

# Newton Primary School



## LOCKDOWN PROCEDURES

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# **LOCKDOWN PROCEDURES**

## **Health, Safety & Wellbeing Guidance – Schools**

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### **Lockdown Procedures – Stay in Stay Safe**

### **Guidance for Schools and Childrens Services Sites**

### **Introduction**

Thankfully, situations where sites need to operate a lockdown are extremely rare. However, as with any emergency situation, it is strongly advised that sites have a procedure in place to deal with this.

Lockdown procedures should be seen as a sensible response to any external or internal incident which could prove a threat to the safety of the pupils / young people and staff at the school / setting.

Like a fire drill, they are an emergency procedure which it is hoped will never be used in earnest. However, as with a fire drill, it is essential that they are practiced appropriately so that all staff know how to react, and their roles should it ever have to be activated.

This guidance has been produced to allow school / settings to develop their own lockdown procedures relevant to their site. Schools / settings that already have procedures in place are advised to reference this guidance to ensure they are up to date and appropriate. Settings will need to as part of developing lockdown procedures examine their external door security to ensure a lockdown can be easily achieved if necessary. Lockdown procedures should be referenced or form part of a settings Critical Incident Plan.

**Please note that this guidance is specific to certain circumstances and does not replace the guidance issued recently regarding actions to take in the event of a terrorist attack or similar and that guidance should still be followed where applicable.**

We would like to acknowledge the work of Surrey County Council in the production of this guidance.

## **Lockdown Procedures**

Lockdown procedures should aim to ensure that staff and young people are secure and in a safe location relevant to the threat that has activated the procedure, and that they remain in this location until the threat has been dealt with. The procedures should aim to keep disruption to a minimum so learning or activities can carry on with the minimum of disruption thus aiming to keep everyone as calm as possible. This is particularly important to try to reduce any anxiety that may be caused by the activation of the procedure.

## **When Would a Lockdown Procedure Be Activated?**

It is clearly very difficult to prescribe specific circumstances when a lockdown procedure will need to be activated. In some cases, it may be a notification from an external agency such as the emergency services or the county council's emergency planning department that instigates the procedure. In other cases, it may be a judgement call from the most senior person on site reacting to information received from staff/visitors relating to a developing situation. In some cases, it may be a planned response to a particular known circumstance.

However, some examples of when lockdown procedures may be activated are given below:

- A reported incident / civil disturbance in the local community with the potential to pose a risk to staff and pupils / young people.
- An intruder on the site (with the potential to pose a risk to staff and pupils / young people).
- A person who is known to the site and known to pose a risk to staff and/or pupils/young people enters the site uninvited.
- A warning being received regarding a risk locally of air pollution (smoke plume, gas cloud) or chemical, biological, or radiological contamination.
- A major fire close to the site.
- A dangerous animal roaming loose in the vicinity of the site.

## **Lockdown Arrangements**

It is not possible to write a generic lockdown procedure as there are a number of variables that are site specific, such as location of site, age of pupils / young people, means of raising alarm, site layout and communication systems amongst other factors.

Sites will need to consider having two types of lockdown procedures – partial lockdown (Invacuation) and full lockdown. These will be looked at individually, however the following basic principles should be useful in formulating plans:

- A member of the Senior Leadership Team / Senior Manager or Nominated Site Health and Safety Officer should be nominated as lockdown manager (with deputies nominated to cover absence) to initiate, manage and conclude the lockdown. They will also be responsible for being the point of communication with emergency services as necessary.
- The roles and responsibilities of the lockdown manager, deputies and staff should be documented.
- All staff should be aware of their individual roles and responsibilities.

- A recognised signal should be established to alert staff that the plan is to be activated. The signal should clearly identify which plan is to be activated (partial or full).
- Sounding the fire alarm should not be the option to instigate the plan as this could lead to people trying to exit the building (the opposite reaction to that required in a lockdown).
- Pupils / young people and staff who are outside the buildings should be brought inside as quickly and calmly as possible.
- Those inside the school / setting should remain in place or proceed to an agreed area (as determined at each site).
- Once those outside are in the building, all doors and as necessary windows are locked. Depending on the circumstances, internal doors may also need to be locked.
- Blinds and curtains are drawn and windows on internal doors covered.
- Agreed communication channels that all staff are aware of are in place for any lockdown activation.
- Once in lockdown mode, staff should notify a dedicated person (the lockdown manager or someone who is in direct contact with them) of any pupils / young people not accounted for, and any additional young people in their area (over and above those who would normally be there).
- The Lockdown Manager should ideally locate themselves where they have ready access to all the information necessary to manage the situation.
- Staff at all times should reassure young people / pupils and encourage them to remain calm.
- The lockdown manager should establish communication with the emergency services as soon as possible. They should also alert the County Council emergency planning team.
- As necessary, parents should be notified as soon as practicable by the sites established system for communications with parents.
- Part of the above communication should inform parents that the pupils / young people will not be released to them during the lockdown and that they should not under any circumstances attend site until they are informed the lockdown is over.
- Any areas which cannot be locked down are identified and the procedures should include instructions to ensure staff and pupils / young people know where they should go to, to ensure they are in a safe area.
- Plans should take account of how visitors, volunteers, peripatetic staff and contractors will be managed.
- Special consideration will need to be given to vulnerable pupils/young people or those with additional needs.
- Agreed terminology to declare the lockdown over should be in place to avoid any confusion. Only the lockdown manager should declare the lockdown over. (This may be after advice from the emergency services where they are involved).
- Once the lockdown is over, this should be communicated to all parents and any external agencies that have been notified.

- Ensure a communication system is in place so that staff can be updated on an ongoing situation (e.g. intruder on site) by the lockdown manager.
- The lockdown procedures should be readily displayed around the site (e.g. adjacent to the fire action notices **but not in public areas**).
- The lockdown manager should ensure any groups of staff, and pupils / young people who are away from the site on a visit or activity are notified that a lockdown is in place and that they shouldn't return to the school/site until they have been notified that the lockdown has been removed.

### **If A Fire Alarm Sounds During a Lockdown**

The plan will also need to document what actions the site will take in the unlikely event that the fire alarm should go off during the lockdown event. As the building is occupied, it should be relatively straightforward to establish whether or not the activation of the fire alarm is a genuine fire quite quickly and respond accordingly.

Initially, the school / setting should contact the Fire service as normal. The person contacting the Fire Service (Lockdown Manager or person nominated by them) should inform them that the site is in a lockdown event and inform them of what action they are taking. Then, someone (a person should be designated to do this as part of the roles and responsibilities of staff during a lockdown) should check the fire alarm panel to establish which zone has been activated. Once the zone has been identified, the alarm should be silenced. This person must also have a means of communication so they can liaise with the lockdown manager and staff. If staff are located in the zone of the fire, they should be contacted and asked to check the zone for any obvious signs of fire. If there are no staff in this area, then a member of the Senior Leadership Team / Senior Manager or Nominated Site Health and Safety Officer will need to be sent to check the area and report back (they will need a means of communication also).

All staff should know what to look for and the basic precautions to take (such as feeling doors and door handles of closed doors with the back of the hand before opening, only opening slightly, and staying behind the door while doing this, smoke, etc). They should also be aware that the alarm may have been set off deliberately by an intruder and so caution will be required.

If a fire is discovered by those searching the area, this will need to be communicated back to the person at the fire alarm panel, who should re-sound the alarm. The emergency services should be updated, and the building evacuated. The lockdown manager should indicate where people should evacuate to, and which exits to use if the circumstances of the lockdown event dictate that normal escape route and evacuation points cannot be used.

### **Practicing Lockdown Drills**

As lockdown events are often fast-moving events which can develop quickly and change throughout the event, it is important that everyone knows their roles and responsibilities. The lockdown procedure needs to be familiar to everyone. It is therefore advised that the lockdown procedure be practiced regularly (as a minimum at least once per year) and be thoroughly debriefed afterwards. The drill is also a chance to ensure the communication systems work properly and to practice different scenarios.

## **Communication Between Parents and The School**

Parents should be made aware that the school has a lockdown plan and that it will be regularly tested, and whilst schools should never share the full plan with parents, arrangements for communicating with parents in the event of a lockdown should be routinely shared either via newsletter or the site website where one exists.

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 site understands their concern for their child's welfare, and that it is doing everything possible to ensure their safety.
- **Do not need to contact the site.** Calling the site could tie up telephone lines that are required for contacting emergency support providers.
- **Do not come to the site.** They could interfere with emergency support provider's access to the site and may even put themselves and others in danger.
- **Wait for the site 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 normal hours.

The 'communication with parents' section of the lockdown plan needs to reassure parents that the site 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 site is in a full lockdown situation. During this period, the switchboard and entrances will be unmanned, external doors locked, and nobody is allowed in or out ...'***

Should parents present at the site 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 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 / manager 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.

## **Specific Lockdown Types:**

### **1 – Partial Lockdown**

Alert to staff to communicate: 'Partial lockdown'.

In a partial lockdown, staff and pupils / young people should remain in the building and all doors leading outside should be locked. No one should be allowed to enter or leave the building; however, teaching, activities 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 / young people in the building should they leave it. 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 / young people 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 / young people remain in the building and external doors locked and windows closed and where possible 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 / young people are safely inside, senior staff will conduct an ongoing and dynamic risk assessment based on

advice from the Emergency Services. Inform the County Council's Emergency Planning Team.

A 'partial lockdown' may also be a precautionary measure but puts the site 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.

## **2 – Full Lockdown**

Alert to staff to communicate: 'Full lockdown'.

This signifies an immediate threat to the site and may be an escalation of a partial lockdown. The aim of a full lockdown is for the site and its rooms to appear empty.

Immediate action

- All pupils / young people and staff stay in their room or move to the nearest room.
- Office staff should remain in their office.
- External doors locked. Room 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 / young people and staff sit quietly out of sight and where possible in a location that would protect them from gunfire (bullets / thrown objects go through glass, brick, wood and metal. Consider locations behind substantial brickwork or heavy reinforced walls, corners of the room furthest away from a door or if no alternative under desks).
- Lights, smartboards and computer monitors turned off.
- Mobile phones turned off (for staff who may need their phones to receive / send messages to the Lockdown Manager they must be turned onto silent so they cannot give away your position (see information on communication below)).
- A register to be taken of all pupils / young people and staff in each room/ office.
- Communicate register of pupils / young people and staff to a pre-agreed central office.
- Staff should await further instructions.

Staff and pupils / young people remain in lockdown until it has been lifted by the Lockdown Manager. If at any point during the lockdown, the fire alarm sounds the procedure for fire alarms sounding during a lockdown is followed.

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.

## **Communication**

The need for good communication systems features heavily in this guidance. Each school / setting will need to decide what works best for them based on their own situation. The following are examples of what discreet communication channels might be:

- Where staff have access to an internal email 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 / site uses communication software e.g. '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.
- Sites with walkie-talkies, handheld radio systems or an internal telephone network could use these. (Be aware of the need not to give away positions in a full lockdown situation. These may not be appropriate in such situations).
- Mobile phones should not be relied on as even where the signal is strong in the event of a major incident, the signal could be blocked to normal means.

## **Ongoing Situations**

Where a lockdown occurs towards the end of a working day and staff who are working away from the site have been informed not to attend the building or there is a situation where for example a threat has not been resolved and the threat may be carried over into the next day. Sites will need to have a system in place to inform all staff of whether or not the situation is ongoing and if building will be open the next day or not.

Sites should utilise this guidance to help them develop their own specific plan.