Lockdown Procedures - Guidance for Schools

Introduction

It is advisable that all schools should have effective lockdown procedures and that they are regularly tested. 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 is **not** an actual plan, but guidance to help you formulate a plan for you own premises.

Lockdown Template

Lockdown procedures can also be known as 'sheltering in place', and this may be a more suitable term to use with pupils.

This document can also be downloaded from the RMBC Risk Management Website

Guidance for Schools on Creating Lockdown Procedures

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 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 or other animal roaming loose.

Procedure for intruder on sports field.

Example alert to staff: 'Intruder on site'

If an intruder is identified, get the students inside or to a place of safety. On receiving information of an intruder office staff to alert internal building. Staff must immediately lock down rooms. Office staff to inform police and lock other possible entry points. Staff will be notified of 'all clear' by other staff members individually informing each classroom. Classes will be returned to normal, and staff will await further instructions by senior leaders or the police.

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.
Schools should consider having two types of lockdowns: 'partial' and 'full'.

Partial Lockdown

Example 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 because 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 because 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.

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.

Full Lockdown

Example 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 isn't necessarily 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 has 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 a text messaging service 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 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 and ability of students.
- Geographical location – urban/rural, presence of secure perimeter fence.

Nonetheless, many schools have found it helpful to incorporate the following basic principles into 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.
- Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council Emergency Planning Service to be notified. Who will alert the Borough Emergency Co-ordinator, (BEC) who is responsible for the co-ordinated and integrated management of the authority's emergency response. They will initiate activation or standby of the borough

emergency plan, either when notified by the Forward Liaison Officer that the emergency services have requested the authority's support or, if an ongoing incident has developed into an emergency beyond the capabilities of the authority's normal response.

- 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 alarm should be raised; this could be identified as the Fire Alarm or a separate Emergency Evacuation Alarm.
- 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.
- If a group are on an outing when the incident occurs, a staff member to telephone them to tell them **NOT** to return to the setting until all clear has been given. If it is safe to do, the group should stay where they are e.g., in the library/museum. If they are on their way back to the setting, to stop and go back to the venue and stay there until advised otherwise (Buddy school may also be in a full lockdown). The staff on the outing to ring the police for advice.
- On being told to do so by police, the staff would contact the parents and notify them of the incident. If safe to do so, suggest to parents to collect their children from the venue. If not, remain there until it was safe to leave and return to the setting.
- An overview sheet outlining the school's procedures will be displayed in the staffroom and other places throughout the school as appropriate.

In the event a school is in lockdown and the fire alarm sounds, it is recommended the school contact the emergency services as in normal fire alarm activation and explain the current circumstances. Dependant on the threat and if safe to do so, a nominated member of staff who has a means of remote communication (e.g., a Radio 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, again if safe to do so. 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 re-sound 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 members can 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 practice 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 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:

1. Conduct several tabletop exercises with the senior leadership 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.

4. Review of Procedures

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 Head Teacher 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 Links

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/developing-dynamic-lockdown-procedures

https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/crowded-places

http://www.npcc.police.uk/CounterTerrorism/ACTforYouth.aspx

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/support-for-children-parents-and-teachers-victims-of-terrorism/additional-advice-and-support-for-parents-children-and-teachers

- Advice and guidance for Higher Education: https://www.safecampuscommunities.ac.uk/

- Advice and curriculum resources for Further Education: http://preventforfeandtraining.org.uk/

The following online resources may be of specific assistance to educators (Safeguarding leads) with discussions about terrorist attacks:

- The PSHE Association Frameworks: https://www.pshe-association.org.uk/system/files/Discussion%20framework%20to%20be%20used%20in%20the%20event%20of%20a%20terrorist%20attack%20-%20July%202016.pdf
- Educate Against Hate :https://educateagainsthate.com/blog/posts/help-young-people-understand-terrorist-attacks/

<u>Support to victims</u>

The Victims of Terrorism Unit at the Home Office victims of terrorism page, includes access to support services, including mental health and other medical services. It also gives advice on handling requests from the media.

The Department for Education's School and College Security Guidance can be found:

School and College Security Guidance

Terrorist Incident Response Checklist

Overview Sheet for Staff

Name of School

Emergency Procedures

Fire Alarm

In the event of the fire alarm sounding (which is specify school's alarm) please leave the school buildings by the nearest fire escape route and assemble on the specify school's arrangements.

'Shelter in Buildings'

Alarm In the event of explain school's own recognised signal, stay indoors, in the room/classroom that you are in. If you are outside when this bell sounds, make your way to the nearest classroom or hall.

Specify how staff will be informed if it is a partial or full lockdown and how further information will be shared.

e.g.: An e-mail will be sent to 'All Staff' giving instructions as to what to do – please ensure this is checked and not on the screen for the children to read. It is therefore important that a computer is always logged on (and e-mail accounts opened) during teaching sessions. Internal phones may also be used for communication.

If you are with children, it is important to:

- remain calm
- reassure them
- remind them to follow your instruction