

Ramshaw Primary School



Lockdown Procedures

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About this document

Parents and carers trust our school to keep their children safe. Thanks to the efforts of staff and governors, schools in the UK normally remain a safe haven for children; but as tragic events both overseas and at home have shown, they can become involved in an emergency at any time.

The Department for Education recommends that schools create and maintain an emergency plan and as an outstanding school we not only comply with this, but also want to go one step further and be ready to deal with the sort of emergencies that no one really wants to think about – the situation where the children and staff are endangered by the threat of deliberate harm. In emergency planning terms this is called lockdown, a description that will be used throughout this document.

The document is designed to help us:

- Develop and review a lockdown plan,
- Provide information to all staff who could become involved in an incident,
- Help staff to educate and inform the pupils and indeed their parents about what to do in such a situation,
- Detail actions and procedures not only for use during such an incident but also for testing our readiness for such an incident.

The advice from the Department for Education and the Cabinet Office reminds us “planning for emergencies can save lives. It can prevent an incident getting worse, provide confidence to staff, governors, parents, carers and pupils and enhance your school’s reputation as a safe place to learn and work. Plans which deal with the consequences of large---scale emergencies also help staff to deal with the smaller (but nevertheless potentially distressing) incidents that schools can experience on a regular basis”.

This is a document that every good school needs, every member of staff needs to understand, and no one ever wants to use.

What is lockdown?

The purpose of a lockdown is to prevent an intruder or other threat outside the school from causing harm to pupils and staff. It means that the entrances to the school must be secured in an effort to prevent any threat entering, and staff and pupils must find a suitable place to protect themselves.

In the case of a fire or similar emergency the children and staff are taught how to leave the building quietly and safely. In a lockdown, they need to learn almost the opposite, to actually get inside the building as quickly and safely as possible and to stay there until the threat is removed, or – in extreme circumstances --- to leave if an intruder gains entrance to the building. A distinct policy is needed because it is so different from the standard emergency drills, and is so extreme in nature that everyone needs to be thoroughly well versed in its contents and the role they are to play during such an incident.

Lockdown arrangements depend heavily on the size and layout of the school, and as a small school, with a mobile classroom separated from the main building, and relatively open fields to the rear we have a number of challenges to overcome.

Any procedures we establish must be realistic; in an incident staff and pupils will not have much time to seek an appropriate place to hide and there is likely to be widespread confusion or panic.

It is very unlikely that our school will ever need to implement a real lockdown but it is important for us to have arrangements in place to deal with such a situation.

Why do we need a policy?

This document has been put together as a stepping---stone to the finished policy, not the final article. Much of the information it contains has been gathered from best practice in other schools and from education departments and authorities. While lockdown polices are commonplace and indeed in some cases statutory, in the US, there is an increasing number of UK schools, including primary schools, that are adopting such polices and our own local authority references lockdown procedures in its emergency planning guidelines. While all of this does not mean we should over exaggerate what is still a minute risk, nevertheless there have been incidents in UK school that would now be classified as lockdown situations.

There are a number of stages we need to go through to create a robust lockdown procedure.

1. Understand what lockdown is and why it could happen (this is covered by this document)
2. Address the issues raised by our particular school circumstances (many of these are touched up in this document for the input and ideas of teaching and support staff)
3. Compile the completed procedure for distribution to all staff complete with step by step instructions for display in classrooms and other school areas as appropriate
4. Hold practice drills on a suitable basis (e.g. annually)
5. Ensure the policy is regularly reviewed and included in the induction for new staff members

Some of the issues we need to resolve

A) Safe places

It is important for all staff to decide and know at this planning stage:

1. Where are the optimum safe places in the school? The characteristics of an ideal safe place are:
 - a. Ability to lock pupils and staff inside
 - b. No windows or windows with poor sight lines from outside (or curtains/shutters)
 - c. Strong walls (this is a problem in the mobile)
 - d. An ability to communicate with the outside world
 - e. A way out if someone comes in.
2. What the second choices if those are not available?
3. Where are the places to be avoided if possible?
4. What is the best way to ensure everyone knows where these places are?
5. The mobile classroom
6. Are there any safe places outside the school building that could provide cover in an emergency?

B) Suitable signal for a lockdown

The signal for a lockdown should be clearly distinguishable to that of an evacuation (fire drill). Any confusion may result in pupils and staff congregating at an assembly point, thus potentially making them more vulnerable to an intruder or outside threat.

What would make a suitable lockdown signal in Ramshaw? Possibilities so far include hand bells like the one to signal the start of the school and day the end of break times, or whistles distributed at key points in the school and carried by supervising staff when outside. (Both of these have pros and cons attached. Are there other solutions?)

C) Communication during the incident

During a lockdown staff may find it difficult to obtain a clear overview of the situation. How can communication be maintained between staff and classrooms?

D) Who gives the signal?

Potentially any member of staff could be the first to raise an alarm for a lockdown so it is important that all employees are aware of the plan and instructions are available in every room. Who is responsible for calling the emergency services? And what happens if they are not able to?

Once the signal is initiated who does what?

Head --- Check the halls and clear of students, inform emergency services.

Teachers --- Detain students in the classroom, keep pupils calm and keep them secure by locking windows and doors

Keep an attendance log of all students in the room and update when safe to do so.

Support staff – direct pupils inside or drop and cover as appropriate. Assist teachers inside the classrooms.

All staff

Not allow anyone in or out until given the all clear by an appropriate authority.

Is there anything else?

E) Dealing with the concerns of the children

It is important that pupils know what action to take if a lockdown happens at school. Becoming familiar with lockdown drills will improve the likelihood of these procedures being implemented swiftly and effectively (which could prevent injury and even save lives).

There are many different ways to inform pupils about this subject. An assembly could be used to explain an emergency drill and outline the actions pupils would be required to take; this could then be followed up by an exercise of the drill. Some of the issues outlined during training sessions are sensitive and may potentially upset pupils, especially the youngest. Staff are well placed to assess what level of information should be provided to pupils on the reasoning behind implementing a lockdown.

Alternatively, a class session could be used to focus on preparing for emergencies. The lesson plan could include:

- Risk assessment (e.g. asking pupils to consider the risks that could affect at school)
- The role of pupils in the school emergency plan (e.g. emergency drills, communicating with parents/carers).

Elements of these tasks could be included in one teaching session or spread over several during a term.

This work can even link into the National Curriculum as follows Key stage 1

Art and Design 1; recording from first hand observation and experience
Citizenship / PSHE 2 & 3; taking part in discussions with fellow pupils, looking at what can harm their local environment, rules and ways of keeping safe English 3; group discussion and interaction.

Key stage 2

Art and Design 1; recording from first hand observation and experience
Citizenship / PSHE 1 & 3; talking and writing about their opinions, school rules on health and safety, emergency aid procedures and where to get help English 3; group discussion and interaction.

Key stage 3

English; speaking and listening PSHE; understanding and managing risk.

Key stage 4

Citizenship; critical reflection, managing risk.

What approach works best in our school? What do we need to explain to pupils? Is this done best on a class by class or a whole school basis?

F) Dealing with the concerns of parents/carers

Parents/carers need to be informed when teaching is taking place on this subject so they can prepare for any possible impact this may have on their children.

Routinely informing parents/carers of the procedures can reassure them that your school is prepared and able to look after their child. Methods of informing parents/carers about preparing for emergencies could involve:

- Including information within the school (or governor) newsletter
- Adding an emergency planning section onto the school website
- Distributing information at parent/carer evenings
- Sending a letter home via pupils including information within the school prospectus.

What approach works best in our school? How can we do our level best to ensure parents are not taken by surprise that this is happening?

G) Practice drills

There are various ways of holding practice sessions for a lockdown and they range in detail and therefore the amount of planning and work they will involve (although obviously the amount of work would not preclude a need for safety – but remember the risk is very small).

The options are:

- Discussion---based exercises --- assembling staff together and asking them to consider how the school would respond to a particular scenario (see page 12 below)
- Table top exercises --- based on simulating the response to an incident and can be run in a single room or a series of rooms (see page 12 below)
- Live exercises – a real time simulation of a lockdown incident involving whole school physically acting out the response to a scenario (see page 13 below).

Which is the best option for our school, and how and when do we make it happen?

H) Staff training

How can we establish a method to conduct lockdown review training for all staff, during each school year?

The Ramshaw Primary School Lockdown Policy

Reasons for a lockdown to be initiated:

- Someone who is out of control and threaten the safety of our pupils, staff, or himself/herself;
- Someone who has a gun or weapon;
- An intruder;
- Hazardous chemicals outside the building;
- An extreme weather related event;

When an incident occurs the priority is to safeguard those on-site (i.e. pupils, staff, parents/carers, visitors) and alert the emergency services if necessary. Other organisations, such as the local authority, can then be informed as appropriate.

When responding to an incident the emergency services will need unrestricted access to (and egress from) the school site. This can sometimes prove difficult, as parents/carers are likely to visit the school immediately upon hearing of an incident. Parents need to be requested to stay away from the school, as they could otherwise worsen the situation and the police services would be the best resource in ensuring this.

Plans should emphasize the importance of locking down as quickly as possible. At the first indication of a major incident or potential threat, the signal for lockdown should be given and the lockdown begin immediately. If pupils are outside when the signal for a lockdown is sounded, staff members need to take pupils to the nearest possible safe area that can be secured.

Raising the alarm

All staff (especially those working in the main office) should be trained that when information is received in the office of a situation requiring a lockdown, whoever receives that information, will immediately activate the school's lockdown system. There should be no hesitation in announcing the lockdown, and the decision to call the lockdown should be made immediately by whoever receives the call to the office, and should not be delayed.

It is recommended that the actual method of announcing a lockdown, is displayed at fixed points is clearly visible and can be read by any person announcing the lockdown. In emergent stressful circumstances even the most composed individuals may have difficulty remembering exact procedures. By pre-printing the announcement and practicing it, the person delivering the message can ensure that the content is delivered accurately.

Classrooms and other secure areas

Before locking a door, staff should gather everyone in the immediate vicinity into their classroom or other secure area, if it is safe to do so.

Once inside a secure area, staff and students should;

- Stay away from doors and windows; turn off lights; close blinds;
- Beware of sight lines if there is a window in the classroom door,
- Consider covering window;
- Take cover if available (get behind something solid);
- Remain absolutely quiet
- Teachers to take attendance;
- No cell phone use unless necessary to communicate regarding the incident.
- Cell phones should be shut off or put on vibrate.

Mobile classroom

Plans need to address how to effectively and safely lockdown a mobile classroom because of the unique issues it presents. Due to thin wall construction, it is recommended that desks be tipped onto their sides with desktops facing out, and all desks placed in a circle, with students/staff locating within the circle, down on the floor below the top edge of the desk.

Toilets:

As the door into the toilet area cannot be locked children need to evacuate toilets if at all possible and get to an area that can safely be locked down.

Designated adults who work in close proximity to toilets need to check them before locking down themselves, if it safe to do so, and take any students found in the washrooms, into their classrooms to lockdown.

As a last resort, staff or children trapped in a washroom, should attempt to somehow secure the bathroom door, enter a stall, lock the door and climb on top of the toilet.

Open Areas

Open areas including hallways and other open areas are the most vulnerable, making them the most likely location for a threat, and the most difficult areas to quickly and effectively secure.

It is very important, everyone understands what to do and where to go in the event a lockdown is called and they are in an open area. There need to be options in the event that the first choice is not available.

Terminating a lockdown

Plans to conclude a lockdown will vary by location. It may include a general announcement, or it may be a room to room visit from police/school personnel so that the occupants of a locked room know in fact that whoever is giving them the all-clear, is in fact authentic. Local plans should include procedures for ending lockdowns at off-site evacuation locations. In all cases where police have responded, the decision to end a lockdown can only be made after approval of the on-scene police.

School recovery following a lockdown

A debriefing should occur in all situations following a lockdown. The nature and severity of the incident will dictate who should be included in the debriefing. In all cases, communication with parents is vital.

Lockdown training and practice

Staff Training

Schools can establish a method to conduct lockdown review training for all staff, during each school year. Induction for new teachers should include lockdown awareness. Due to the young age of some primary pupils, it is suggested that classroom teachers be responsible for training students.

Lockdown practice exercises

The purpose of an exercise is to validate procedures documented within the lockdown plan (in the same way that fire drills are practiced). Although they cannot fully replicate the pressure of a real incident, exercises can help to reinforce training, give confidence to staff that they have the necessary knowledge and skills to respond to an emergency and increase the likelihood of procedures working in practice.

They are also particularly adept at highlighting areas of the response that may initially have been overlooked when developing the plan.

It is recommended that staff and pupils undergo training on relevant parts of the emergency plan before participating in an exercise. Staff should be aware of their roles and responsibilities and be reasonably confident in carrying them out. There are different types of exercise that can be used to validate a plan but the method you choose is likely to depend on the purpose of the exercise and the amount of time available.

Discussion---based exercises

Discussion---based exercises involve assembling staff together and asking them to consider how the school would respond to a particular scenario. Participants are provided the opportunity to talk about their roles and discuss what actions the school would take if an incident were to occur. Staff are required only to discuss, not implement, these actions.

Discussion---based exercises are often used to develop a greater awareness of the plan and are ideal for use during training events. They are simple to prepare and a variety of scenarios can be used to provide an indication of the different emergencies staff may experience.

Tabletop exercises

A tabletop exercise is based on simulating the response to an incident (although it does not literally have to take place around a tabletop). A tabletop exercise can be run in a single room or a series of rooms to simulate real divisions (e.g. between the main building and the mobile classroom).

Unlike a discussion-based exercise, each participant is expected to undertake a specific role and outline the actions they would take whilst a simulated, realistic scenario unfolds. It is not necessary for staff to physically implement the response but they are required to co-ordinate their actions with other staff.

Tabletop exercises are relatively easy to run but do require careful preparation. Due to the nature of this type of exercise there are limits to the number of people who can be involved.

Live exercises

A live exercise involves physically acting out the response to a scenario. Although this may sound complicated all schools implement fire drills, which are a type of live exercise, on a regular basis.

These exercises are particularly useful for testing logistics and communication arrangements. They can also make excellent training events from the perspective of experiential learning, helping participants develop confidence in their skills and providing insight into the reality of responding to an incident.

Live exercises are generally the best means of validating the lockdown plan as they can involve the entire school, including pupils. However, they do require more planning and resources than any other type of exercise; it may be useful to seek support from your local authority or the emergency services to assist in its preparation.

Most live exercises involve three different types of personnel, commonly referred to as:

1. Facilitators
2. Players
3. Observers.

Facilitators are involved in the planning of an exercise and should be present on the day to set-up equipment, deliver briefings and ensure the event runs smoothly. Once the exercise is underway facilitators may be required to issue scenario updates to players.

Facilitators should not be involved in the response as they will be privy to details of the scenario and any action they take would compromise the realism of the exercise.

Players are involved in simulating the response to the emergency. Each player will be required to respond to the exercise as if the situation were real and keep an accurate log of decisions made and actions taken.

The role of an observer is to monitor the exercise and note any important issues that arise. They should be briefed before the incident and asked to observe specific aspects of the response. Staff from other schools, extended services or the local

authority may be particularly useful observers due to their impartiality. All staff, particularly players and observers, should be prepared to provide feedback during the exercise debrief.

Safety in a live exercise

It is useful to identify a form of words that can be used as a way of indicating to participants that something has occurred, which is, not part of the exercise. Typically this can be a rather obvious statement such as “This is for real” “The exercise is over”. Everyone involved in the exercise needs to be aware of the phrase to be used.

Briefings

Live exercises can appear very realistic so it is important to notify all possible stakeholders that an exercise is taking place. Prior to the event it will be necessary to brief a wide variety of groups:

- Pupils
- Parents/carers
- Staff
- Governors
- Extended services
- The emergency services
- The local authority
- The media
- The local community.

It is particularly important to advise the emergency services of the exercise to ensure they are not called out to attend thinking it is a real incident. You may also wish to put notices on the school gates to prevent concern or panic from local residents/passers by.

Lockdown Exercise Review list

1. Parents were informed prior to a drill or after an actual event.
2. Scenario was reviewed with staff prior to the event.
3. Pupils/staff went inside, closed the doors, and closed and locked all windows.
4. Hang signs outside school indicating a lockdown is occurring.
5. Blinds, curtains and windows were closed.
6. Rooms were designated for people to go to during a drill.
7. Someone called emergency services
8. Check whether anyone left the building during drill or actual event.
9. Roll call of students and staff.
10. Debriefing after drill or event.

Instructions for Lockdown

To initiate a Lockdown sound repeated blasts on an air horn/siren.

If you hear the Lockdown signal:

1. Both front doors to be locked by Admin/SLT.
2. Admin/SLT to contact Police with own/school mobile.
3. Admin/SLT ensure all entrances closed and retire to safety.
4. Teachers ensure all class windows locked and secured.
5. Member of Class 1 team to check both toilets for children.
6. Place children against the wall, so any intruder looking in cannot see them. If the threat is a chemical or toxic release everyone should cover their nose and mouth (their own clothing can be used)
7. Turn out lights and computer monitors.
8. Keep children as quiet as possible.
9. If children are on the school field, then guide them to the Village Play Area. If that is not possible they need to disperse, drop and cover. Communication to be maintained through walkie talkies.
10. Anyone in the hallway should move to the closest classroom immediately.
11. Support staff should move to the School Hall or stay in the area they are in, secure the doors, and turn out the lights.
12. Stay in safe areas until directed by the emergency services or members of staff to move or evacuate.
13. Never open doors during a lockdown, even in the event of a fire alarm.
14. If an evacuation occurs, everyone will be directed by the emergency services to a safe location. Once evacuated teachers should take roll to account for all children present in class.

15.Repeated blasts of the air horn/siren indicate Lockdown has ended.

16.Kitchen staff to lock kitchen, sit under door and telephone school office should they perceive any danger.