



# Lockdown Procedures

Guidance to schools and academies

(November 2013)

**It is advisable that all schools should have effective lockdown procedures and that they are regularly practised. This guide is intended to be used both by schools which already have lockdown plans, to inform their development as necessary and by those schools where no such plans currently exist.**

**This document can also be downloaded from the Business Continuity page of the [Central Bedfordshire Schools' Portal](#)**

## Guidance for Schools on Creating Lockdown Procedures

All schools should consider the need for robust and tested **school lockdown procedures**.<sup>1</sup> 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)
- A major fire in the vicinity of the school
- The close proximity of a dangerous dog roaming loose

It is not possible to prescribe generic details of a school's lockdown plan as there are a number of variables that will dictate exactly how an individual 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 eg the layout of buildings and their proximity to one another
- Age of students
- Geographical location – urban/rural, presence of secure perimeter fence

Nonetheless, many schools have found it helpful to incorporate the following basic principles in their plans:

- Staff are alerted to the activation of the plan by a recognised signal, audible throughout the school
- Pupils who are outside of the school buildings are brought inside as quickly as possible
- Those inside the school should remain in their classrooms
- All external doors and, as necessary, windows are locked (depending on the circumstances, internal classroom doors may also need to be locked)
- Once in lockdown mode, staff should notify the office immediately of any pupils not accounted for (and instigate an immediate search for any missing)
- Staff should encourage the pupils to keep calm
- As appropriate, the school should establish communication with the Emergency Services as soon as possible
- Central Bedfordshire Council should be notified via the 'School Emergency' phone number

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<sup>1</sup> According to a survey conducted of Central Bedfordshire schools and academies in January 2012, only 58 of 108 schools responding confirmed they had Lockdown Procedures. The vast majority of these (39) were lower schools

- If necessary, parents should be notified as soon as it is practicable to do so via the school's established communications system
- Pupils will not be released to parents during a lockdown
- If it is necessary to evacuate the building, the fire alarm will be sounded
- Staff should await further instructions

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. To achieve this, a lockdown drill should be undertaken at least once a year. Depending on their age, pupils should also be aware of the plan. (Regular practices will increase their familiarity). Parents too should know that the school has a lockdown plan, and a copy should be placed on the school's website.

It would also be good practice to:

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

## **Lockdown Arrangements**

Lockdown arrangements should be determined by 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. An example of a lockdown procedure could be:

### **1 Partial Lockdown**

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

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 need 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 permitted within the building dependent upon circumstances

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. This can then be communicated to staff and pupils. 'Partial lockdown' is a precautionary measure but puts the school in a state of readiness (whilst retaining a degree of normality) should the situation escalate.

In the event of an air pollution issue, air vents can be closed (where possible) as an additional precaution. 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.

### **Immediate action:**

- All pupils return to base (classroom, tutor room or other agreed location eg sports/assembly/dining hall)
- External doors locked. Classroom doors locked (where a member of staff with key is present). Windows locked, blinds drawn, pupils sit quietly out of sight (eg under desk or around a corner)
- Register taken -the office will contact each class in turn for an attendance report

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 then 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 eg laptop, smartphone or tablet
- Where a school uses 'Parentmail' then staff could be put into a defined user group. This could then be used to communicate instructions via text message in an emergency

## Communication between parents and the school

School lockdown procedures, especially arrangements for communicating with parents, should be routinely shared with parents either by newsletter or via 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.<sup>2</sup>

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 needed for contacting emergency providers
- Do not come to the school. They could interfere with emergency 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 for you to come get your children, and where this will be from

*The communication with parents part of the 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 '..the school is in a full lockdown situation. During this period the switchboard and entrances will be un-manned, external doors locked and nobody allowed in or out...'***

## 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 with regarding the timing of communication to parents.

In the event of a prolonged lockdown or more severe scenario, Central Bedfordshire Council has the capacity to provide humanitarian assistance by establishing a Reception Centre for friend and family outside of the cordoned area.

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<sup>2</sup> Research evidence suggests that panic and anxiety are far less likely where those associated with an incident are fully informed of the facts. '...Information about dangers should be disseminated and not withheld because of a fear that people will panic...' (Dynes, Quarantelli and Kreps 1972).