Lockdown Procedures

GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOLS

## Introduction

It is recommended that schools have lockdown procedures in place, and that these are practised and reviewed frequently to ensure that they stay suitable and effective. This document should be used as guidance when creating or reviewing your own school lockdown procedures, however, as every school will vary, it is important for schools to tailor their procedures to suit them.

## Situations where lockdown procedures may be needed

Lockdown procedures may be needed in a number of situations such as:

* Incident or civil disturbance in the local community,
* An intruder on the school site,
* 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.

These are only a few examples, and dependent on the location of school, there may be more.

## How to create lockdown procedures

Lockdown procedures should detail a sensible and proportionate response to incidents, whether they are internal or external, which could pose a threat to the safety of those in the school. Whilst ensuring the safety of all those who are at the school (i.e. staff, pupils, contractors, visitors), the procedures should cause as little disruption as possible.

When creating the lockdown procedures, it may be useful to use a map / plans of the school to identify which rooms are most suitable for lockdown situations, as well as which entrances will need to be locked.

If there are people outside when the lockdown alarm is raised (break time, lunchtime, outdoor lessons etc.), the most sensible option may be to ensure that people go to their nearest building that can be secured, or tell them to run and hide if this will aid their safety.

It will be necessary to consider the following areas when creating the procedures:

* Access to school bell controls to raise an alarm in an emergency,
* Internal communications - messenger, two-way radios, mobile phone, internal email, texts, etc.,
* School site plan including the layout of buildings and their proximity to one another,
* Age of pupils,
* Any disabilities of staff, pupils, visitors etc.,
* Geographical location.

Here are some basic principles of a lockdown procedure:

* Staff to be alerted to the activation of the plan by a recognised signal, which should be audible throughout the school,
* Those 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 the area has been locked down staff should immediately notify if any staff / pupils are not accounted for, and instigate an immediate search,
* Staff should encourage pupils to keep calm,
* The school should establish communication with the Emergency Services as soon as possible where appropriate,
* If necessary, parents should be notified as soon as it is practicable to do so via the school’s established communications system,
* Pupils not to be released to parents during a lockdown,
* If it is necessary to start an evacuation, the fire alarm will be sounded (fire alarm should be different to the lockdown alarm),
* No one should move until they have been given further instruction.

Lockdown procedures should be made familiar to staff. Ideally a lockdown drill should be undertaken on an annual basis, along with table top exercises for senior management to test the plan against different scenarios. Pupils and parents should also be aware of the procedures and regular practices with the pupils will increase their familiarity. Display lockdown drill information in every classroom alongside information relating to fire drills.

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

## Communication with parents / guardians etc.

In the event of a lockdown, it is advised that any incident / development is communicated to parents / guardians as soon as possible. Arrangements for communicating with parents / guardians in the event of a lockdown should be routinely shared, although it is not advisable to share entire lockdown plans.

Adequate information should be given to ensure that, so far as is possible, parents / guardians:

* Are reassured that the school is doing everything possible to ensure their child’s safety,
* Do not need to contact the school, as this could tie up phone lines,
* Do not come to the school as they could put themselves and others in danger,
* Wait for the school to contact them about when it is safe to come to collect their children.

## 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 could be cordoned off by Emergency Services.

## Documenting your plan

The plan does not need to be a large document as it is something to refer to in an emergency situation.

It should include:

* The people with authority to manage the lockdown (e.g. Head Teacher, Deputy Head Teacher, plus two others as back-up in case of absence),
* A list of the circumstances where lockdown will be applied,
* Details of how individuals can alert someone if they see or hear something suspicious,
* Arrangements for how the lockdown signal will be given,
* Guidance on where people should go if they are outside or away from the classroom,
* Details of how a roll call will be undertaken,
* Information about how the plan will be shared, tested and reviewed,
* Training requirements for staff and pupils,
* Debriefing arrangements following a lockdown.

## Lockdown situations when away from school

Schools must consider what would happen if a lockdown situation should arise when a group is away from school.

A risk assessment should be carried out 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 supervising the trip.

Guidance should be given to pupils prior to the trip, and reinforced during the trip. Parents / guardians also need to be provided with information about the procedures.

It is almost impossible to predict the circumstances where an emergency situation might arise in a way that specific planning can be undertaken, therefore 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.

## Example of a lockdown procedure

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 building design and layout, class arrangements, resources available, etc.

Here is an example of a lockdown procedure:

**Partial Lockdown**

Alert to staff: “Partial lockdown”

*Example:* 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.

Immediate actions:

* All outside activity to cease immediately with everyone returning indoors. (NB: There will need to be a means of communicating the alert to duty staff at break times / lunch times.).
* Everyone to remain indoors.
* External doors and windows should be locked.
* Free movement may be permitted within the building, dependent upon the circumstances.

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.

**Full Lockdown**

Alert to staff: “Full lockdown”

*Example:* This signifies an immediate threat to the school and may be an escalation of a partial lockdown.

Immediate actions:

* Everyone return to base (classroom, form room, office or other agreed location e.g. sports hall, assembly hall, dining room).
* External doors locked.
* Classroom doors locked, where a member of staff with key is present.
* Windows locked and blinds drawn.
* Everyone to sit quietly out of sight (e.g. under desk or around a corner).
* Register taken.
* School to remain in lockdown until it has been lifted by a senior member of staff or the Emergency Services.
* If the fire alarm sounds, this is a cue to evacuate the building.

Staff will keep to agreed lines of communication but not make unnecessary calls to senior management or the administrative staff as this could delay more important communication.