

# **Glebe House School and Nursery**

#### 2 Cromer Road, Hunstanton, Norfolk PE36 6HW

🕾 01485 532809

07590 529353 (Head’s mobile)

Email: ghsoffice@glebehouseschool.co.uk

Disaster

## And Major Incidents Plan

**General**

The school has adopted policies and procedures to minimise risks to pupils and staff, and has a Health and Safety policy and procedures that are regularly reviewed. The governing body recognises that not all circumstances are under the control of the school and that emergencies and disasters may happen. This policy has been adopted by the governing body after consultation with the Head and staff (and taking into account LEA advice and policies.).

# **Aims**

The aims of this policy are:

* To prepare governors, staff and pupils for any disasters that may occur;
* To ensure that there is a plan that can be implemented swiftly in the case of an emergency caused by a disaster; and
* To be a guide to actions in circumstances that are liable to strain the capacity of those handling the situation to think clearly.

**Use of this Policy and Procedures**

This set of guidelines is to be checked before a school visit takes place. It will also be used in the aftermath of an emergency. All staff and Governors should be familiar with the contents of this guidance so that all those involved know what to do, or what not to do, if an emergency occurs.

**What can Happen.**

A major incident can be:

fire, flood or terrorist attack;

• bomb threat or attack:

• major accident;

• sustained loss of services e.g. power, heat, or information technology;

• health and safety emergencies e.g. chemical spill, asbestos, pollution, gas leak or unsafe property.

• supply of defective, unsafe or illegal product.

• financial breakdown or impropriety;

• targeting by a pressure group campaign;

• sabotage;

By ‘disaster' we mean an incident that has caused death or serious injury to a member or members of the school community e.g.:

In School or in Our Community

* The death of a pupil or member of staff from natural causes;
* a traffic accident involving staff or pupils;
* a deliberate act of violence against staff or pupils;
* a school fire or major incident in a laboratory or workshop; and
* a serious accident of any sort involving death or mutilation.

Out- of -School or our immediate community

* deaths or injuries on school journeys;
* tragedies involving children with many others (e.g. Manchester Arena); and
* a bomb incident.

However much of this document will still apply to incidents that require decisive action.

Most aspects of disasters are self-evident but two are important to emphasise for the purpose of planning:

* Feelings of grief, guilt and insecurity caused by the disaster. These are felt by survivors, parents and staff alike (not only by those directly involved) and may strike at any time over a long period after the disaster. (see Post-traumatic Stress Disorder below).
* Inevitable media interest. This will focus on the ‘human interest’ and on discovering ‘who is to blame’. To the media there is no such thing as an accident. Whether intended or not, the result can be to persuade people to say things in haste that they will bitterly regret at leisure. The media can sow discord and prevent healing. In the immediate aftermath the media may interfere with communications and distract people from coping with the emergency.
* The following procedures are designed to deal with the problems in the early stages. It is assumed in what follows that our first duty is to support and help pupils, parents and staff involved. We are also concerned to ensure that the handling of the disaster does not result in damage to the school which will then cause all pupils and staff to lose in the long term.

It is essential that everybody knows:

* the roles to be performed by each person;
* the communications strategy; and
* the basic principles we will follow with the pupils and parents.

**Roles and Responsibilities**

In term time, other things being equal, the crisis will be managed by a team that will include:

* the Chairman of Governors;
* the Head;
* the Deputy Head
* School Business Manager
* The Nursery Manager
* and other relevant staff, depending on the situation.

The Head, if not disabled in the disaster, will be the first contact for the Media. It is probable that as things develop the Chair of Governors will need to make a statement and written statements may be issued by others.

The School Business Manager will be responsible for arranging the necessary communications network including allotting duties to other support staff for typing statements etc. He will also be responsible for checking with insurers etc. to make sure that we do not make mistakes at that stage of the crisis.

The exact roles of others will have to be decided at the time as any crisis will undoubtedly have its own particular character and need a different reaction but among the roles needed will be:

* contact with parents;
* support for staff directly involved;
* liaison with remainder of staff and pupils;
* finding assistance for the school e.g. legal etc; and

liaison with relevant authorities e.g. police/Foreign Office /Health and Safety Executive.

Out of Term, the **first** thing for the person in charge on site to do will be to contact as many members of the Emergency Team as possible.

**How to minimise the loss**

Not all losses occur out of school hours.

A loss may be minimised if:-

* The location of gas and electricity isolation points Is known.
* Staff are instructed in the use of fire extinguishers.
* Extinguishing appliances are inspected regularly.
* Emergency procedures such as drills are practiced.
* The fire brigade are familiar with our premises and know where the hydrants are located.
* Back-ups of all computer records are kept off site including teachers own classroom records and data.
* A copy asset register is kept off site ( a copy of this is kept at the school’s accountants)
* All fire doors are kept closed but not locked.
* Site plans showing locations of on/off switches for utilities and areas of particular hazards are available to the fire brigade.
* You are familiar with Safety on School Trips Code of Practice.
* There is only one public entrance to the school.

**Precautionary Rules for Trips off Site**

When a disaster occurs off site it is critical to know quickly who has been involved, therefore:

* all trip leaders will make sure that there is a list in the School Office with the names of all pupils and a contact number/s for parent/s; and
* every member of staff on the trip ( not only the leader) will keep with them at all times a list of pupils on the trip. This may be the only starting point for identifying pupils and the leader may be incapacitated or dead.

It is also vital that information is passed to the School as soon as possible so that support can be given to the staff on the ground and parents and that accurate information can be given to the media etc.

All the staff on a trip will:

* know how an alarm is to be raised; and
* will have to hand numbers to contact to report any disaster. This will not just be the school number in case the media jam the phone lines. (Any such non school number must be kept absolutely confidential).

As soon as the injured etc are properly looked after and in the hands of competent assistance then communicating the news is the priority.

Once that has been done the priority of those on the ground becomes to look after pupils and each other. Dealing with the media, with parents and all other issues then becomes the job of the Disaster Team.

**Immediate Action in the Case of Disaster**

The Chair of Governors will be contacted immediately or in his absence, the Vice

Chair. Failing either, another nominated governor will be contacted. The relevant governor will be asked to join the team at the School.

* The police will be contacted immediately to ask for help in controlling access to the School;
* The LEA will be contacted and asked what resources they can make available;
* The Disaster Team will convene at an appropriate headquarters;
* Roles will be allotted;
* If the disaster is abroad then a contact will be opened up to authorities in the foreign country through the appropriate embassy or the Foreign Office and arrangements made to get a senior member of staff and someone familiar with the language (if possible) out to the scene of the disaster as a matter of urgency to take charge from the staff involved;
* Parents will be contacted by mobile phone. It may be sensible to send someone off-site to phone from an exchange that will not be blocked or overheard by the media;
* Depending on the situation, headquarters will either be in the Office or another suitable building on or near the School depending on the circumstances; and
* If children are off-site parents should be re-united with them as fast as possible. (It is the duty of the Head (or Head's delegated representative) to determine in the circumstances whether It may be helpful for parents to view the accident site so they can share the situation with their children.

**Communicating with Parents.**

Only nominated members of staff/governors have the authority to contact parents. Such persons, when answering or contacting parents will have a written list of known facts issued by the Head (or Head's delegated representative). The nominated person will only

* say what is known for a fact;
* say how parents will be updated as information becomes more complete;
* say how parents should contact hospitals etc; and
* check whether any help is needed with transport.

While the school's main responsibility is to parents whose children are involved, there will be other parents who, for one reason or another, will want to know what has happened from us. Depending on the circumstances it may be appropriate to:

* send an account that is written;
* post information on the School web-site; and
* use the media to communicate with parents.

The Head (or Head's delegated representative) will make the decision.

**Communicating with Pupils**

If the disaster occurs during term a lot again will depend on whether information is available while pupils are in school.

The first priority will be to make sure that pupils know what is true.

The second priority will be, as appropriate, for the School community to share its shock and/or grief.

The procedure will be:

* pupils will be given in tutor groups by selected staff or through an assembly:
* the plain facts - no speculation; and
* absolutely honest responses to questions that cannot be answered.

Normally the school will use the following strategy:

* hold an assembly to give out information;
* return pupils to tutor group bases; and
* selected staff to go round the tutor groups and answer questions.

If a disaster occurs during the holiday there may have to be special arrangements to allow families, friends and others to come into school, and for an appropriate member of staff to be available to inform and support. This will be determined by the Head (or the Head's representative) and put into place by the Disaster Team.

**Communicating with the Media.**

Media interest will seem intrusive and unhelpful. It is important to realise, however, that their interest is legitimate. Used properly the media can help to communicate important messages to parents and the community. It is important to do everything to be helpful short of compromising the essential interests of the school. The Head will explain to the press what is happening but will stress that pupils' and parents' interests must come first for us. He/she will ask for the press's co-operation in achieving this aim. (The Head and Disaster Team will liaise with the LEA at all times in carrying out their role.)

* All statements to the media will be made after discussion with the Head (or representative). In ideal circumstances he/she will be the press officer. If he/she is not present he/she should be contacted if possible. A Deputy will cover the Head's absence;
* The Chair of Governors will make a statement at the earliest but appropriate moment;
* Governors and staff will refer all questions to the Head (or delegated representative) and must refuse to make any comment or react to any statement put to them by the media;
* The following will be the principles to guide dealings with the press;
* It should be remembered that the media will be looking for a story and headlines. A ‘story’ only lasts for a short time in media terms so they will be looking for a quick result: grief to dramatise or blame to allot. They only polarise. However, there are possible stereotypes which we can help to get sympathetic treatment.
* Close-knit school devastated by disaster;
* Staff trying to hold things together under impossible circumstances;
* Caring school trying to do what it can; and
* Bolt from the blue overwhelms all sensible precautions.

**N.B. We must remember that we have to be careful that nothing we say should increase grief or wrong-foot ourselves in possible legal action.**

The media will normally not be invited onto the school site and if they do make their way into the site uninvited, they should be referred to the Head, who will normally ask them to leave, and will explain why. The assistance of the police could be sought if necessary.

It is the responsibility of the Head in consultation with the Disaster team to determine whether a Press Conference should be arranged in a place away from the children. If there are signs of devastation on the school site, it may be inevitable that they will have to be allowed to take pictures but the Disaster Team will attempt to ensure that these do not add to the grief of parents and others.

Pupils will be kept away from the media and the importance of this will be explained to the pupils.

No addresses will be given to the media.

Approved By: …………..........................………………………Date……….………..........…………………….

S Bottomley on behalf of the GHS Health and Safety Committee

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| **Author** | **Governors & the Head** |
| Policy initiated | March 2002 |
| Review Frequency | As necessary |
| Latest reviews with changes made | September 2022 |
| Review due date | September 2023 |
| References |  |

**Appendix A**

Responsibility of the members of the team

The following tasks would be allocated as follows:-

* Inform Emergency Services *Whoever discovers the disaster*
* Evacuate Buildings if appropriate *Activation of the Fire Alarm will result in evacuation*
* Immobilise Utilities if necessary *First on scene (see plan for locations)*
* Liaise with emergency services ..........................*First on scene (ensure that site plans are made available)*
* Take a roll call to confirm evacuation *Staff to follow normal fire drill procedures*
* Call in Recovery Team Members *Whoever discovers the disaster*
* Decide the next step – Possible school closure or sealing off an area

*Most senior member of team present*

* Advise Ofsted, Environmental Health, IAPS as appropriate....................................*Head/Head of*

*Nursery*

* Advise the media, especially local radio if the school is closed *Head of Service Support*
* Have a prepared statement for the press *Head of Service Support*
* Contact Insurance Brokers Ltd (Schools Division) *School Business Manager*
* Contact Services and Suppliers *School Business Manager*
* Contact Staff and Parents *Staff under instruction from Deputy Head*
* Consider use of counsellors for those affected by the disaster including members of the team, staff and children *SENDco and Mental Health Champion*

**Appendix B**

**An Off-Site Comprehensive list of Emergency Telephone Numbers**

**List of Staff and Home telephone numbers**

**List of Governors, Addresses and Home/Business Telephone numbers**

**List of Parents, Addresses and Home/ Business Telephone numbers (by division)**

**Other numbers of persons or organisations to be informed**

**Suppliers of goods and services likely to be of use in an emergency**

**Appendix C**

The team should be aware of the following and be ready to communicate this information to the emergency services as necessary:

**Isolation points for Electricity, Gas and Water Services - In the basement adjacent to the domestic staff room**

**Assembly Points – Front lawn for Senior Building, Main Field for Junior Building and pool, Nursery Garden for Nursery**

**Flammable and Hazardous Products Storage areas - Maintenance shed and Tractor shed**