

Critical Incidents and Business Continuity Policy

Summary

This document is the Trust Policy on managing critical incidents and ensuring business continuity.



If you are unsure about the validity of the content of this policy please refer to the Policy Owner.

Please Note: This policy is applicable to All Employees / Teachers / Support Staff / Volunteers including Trustees and Governors within the Group.

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| Policy owner | Audit Committee |
| Policy holder | Chief Finance Officer |
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Approved by

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| Consultation Group | ELT, Audit Committee |
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| 01 | Section 1.2, our commitment Section 1.3, definition of incidents Section 1.7, governance & responsibilities Section 1.8, addition of invacuation (lockdown) Section 1.10 addition of section to confirm that the policy incorporates the requirements of the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025 – Martyn’s Law Section 2.4, additional overview on activation of the emergency plan, response, recovery/continuity, review and communication. Other additions in blue to strengthen the current policy wording | ELT, Audit Committee | December 2025 |

This document is the Trust Policy on managing critical incidents and ensuring business continuity.

There are a range of supporting procedures (not included) which can be accessed via the [H&S Manual Sharepoint](#) site:

- Template School Emergency Plan (inc contact details, Roles & Responsibilities, Business Continuity information, site information, evacuation, shelter, lockdown, closure, threats & communication plans)
- Business Continuity plan – simple RAG format
- Coping with a school emergency – practical resources for schools – include guidance and templates for risk assessments, planning and reviewing.
- Training presentation templates for local adaption and delivery to SEMT (School Emergency Management Teams) and tabletop exercises

Related policy advice is contained in the Trust's:

First Aid and Medical Treatment Policy

Health and Safety Policy

[Health & Safety Manual Sharepoint](#)

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This policy sets out the Trust's policy for planning and responding to major incidents which affect the continuity of the Trust and its academies business and the safety of its staff, pupils and others.
- 1.2. We are committed to preparing for, responding to and recovering from any disruptive incident or critical event – whether caused by accident, natural hazard, malicious act or system failure – so that the safety and wellbeing of pupils, staff, visitors, and the continuity of educational services are maintained.
- 1.3. It is not possible, or desirable, to write a plan for every possible disruption.

Definitions of incidents are:

- Critical Incident – An event or events, usually sudden, which involve significant distress and organisational impact.
- Business Continuity Incident – Any event that disrupts normal operations (e.g., fire, flood, ICT failure).

No matter what the *cause* of the incident, the *effect* can generally be summarised as:

- An inability to carry out daily and/or critical activities
- Loss of life or serious injury to Academy staff and students/pupils or members of the public
- Loss of building, or part of building or access to the building
- Loss of ICT
- Loss/shortage of staff
- Loss of critical supplier or partner
- Adverse publicity and/or reputational impacts
- Involvement in a police investigation
- Use of school infrastructure as an emergency facility for the local community.

- 1.4. Procedures for administering and recording First Aid and medical treatment are contained in the Trust's First Aid and Medical Policy. The Trust's policy and procedures for assessing Health and Safety risks are contained in the Trust Health and Safety Policy.
- 1.5. This policy also recognises that individuals (adults and young people) may be affected by critical incidents which occur in or outside of academy. For example:

In-school:

- the death of a pupil or member of staff through natural causes, such as illness;
- a traffic accident involving a pupil or staff member;
- a deliberate act of violence, such as a knifing or the use of a firearm;
- an academy fire or flood;
- allegations or actual incidents of abuse against pupils by staff and staff against pupils;
- an arson or other attack on the academy.

Out-of-school:

- deaths or injuries on academy journeys, trips or residential trips;
- tragedies involving children from many academy's at public events such as football matches;
- civil disturbances;

- refugee children joining a academy, uprooted from their countries and perhaps shocked by wars or atrocities;
- abductions / disappearances;
- Incidents involving the murder of academy children that attract the attention of national and international media over prolonged periods;
- a civil disturbance or terrorism;
- a disaster in the community;
- a transport accident involving academy members.

1.6. At the Trust, all our academies take all children's needs seriously, including emotional and psychological and are committed to ensuring all children receive the help they require to explore such matters as death and significant harm or injury in an environment of trust, care and safety. We also recognise the impact such incidents can have on the well-being of staff and parents/ carers and will do our utmost to support any recovery needed and to work with any agencies.

1.7. Our Governance and Responsibilities for planning and managing incidents are as follows:

- Trust Board/Governors: Approve policy and local School Emergency Plans, ensure resources, monitor outcomes.
- CEO/Principal: Strategic leadership, activation of plan.
- Principal/SEMT: Operational readiness, plan updates, staff training.
- All Staff: Understand roles, complete training, report incidents.

1.8. Whilst no amount of planning can totally prevent accidents and problems occurring, it is hoped that some can be prevented and the effects of others minimised by taking sensible precautionary measures. The Trust expects that:

- Staff and pupils will be familiar with the academy's routines for fire evacuation and the evacuation (lockdown) of the academy building on hearing the appropriate alarm;
- Staff will be familiar with the routines and procedures for dealing with emergencies (as detailed in the documents supporting this policy);
- Staff assigned SEMT roles, will undertake training and tabletop exercises as appropriate;
- Staff and pupils will be familiar with the academy's security procedures, in particular that all visitors not wearing a visitors badge should be questioned and escorted to the academy entrance area;
- Staff organising academy trips and visits follow the guidelines and write a risk assessment to be signed off by the Principal;
- Staff will sign in and out of the premises;
- Staff are aware of pupils with medical needs or health problems;
- Staff are aware of academy policy in dealing with violence at work;
- Staff are aware that they should assess associated risks to children before carrying out a curriculum or other activity;
- Staff are aware that they are responsible for assessing risks to themselves before undertaking an activity.

1.9. Additionally, in the event of a critical incident the priorities of those adults in charge of the academy or trip will be to:

- Save life
- Minimise personal injury
- Safeguard the interests of all pupils and staff
- Minimise loss and to return to normal working as quickly as possible.

- Minimise threat to the safety and well-being of staff and pupils
- Minimise potential damage to school buildings and resources
- Inform appropriate parties of an incident and its consequences. This may include emergency services, Trust CEO or a delegate, Chair of Governors, Principal and staff, parents and pupils.

1.10 This policy incorporates the requirements of the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025 – Martyn’s Law – and reflects the school’s statutory duty to take reasonably practicable steps to protect staff, pupils, and visitors from the risk of terrorism-related harm.

2. Planning for and Managing Emergencies or Critical Incidents

2.1. Each academy will complete a School Emergency Plan, using the template provided (on H&S Manual Sharepoint) to identify key risks to its operation and the safety of its pupils, staff and others. The completion of this document will be led by the Principal, with support from their academy leadership teams and will detail and plan the local emergency and business continuity planning. Completing a School Emergency Plan is an effective risk assessment and business impact analysis to identify critical functions, threats and plan the school response and roles.

2.2. Each academy will maintain its own Emergency Plan; including emergency contact details, roles and responsibilities and the action plans within the appendices of the Emergency Plan document.

2.3. In order to maintain an appropriate level of readiness for a critical event, the school emergency management team (SEMT) and Principal should:

- identify training needs for staff and governors – training is provided within the supporting documents
- familiarise the school community with procedures and undertake drills
- ensure that key staff have their own controlled copy of the Emergency Plan.
- Prepare an emergency grab bag

2.4. The Emergency Plan will be activated by the Principal or other senior leader in the event of a critical incident or an emergency i.e. when an incident occurs that impacts on the delivery of our critical activities or the safety and wellbeing of our pupils, staff and others; and when normal responses, procedures and coping strategies are deemed insufficient to deal with the effects.

Activation & Response:

When an incident is identified, the Principal/Senior Leader will decide whether to invoke the plan. Steps include ensuring safety, securing the site, notifying emergency services (where appropriate) and logging all actions.

Recovery & Continuity

Prioritise restoration of key services and functions. Use alternative sites or remote learning where necessary. Liaise with the Trust, emergency services and contractors. Provide wellbeing support for pupils and staff.

Post-Incident Review

Conduct debriefs to identify lessons learned. Update plans and training accordingly. Submit a report to the Trust and relevant authorities.

Communication & Stakeholder Management

Ensure clear, timely, and consistent communication with staff, parents and, if appropriate the media (via the Trust). Use pre-prepared message templates.

2.5. Each Academy's Emergency Plan will be reviewed by the local academy council on an annual basis, or following a major incident.

3. ICT Disaster Recovery

3.1. The Principal will be responsible for establishing an ICT Disaster Recovery Plan in line with the academy's Assessment of Critical Activities (business continuity plan). All school MIS systems are now cloud based and servers are backed up daily.

3.2. This plan will identify actions to take in the event of loss of ICT hardware, software, infrastructure or connectivity; or the loss of key ICT related staff.