



Kirklees
METROPOLITAN COUNCIL

Education



***Guidelines for schools
on handling emergency
closures and crises***
September 2005



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and improving!



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



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Relevant sections from the booklet *Dealing with the media*
– *A guide for schools - March 2003*



Contacts for help and advice

1. Service contacts

The Publications and Media Team	01484 225275	860 5275
Assistant Director, Strategy & School Support	01484 225236	860 5236
Principal Asset Management Officer	01484 225243	860 5243
Home to school transport	01484 225262	860 5262
Caretaking & Cleaning Service	01924 326560	833 6560
Loss of radioactive sources from school Science Departments	01484 225883	860 5883
Building Services emergency helpline	01484 225474	860 5474
Asset Management & Planning Team	01484 225249	860 5249
PPP1 Schools Help Desk	01484 485440	

A Help Desk number for the PPP2 Special schools will be notified later

2. Contacts for general help in an emergency/crisis

Jonathan Quarmby
(Principal Asset Management Officer) **07976 571156**

Margaret Parker (Assistant Director,
Strategy & School Support) **07967 491224**

To report a criminal assault
(happening now) **Police 999**

To report a crime or non-emergency
matter & for help and advice **0845 6060606**

Also know the number of your community
police officer



To warn others who may be affected
(eg if you share a site)

**Know the numbers of other buildings
on your site**

Trauma or psychological first aid and
advice on post incident recovery

Judi Bamford, Principal Educational
Psychologist or **Phil Jones**,
Senior Educational Psychologist
01484 221472 860 1472

Mediation and links to Social Services

Head of Educational
Access
01484 221919 860 1919
Lorraine Absolon, Team Manager,
Social Work Development
01924 326509 833 6509

Educational visits advice and training

Ian Kirby, Education Visits Advisor
01484 222742 860 2742

Incident investigation, inspection health
& safety training, advice on reducing risks
and risk assessment

Group Safety Advisor
01484 226419 860 6419

Group Safety Advisors 24-hour
emergency number

07977 256697

Letters to parents/trespassers. Injunctions
against parents. Prosecutions under
Education Act 1996 for others causing
nuisance

Cath Cheesman, Senior Legal Officer
01484 416266 860 4266



Advice about racially motivated or homophobic attacks/abuse

Rob Wood, Principal Officer, Equalities & Diversity

01484 225279 860 5279

Dignity at work

Rosemary Gibson, Personnel Manager

01484 225276 860 5276

Local support to reduce the impact and effect of crime. Practical assistance with criminal injuries compensation. Self referral/referral by police

Victim Support (independent charity)

01484 511112

(24 hour support line will log details)

Policies, procedures, incident report forms
Health & safety

Asset Management
(Health, Safety & Welfare)

01484 225248 860 5248

Risk management surveys and reports to investigate security concerns

Neil Heppenstall,
Risk & Insurance Manager

01484 221084 860 1084

Advice about anti-social behaviour orders (ASBOs)

Head of Education
Access

01484 221919 860 1919

Simon Massey, Community
Safety Manager

01484 226920 860 6920

Effects on health, support, counselling

Personnel Unit

01484 225276 860 5276

Kirklees Emergency Planning Office

On-call officer in emergency

0777 333 4 999



Introduction

Handling crises is part of school life. You need to be prepared and have plans and procedures in place which protect your pupils, the staff and the school. Kirklees is committed to making sure that schools are open for pupils for the statutory 190 days each year. However, we recognise that there may be times when you will need to close your school because of an emergency.

The Service has a clear position: emergency closure days are for pupils; staff should make themselves available for work where the headteacher decides it is safe for them to do so.

You should discuss your plans and procedures for managing these rare occasions when you may have to close with your staff and governors and your governing body should agree your school's **Emergency Plan**.

The aim of these guidelines is to help you consider all the aspects of a possible emergency and to help you draw up a working and accessible **Emergency Plan** which all staff are aware of.

Separate guidance is being prepared on handling violence in school.

It is likely that, resulting from the Children's Act, the term LEA will disappear in 2006 to be replaced by Children's Services Authority (CSA) which is Kirklees Council in terms of accountabilities.

What sort of emergencies can happen?

1) Those causing possible closure of the school

- Heating/electricity/boiler/power/water failure which cannot be helped by temporary or alternative provision
- Gas/water leaks
- Union action
- Fire
- Severe weather including snow, floods and gales
- Damage to the school building or contractor failure which becomes a health and safety problem
- Bomb threat/chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN)
- Due to external emergency plans (eg the council's Emergency Plan – COMAH – chemical sites in area of school)
- Accident in a science lab (eg spillage of chemical or volatile substances)



2) Other incidents at the school (including fatalities)

- 1) Accidents involving death or serious injury
- 2) Serious misbehaviour or violence on the part of a pupil, member of staff, a parent or other member of the public (separate guidance will be available)
- 3) Health hazards such as infectious or contagious diseases
- 4) Loss of radioactive sources from Science Departments.

3) Other potential crises

- 1) Accidents or incidents on a school trip
- 2) Accident, incident or fatality involving a pupil or member of staff inside or outside school
- 3) Criminal activity, abduction.

How should you manage these crises?

1) Those causing possible closure of the school

Schools should make sure that they have a clearly thought out **Emergency Plan**. Look at the very good section on the DfES website which provides advice on how schools can plan for emergencies. This also provides links to other sources of information. The link is <http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/emergencies>.

You should also cross-reference with the Health & Safety Policy – Manual of Guidance which is available on CD-Rom as well as on Ednet at <http://www.kirklees-ednet.org.uk/subjects/health/docs/policy/index.htm> particularly the key sections:

- No 2 Asbestos in educational buildings
- No 4 Children absconding/protection from unwelcome visitors
- No 5 Contractors in schools
- No 8 Fire prevention and emergency
- No 12 incident recording and reporting
- No 21 Off-site visits
- No 23 Personal Safety Risk Management and Security.

When preparing your **Emergency Plan**, make sure it covers the following:

- how to report incidents, fires, bomb threats and other emergencies (see list of contacts on pages 2 - 4)



- each building must have a nominated person in a position of authority to order the evacuation of the building without the need to refer elsewhere for a decision
- when you will need to take advice from emergency services on possible evacuation in cases of bomb threats etc
- setting out a clear chain of command, listing the names and job titles of all those people responsible for making decisions, monitoring actions and returning the situation back to normal
- list of the names of specific personnel responsible for carrying out various tasks and/or checking that areas are clear
- clear evacuation procedures including identifying an assembly point outside and a process to account for everyone (staff, pupils and visitors) after an evacuation
- who to contact in the event of an emergency or a crisis (see pages 2-4 and 8)
- how to inform parents. Do you have an up-to-date contact list? Is this information backed up on a different PC in a different location? There could be a fire which affects the office and knocks out the office PC (eg the fire at Greenside I&N School)
- how to inform staff and the arrangements for staff to get into school or to work elsewhere
- where staff will park their cars if the car park is blocked with snow/emergency vehicles/debris or is flooded
- who to contact at the Service (see page 2) and who to ask for specific advice
- note who and how any incident will be recorded and reported specifically to ensure you meet the requirements of Health and Safety Law (in line with Service procedures). There is information in the Health & Safety Manual of Guidance in Note No 12.

It would also be helpful for each school to pull together an **Information Pack** containing important information in the event of an emergency. This should be kept, together with a copy of the **Emergency Plan**, in an accessible place of which all relevant personnel are aware. It would be a good idea to keep it alongside the school's Health & Safety Information File.



The **Information Pack** might include:

- a site and buildings plan showing exits, evacuation routes and assembly points (NB the assembly point for a fire evacuation may differ from that for a bomb threat evacuation.)
- details on how to turn off the gas, water and electricity supply to the school, if required, in an emergency
- details of how vehicles can access/egress the site with alternative routes marked if the preferred access is blocked
- details of the location of water hydrants to advise the Fire Service if required
- details of the location of any hazardous items eg chemical stores, gas bottles etc
- list of emergency contacts/liaison officers.

2. Other incidents at the school (including dealing with tragedy)

In the event of a **major incident** involving fatalities, major injuries or risks to life and limb etc you should contact one of the Service's Liaison Officers who can mobilise appropriate resources and support:

Jonathan Quarmby	Tel: 01484 225243
Principal Asset Management Officer	(m) 07976 571156

Margaret Parker	Tel: 01484 225340
Assistant Director (Strategy & School Support)	(m) 07967 491224

Either of these contacts can call the Kirklees Council Emergency Plan into operation and enable appropriate services, personnel and resources to be made available.

From time to time **incidents occur outside school** which do not necessarily directly involve a school but which do involve either pupils, staff or parents at the school and which do have an impact on the life of the school. One of these was the recent incident involving a young child in Earlsheaton which affected schools in Chickenley and Earlsheaton.

You should contact the Publications and Media Office as quickly as possible who will arrange an urgent meeting involving all the necessary personnel who can offer help, advice and support to the school as quickly as possible.



The meeting might include headteachers from other schools who could be involved, the council's Public Relations Officer, ESWs, Educational Psychologists, the School Contact Officer(s) and possibly the Police and representatives from Social Services and the Community Support Service.

We can do this very quickly so that the school receives the right support promptly.

In the event of **serious misbehaviour or violence** on the part of a pupil, member of staff, a parent or other member of the public, we will shortly be producing specific guidance. Some guidance is available in the Health & Safety Manual see No: 29 Work-related violence – guidelines for managers and individual employees. Again you should incorporate this into your **Emergency Plan**.

If a health hazard occurs, you should look carefully at the procedures in the Health & Safety Manual particularly:

- No 3 Blood-borne diseases
- No 9 First aid in schools
- No 16 Medication in schools
- No 17 Meningococcal infections.

The Health & Safety Manual also offers guidance on hazards in Science departments

- No 11 Control of hazardous substances
- No 27 Managing Health & Safety in Science.

Schools and the Service need to be prepared to deal with **any level of tragedy** which hits a school. This could be anything from the death of a pupil or an employee, a minibus crash, a fire that demolishes a school or even criminal proceedings that have shocked the whole school community.

Pam Reynolds produced the following advice in 2001, which schools have found helpful.

Dealing with tragedy – managing the pupils

- Tell pupils what has happened as soon as possible so that they hear the truth from the right people that is, people who are close to them.
- If information is limited, tell the children what you know as you know it. This will minimise rumours and fantasy.
- Be prepared for questions to continue for a while as the reality of the situation registers with the children.



- Let the children (and staff) know that it is a natural thing to be upset and to cry.
- Keep an eye on those who don't want to show their emotions as their upset or confusion may emerge in other forms later.
- Talk to the children about their confusion of emotions. It is natural to feel upset, anger, abandonment and/or guilt at times like this – but children don't know this.
- Depending on the religious beliefs of the children and staff, try to answer as honestly as possible the question of what death means. This may be the first time a child has had to face the concept of their own mortality and that of their friends and family. It is very important to know the different religious attitudes to death. Do not pretend to believe what you don't.
- It is important to encourage normality of life at school as soon as possible as this will give pupils security.
- Offer counselling from an external source. Contact the Psychological Service on 01484 221472 or Employee Health Care on 01484 226422.
- Remember to explain what a counsellor does. As one intelligent, well-adjusted Year 10 pupil said: "I don't need a counsellor, I just need someone to talk to."

Managing the tragedy

- Tell the people within the school community (SMT, staff, chair of governors).
- Contact the Publications and Media Office who will inform the Service's Senior Management Group, your SCO and other relevant officers.
- Contact the school's Educational Psychologist and Education Social Worker who will arrange support or counselling for staff and pupils.
- Make sure there are tissues available around school.
- Hold an emergency staff meeting to make sure all staff are aware of the tragedy and have briefing notes or a statement available if necessary.
- If possible, hold an assembly (or assemblies) to make sure all the children know what has happened and/or to allow thoughts/prayers to be expressed for the family.



- Be flexible in class time to allow pupils and staff to express their feelings together and collect positive ideas about what classmates can do to help.
- If possible, release SMT to support you and colleagues.
- Contact the bereaved family, if dealing with the death of a pupil or an employee, to offer condolences and support. We recommend that you do this initially only once on the day of the tragedy.
- You should contact the bereaved family again, later, to express condolences and discuss how school can fit in with the family's arrangements.
- Send flowers with messages from pupils, staff and governors.
- If appropriate under the circumstances of the tragedy, contact the Publications and Media Team and issue a press statement.
- Set up a counselling programme for pupils and staff, if needed. And make sure you allow time for your own support/counselling.
- Inform all parents by letter and offer advice on how their child might be feeling or might react and explain that distress may manifest itself later.
- If necessary, set up interviews with the police for staff and pupils.
- Discuss the school's contribution to the funeral – number of pupils (if approved by the bereaved family), number of staff, your contribution. (See advice on funerals later.)
- Keep school life as normal as possible.

The role of the service

The Service has a clear role in helping schools to handle tragedies. It will:

- respond immediately to the tragedy, at the school's request
- help the school to resume normal education for its pupils as quickly as possible, if this has been interrupted
- support the whole school community (pupils, staff, parents, governors) in the aftermath of the tragedy and into the future.

Immediately, and in the first 24 hours, this will include emotional support for the headteacher and any immediate practical help the headteacher feels he/she and the school need.



In the medium-term, the Service will assist the school to return to normality as far as the education of the pupils is concerned. This may involve:

- advice on staff and pupil attendance at funerals, if necessary
- action planning support for the short, medium and long term
- psychological support for cases of trauma
- the involvement of church/religious bodies on behalf of victims
- support for the supporters
- advice and support for governors
- media-handling support
- advice and assistance with legal procedures eg witness support for inquests, inquiries, trials etc.

In the long-term, the lasting effects of a tragedy in a school are often not foreseeable. It is often said that children are resilient. What is, perhaps, truer, is that children are adept at burying their worries and emotional traumas. It is also true that these worries will surface in some form or another at a later stage and staff at the school must be prepared for the long term effects of a tragedy. The Service will help by:

- monitoring the health and well-being of the staff and pupils at the school, regularly and systematically
- providing the necessary support that has been identified as a result of the monitoring
- checking that monitoring systems are in place and adhered to
- assisting the school to monitor pupil attainment in the years following the tragedy/crisis
- assisting with resourcing the return to normality, if necessary
- liaising with other agencies like the Health Authority and Social Services.



Funerals

Headteachers face very difficult decisions when considering how to manage funerals that arise from the tragedy. They must achieve a balance between showing the appropriate respect for the deceased, relieving the grief of those closest to the tragedy and keeping the school going. Headteachers must take into account the feelings of staff and pupils and avoid conflict at all costs. Before making a decision, take advice from a member of the Schools Management Team on 01484 225183/4/5.

Consider alternatives to large numbers of pupils and staff attending funerals which necessarily entails school closure. Recent examples of alternative ideas that have been used by Kirklees schools recently are:

- holding a memorial service in school to which the family of the bereaved are invited, to celebrate the school life of the deceased
- a pupil/staff contribution to the funeral itself which can be presented again in school
- arrange for the funeral cortege to drive past the school with pupils and staff lining the route.

3. Other potential crises

An emergency on a school visit can be defined as:

- an accident leading to a fatality
- illness to any of the party, requiring the call out of medical assistance or leading to serious disruption of the trip
- circumstances where any party member might be at serious harm eg child protection, missing children
- a situation where the media may be involved.

As soon as an incident has occurred, the party leader or deputy should ensure the rest of the party is safe from further danger and contact the appropriate emergency services.

- If there is a fatality, the local police will take charge of the situation and will contact West Yorkshire police who will then contact the parents.
- Be aware of inappropriate use of mobile phones.



- Put in place the **school's and the LEA's Emergency Plan**. It is important that the party leader writes down what is said to whom and at what time.
- The party leader should give a phone number where he/she can be contacted.
- If the media are likely to be involved contact the Publications and Media Team on 01484 225275.
- Where necessary, arrange evacuation back home through the appropriate agency/ies eg insurance company or travel agents.

During the planning stage it is important that the party leader has nominated a deputy leader who is familiar with all the emergency procedures.

General procedures

The main objective of any emergency procedure in a school is to provide a safe environment for all pupils and staff during the emergency and to minimise any loss of life, injury or damage to property.

Your school **Emergency Plan** should spell out a course of action that directs personnel to act immediately and correctly in all types of emergencies. It must outline the basic steps needed to handle anticipated emergencies. It cannot be all-inclusive but it should provide appropriate guidance on what to do in an emergency.

The first step in drawing up your Emergency Plan is to carry out a **risk assessment**. You should identify all potential hazards including external factors such as weather, geography of the site, the distance from major emergency and accident centres and access to and egress from the school site through any built up areas. If there are any hazardous substances on site you should get information from the supplier (or contractor) about emergency first aid procedures. You should have qualified first aiders on site at all times when the premises are open. They should have a knowledge of first aid procedures for hazardous substances, where appropriate.

Any **Emergency Plan** is only as good as the personnel who carry it out. All those people should be involved in its development. The Plan should be reviewed regularly to incorporate changes in the school site or personnel at the school.

At the beginning of each new school year, you should make sure staff and pupils are familiar with the evacuation and emergency procedures. Staff directly involved with tasks in the **Emergency Plan** should be trained and updated. You should also make



sure that caretakers, kitchen staff, cleaners and your office staff are aware of the **Emergency Plan**. Don't forget part-time staff, peripatetic and supply teachers. All these people should know the general procedures and be aware of emergency evacuation routes.

It is also important, at this time, when many schools have contractors on site carrying out building work, that your Plan covers how to deal with contractors on site at the time of a potential emergency.

It is essential that staff are not only involved in the development of your **Emergency Plan** but also have the opportunity to work through the Plan theoretically and look at some of the worst case scenarios.

Such as, for example, how would your school cope with a fire during the school day? We have had several of these in the last few years and it is a real possibility. A theoretical exercise with staff is one way of evaluating how your staff could handle such a situation.

The evacuation procedures in your **Emergency Plan** require a more practical approach. If these are to have any value in raising awareness and being effective, it is essential that they are not done simply once a term with everyone knowing beforehand that it is a fire drill! It might also be appropriate to test your evacuation procedure by blocking an exit (which could be a likely occurrence) and perhaps asking the Fire Service to test your procedure.

However, all this kind of exercise shows is that in ideal conditions, with everyone fully alert, the best possible response can be achieved. But emergencies are not ideal conditions and they don't come when you expect them.

One of the most important aspects of handling an emergency is **the control of information**. We have already produced information about this in the booklet '**Dealing with the media – A guide for schools. March 2003**'. This is available on Ednet at <http://www.kirklees-ednet.org.uk/management/misc/sss6503.doc>

On page 7 of this booklet there is a section dealing with 'When there is a disaster or crisis in school'. Starting on page 13 is a section on 'Preparing for and managing a crisis'. We have included these relevant sections on page 21.



What to do when you have to close the school

1. Loss of essential services

Schools can contact Kirklees Building Services direct if they suffer the loss of an essential service eg boiler failure, prolonged cut in water, gas or electricity service. Contact them on their emergency helpline 01484 225474 to report the failure.

You should also contact the Asset Management & Planning Team at Oldgate House. You can call them from 7.45am. The team will be able to provide advice and support and could help you keep your school open by providing temporary heaters, drinking water bowsers etc. If the AMP Team cannot help or if the loss of service causes health and safety concerns or if it is due to external problems and you decide to close the school, you should follow your emergency closure procedure in your **Emergency Plan**.

The AMP Team will contact the Publications and Media Team who can deal with any media interest.

2. Gas/water leaks/electricity/telephones

Take advice from the utility company and/or (if time allows) the AMP Team and follow your **Emergency Plan**. The AMP Team will advise the Publications and Media Team.

3. Possible closure due to union action

We always have notice of official union strike action and we will contact you, in advance, by email to let you know when this is likely to happen. The Service will also post advice and guidance on Ednet. For further information you can always contact the Publications and Media Team on 01484 225275.

4. Fire

This could happen at any time and you should have specific guidance and procedures in your **Emergency Plan** to handle evacuation and temporary relocation. Once you have informed the emergency services you should contact the Asset Management Team and they will put their own plans and procedures in place to provide temporary accommodation and assistance.

If your school is one of the 20 schools in PPP1, you should contact the Help Desk on 01484 485440.

The Special Schools in PPP2 will have a number to contact on the Ravenshall School site. We will circulate this number when the contract is complete.



Your **Information Pack** will help the emergency services check the building and deal with the fire.

If the fire is out of school hours, your emergency plan should detail how to contact pupils, parents and staff should the school need to close.

If it is a false alarm you should take advice from the emergency services before getting the situation back to normal. However, a genuine fire will generate interest and concern from parents and from local and national media. Look at **Dealing with the media – A guide for schools** or the Publications and Media Team who can advise.

5. In snow or bad weather

When weather conditions are severe, the headteacher or nominated deputy may decide that, for health and safety reasons, they have to close the school for pupils. How you subsequently handle the closure depends on the time of day you take the decision. The headteacher/deputy should:

- inform your chair of governors, if possible, at an appropriate time, as a courtesy
- if you decide to close, contact the Service's Publications and Media Team on 01484 225275 who will inform the relevant officers in the Service. The Team can also help deal with any media interest
- Special schools, schools with resourced provision and those which have pupils who have transport to and from school should contact School Transport directly on 01484 225262 as soon as possible to let them know of the intention to close
- advise your contact at Caretaking & Cleaning service directly too, on 01924 326560
- tell parents, giving them as much notice as possible. If you are warning them that you might wait until the following morning to make a firm decision, remind them which radio stations to listen to for the information (information on radio stations is on page 20)
- inform staff that you intend to close the school to pupils. Remind them that they should still report for work as usual, according to the school's **Emergency Plan**. This may include a provision for the headteacher to direct individual



teaching staff to work from home in certain circumstances. Office and support staff should have appropriate tasks in school unless directed otherwise by the headteacher

- if staff cannot get into school, individual circumstances should be taken into account and the facts of why they did not get in dealt with on their merits
- note that it is only realistic to send pupils home during the school day where the headteacher believes it is safe to do so. Where practical (bearing in mind the size of the school and the age of the children) you should contact parents or the emergency contact for pupils before you send them home. Your **Emergency Plan** should set out how you will carry out this task and how you make sure your parent/emergency contact data is up-to-date
- your **Emergency Plan** should also include a contingency for those pupils whose parents/emergency contacts cannot collect them immediately.

If exceptionally severe weather conditions are forecast for the whole area, or if the police advise the council of major problems for people using the roads or public transport, the Director could make the decision to close all schools to pupils the following day. In this case:

- the Service will inform the secretaries of KSHS, KMSH, KPH, KSSH, NAHT, SHA, NUT, NASUWT, ATL, UNISON & GMB
- if the decision is taken before 2.30pm, the Service will contact all heads by phone and email the school and ask them to advise parents
- if the decision is taken after 2.30pm the Service will either contact all heads at school by email or phone or will contact them at home by phone
- the Service will then advise all the radio stations on the list on page 10 as well as BBC TV Look North and ITV Calendar and ask them to make announcements that evening and the following morning. The announcement will state which schools will be closed for pupils and that staff should report according to their school's **Emergency Plan**
- it could be that some pupils will still turn up at school and each school should have a contingency for this in their **Emergency Plan**.



6. Damage to school buildings/contractor failure

Contact Building Services emergency helpline to report any damage to your building and also contact the Asset Management Team.

If you have had a contractor on site carrying out work during a holiday and the work is not going to be completed before the next term starts, you should contact the Assistant Director, Strategy & School Support on 01484 225236 to discuss any possible additional closure days. The AMP Team can provide advice but cannot approve closure days.

7. Bomb threats/CBRN (chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear)

Hopefully, CBRN threats are not on the school agenda. But there have been local instances of hoaxes with 'white powder'

Always call the police to report any threat. Discuss with them whether you should immediately evacuate the school. If in any doubt, always evacuate. The police will investigate but the decision to evacuate the premises is always one for the headteacher or other authorised (nominated) person.

Contact the Publications and Media Team on 01484 225275 who will deal with any media interest whilst you are handling the emergency in school.

8. For reasons due to external emergency plans

Some schools are part of the council's Emergency Plan. Salendine Nook High School/Technology College, for example, is part of the council's contingency plan for the M62. In the unlikely event that the motorway has to be closed, Salendine Nook is designated a rest centre. If the council's plan comes into operation, the school will be contacted and all necessary information given to them. Schools should include such matters in their own **Emergency Plan**.

Following an off-site incident at a chemical plant, schools within the adjacent evacuation zone will be contacted and appropriate advice supplied by the company, the police or the Kirklees Emergency Planning Office.



Broadcasting media contact list

This is a list of contact numbers for the broadcast media for use when closing a school. There are security passwords which we will not publish here. If you do not have a copy of these, please contact the Publications and Media Team on 01484 225275.

Home FM Tel: 01484 319967 (Mon-Fri 6.00am-9.00pm) or
Tel: 01484 303307 (Mon-Sun 6.00am-9.00pm)
Fax: 01484 311079
Email: news@home1079.com

Pulse of West Yorkshire Fax: 01274 203203 or
Fax: 01274 203130
Tel: 01274 203131
Email: news@pulse.co.uk

Radio Aire & Magic 828 Tel: 0113 283 5500 (Switchboard 8.30am-6.30pm)
Fax: 0113 283 5601
Email: aire.news@radioaire.com

Radio Leeds Tel: 0113 224 7300 (24 hours)
Tel: 0113 224 7360 (Snowline)
Tel: 0113 224 7310 (one-off closures)
Fax: 0113 242 0652

BBC TV Look North Tel: 0113 244 1188
Tel: 0113 224 7137
Tel: 0113 224 7134
Tel: 0113 224 7032
Tel: 0113 224 7041
Fax: 0113 243 9387
Email: look.north@bbc.co.uk

YTV Calendar Tel: 0113 222 8700
Fax: 0113 243 3655
Email: calendar@yorkshire.tv.co.uk



Controlling information

Dealing with the media – A guide for schools – March 2003 is available on Ednet at <http://www.kirklees-ednet.org.uk/management/misc/sss6503.doc>
The relevant sections are as follows:

When there is a disaster or crisis in the school

(see page 7 of the booklet)

This is one of the most difficult areas of dealing with the media. As part of their daily life, schools and staff frequently encounter and deal with a variety of accidents and misfortunes. Some of these, by their very nature, could strike at the heart of a school, either as an organisation or as it affects pupils and/or staff.

In the context of school life they could be regarded as major disasters. Depending on the circumstances, they could, in addition to short term difficulties, pose long term problems for the school and its occupants. It is essential to identify and analyse such potential hazards as a first step towards preparing a school **Emergency Plan**.

What is crisis communications?

“The task of handling with intelligence, skill and responsibility, the crucial situations which spring up, unexpectedly, and which threaten the organisation’s well-being and reputation.”

An Esso definition.

There are some fundamental rules for handling crisis communication situations:

Take and hold the initiative!

Don’t panic.

Don’t be bullied.

Control the information flow.

This last point may mean investing in technology such as mobile phones for a number of identified people.

However tempting it is to try to run for cover when something bad happens that will hit the press, don’t!

10-point survival guide is on page 9

Do’s and don’ts about dealing with the media is on page 11

Preparing for and managing a crisis (page 13)

Emergencies are by definition rare and unpredictable events. However, you can make arrangements, in anticipation, which are flexible and resilient enough to cope with the unexpected.



Information

The handling of information is crucial to managing the crisis. The headteacher and the governors should prepare a policy which describes how information will be released to parents, general inquirers and the media. It may be necessary to take special steps to inform parents effectively and sensitively. In view of the obvious stress of doing this, a written script/notes may be helpful and the task given to a member of staff who knows the family best.

It may be necessary to give out a telephone helpline using a previously known telephone number. It may be helpful to arrange a multi-access answerphone with a concise, informative and honest message. This should include a time and date of recording and should say when it will be updated. You should make sure that this is done.

Communications

A crisis will place a great strain on existing communications so it is worth considering:

- an ex-directory line for outward use
- temporary pay phones where school facilities are being used
- Kirklees MC Emergency Planning Control Room facilities.

Relating to the media

As most recent disasters have shown, the response of the news media is likely to be quick with a large amount of personnel and equipment. In the case of a major incident, the Police are responsible for managing facilities for the media. However, not all emergency situations which happen in school will involve the Police so the school should plan for the provision of facilities which will allow the media to gather information and pictures. The headteacher must involve the chair of governors (and the other governors) in this sort of situation.

By co-operating with the media, the school will achieve some of its own objectives whilst assisting the journalists to achieve theirs. The school will want to:

- show it is controlling the incident and doing all it can to minimise the consequences
- set minds at rest as far as possible and counter dangerous rumours
- establish itself as caring, responsible and competent.



It will achieve these objectives by being as co-operative as possible. Journalists barred entry may use gossip and speculation instead of facts in what they write so the school needs to:

- control the flow of information
- be a single source of authoritative information
- ensure that information is standardised and consistent
- collect information from the media
- retain the media's goodwill by providing as much information as possible.

To take full benefit from co-ordinating the input to the media, in an extreme situation, it could be helpful to establish a central media point early on. A media response room needs tables, chairs, telephones, stationery, school fact file, flip charts/wipe boards, photocopier, fax machine and glasses and water. You should make a mature and articulate member of staff solely responsible for dealing with the media. With the help of some assistants, they could answer queries, provide briefings and press statements.

Clarity and context are vital first steps to effective communication through the media.



Education



*Produced by the Service's Publications & Media Team
8/F Oldgate House
2 Oldgate
Huddersfield
HD1 6QW*

*Tel: 01484 225275
Fax: 01484 225237*

*www.kirklees.gov.uk
www.kirklees-ednet.org.uk*