



Bellfield Schools – Infant & Junior Schools

Lockdown Procedure Policy

Introduction

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

Lockdown Procedures - rationale

All 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, staff and visitors. Any confusion as to where staff and pupils will congregate could lead to them making themselves more vulnerable to an intruder. If pupils are outside when the lockdown alarm is raised it may be more appropriate to take them to the nearest building that can be secured, or even tell them to hide and/or disperse if this will aid their safety.

Lockdown procedures may be activated in response to any number of situations, but some of the more typical ones might be:

- A reported incident or civil disturbance in the local community which potentially poses a risk to the school community.
- An intruder on the school site with the potential to pose a risk to pupils, staff and visitors.
- A warning being received regarding a local risk of air pollution (e.g. smoke plume, gas cloud).
- A major fire in the vicinity of the school.
- The close proximity of a dangerous animal roaming loose.

There are a number of variables that will dictate exactly how the 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 – internal phone system, mobile phone, internal email, texts, etc.
- School site plan including the layout of buildings and their proximity to one another.
- Age of students.
- Any disabilities of the students/staff involved.
- Geographical location – urban/rural, presence of secure perimeter fence.

The persons with authority to manage the lockdown are the headteachers, deputy headteachers or other members of the SLT in either school.

If an adult on site sees something suspicious, they should report it to a member of the SLT or the Pastoral Manager or the office immediately, reporting exactly what it is they have seen and why it seems suspicious.

The schools will incorporate the following basic principles:

- Staff will be alerted to the activation of the plan by a recognised signal, which will be audible throughout the school. *This signal will be an intermittent sounding of the fire/evacuation alarm electronic siren.* The staff will also be alerted via the NetConsole computer system where a message will flash up on PC screens. This will also be a way for the HT and/or SBM to keep staff informed of what is going on.
- Pupils who are outside of the school buildings are brought inside as quickly as possible if it is safe to do so. If it is not, staff must instruct children to disperse and hide (behind outside buildings, trees, fences etc).
- Those inside the school should remain in their classrooms – classrooms should be locked and/or barricaded. Blinds should be drawn and children & staff should lay under tables. *This may be dependent on circumstances (see below) but if the reasons for lockdown are unclear, locking of classrooms/ blinds drawn should occur.*
- All external doors and windows should be locked.

- Once in lockdown mode, staff should notify the administrative office or HT immediately of any pupils not accounted for, and instigate an immediate search for any missing pupils, if safe to do so. *This could be by mobile phone (if it is on your person/ in your room), by internal telephone or by email).*
- Staff should encourage pupils to keep calm at all times/ not make a noise.
- The school should establish communication with the Emergency Services as soon as possible where this is deemed appropriate.
- Birmingham City Council School and Governor Support should be notified on 0121 303 8394 (South).
- Where the incident may have a wider impact than just the school itself, the Birmingham City Council Resilience Team should be notified on 0121 303 4825.
- If necessary, parents should be notified as soon as it is practicable to do so via the school's established communications systems (app, website).
- Pupils will not be released to parents during a lockdown until a member of the emergency services or the SLT deem it safe to do so.
- If the situation changes, and it becomes necessary to evacuate the building, the fire alarm will be sounded. (reminder: two tone, continuous electronic siren)
- Staff should then await further instructions.

Understanding The Lockdown Procedures

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 will be undertaken at least once a year. Dependent upon their age, pupils should also be aware of the plan and regular practices will increase their familiarity. Parents will also be made aware that the school has a lockdown plan.

It is not advisable to circulate the actual plan as if copies fell into the wrong hands it could render the plan ineffective.

As good practice, the school will:

- Conduct a number of table top exercises with the senior management team to test the procedures against a variety of scenarios.
- Rehearse lockdown arrangements with all staff and pupils, taking care not to worry or upset the children.
- Display lockdown drill information in every classroom alongside information relating to fire drills.

Types of Lockdowns possible

1 Partial Lockdown

Alert to staff: "Partial lockdown"

This may be as a result of a reported incident or civil disturbance in the local community with the potential to pose a risk to pupils, staff and visitors in the school. It may also be as a result of a warning being received regarding the risk of air pollution, etc.

Immediate actions:

- All outside activity to cease immediately with pupils and staff returning indoors. (NB: There will need to be a means of communicating the alert to duty staff at break times – currently the schools are looking at external bells to add to the current system on top of the current system of walkie-talkies at breaktimes).
- All pupils and staff to remain indoors and external doors and windows should be locked.
- Free movement may be permitted within the building, dependent upon the circumstances – this will be communicated as soon as is possible.

All situations are different; once all pupils and staff are safely indoors, senior staff will conduct an ongoing and dynamic risk assessment based on advice from the Emergency Services. This can then be communicated to staff, who can inform pupils if they are old enough to understand. "Partial lockdown" should be seen as a precautionary measure which puts the school in a state of readiness should the situation escalate, whilst retaining a degree of normality.

In the event of an air pollution issue, air vents can be closed where this is 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 actions:

- All pupils return to their classroom, or closest classroom if they are too far away from their own classroom.
- External doors locked.
- Classroom doors locked/ barricaded, where a member of staff.
- Windows locked and blinds drawn.
- Pupils sit quietly out of sight (e.g. under desk or around a corner).
- Register taken - the administrative office will contact each class in turn for an attendance report if this is possible (ie via phone, email).

Staff and pupils remain in lockdown until it has been lifted by a senior member of staff or the 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 senior management or the administrative office as this could delay more important communication.

Examples of discreet communication channels might be:

- Where staff have access to an internal email 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 e.g. laptop or tablet.
- Where a school uses "Groupcall" then staff could be placed into a defined user group which could then be used to communicate instructions via text message in an emergency (BIS).

Communication With Parents and Carers

The schools' lockdown procedures, especially arrangements for communicating with parents and carers, should be routinely shared with parents and carers via the website. In the event of an actual lockdown, it is strongly advised that any incident or development is communicated to parents and carers as soon as is practicable. Parents and carers will obviously be concerned but regular communication of accurate information will help to alleviate undue anxiety. The school will communicate via the website and app at the earliest possible opportunity (children's safety will always come first).

Parents and carers 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 their child's safety,
- do not need to contact the school as calling the school could tie up telephone lines that are needed for contacting emergency service providers,
- do not come to the school as they could interfere with access by emergency service providers and may even put themselves and others in danger,
- wait for the school to contact them about when it is safe to come to collect their children, and where this will be from.

This part of the plan must reassure parents and carers 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 not be staffed, external doors and gates will be locked and nobody will be 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 dependent upon 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, Birmingham City Council has the capacity to provide humanitarian assistance by establishing a Reception Centre for family members outside of the cordoned off area.

Lockdown Situations when Away From School

Schools must also consider what would happen if a lockdown situation should arise when a group is away from school, whether this be on a short visit, day trip or longer trip that involves a party staying away, possibly even in a foreign country.

It will always be necessary to carry out a risk assessment prior to such visits and it is important to consider what would happen if an emergency situation arose that was out of the control of the staff who are supervising the pupils on the trip.

It will be necessary to give some guidance to pupils prior to the trip, and this should be reinforced during the trip itself. Parents and carers also need to be provided with information about the procedures that would be followed.

It is almost impossible to predict the circumstances where an emergency situation might arise in a way that specific planning can be undertaken. As a minimum it will be prudent to show pupils an emergency meeting point if the party gets separated and remind them to follow instructions from the Emergency Services. If the trip involves staying in a hotel or hostel the staff leading the trip should identify areas of the building where they are most likely to be able to protect the safety of the children in their care. Pupils could even be asked to disperse or hide if this will aid their safety.

Debriefing arrangements following a lockdown.

Following any type of lockdown, there should be a debriefing with the SLT, assessing the situation and success of the procedures (this should also follow practice lockdowns). If necessary, any conclusions should be shared with the staff and volunteers of the school to ensure improvements and best practice, adjusting policies and practice as necessary.

Conclusion

No guidance will ever cover every eventuality but, if the matter is given some thought, everyone will be as prepared as possible should a lockdown situation ever arise. The more preparation that has taken place the greater chance is that there will be less panic, enabling staff to protect the children in their care to the best of their ability.

Review

This policy will be reviewed at least annually. Currently, both schools are reviewing developing the communication systems in school to ensure all persons affected will be highlighted to a lockdown in process.

This policy will be reviewed in the Summer Term 2019.

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