



department for
children, schools and families

Coping with a School Emergency

A practical guide for schools



Consultation (January 2010)



PREPARING FOR EMERGENCIES

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Introduction

Parents trust schools to keep their children safe both in school and when learning outside the classroom. Thanks to the efforts of school staff and governors, schools normally remain a safe haven for children. However, schools can become involved in an emergency at any time. It may be a natural hazard or event such as a flood or a fire, an accident or death on site or on a school trip, or an industrial accident such as a chemical spillage.

Thankfully, emergencies such as these are rare and will probably never happen in most schools, but it is vital to prepare for all eventualities. Plans which deal with the consequences of large-scale emergencies will also help in dealing with the kind of smaller, routine (but nevertheless potentially distressing) incidents that schools experience on a regular basis. For the purposes of this guidance, a school emergency is defined as an event that threatens the school environment and / or the safety and welfare of pupils and staff, for which the school may require the assistance of outside agencies.

Planning and preparing for emergencies can save lives. It can also help prevent an incident getting worse, protect against litigation and enhance the school's standing as a safe place to learn and work, giving confidence to staff, parents and pupils.

The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) recommends that schools have an emergency plan. This document has been produced to help you put together an emergency plan for your school. This guidance is not intended to replace any emergency procedures or plans you may have already produced. However it may be useful to check that your existing plan covers all relevant aspects of responding to an emergency. You may also have existing procedures or protocols for specific incidents – these can be held alongside your school emergency plan and referred to where relevant.

This document links to a sample school emergency plan template which is available in an editable format from www.schoolemergencies.co.uk. For ease of use, the information in this guidance document relates directly to the sections and appendices in the template, however you may choose to use only parts of the template and information or create your own emergency plan in a format you find easy to use.

Part 1: Emergencies in schools

Scope of a school emergency plan

Your plan should be generic enough to cover a range of potential emergencies that could occur at any school. These may include:

- Death of a pupil or member of staff
- Kidnap or disappearance of pupil
- Violence and assault in school
- Destruction or vandalism of part of the school
- School fire, flood or explosion
- Chemical or toxic substance release
- The effects of disasters in the wider community
- Incidents on learning activities outside the classroom
- Disease epidemics and pandemics.

There may also be specific hazards which pose a particular risk to your school, such as proximity to an industrial site, river, or major road. You should make an assessment of any specific risks affecting your school and plan how you would deal with an incident arising from them. Your local authority emergency planning unit may be able to give you some advice on this.

Your plan should cover procedures for an incident occurring in school time and out of school hours, weekends and during school holidays.

Linking with your local authority

It is important to understand the arrangements for contacting your local authority in an emergency. It is likely that you will have a nominated emergency contact within the local authority who you should contact in office hours – this may be your local education officer or someone with a similar role. Ensure that you also have an emergency contact number for the local authority out of office hours – this may be to contact someone in your Children's Services department or the emergency planning team.

Your local authority should be able to supply you with relevant contact numbers for people who you may need to contact within the local authority – these should be included in your school emergency plan.

The amount of support your local authority is able to give in an emergency may depend on what type of school you are – if in doubt clarify this with your local authority whilst carrying out your planning.

The planning process

You may wish to involve members of staff in the planning process, to gain their support for the plan and to ensure they are able to implement it in the event of an emergency. The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) advise that schools devote a staff meeting or part of a staff development session to the plan in the initial stages, once the plan is complete, and annually thereafter.

Identifying staff that are prepared to take on key roles in an emergency in advance can really help when responding to an emergency. One member of staff should be nominated to take responsibility for updating and reviewing the plan once it is in place.

It may be necessary to include extra appendices to the school emergency plan to cover any separate arrangements for other services using the site (e.g. school holiday clubs, community groups etc).

Template school emergency plan

A template school emergency plan which may assist you in producing a school emergency plan can be downloaded from www.schoolemergencies.co.uk. There are several appendices in the template plan that you can populate with relevant information specific to your school. Suggestions for what you may wish to include in each appendix are denoted by italics in the template.

Part 3 of this guidance gives more detail on issues you may wish to consider when producing an emergency plan. This information is structured to link in with the template school emergency plan. However, you may use the information and suggestions to simply update an existing school emergency plan, or to check you have covered all aspects of emergency planning in schools.

Whether you adopt this template, or use one of your own, the information included should be adapted as appropriate to your school and circumstances. Once completed, you may want to print out your plan and ensure relevant people have hard copies to refer to if necessary.

Top tip!

Once printed, it might be useful to keep your plan in a folder so that sections of the plan, such as contact details can be easily updated and replaced. You could also store any related procedure documents in the folder.

Part 2: Practical considerations when planning

Grab bags

You may wish to put together a pair of 'grab bags' containing information and resources that may be of use during an emergency. These should be stored securely; one in the school building (e.g. school office) and one out of the main building, in case the building becomes inaccessible. Your grab bags could contain items such as:

- Full copy of your school emergency plan (including emergency contact numbers)
- Contact details for staff and pupils
- Copies of other key information, such as insurance policies
- Hi-visibility vests for members of the School Emergency Management Team (SEMT)
- Documents or resources for any pupils or staff with specific medical or other requirements (if appropriate)
- Notepads and pens for log keeping
- First aid kit and suncream
- Radios/mobile phones and charged batteries
- Keys to your place of safety.

This is not an exhaustive list and what your grab bag contains will depend on your school and emergency procedures. Thought needs to be given as to the storage of the grab bag as it contains personal information.

School support for external emergencies

Headteachers and school staff may become involved in the response to an emergency affecting the local area, even if the school itself is not affected directly.

For example:

- Civil disturbance or violence in the local community
- Terrorist incidents affecting the local community
- Disease epidemics and pandemics
- Severe weather.

In case of an emergency that affects the local community, you may want to activate your emergency plan to provide support for pupils and staff who are affected by the incident.

Your school may be designated by your local authority as an emergency reception centre for evacuees of a major incident. If this is the case your local authority should provide information on what you need to do if the school needs to be used – you may want to include this information in your emergency plan.

Media management

For schools that are run by the local authority, the local authority corporate communications team may take the lead in dealing with the media in the event of a school emergency. They may produce press statements on your behalf and ensure these have been approved by the relevant people and organisations (e.g. headteacher, police) prior to release. If someone from the school wishes to make a statement to the media, they can provide support and guidance, or request a suitable person from the local authority to take on this role. This can take a lot of pressure off the school and headteacher, especially in smaller schools where all staff may be busy managing the emergency.

Other schools may have different relationships with their local authority – if in doubt contact your local authority to ask what support they could provide in an emergency. It may be worth a member of the school staff or governing body undertaking some media training to help in the event of having to deal with the media.

Debriefing

There are two recognised forms of debriefing which can be valuable in dealing with the aftermath of an incident. These are:

- Psychological debriefing (also known as critical incident stress debriefing) - a useful way of helping people to come to terms with an incident, carried out by a trained specialist
- Post-incident debriefing - concentrates on learning lessons which will help the school improve plans and procedures to deal more effectively with an incident in the future.

Your local authority emergency planning team may be able to help with further information and support on debriefing procedures.

Post-incident care and welfare

Post-incident care is aimed at helping individuals to understand their feelings following an emergency and to identify sources of future support. The overall aim of the support is to help people in a way that will reduce the possibility of them developing post-traumatic stress disorder. Some emergencies may generate a large amount of media exposure for months, or even years after the incident and the effect of this on pupils may need to be taken into consideration.

It is worth giving some thought to how the topics of loss, bereavement, risk / safety and change are covered in the curriculum. Schools where these topics are discussed openly, and treated as normal life events, may find it easier to cope when a difficult or tragic incident occurs.

Support is available from a range of sources for school staff in their direct dealings with affected individuals, including:

- Local authority educational psychology service / welfare service
- Local authority Human Resources (HR)
- Internal or external counselling services.

This support offers people structured opportunities over a specified timescale, to talk about an incident in a supportive atmosphere, receive feedback and validation of their own feelings and help to come to terms with these.

Staff in schools can help pupils by being aware of the most frequent and normal reactions of children to a traumatic incident (fear, guilt, anger, confusion) and other normal reactions that may be seen (such as withdrawal, aggression, nervousness, depression). Some of the following responses may be appropriate:

- Do not minimise the effect of loss upon the child – recognise the uniqueness of the child's feelings
- Listen to the child – do not attempt to stop his / her references to the incident
- Show that you are prepared to listen and offer reassurance
- Show that you care by offering genuine support and empathy.

Staff play an important role in supporting both pupils and colleagues as they recover from a traumatic incident. However, it is important to remember that staff should not be expected to perform a counselling role unless they are trained to do so. **It is also important not to underestimate the impact of an emergency on staff, which in some cases may be greater than the impact on pupils.**

Despite the situation, staff must avoid actions that may be misinterpreted. For example, physical contact and one-to-one meetings may later be represented as inappropriate. The presence of witnesses and contemporary action logs where practical will minimise the risk of misinterpretation.

Remember to consult with and involve parents in the aftermath of an incident. It is particularly important to communicate with parents of pupils who have been involved, and ensure that their needs and wishes are taken into account.

Part 3: Guidance on writing your plan

This section gives more detailed guidance and information on writing a school plan, based on the sections and appendices of the template school emergency plan. Your plan should be reviewed regularly – this may be annually, or after any exercise or incident - and a new review date entered.

Introduction

This should be kept short and simple, but include information which may be required when the plan is being used. The introduction may include:

- The scope of the plan (for example if it includes information relating to other users of the site)
- A reminder of the importance of keeping written records (using Appendix 11 as a guide) and accounting for all expenditure relating to an emergency.

Section 2: Emergencies in schools – activation

This section provides a form for the person who receives notification of an incident to record vital information. This person may be the headteacher, school secretary or caretaker so it is important that all staff are aware of this form and preferably have one to hand (e.g. near the telephone in the office).

If an incident occurs when the school is in use then the first priority is obviously to safeguard pupils and staff and alert the emergency services if necessary. After this your local authority should be informed. They can give support, advice and organise much of the response and recovery to an incident – **you will not be able to do everything yourself**. Throughout the response to the emergency you should try to log timings of communications and actions – see guidance in Appendix 11 for more information.

Note:

In the event of a fire in school hours, it is important to have a designated person to meet the arriving fire appliances to give critical information, such as the exact location of the incident, anyone who may need rescuing and their location, and any individual hazards (e.g. chemicals) that may be present.

Some schools may have alternative arrangements regarding property issues – if in doubt speak to your local authority about what support they will provide.

Section 3: Emergencies in schools – roles and responsibilities

The headteacher, or in his / her absence, a pre-agreed nominee, should take overall responsibility for the school's response to an emergency. They may be supported by a small School Emergency Management Team (SEMT) called together as soon as an incident occurs. This could consist of up to four staff to take on roles relating to communications, welfare, media management, and resources – it is advisable to identify these roles prior to an incident occurring. **All those with emergency responsibilities should hold an up-to-date copy of the emergency plan off-site.**

In smaller schools, it may not be possible to nominate a full SEMT and most or all of the roles of the team may be taken on by the headteacher with the support of office staff and the caretaker. In these circumstances, it may be particularly useful to call for support from the local authority as soon as possible.

This section outlines some initial and ongoing actions for each member of the SEMT. By identifying tasks in a checklist, you can ensure nothing is missed when responding to an emergency situation. It is important that staff are familiar with what their role entails and that any training requirements associated with this are covered. Refer to *Coping with a School Emergency: Training and exercising your school emergency plan* for more information (to be released for consultation in February 2010).

When assigning staff to the roles outlined below, the immediately obvious choice may not always be the most appropriate one. Consider the strengths of your staff and what they would be most suited to doing. For example, you need someone who will be calm under pressure to take on the welfare role, to ensure other staff and pupils remain calm. If a staff member is used to updating the school website and setting up phone diverts, they may be an appropriate person to take on the communications role.

Lead coordinator checklist:

Important things to remember are:

- Ensure you have an overview of the situation and don't become bogged down in responding – try and delegate tasks to appropriate staff
- Act as a central contact point for information both internally and externally BUT leave most of the communications and disseminating information tasks to the person allocated that role
- Take time out if you need it – this is YOUR emergency and you won't be able to respond effectively if you burn out
- Ensure relevant authorities are informed of the incident (e.g. Health and Safety Executive).

Welfare coordinator checklist:

Essentially your role is to take care of the needs of pupils and staff and ensure their safety, for example by identifying an appropriate place of safety if the building needs to be evacuated for a significant period. It is important to remain calm, as this will then calm other staff and pupils.

If the emergency is out of school hours then there may not be any immediate welfare actions. However, there is likely to be a longer term need for a welfare coordinator to help coordinate post-incident care and support.

Communications coordinator checklist:

Effective communications, both internal and external, are vital for the efficient management of an incident. Your school emergency plan should cover communications procedures relating to your school and you may want to add some additional tasks into the communications checklist to ensure these procedures are carried out.

Rumours spread quickly within a school community, and can cause great distress in a crisis situation. The best way of preventing rumours is to inform people quickly, simply and factually.

All staff and governors should be informed as soon as possible, and given the same, accurate information. You may wish to inform pupils in small groups, again using accurate, factual information. If possible, this should be done the same day as the incident. In the case of a tragic incident, the educational psychology service at your local authority may be able to advise on the best way of informing pupils.

For more information and tips on communications in an emergency see guidance on completing appendix 4.

Media coordinator checklist:

Important things to remember:

- If applicable, try to direct media enquiries to the local authority's corporate communications division
- It may be appropriate and beneficial for the headteacher or a nominated representative to make a press statement or be interviewed after liaising with the local authority
- Do not allow the press onto school premises or give them access to children unless there is a specific reason and permission and consents are in place – the police may help with this in a major emergency
- If there is likely to be a high media presence at the school site, it may be appropriate to pre-designate an area for media vans and journalists if they arrive at the school and from which interviews can be given. This may prevent the media blocking access routes to the school or intimidating pupils and staff.

Resources coordinator checklist:

Initially your first priority is to secure the site and make it safe, as far as possible. You will therefore need a good knowledge of the site, access and exit points and how to shut off electricity, gas and water supplies.

If there is damage to school property or resources then a list will need to be made of what has been damaged or destroyed for insurance purposes. See guidance on Appendix 7 for more information.

It may be necessary to procure resources for use in the emergency – your contact from the local authority may be able to help with this.

Section 4:

Emergencies on learning activities outside the classroom – activation

Learning outside the classroom encompasses activities that take place on the school grounds, in the local area, day visits requiring transport and residential visits both in the UK and overseas (see link in appendix 1 for more information). The guidelines below are just some of the issues to take into consideration when planning a visit, although some points may only apply to day or residential visits:

- Activity leaders may wish to carry a copy of the checklist in section 6 to follow if an emergency does occur

- When any group is on an activity outside the classroom, the headteacher (or a deputy or senior teacher if the head is on the visit or unavailable) should provide an emergency contact for the group (this needs to be available after hours for evening activities and 24 hours for residential visits)
- The school contact should have, readily available, written details of the visit, including a list of all involved, contact arrangements with the group, and day and night contact details for parents and staff next-of-kin when applicable
- Copies of all documentation and contact lists relating to the visit should be held by the headteacher or headteacher's representative. On residential or after-hours visits, the headteacher or school contact should take this information home
- Make sure that arrangements will work after hours, at weekends and during the school holidays if activities are taking place at these times.

Section 5: Emergencies on learning activities outside the classroom – roles and responsibilities

Although this action list is for the headteacher or nominee, it may be appropriate to delegate some of the tasks to other members of staff. All leaders of visits or activities outside the classroom should be aware of their roles and responsibilities.

Section 6: Stand-down and recovery

When the emergency services have left the school, or in the case of an incident on a school trip, when pupils and staff have returned home and media interest has subsided, the school can begin the recovery process. In the case of a long-running emergency (e.g. the disappearance of a pupil), the recovery may need to be considered alongside the response to the emergency.

Headteachers should work with their local authority to develop a recovery plan for the school. A range of support will continue to be available from the local authority, which should be accessed through your local authority contact.

There may be formal inquiries or even police investigations into the incident, which may continue for some time, and require the cooperation and support of school staff, pupils and parents.

Section 7: Support from other organisations

The headteacher, or the headteacher's pre-agreed nominee, will take charge of the incident on behalf of the school. The School Emergency Management Team will assist the headteacher in managing the incident. They may be supported by the local authority, which may activate its own emergency procedures to assist with the response to a major emergency affecting a school in their area.

This section indicates what organisations may respond to a school emergency, and what facilities and help they may be able to offer.

Appendix 1: Closing the school due to extreme weather conditions

Your local authority Children's Services department may have issued some guidance on this, which should be followed. The guidelines below are generic and should not replace local guidance.

- The decision to close a school lies with the headteacher – this applies whether the severe weather occurs overnight or during the school day
- Warnings, from the weather centre, the police and emergency planners about travel conditions should be taken into consideration
- You may wish to consult your local authority contact about any decision to close your schools. You should inform your local authority if you decide to close the school, so they can keep a central record of all school closures
- You should inform your local radio station that the school has closed
- When making a decision to close the school during the school day consideration will need to be given to contacting parents to arrange collection of pupils where necessary
- Bus operators have a legal duty to ensure the safety and welfare of their passengers and, therefore, make the final decision on whether to undertake or continue any journey – your planning should take account of this.

Appendix 2: School site information and risk assessment

If there are specific hazards or risks associated with your school, any information and special procedures relating to the risks should be included in your emergency plan. This may include hazards within the school (e.g. chemical stores), hazards external to the school (e.g. nearby streams or rivers that may flood, industrial facilities) or possible difficulties relating to the school itself (e.g. split-site, communications difficulties). When thinking of risks that could realistically affect the school, it may be useful to look at your local Community Risk Register which should be available through your local authority emergency planning team.

Your local authority emergency planning team may be able to provide guidance on any specific risks or issues affecting your school.

Appendix 3: Emergency contacts

Your emergency plan should include contact details for all members of staff, so that if an emergency happens out of school hours, all staff can be contacted. **During school holidays it may be useful to be aware of when key staff are away, so that it is possible to gain access to the building if required in an emergency.** Some general external contacts are included, but you will need to add contacts specific to your school.

This section may also be used to outline a telephone tree system of contacting parents, if appropriate for the school. At least one copy of the plan held offsite (e.g. by the headteacher) should include a master copy of all pupil contact details. Hard copies of this information should be stored in a locked cabinet, electronic copies should be password protected.

This section of the plan is likely to need regular update and review, for example at the start of each term.

Appendix 4: Communications

Communications - external

Communications systems are put under enormous pressure in the immediate aftermath of an emergency, but are vital to ensuring a well-managed response. The main school telephone number may quickly become jammed with incoming calls. Identify any other lines not generally known to the public (kitchen phone, mobile phones), which could be used for outgoing calls in an emergency, or for incoming calls from partner responding agencies (e.g. police, local authority).

In the event of a power failure, a powered switchboard system may not work, but a telephone plugged directly into the first telephone point coming in from the exchange should provide a useable line. The location of this telephone point should be identified in the emergency plan.

If it is likely that the incident will create a very high volume of calls, or interest from the wider public, the local authority may be able to set up a public helpline to help relieve the pressure on the school.

Communicating with parents

An early decision should be made about how to inform parents, bearing in mind the speed with which rumours circulate. However, in the case of a fatality, the police will normally inform the parents or next of kin of the children or staff involved. You may wish to consult with the emergency services and / or local authority about what information and advice to give parents regarding an incident.

If an emergency happens at a school, on a school visit, or if the school may be closed for any reason (for example, severe weather), it is likely that concerned parents will try to telephone the school to get further information. This may hamper the school staff in dealing with the emergency itself. One possible way of dealing with this is to set up the main school line with an answer machine that you can set to 'message only' (callers cannot leave messages). Updating the message regularly with information on the emergency can help inform and reassure parents. Most answer machines should also have the capacity to change the message and call recording system remotely if the school cannot be accessed. Information on how to do this should be included in your emergency plan.

Other methods of informing parents could include:

- Notices on the school website
- Letters
- Emails or text messaging
- Notices on the school gate / fence
- Person at the entrance to the school to explain issues
- Telephone tree where each parent is contacted by telephone
- Local radio (they may ask for your DCSF number as a security measure).

Top tip!

Routinely informing parents of the school's procedures for dealing with emergencies can reassure them that the school is prepared and able to look after their child, and may assist in the school's management of an emergency should one occur.

Information could include how parents might hear about an incident affecting the school (e.g. radio, school answer phone etc.) and what they should do if an emergency affects the community whilst their child is at school.

This pre-emergency information could be sent out as part of a school newsletter - perhaps a special 'emergency planning' edition - or put on the school website. This may also be a good opportunity to remind parents to notify you of any changes to contact details!

Appendix 5: Evacuation and shelter plan

This is one of the most important sections of your plan as it outlines the initial actions that should be taken to safeguard pupils and staff, both from internal and external hazards. **All staff must be aware of these procedures, as warning signals may need to be triggered immediately, before advising others of the threat.**

The purpose of an **evacuation** is to move people and other living creatures (e.g. school pets) away from a real or potential danger to a safe place. This is likely to be moving away from a danger in the school building, although in some circumstances it may require evacuation of the whole school site. Your evacuation plans should include information about what route to take and what assembly point to use in the case of a bomb threat, as these may need to be different from those used for other types of incident (e.g. fire).

It is also important to think about how you would move from an assembly point if required (e.g. due to smoke drift) and what your evacuation routes off the site are – if this requires going through any locked gates then someone should have the responsibility of ensuring that the keys for these are available.

If the school has to be evacuated for a period of time you may need a 'place of safety' nearby where pupils can be taken to wait, either until you can return to the building or whilst waiting for parents to collect their children. This may be a local community centre or nearby school. It is important that you can get access to the building when you need it, either by having a key or knowing who to contact to get into the building.

It is also important to plan for a hazard outside of the school building. If this is an environmental hazard, such as a smoke cloud or suspected chemical leak, then you need to ensure the children are safe inside, all doors and windows are closed and ventilation systems are switched off – this is known as **sheltering** in place. If the hazard is an intruder on the school site then you may have to **lockdown** the school building. This is similar to the shelter procedure but entrances to the building and/or site must be secured to prevent the intruder entering the building. It is important to have pre-planned arrangements for signalling both a shelter and a lockdown drill, and some way of signalling to pupils if they are out of the school buildings during break time or lunch time that they need to immediately return inside.

It may be that the emergency services alert the school to a potential hazard, such as a plume of smoke from a fire, or a potential intruder. In other situations the school may have to make a decision to evacuate, shelter or lockdown the school to ensure the immediate safety of pupils and staff.

It may be useful to form a mutual aid or 'buddy school' agreement with a nearby school, so that in the event of an emergency at either school, the other school will assist with taking in pupils, providing resources etc. Your 'buddy school' could act as a place of safety if nearby, or even a short term accommodation solution to help continue pupils' education.

Top tip!

Some small schools have no way of changing their school fire alarm to signal the need for sheltering and have instead purchased an air horn. This is easy to use, has a distinctive noise and is loud enough for everyone to hear!

Appendix 6: Business continuity

Business continuity planning is the process involved in ensuring that a business or organisation can continue to deliver its critical services during and after an emergency. In the case of schools, one of these services is to continue pupils' education. You may therefore want to think about what is required in order to continue this function and what vital records or data you may need to duplicate or back up.

A school is most likely to experience an emergency that affects the school building, which could be anything from a boiler breakdown, to a fire or flood. Having an inventory of the contents of the school can be useful in calculating losses for insurance claims. You may want to complete the three tables in this section to help with this.

Equipment

This doesn't need to include every single item in the school, as numbers of desks and chairs are easy to calculate, but you may want to include IT, electrical equipment and any other specialist, large, one-off or expensive items. You may also choose to include details of any leased equipment on the premises.

IT data and systems

As we become more reliant on IT infrastructure it is important to consider back ups for IT data and systems as well as paper based ones. If possible, all important data stored on school computers should be backed up either remotely, or using tapes which are stored off site. You may wish to use this table to record essential data sets and IT systems and where they are backed up. If computers are destroyed and replacement IT systems are brought in then this will help ensure you have all the programmes and data you need.

Paper based records

Most schools will have at least some essential paper based records, not stored electronically, which could be easily damaged or destroyed in a fire or flood. You may wish to include a list of

these along with the locations of back up copies which may be stored off site – this includes your emergency plan!

It is also worth encouraging staff to think about where they keep important resources (lesson plans, pupils' coursework etc), as loss of these could have a large psychological impact on staff. It is worth considering whether copies of essential paper documents or resources should be kept off-site.

Appendix 7: Pandemic influenza plan

Detailed guidance on planning for schools and childcare settings, along with specific information relating to the 2009 swine flu pandemic, is available on the DCSF Teachernet website and the HPA website (please see annex 1). This includes a checklist for a model pandemic flu plan for schools which you may wish to use when completing this section of your plan. However, the swine flu virus experienced in 2009 has been comparatively mild and it is worth considering if your planning is flexible enough to deal with a future pandemic which may be much more severe.

Guidance on widespread school closures in a pandemic will be issued by central government and passed on to schools via your local authority. However the final decision to close will still rest with the headteacher and governing body. It is unlikely that sixth form and FE colleges would be advised to close.

You should inform the local authority if the school is closing and how many pupils are affected. If widespread school closures were not advised, there may be situations when you may decide to close your school, for example if a significant number of staff are absent due to sickness, or if you have a large number of particularly vulnerable pupils.

You may wish to seek specific guidance from your local authority, or the Health Protection Agency when making your decision. Staff would generally still be expected to work if able to do so, even if the school was closed to pupils. Guidance has been issued by DCSF on remote learning and educating pupils during a flu pandemic for schools and local authorities (see annex 1). Up to date information and guidance on pandemic influenza is available from the Department of Health website.

DCSF emphasise that schools should ensure they have up-to-date contact details for pupils and staff.

Guidance on if and when schools should close in a pandemic will be issued by central government and passed on to schools via your local authority. However the final decision to close will still rest with the headteacher and governing body. Sixth forms and FE colleges would not be advised to close. You should inform the local authority if the school is closing and how many pupils are affected.

Appendix 8: Training and exercising

Training and exercising can help ensure it is fit for purpose and that the procedures outlined in the plan for dealing with an emergency can be carried out effectively if an emergency does occur. The guidance document *Coping with a School Emergency: Training and exercising your school emergency plan* gives more information, guidance and resources to help you do this (to be released for consultation February 2010).

It may be useful to keep a record of when training and exercises have been carried out in your emergency plan.

Appendix 9: Bomb threats and suspicious packages

Although bomb threats usually turn out to be hoaxes, they must always be taken seriously. It is important that reception / switchboard staff know what questions to ask if they do take a call from someone claiming to have information about a bomb. The bomb threat prompt card gives questions to ask and immediate actions to take in this situation. Reception staff should be familiar with this information, and preferably have a copy to hand near the telephone.

Equally important is dealing with suspicious packages - in most cases the package turns out to be a hoax or genuine mistake, but it is better to take all appropriate precautions if such a letter or package is received. Any member of staff who may deal with incoming mail in the school should be aware of procedures relating to suspicious packages.

Appendix 10: Emergency arrangements for other services using the school site

A school emergency plan should cover the whole school site and all the activities that take place there, including extended services. Where schools share a site with another service, or have other organisations on the premises, you may want to involve those other services or organisations in the planning process. **All staff using the site, whether employed by the local authority or not, need to be aware of the plan and how it affects them.**

Appendix 11: Log keeping

Any emergency affecting a school may afterwards become the subject of a detailed inquiry. It is important that accurate written records are kept, and that no piece of information about either the planning or the response to the incident is lost. Records may also be in the form of a recording made via a CCTV camera, a telephone or on an answer machine. The records should be retained after the incident for future reference.

Each member of staff involved in dealing with the emergency should log decisions made, telephone calls made and received and tasks carried out. In an emergency, things happen very quickly and it is unlikely that you will remember all the people you have spoken to and actions you have taken unless you write everything down.

It may be useful to have a designated log keeper whose role it is to maintain a record of events and record decisions made at meetings of the SEMT.

Appendix 11 outlines some guidelines you should aim to follow when keeping a log during an emergency. These may seem very detailed, but at the very least making sure that all information and decisions are recorded in a hardback notebook would be essential in the event of any inquiry relating to the incident.

Annex 1

Useful references

Coping with a School Emergency: Guidance on training and exercising your school emergency plan – guidance and resources to help in training staff on a school emergency plan and on exercising a school plan. Available from www.schoolemergencies.co.uk (to be released for consultation in February 2010)

Environment Agency website (information on flooding and guidance on developing a flood plan for your school)

www.environment-agency.gov.uk/subjects/flood and click on 'How can I be prepared?'

Department of Health website (latest information and guidance on pandemic influenza)

<http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/PublicHealth/Flu/PandemicFlu/index.htm>

DfES Teachernet website (information on pandemic influenza planning and guidance for schools)

<http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/humanflupandemic>

DfES publication on violence in schools

A legal toolkit for schools: tackling abuse, threats and violence towards members of the school community. Available from

<http://publications.teachernet.gov.uk/>

Information and Guidance on Learning Outside the Classroom and educational visits

<http://www.lotc.org.uk>

<http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/healthandsafety/visits/>

Wise before the event: Coping with crisis in schools

by William Yule and Anne Gold, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 1993.

ISBN 0 903319 66 7

This book emphasises the need for prior planning and has many practical suggestions.

Dunblane: A place of learning

Available to order, priced £7.50 from:

Stirling Council

Children's Services

Viewforth

Stirling

Scotland FK8 2ET

Glossary

Business continuity planning – the process of ensuring that a business or organisation can continue to deliver its critical services during and after an emergency or business interruption.

Business continuity promotion – the process of ensuring that an organisation can continue business operations at an acceptable pre-defined level.

Community risk register – a list of the risks that might be faced by a community which have been analysed to determine their likelihood and impact on that community. It may also include steps that have been taken to reduce the likelihood of a risk occurring or the impact if an emergency did occur. A community risk register should be available for each Local Resilience Forum area.

Critical services – services you deliver whose loss would have the greatest impact in the shortest time and therefore need to be recovered the fastest in the event of a disruption.

Debrief – a process carried out after an exercise or incident to review how well the exercise or incident was managed and identify any actions to take to improve a future response (see also psychological debrief).

Emergency planning team – each local authority will have a team which works on emergency planning issues. They may also be called a 'resilience team' or 'civil protection team'. Some areas may have a team that works jointly for several local authorities or as part of a larger team with representatives of other responding organisations, such as the emergency services.

Emergency reception centre – a building which may be used to provide temporary accommodation or support for people during an emergency. In some local authority areas certain schools are designated as possible emergency reception centres. Emergency reception centres may also be known by other names, such as rest centres.

Exercise – a simulation to validate an emergency plan, rehearse key staff or test systems and procedures (see also live exercise and tabletop exercise).

Grab bag – a bag containing items that may be of use when responding to an emergency.

Influenza pandemic – a global disease outbreak of a new influenza virus that spreads rapidly and causes serious illness in a large number of people.

Inject – an input of information into an exercise.

Live exercise – a process of validating an emergency plan by physically acting out the response to a simulated emergency (e.g. a fire drill evacuation would be a small scale live exercise).

Local Resilience Forum (LRF) – the body through which local multi-agency cooperation and emergency planning is carried out. Local Resilience Forums are based on Police areas and will consist of a number of groups looking at strategic and tactical level issues relating to emergency planning in the area. A list of LRFs can be found on the UK resilience website:

<http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/ukresilience/preparedness/ukgovernment/lrfs.aspx>

Lockdown – a procedure by which all pupils and staff are locked in the school buildings to protect them against an external threat (usually an intruder on the school site).

Place of safety – a safe building where people may be evacuated to in an emergency for a short period of time whilst alternative arrangements are made.

PSHE – Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education.

Psychological debrief – a useful way of helping people to come to terms with an incident, carried out by a trained specialist (also known as critical incident stress debriefing).

Recovery – the process of rebuilding, restoring and rehabilitating a community (e.g. the school community) following an emergency.

School Emergency Management Team (SEMT) – school staff who have specific roles in an emergency and would jointly manage the school's response.

Shelter – used in the context of a shelter drill, a procedure by which pupils and staff are confined to the school building and doors and windows are closed to protect against an external, environmental hazard.

Tabletop exercise – a process of validating an emergency plan by making decisions based on a simulated emergency, but not physically acting out the response.