. pupils, staff, parents/carers, visitors) and alert the emergency services if necessary. Other organisations, such as the local authority, should then be informed as appropriate.

Some emergencies may affect the local community but not the school directly. In such instances it might be suitable to activate certain aspects of the plan (e.g. post incident support) to help those affected.

## **SECTION 3 – ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

This section of the plan includes generic roles and responsibilities for staff during an emergency and in the recovery phase. The actions required to respond will depend on the nature of the emergency; it is unlikely staff would need to implement all of the actions outlined in this section during one incident.

### **Initial response, ongoing response, recovery**

Actions taken during the response to an emergency can have a direct impact on the recovery phase. When responding to an incident staff should consider the long-term implications of any decisions made.

Once the response has finished all those who were originally notified of the incident should be informed and a recovery strategy should be established. Support may be available from the local authority in organising remedial work to property and providing post incident support to pupils and staff.

The recovery phase may last for a significant period of time. Reconstruction work, formal inquiries or police investigations into an incident will require the co-operation and support of school staff, pupils and parent/carers.

### **School Emergency Management Team (SEMT)**

The Headteacher will usually take overall responsibility for co-ordinating the response to an emergency. If this is not appropriate a pre-agreed nominee should be identified (and appropriately trained) to undertake this role.

Unless the incident is minor, it will be impossible for the Headteacher to implement all the actions required on behalf of the school. A School Emergency Management Team (SEMT) should be established at the onset of an incident which can assist the Headteacher in managing the response.

The following roles could be covered by the SEMT:

- Co-ordination (i.e. Headteacher or pre-agreed nominee)
- Business continuity
- Communications
- Log-keeping
- Media management
- Resources
- Welfare

### **Assigning staff to the SEMT**

Nominees for the SEMT should be identified prior to an emergency and are likely to comprise a variety of school employees:

- Site managers/caretakers
- Business managers/bursars
- Teachers
- Office staff

The size of an SEMT will vary depending on the size of your school and the nature of the emergency. In some cases more than one member of staff will need to be assigned to a role (such as 'welfare' which can prove especially labour intensive).

It may not always be possible to nominate a full SEMT; in such a situation employees will have to undertake more than one role. Indeed, in smaller schools the majority of responsibilities may be assigned to the Headteacher with the support of office staff and the site manager/caretaker. In these circumstances it is particularly useful to call for additional support (e.g. from the local authority) as soon as possible.

When assigning staff to SEMT roles the immediately obvious choice may not always be the most appropriate; consider the strengths of your staff and what they would be most suited to doing. If an employee updates the school website and contacts parents/carers on a regular basis, this person may be appropriate to undertake the 'communications' role. The site manager/caretaker is often well placed to undertake the 'resources' role due to their detailed knowledge of the school premises.

Employees who have other roles in an emergency (such as those trained in first aid) may not be appropriate to nominate as part of the SEMT as this could prevent them fulfilling their other responsibilities.

Staff not within the SEMT still have a crucial role in the response to an emergency; their presence will be needed to reassure pupils and minimise disruption to the school routine. They may also be required to provide assistance in other ways, such as accompanying pupils to hospital.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Consider tailoring the roles and responsibilities within this section to make them more specific to your school.</li> <li>❑ If staff have been pre-designated an SEMT role, this information could be included in section 1.2 of the template school emergency plan.</li> <li>❑ Members of the SEMT may not always be available; consider nominating deputies for each role.</li> <li>❑ It may be useful to issue the SEMT with armbands or high-visibility tabards to make them easily identifiable during an emergency. These could be stored in your grab bag(s).</li> <li>❑ Wherever possible, all staff and governors should carry identification with them when responding to an incident. The emergency service may ask staff for proof of identity before allowing them access to the premises.</li> </ul>	<b>SUGGESTIONS</b>
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### **SEMT briefings**

It is useful to pre-designate a venue for the SEMT to meet during an incident. Ideally this location will have access to telecommunications and enough space to incorporate the SEMT and other responders (e.g. personnel from the emergency services or local authority). In many instances, the school office or staff room will be particularly suitable for this role.

How often the SEMT meet will depend on the exact nature of the incident. However, it is important that frequent briefings are held and that staff maintain regular contact with each other. At the end of each SEMT briefing the time and location of the subsequent one should be agreed.

### **Shifts**

Responding to an emergency can be exhausting and potentially upsetting. Staff cannot work indefinitely and during a protracted incident it will be necessary to consider shift patterns. The timing of shift changes should be staggered to ensure replacements have an opportunity to be briefed properly and become accustomed to their role.

### **Emergencies during educational visits**

Leaders of educational visits have a legal duty of care for the people under their charge. Schools are required to have procedures in place for educational visits and staff should refer to these arrangements when planning an event.

Although roles and responsibilities have been provided for the educational visit leader some of these actions are likely to be delegated to other members of staff on the visit.

Every NCC school and academy which buys into the Health and Safety Service Level Agreement (SLA) uses the EVOLVE system to record all their off-site visits. For all emergencies, on any off-site visit, the procedures laid down in the 'Off-site Visits – Serious Incident Guidance' document must be followed.

Schools which are independent of NCC control must have their own arrangements for off-site educational visits in place.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>❑ Staff must take a copy of the emergency plan and may wish to take a grab bag when on an educational visit.</li><li>❑ When taking pupils on an educational visit abroad it is recommended that you subscribe to the Foreign &amp; Commonwealth Office's foreign travel advice, where travel updates are communicated via Email, Twitter and Facebook. To subscribe go to <a href="http://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice">www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice</a></li></ul> | <b>SUGGESTIONS</b> |
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## SECTION 4 – POST INCIDENT SUPPORT

The effects of a traumatic event upon a school, such as the serious injury or death of a pupil, can be profound and have significant and long-term effects.

After an incident there will be a continuing need to support pupils, parents/carers and staff. It is important to ensure appropriate monitoring procedures are in place so any individuals who require assistance can be identified and supported. This could include those who:

- Were injured
- Were uninjured, but at great risk
- Witnessed the event
- Are related to those involved
- Are friends of those involved
- Blame themselves
- Are being blamed by others
- Are experiencing instability at home
- Have pre-existing behavioural difficulties
- Have previously suffered bereavement or loss
- Have witnessed a similar incident before

People involved in the incident, whether directly or indirectly, will be affected in different ways. This could include:

- Sleep disturbance
- Recurrent dreams
- Disturbing images and memories of the event
- Impairment of memory
- Feelings of guilt
- Feelings of detachment
- Difficulty in retaining concentration
- Diminished interest in significant activities (e.g. exams)
- Avoidance of activities which recall the event

Affected individuals may also experience renewed grief on the anniversary of the incident or on other significant dates.

Staff will play an important role in supporting pupils as they recover from an incident but they should not be expected to perform a counselling role. If support is needed, further professional help should be arranged following discussion with, and the consent of, parents/carers. This will be very sensitive matter and staff should seek advice from trained specialists if they are unsure how to proceed.

Local authorities may be able to offer support from educational professionals trained in psychological debriefing, critical incident stress debriefing, bereavement counselling and trauma management. This could include:

- Advice on short-term and long-term support arrangements
- Guidance on the grieving process
- Advice on identifying particularly vulnerable individuals
- Links to other organisations which can provide assistance

Assistance may also be available from external counselling services (e.g. Cruse Bereavement Care, Samaritans) and local religious groups.

Staff will need support if they are to be effective at caring for pupils as dealing with crises can be an enormously stressful experience. The effect on staff should not be underestimated as in some cases it may be more significant than the impact on pupils.

## **SECTION 5 – BUSINESS CONTINUITY**

The aim of Business Continuity Management (BCM) is to ensure critical services continue to be delivered during and after an incident.

Causes of business interruption commonly include:

- Loss of utility supply
- Loss of supplier
- Loss of premises
- Loss of personnel
- Loss of telecommunications

It is important to have arrangements in place to cope with a business continuity incident. Even whilst responding to an emergency schools should aim to maintain pupils' education and minimise disruption to timetables and examinations.

The loss of important paperwork, records and data can prove particularly damaging.

### **Paper-based records**

Most schools have some essential paper-based records which could be easily destroyed in a fire or flood.

Staff should be encouraged to think about where they keep important resources (e.g. coursework) as loss of these can significantly harm the morale of pupils. Measures could include:

- Storing essential documentation in a fire-proof safe
- Making copies of important documentation and storing these off-site
- Scanning important paper-based records and storing these electronically

It is sometimes possible to restore damaged records if prompt action is taken. Details of document salvage/restoration companies could be incorporated into your plan.

Schools should have a record of important equipment and items (e.g. asset register, equipment inventory) for calculating losses for insurance purposes. This, alongside details of any leased equipment on the premises could also be included within this section.

### **Electronic records**

Schools should have disaster recovery arrangements for their technical systems. All data stored on the school network should be backed-up remotely and copies of data stored off-site. This section could be used to record information on the technical systems your school relies on and any back-up arrangements which have been established.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ It is important not to become over-reliant on one supplier. Consider creating a list of alternative suppliers and check that your existing ones have business continuity arrangements in place.</li> <li>❑ A Business Impact Analysis (BIA) can be used to assess the implications of a business continuity incident in more detail. Please contact your local authority for more information.</li> </ul>	<b>SUGGESTIONS</b>
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### **Remote learning**

If closed for a significant period of time schools will need to put remote learning measures in place to provide pupils with a reasonable level of teaching. A reliable and consistent method of distributing work to pupils should be established and pupils will need advice on the arrangements for submitting work and receiving feedback from teachers.

Technical systems play a vital role in maintaining communication between staff and pupils. Nevertheless, it is important to consider how pupils without a computer and internet connection will be able to work from home. In most situations, remote learning arrangements are likely to consist of a combination of technical systems (e.g. Virtual Learning Environments, extranets, websites, email) and sending hard copies of work via post.

Methods of supporting pupils should also be considered. An email address could be designated for pupils to use should they have any general queries but regular opportunities to speak to an appropriately qualified member of staff (either in person or over the telephone) should also be provided.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Consider identifying learning resources/teaching materials which are particularly suited for remote learning. It may also be useful to assess the proportion of pupils with access to a computer and internet connection at home.</li> <li>❑ During an influenza pandemic many schools could be forced to close. Consider how remote learning could be provided in conjunction with other affected schools and the local authority.</li> </ul>	<b>SUGGESTIONS</b>
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## SECTION 6 – SITE INFORMATION

Detailed information about the school site can prove particularly useful for personnel involved in the response to an incident, particularly the emergency services.

This section could contain a number of differently themed maps including details of:

- Internal hazards (e.g. asbestos, chemical stores)
- External Hazards (e.g. rivers, reservoirs, industrial sites, main roads)
- Utility supplies (e.g. isolation points for gas, water and electricity)
- Evacuation procedures (e.g. evacuation routes, assembly points)
- Notable premises in vicinity (e.g. places of safety, buddy schools, rest centres)
- Pre-designated areas to be used during an emergency (e.g. SEMT briefing area, media briefing area, suitable rooms for lockdown procedures)

This section of the plan could also provide instructions on how to isolate utility supplies and reset the fire alarm system. It is easy to become over-reliant on site managers/caretakers; other school staff should also be able to perform these tasks.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Within this section you may wish to include details of any mitigation measures your school has in place (e.g. instructions for using flood protection equipment, where grit/salt should be spread during periods of cold weather).</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> When responding to an incident the emergency services will need unrestricted access to (and egress from) the school site. This can sometimes prove difficult as parents/carers are likely to visit the school immediately upon hearing of an incident. It may be necessary to assign a member of staff with the role to stop traffic parking in unsuitable places.</li></ul>	<b>SUGGESTIONS</b>
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## SECTION 7 – EVACUATION

Evacuation, shelter and lockdown procedures are particularly important sections of your plan as they outline the initial actions that should be taken to safeguard pupils and staff, both from internal and external hazards.

All staff must be aware of these procedures as warning signals may need to be triggered immediately, before advising others of the threat. In other situations, the emergency services might alert the school to a potential hazard, such as a plume of smoke or a potential intruder.

In some circumstances it can be difficult to know whether to evacuate the premises or take shelter; the emergency services will be able to advise on the best course of action.

It is important to distinguish between the different signals used for:

- Evacuation procedures
- Shelter procedures
- Lockdown procedures

The difference between these signals should be easily identifiable (e.g. using a different ring tone or pattern). Procedures for sounding the 'all-clear' should also be established.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Some schools are unable to change their fire alarm signal so have instead purchased an air horn. This is easy to use, has a distinctive noise and is usually loud enough for everyone to hear.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Some incidents may require pupils to return home or be collected earlier than usual. A system for ensuring all pupils and visitors can be accounted for (through the use of registers and visitor books) could be included within this section.</li></ul>	<b>SUGGESTIONS</b>
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The purpose of an evacuation is to move people away from danger to a safe place. This is likely to involve withdrawal from a hazard with a specific part of the school building but in some circumstances could require evacuation of the whole site.

Your school should already have evacuation procedures in place. References to these procedures, and any Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs), could be included within this section.

If the entire site has to be evacuated pupils and staff may need to move from an initial assembly point to an alternative premises.

## **Buddy Schools**

It may be useful to form a mutual aid (or 'buddy school') agreement with a nearby school. In the event of an emergency a buddy school can be asked to provide assistance; this could include acting as a place of safety.

If such an arrangement is reciprocal you will need to consider the implications of receiving a request for support from your buddy school. The assistance your school would be able to provide could be documented in this section.

## **Places of safety**

Other places of safety (e.g. village halls, church halls) could be used to provide temporary accommodation should the school be evacuated.

If there is a potentially suitable venue nearby it might be useful to access the property to establish what facilities it has available and how many people it could realistically support:

- Toilets
- Catering facilities
- Heating
- First aid
- Chairs and tables
- Beds/sleeping bags
- Disables access/facilities
- Back-up generator
- Office

Information about how to travel to a place of safety, including at least one alternative route in case the primary one becomes unsuitable, could be documented in this section. Arrangements for contacting key holders could also be included.

## **Rest Centres**

If a school is evacuated for a significant period of time and pupils cannot be easily collected by parents/carers, the local authority may establish a rest centre. School staff will need to liaise with the local authority in order to establish transport to the rest centre and to ensure the welfare needs of pupils are met.

In some cases, the local authority may request schools to act as a rest centre. This could entail accommodating evacuees in a school hall (possibly overnight) and providing them with refreshments, comfort and hygiene facilities. Schools are likely to be used only upon agreement by the Headteacher and if all other potential venues are unsuitable.

## **SECTION 8 – SHELTER**

Some emergencies may require staff and pupils to shelter within the school building. If this is an environmental hazard (such as a smoke plume) employees should ensure all doors and windows are closed and ventilation/air circulation systems are switched off. In such circumstances the emergency services may issue a public message to 'go in, stay in, tune in'.

All staff will have an important role to play in reassuring pupils and alleviating any concerns parents/carers may have.

Depending on the nature of the incident it can be difficult for the emergency services to provide an accurate estimation of how long it will be necessary to shelter for. Every effort should be made to enable pupils to return home but only as long as it is safe to do so.

In very rare cases (such as exceptionally heavy snowfall) pupils and staff may become stranded at school. It may be useful to assess if pupils and staff would require any special assistance (e.g. those with medical needs) were they to remain at school for an extended period of time or even forced to shelter overnight.

## **SECTION 9 – LOCKDOWN**

The purpose of a lockdown is to prevent an intruder from causing harm to pupils and staff. Entrances to the school must be secured in an effort to prevent the intruder from entering the premises and staff and pupils must find a suitable place to protect themselves.

Lockdown arrangements will depend heavily on the size and layout of your school. You may wish to identify those rooms most suitable for lockdown (and entrances which need to be locked) on a map which could be included within this section. It is important to ensure these rooms have an exit route in case the intruder does gain access to the premises.

The signal for a lockdown should be clearly distinguishable to that of an evacuation. Any confusion may result in pupils and staff congregating at an assembly point, thus potentially making themselves more vulnerable to an intruder.

If pupils are outside when the signal for a lockdown is sounded, staff could consider taking pupils to the nearest possible building that can be secured. Pupils could also be asked to hide or disperse if this will aid their safety.

During a lockdown staff may find it difficult to obtain a clear overview of the situation. Consider how communication could be maintained between employees, whether by two-way radio, mobile phone or less conventional means (e.g. using classroom computers to send messages via instant messaging or email).

Any procedures you establish must be realistic; in an incident staff and pupils might not have much time to seek an appropriate place to hide and there is likely to be widespread confusion or panic.

It is very unlikely that your school will ever need to implement a real lockdown but it is important to have arrangements in place to deal with such a situation.

## **SECTION 10 – CLOSING THE SCHOOL**

This section of the plan includes actions to take when closing the school. Please note that these guidelines are generic and should not replace any existing local procedures.

Schools are expected to remain open, but it has long been accepted that there may be occasions when the health, safety and welfare of the staff and pupils are of overriding concern, though the occupants will not necessarily be subject to extreme risks. In such circumstances there is no option but for the school to close on those grounds. Examples include inclement weather and the failure of utilities such as the heating, electricity and water supply to the school. The NCC Health and Safety Team is preparing a separate, brief, guidance for schools on how to deal with such eventualities.

The decision to close a school will usually be taken by the Headteacher. Occasionally local and central government may also recommend this course of action (e.g. in the event of a public health incident).

When to take the decision to close is important; it must balance the benefits of an early decision (avoiding unnecessary journeys and providing parents/carers with enough time to arrange childcare) against the drawbacks (finding that the situation is not as bad as initially feared). Headteachers are best able to judge the severity of the incident but should always consider safety in arriving at a decision.

Pupils and parents/carers should be notified of a school closure at the earliest possible opportunity. The communication arrangements outlined in section 11 of the template school emergency plan may help in this regard.

In some instances it is possible for a school to remain partially operational. In such an event lessons should be prioritised for those pupils who are taking exams or who are at a particularly important stage in their education.

Schools should aim to reopen as soon as possible to ensure that pupils are not away from education any longer than necessary.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Some local authorities/local radio stations have developed online systems for reporting school closures. If unsure about the procedures for reporting school closures please contact your local authority.</li> <li>❑ In some instances it may be possible to enlist the help of parents/carers or the local authority to help reopen the school (e.g. clearing snow from the premises after a period of severe weather).</li> </ul>	<b>SUGGESTIONS</b>
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## SECTION 11 – COMMUNICATIONS

During an emergency it is likely that the concerned parents/carers will contact the school for further information and the general school telephone number may quickly become jammed with incoming calls.

One method of alleviating this pressure is to set-up an answer machine that can be set to ‘message only’ (i.e. callers cannot leave messages). Updating the answer machine message regularly with information on the emergency can inform and reassure parents/carers whilst reducing the burden on office staff. Many answer machines also have the capacity to change the message and call recording system remotely which may prove useful if staff cannot get to school.

Specifically designated lines for incoming and outgoing calls (preferably landlines as mobile phones can rapidly run out of battery) should be used to maintain communication with other organisations (e.g. the emergency services or local authority) but should not be made available to the public.

During an emergency it may be appropriate to consult the emergency services or local authority about what information can be provided to pupils and parents/carers.

Those who have been directly affected by the incident should be notified personally (either by a telephone conversation or face-to-face). A log of communications should also be maintained so as not to disturb people by contacting them more than once if it is not necessary.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Text messaging systems can prove especially useful for contacting pupils and parents/carers in an emergency.</li> <li>❑ If your school has poor mobile phone reception on some networks consider including this information within the plan.</li> <li>❑ Consider purchasing a spare battery for your mobile phone or a universal phone charger.</li> <li>❑ If the incident has created a very high volume of calls or interest from the wider public the local authority may be able to set-up a public message helpline to help relieve the pressure.</li> </ul>	<b>SUGGESTIONS</b>
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## **Media Management**

Any significant emergency is likely to attract media attention. The scale of the interest will depend on the incident and could vary from telephone enquiries from the local media to national and international television crews arriving at the school asking for interviews.

If handled successfully, media management can directly assist personnel involved in the response and enhance the reputation of the school. It may therefore be beneficial for a member of the SEMT or a governor to undergo media training.

Other organisations, such as the emergency services or local authority, may be able to assist in responding to media requests and thus alleviate some of the pressure on school staff. All media statements should be approved by the school and those organisations involved in the response prior to release.

## **SECTION 12 – BOMB THREATS**

Although bomb threats usually turn out to be hoaxes, they must always be taken seriously. All staff need to be aware of the actions to take if they receive a call from someone claiming to have information about a bomb.

This section outlines the immediate actions staff should take upon receiving a bomb threat. It might be useful to retain a copy of this form in the school office (but preferably out-of-sight of pupils) for quick reference.

Bomb threats can come from a variety of sources, including truants, former pupils or strangers. A threat is more likely to be real if:

- A codeword is used that is known to the Police
- The Police are aware of potential terrorist activity in the area
- The threat is specific rather than general
- The threat is credible

Whilst it is reasonable for staff to assess the accuracy or validity of a threat, employees should record as much detail about the call as possible; this information will prove useful to the Police.

A bomb threat is a crime so even if employees are confident the call is a hoax they must still report the incident to the Police.

## **SECTION 13 – SUSPICIOUS PACKAGES**

In most cases a suspicious package turns out to be a hoax or genuine mistake. Nevertheless, all appropriate precautions should be taken if such a package is received.

Any member of staff who handles post in the school should be aware of proceedings relating to suspicious packages.

## **SECTION 14 – LOG-KEEPING GUIDELINES**

In an emergency, events can occur very rapidly and it is vital to keep an accurate record of events.

All employees involved in the response to an emergency should maintain an incident log. Within this log, staff should record decisions made, actions taken, significant conversations and any other important information pertinent to the incident.

An emergency affecting a school may afterwards become the subject of a detailed inquiry. It is important that accurate written records are kept and that no piece of information related to the response is lost. Information related to the incident should be copied, retained and archived for future reference. Records of expenditure should also be kept.

When distributing the plan it is recommended that staff are provided with a log book. Staff should keep this alongside their copy of the plan to ensure it is readily available.

# Training

School employees have many demands on their time but it is important that staff and governors are aware of the emergency plan and their roles when responding to an incident. Training events provide an excellent opportunity for staff to become acquainted with emergency procedures and discuss any queries or concerns they may have.

The amount of training staff and governors require will vary. Members of the School Emergency Management Team (SEMT) and their deputies will need to undergo more extensive training due to their specific responsibilities.

Although other members of staff may require less comprehensive training all employees should have a general overview of the school's emergency procedures.

It can be useful to train both staff and governors together. This can foster a closer working relationship and identify co-ordination or communication issues which may have otherwise gone unnoticed.

Records should be kept of staff who have attended training events, both for audit purposes and to ensure their training is kept up-to-date. Including training within your existing staff training programme is a useful method of embedding emergency procedures within your school.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Extended services should also be aware of the plan and how it affects them. You may wish to involve them in any training events that take place or even tailor a specific event for them.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> It is unreasonable to expect temporary staff to read a copy of the plan before they start work. Nevertheless, they should be briefed on the fundamental aspects of the plan (e.g. evacuation procedures and who to contact for help if there is an emergency).</li></ul>	<b>SUGGESTIONS</b>
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## Types of training

Staff can be trained in a variety of ways. You may wish to:

- Provide staff with a demonstration of the equipment within the school grab bag(s)
- Deliver a tour of the school premises
- Provide a general overview of the procedures within the emergency plan
- Organise specific training for members of the SEMT

It is preferable for staff to have read the emergency plan, and become accustomed to the procedures within it, prior to attending these sessions.



Staff may also benefit from other types of training which would support their role in responding to an incident. Examples include:

- First aid training
- Media training
- Fire safety training
- Health and safety training

### **Delivery**

Staff who developed the emergency plan are usually well placed to organise and deliver training. Other employees, particularly the site manager/caretaker and members of the SEMT, may also be able to assist.

Other organisations, such as the local authority, are often able to provide support in organising or facilitating training events. The emergency services regularly visit schools to discuss personal safety; these sessions could be used to inform pupils about your school emergency procedures too.

Although special events can be organised which focus solely on emergency planning issues it may be more feasible to incorporate training within existing meetings. Examples include:

- Staff meetings
- Governor meetings
- INSET days

It is recommended that training is provided annually as this will keep staff reminded of their responsibilities, offer opportunities to examine updated versions of the plan and ensure new staff are appropriately trained.

### **Involving pupils**

It is important that pupils know what action to take if an emergency happens at school or on an educational visit. Becoming familiar with evacuation, shelter and lockdown drills will improve the likelihood of these procedures being implemented swiftly and effectively (which could prevent injury and even save lives).

There are many different ways to inform pupils about this subject. An assembly could be used to explain an emergency drill and outline the actions pupils would be required to take; this could then be followed up by an exercise of the drill. This theme could be continued over a period of time, with a different drill being discussed each term.

Alternatively, a class session could be used to focus on preparing for emergencies. The lesson plan could include:

- Risk assessment (e.g. asking pupils to consider the risks that could affect them at home, at school or on an educational visit)
- Emergency preparedness at home (e.g. asking pupils to consider what they could do to prepare for an emergency at home, such as preparing a grab bag or knowing how to isolate utility supplies)

- The role of pupils in the school emergency plan (e.g. emergency drills, communicating with parents/carers).

Elements of these tasks could be included in one teaching session or spread over several during a term. This work could link into the National Curriculum; please refer to annexe 1 for more information.

Some of the issues outlined during training sessions (such as lockdown drills) are sensitive and may potentially upset pupils, especially in primary schools. Staff are well placed to assess what level of information should be provided to pupils on the reasoning behind implementing a lockdown. Parent/carers should also be informed when teaching is taking place on this subject so they can prepare for any possible impact this may have on their children.

### **Raising awareness with parents/carers**

Routinely informing parents/carers of your emergency procedures can reassure them that your school is prepared and able to look after their child.

Methods of informing parents/carers about preparing for emergencies could involve:

- Including information within the school newsletter
- Adding an emergency planning section onto the school website
- Distributing information at parent/carer evenings
- Sending a letter home via pupils
- Including information within the school prospectus

A public version of the school emergency plan (which excludes sensitive information such as contact details) could also be uploaded onto the school website.

Whichever method is decided upon, it may be appropriate to include the following information:

- The reasoning behind contacting parents/carers
- The emergencies the school has prepared for
- The actions staff would take during an emergency (e.g. ensure the safety of pupils, co-operate with the emergency services)
- The arrangements in place for contacting parents/carers in the event of an emergency (or school closure)
- The action parents/carers should take if they are informed of an emergency at school or on an educational visit
- A reminder for parents/carers to inform the school of any changes to their contact details

# Testing Your Procedures

The purpose of an exercise is to validate procedures documented within an emergency plan. Although they cannot fully replicate the pressure of a real accident, exercises can help to reinforce training, give confidence to staff that they have the necessary knowledge and skills to respond to an emergency and increase the likelihood of procedures working in practice.

They are also particularly adept at highlighting areas of the response which may initially have been overlooked when developing the plan.

It is recommended that staff and pupils undergo training on relevant parts of the emergency plan before participating in an exercise. Staff should be aware of their roles and responsibilities and be reasonably confident in carrying them out.

There are different types of exercise that can be used to validate a plan but the method you choose is likely to depend on the purpose of the exercise and the amount of time available.

## **Discussion-based exercises**

Discussion-based exercises involve assembling staff together and asking them to consider how the school would respond to a particular scenario. Participants are provided the opportunity to talk about their roles and discuss what actions the school would take if an incident were to occur. Staff are required only to discuss, not implement, these actions.

Discussion-based exercises are often used to develop a greater awareness of the plan and are ideal for use during training events. They are simple to prepare and a variety of scenarios can be used to provide an indication of the different emergencies staff may experience.

## **Tabletop exercises**

A tabletop exercise is based on simulating the response to an incident (although it does not literally have to take place around a tabletop). A tabletop exercise can be run in a single room (e.g. an SEMT briefing area) or a series of rooms to simulate real divisions (e.g. different school sites).

Unlike a discussion-based exercise, each participant is expected to undertake a specific role and outline actions they would take whilst a simulated, realistic scenario unfolds. It is not necessary for staff to physically implement the response but they are required to co-ordinate their actions with other staff.

Tabletop exercises are a particularly useful way to run an exercise for members of the SEMT. They are relatively easy to run but do require careful preparation. Due to the nature of this type of exercise there are limits to the number of people who can be involved.

## Live exercises

A live exercise involves physically acting out the response to a scenario. Although this may sound complicated all schools implement fire drills, which are a type of live exercise, on a regular basis.

These exercises are particularly useful for testing logistics and communication arrangements. They can also make excellent training events from the perspective of experiential learning, helping participants develop confidence in their skills and providing insight into the reality of responding to an incident.

Live exercises are generally the best means of validating your emergency plan as they can involve the entire school, including pupils. However, they do require more planning and resources than any other type of exercise; it may be useful to seek support from your local authority or the emergency services to assist in its preparation.

<input type="checkbox"/> Exercises do not have to be complicated or ambitious in order to be effective. Relatively simple live exercises (such as attempting to contact employees outside school hours to check if they would be available to respond to a hypothetical incident) can often prove very beneficial.	<b>SUGGESTIONS</b>
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## Choosing a scenario

It is important that an exercise scenario is realistic and appropriate for participants. Inspiration for a suitable scenario could be sought from the Community Risk Register (see Risk Assessment).

When choosing a scenario remember to consider any personal issues that pupils or staff may have. In the majority of instances it is inappropriate to have an exercise which simulates fatalities, especially if someone within the school has recently been bereaved.

Prior to an exercise it is recommended that systems and processes in the plan are checked to ensure they work as intended. Examples include:

- Verifying contact details
- Testing equipment (e.g. two-way radios)
- Checking if an evacuation route can be walked safely

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ It is customary to devise an interesting and memorable name for live/tabletop exercises; one that will capture the imagination of participants. If running a live exercise involving pupils consider organising a competition for the best exercise name.</li> <li>❑ It can be useful to gain experience of a live exercise before organising one. Consider asking the local authority if they know of any school exercises taking place; you might be able to attend as an observer.</li> </ul>	<b>SUGGESTIONS</b>
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### **Timings**

As live exercises can cause temporary disruption to the school routine it is often practical to run these after any exams have taken place and holidays are approaching.

Your school's procedures may differ during break time or whilst lessons are taking place; when organising an exercise it is important to consider how the timing of the scenario may affect the response of pupils and staff.

Exercises do not have to conform to real time; it is possible to vary the passage of time or even 'jump' hours, days or weeks. This approach is commonly used in exercises to move from the response phase to the recovery phase and can prove very useful. Facilitators must ensure all participants are aware of any changes to the timeline during the exercise.

### **Involving other organisations**

Local authorities may be able to assist in organising an exercise and provide contact details for other organisations (e.g. the emergency services) who might wish to participate.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ There will be a variety of exercises run in your area to test local community plans; your school might be able to participate in one of these. To find out if this is possible, contact your local authority.</li> <li>❑ Involving other organisations can be mutually beneficial; the emergency services are often keen to practice their skills, particularly in a school environment. They might also be able to provide support in other ways (e.g. the Fire &amp; Rescue Service can sometimes provide pyrotechnics to simulate an explosion).</li> </ul>	<b>SUGGESTIONS</b>
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## Personnel

Most exercises involve three different types of personnel, commonly referred to as:

- Facilitators
- Players
- Observers

Facilitators are involved in the planning of an exercise and should be present on the day to set-up equipment, deliver briefings and ensure the event runs smoothly. Once the exercise is underway facilitators may be required to issue scenario updates to players.

Facilitators should not be involved in the response as they will be privy to details of the scenario and any action they take would compromise the realism of the exercise.

Players are involved in simulating the response to the emergency. Each player will be required to respond to the exercise as if the situation were real and keep an accurate log of decisions made and actions taken.

The role of an observer is to monitor the exercise and note any important issues which arise. They should be briefed before the incident and asked to observe specific aspects of the response. Staff from other schools, extended services or the local authority may be particularly useful observers due to their impartiality.

All staff, particularly players and observers, should be prepared to provide feedback during the exercise debrief.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Facilitators, players and observers should be distinguishable from each other, particularly in live exercises. Name badges, armbands or high-visibility tabards could all be used to differentiate these roles.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Pupils can often be very eager to participate in a live exercise; consider using drama students to play the part of those directly affected by the incident.</li></ul>	<b>SUGGESTIONS</b>
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## Injects

Throughout the exercise facilitators will need to provide players with updated information related to the scenario; these are often referred to as 'injects'.

Injects are used to simulate the changing nature of an emergency and can be delivered in different ways. Examples include:

- Face-to-face conversations
- Paper-based updates
- Telephone calls
- Text messages
- Fax messages
- Television footage

Injects must be clearly identifiable as part of an exercise. Written updates should have 'exercise' clearly displayed on them and verbal communication, particularly telephone conversations, must start with a message stating that the following conversation is part of an exercise.

### **Codewords**

Codewords are used to indicate to participants of an exercise that an important event has occurred which is not part of the exercise (e.g. a real incident).

Examples of codewords include 'for real' or 'end ex'. If any person feels that a dangerous situation is present or imminent the relevant codeword should be used and this should result in the immediate suspension of the exercise.

Everyone involved in the exercise must be aware of the codeword(s) to be used.

### **Briefings**

Live exercises can appear very realistic so it is important to notify all possible stakeholders that an exercise is taking place. Prior to the event it will be necessary to brief a wide variety of groups.

- Pupils
- Parents/carers
- Staff
- Governors
- Extended services
- Buddy schools
- The emergency services
- The local authority
- The media
- The local community

It is particularly important to advise the emergency services of the exercise to ensure they are not called out to attend the exercise thinking it is a real incident. You may also wish to put notices on the school gates to prevent concern or panic from passers-by.

# Reviewing

An emergency plan needs to be reviewed on a regular basis in order to remain effective. Contact details will need reviewing regularly; it is recommended that these are updated at least annually. Staff, governors, extended services, pupils and parents/carers should also be encouraged to notify the school whenever their contact details have changed.

Grab bags should also be audited annually and after any equipment has been used.

The review may need to be brought forward in the event of:

- Lessons identified from a training event
- Lessons identified from an exercise
- Lessons identified from an emergency
- Changes to risk assessments
- Changes to key members of staff
- Changes to the school site

## Debriefs

It is particularly important to identify lessons from an exercise or incident. The best method of doing this is by asking staff and governors to attend a debrief.

A debrief should aim to identify:

- Aspects of the response which worked particularly well
- Aspects of the response which could have been improved
- Improvements that should be made to the school emergency plan
- Additional training needs for staff

A debrief may take place immediately after an exercise (often referred to as a 'hot' debrief) or some time afterwards, when participants have had time to reflect on what happened.

Although it may not be appropriate to invite pupils and parent/carers to a debrief you may wish to speak to these people beforehand to gain their views on the response and mention any issues in the debrief on their behalf.

It is important that information and suggestions for improvement are captured during a debrief or review. It might be appropriate to devise an action plan which includes any suggested amendments that need to be made to the plan. Any actions, recommendations or lessons identified can be incorporated into an action plan.



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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>❑ A representative of the school may also be required to attend other debriefs (e.g. one organised by the emergency services or local authority).</li><li>❑ It is important to share lessons internally but also with other parties who may find them useful (e.g. extended services, other schools, the emergency services, the local authority).</li></ul> | <b>SUGGESTIONS</b> |
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### **Redistributing the plan**

Ideally, staff and governors should be given a chance to consult on the plan before any new versions are distributed. A process of version control should be instigated to ensure only the most up-to-date version of the plan is available.

One hard copy of the previous version should be archived and all others destroyed (preferably shredded). Similarly, one electronic version should be archived and all other deleted (including those on encrypted memory sticks). Similar arrangements should also be put in place for public versions of the plan.

## **ANNEXE 1 – LINKS TO THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM**

Involving pupils in the production of school emergency plans and exercises can link into their wider education. Included below are some examples of where emergency planning might link into the National Curriculum.

### Key stage 1

- Art and Design 1; recording from first hand observation and experience
- Citizenship / PSHE 2 & 3; taking part in discussions with fellow pupils, looking at what can harm their local environment, rules and ways of keeping safe
- English 3; group discussion and interaction

### Key stage 2

- Art and Design 1; recording from first hand observation and experience
- Citizenship / PSHE 1 & 3; talking and writing about their opinions, school rules on health and safety, emergency aid procedures and where to get help
- English 3; group discussion and interaction

### Key stage 3

- English; speaking and listening
- PSHE; understanding and managing risk

### Key stage 4

- Citizenship; critical reflection, managing risk