



GREENWOOD ACADEMIES TRUST

Emergency Planning Protocol

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1. Policy Overview

Our academies have a duty of care to provide a safe environment for all staff and pupils. In turn, parents entrust our staff to keep their children safe at all times. Thanks to the combined efforts of the staff at our academies and the GAT Educational Support Team, our sites usually remain a safe place for children and adults to work and learn. However, academies can become involved in a crisis at any time. Emergencies can take many forms including a flood or a fire, an accident or death on site or during a school visit, an intruder or an industrial accident such as a chemical spillage.

Thankfully, serious incidents such as these are rare in the UK and will probably never happen in most schools. Nevertheless, it is vital to be prepared as incidents may occur on-site, off-site but affecting the whole school, during term-time or school holidays, during school hours or out-of-hours. Incidents can have a profound and lasting effect on pupils, staff, parents and on the school as a whole. Having up-to-date and well-rehearsed plans that deal with the consequences of serious emergencies will reduce their impact and help staff to respond effectively. These plans will also help in dealing with the kind of smaller, routine (but potentially distressing) incidents that schools cope with on a regular basis.

In more serious instances, good crisis management can save lives. It can also prevent escalation, protect against legal action and enhance the school's standing as a reliable and effective institution, providing confidence to staff, parents and pupils. The Department for Education and the Local Authorities advocate that schools should have an emergency plan. Furthermore, OFSTED denote that inspectors give particular priority to checking schools' procedures for safeguarding and protecting children and young people from harm and it is an expectation for schools to have a robust policy for dealing with emergencies. It is not mandatory for schools to produce an emergency plan; however, the Trust accepts the advice to do so unreservedly and intends to go well beyond the minimum provision in this important area.

The emergency plans for GAT academies should cover the whole of the Academy site and all activities taking place there. Where academies share sites with other services, or hire out space to other organisations, it is important to involve these third parties in the planning process and to make sure that all staff are aware of the plan and how it affects them.

2. Purpose of the Guidance

This guidance is intended to help all GAT academies prepare for a critical incident and to ensure effective management in a difficult situation. Although it is not possible to prepare in detail for every situation, it is essential to have a general plan to hand which outlines the steps that need to be taken. The policy provides some general guidance in reducing the likelihood of a critical incident affecting our academies and the development of critical incident management plans to indicate what steps to take should a critical incident occur.

3. Definitions

A 'Critical Incident' can be defined as:

"An event, or sequence of events, affecting pupils and / or staff which creates significant personal distress to a level which potentially overwhelms normal responses, procedures and

coping strategies and which is likely to have serious emotional and organisational consequences”.

What constitutes a critical incident at one academy may not be critical at another; this will depend on their resilience and ability to respond. Events that could affect our academies can be broken down into the following levels and may help in deciding when further advice and assistance is required from the GAT Educational Support Team and external agencies:

Level 1: Incident

An ‘Incident’ can be managed within the Academy but may require some support from the GAT Educational Support Team or other agencies. An incident may pose no immediate threat to life but may cause some disruption to the daily routine of the Academy. Examples include: ICT failure, water leak, local industrial action, failed heating system or disruption to the gas, water or electricity supply.

Level 2: Emergency

An ‘Emergency’ is an unexpected event within or outside the Academy that is likely to cause some disruption to the school’s functionality. Emergencies are also likely to pose a real threat of injury or death and will require urgent and significant support from the GAT Educational Support Team and other external agencies. Examples include:

- A deliberate act of violence (eg, knife or firearm)
- Fire or laboratory explosion
- Hostage situation
- Gas or chemical leak
- Destruction or serious vandalism of premises
- Death of a pupil or member of staff
- Transport accident involving a large number of pupils / staff
- Civil disturbance or terrorism
- Epidemic

Level 3: Major Incident

A ‘Major Incident’ is one that affects the wider community and could have a significant impact on the Academy. The declaration of a ‘Major Incident’ is likely to be made by a Category 1 responder (eg, Police or Fire & Rescue Service) and the immediate closure of the Academy may be necessary depending on the nature and proximity of the emergency. The GAT Educational Support Team will be involved as part of a multi-agency response. Examples include:

- Serious road or rail accident / spillage
- Aircraft crash
- Factory explosion
- Terrorist action
- A flu epidemic or viral infection leading to a national alert

Levels 2 and 3 are distinguished by how widespread their possible effect may be and by the action that needs to be taken, not necessarily by their potential severity. Whilst the GAT Educational Support Team’s response and coordination is likely to take effect on the two

higher levels, Principals should inform the relevant member(s) of the Team in case the incident escalates. As most incidents and emergencies will have Health & Safety implications (particularly where asbestos is involved), it is particularly important that early contact is made with the GAT H&S Team and that the detailed advice given in the separate Academy's Health & Safety Manual is followed. Contact by the Principal with the Central Team at the earliest opportunity is also vital in determining the appropriate follow-on and recovery actions to be taken once the immediate threat has been neutralised.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for ensuring that effective emergency plans are developed and practised regularly across the Trust. The management of these plans, and the associated annual training exercises, is delegated through the Deputy Chief Executive Officer to the Senior Adviser – Emergency Planning. The responsibility for training new Principals and senior members of the Educational Support Team is delegated to the Chief People & Organisational Development Officer and the Chief Education Officer through the Trust's induction training programme and the Learning Alliance.

5. Critical Incident and Continuity Management Plans

The procedures to be followed in the event of an emergency occurring either on or off-site at any Academy or at the Greenwood House offices are contained in the relevant Critical Incident and Continuity Management Plan (the 'Red Books'). The Red Books follow a common format but have been specifically developed for each Academy and Greenwood House. All Principals are to appoint a nominated Plan Owner who is required to arrange for the distribution and safekeeping of the hard copy folders held by key Academy staff and who will provide updates to the Plan to the Senior Adviser – Emergency Planning annually, or more frequently if necessary. Electronic copies of the Red Books are also available to all hard copy holders in PDF format. Further detailed advice on the actions to be taken in the event of an emergency on site or during an off-site visit is given in the Health & Safety Manual held at each Academy and the Health & Safety on Educational Visits Policy.

6. Business Continuity Plans

The business of the Trust is teaching and learning. All Principals are required to make adequate contingency plans to keep their academies open wherever it is safe and practicable to do so in the event of utility failure or other interruption to normal activities. Closure of an Academy is a last resort and must be discussed in advance with the Chief Education Officer. Details of individual Academy Business Continuity Plans (not including routine fire evacuation, snow closure plans and H&S procedures) are specified in the Red Books.

7. Lockdown Procedures

All Principals are to develop and maintain effective Lockdown Procedures for their academy. These documents are reviewed every three years (or as required) and the procedures are to be practised annually in the form of a practical exercise involving staff and pupils with the exception of special schools.

Special schools are required to complete an annual practice exercise of lockdown procedures however may undertake practice drills involving only staff to reduce the adverse impact of unnecessary stress on potentially vulnerable pupils.

8. Table-top Exercises

The Senior Adviser – Emergency Planning is to arrange for an annual Table-top Exercise to be conducted at each academy. This should involve the Principal (or nominated SLT representative), the Plan Owner and the Site Manager. The aim of the exercise is to review any incidents (and near misses) that have occurred over the year at the Academy, to discuss the actions to be taken in a range of realistic situations and to share lessons learned across the Trust. These exercises will also help to identify any areas for improvement and to maintain a high level of readiness amongst the Academy staff to ensure that they are confident and prepared to manage effectively any live incidents in the future.

9. Media Skills Training

All Principals and key members of the Educational Support Team who may be required to take part in media interviews or provide public statements on behalf of the Trust are to complete the external Media Skills Training programme as soon as practicable after taking up their post. This course also provides Principals and senior members of staff with the skills and knowledge that they need in order to develop and implement an effective communications plan in the event of a serious incident. Indeed, the growing use of social media and the widespread availability of mobile technologies have had a profound impact on our ability to communicate effectively in a crisis. The Media Skills course therefore forms an essential part of the initial training programme for all Principals and selected members of the SLT.