



St. Gregory's Catholic Primary School

Lockdown Policy (procedures are internal only).

2024 -2025

We give thanks to God, work together and always try our best

The Department for Education recommends that schools create and maintain an emergency plan. In emergency planning terms, this is called a 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 children 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 reminds us that planning for emergencies can save lives. It can prevent an incident from getting worse, provide confidence to staff, governors, parents, carers and children 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 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 children and staff. It means that all entrances to the school must be secured in an effort to prevent any threat entering, and staff and children 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 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 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.

Any procedures we establish must be realistic; in an incident staff and children 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 this document?

Much of the information this contains has been gathered from best practice in other schools and from education departments and authorities.

While lockdown policies 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 policies 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 schools 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 on in the procedure document document).
3. Compile the completed procedure for distribution to all staff 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 this document is regularly reviewed and included in the induction for new staff members



Dealing with the concerns of the children

It is important that children 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 children about this subject. An assembly could be used to explain an emergency drill and outline the actions children 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 children, especially the youngest.

Staff are well placed to assess what level of information should be provided to children 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 children to consider the risks that could affect school).
- The role of children 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.

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

- Each teacher will lead a session on how we can keep each other safe in class prior to a phase assembly.
- A phase assembly will then be held to explain to children about lockdown procedures, class teachers will speak to their classes and revisit the purpose of lockdown and talk them through the procedures.
- Once this has taken place, a practice drill will take place. **All** children should be included, but during the initial implementation of the policy all staff will be informed of the time/date of the planned lockdown practice in order to prepare children and reduce any anxiety.

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 our 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 newsletter.
- Distributing information at parent/carer evenings.
- Sending a letter home via Arbor.

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?

In the first instance parents/carers will be informed of the new policy, via a parent information sheet. A message will then go on Arbor to inform parents that we are holding a practice drill. This will enable parents/carers of individual children, especially those with SEND needs to be prepared to answer any questions their child may have.

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 St. Gregory's Way Lockdown Policy

Reasons for a lockdown to be initiated:

- A medical emergency
- Someone who is out of control and threatens the safety of our children, staff, or himself/herself.
- Someone who has a weapon.
- An intruder.
- A stray animal loose on the yard
- A suspicious package
- A hazardous event close to the building or on the neighbouring estate
- An extreme weather related event.

When an incident occurs, the priority is to safeguard those on-site (i.e. children, staff, parents/carers, visitors) and alert the emergency services if necessary. Other organisations, such as the BCCET, 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 exacerbate the situation and the police services would be the best resource in ensuring this.



Plans should emphasise 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 begins immediately. If children are outside when the signal for a lockdown is sounded, staff members need to take children to the nearest possible internal safe area.

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 inform the Headteacher and 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, it should not be delayed. The other member of office staff, headteacher or member of SLT, will call the emergency services, if this is required.

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 includes lockdown awareness. Due to the young age of some primary children, it is suggested that classroom teachers be responsible for training children.

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 practised). 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 children 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.