HCAT Emergency Planning Policy & Procedure

EDUCATE. EMPOWER. INSPIRE.

Version Number	Version Description	Date of Revision
1	Original	Sept 2023
2	Rebranded & reviewed	July 2024
3	Reviewed	April 2026

HCAT Emergency Planning Policy & Procedure

Introduction

This Policy sets out the Framework for how the Trust will effectively respond to an emergency that may occur in one of its Academies or on an educational visit.

Academy emergency plans

All Academies within the Trust are required to have a Trust Academy Emergency Plan which is used to effectively respond to an emergency.

Each Academy must have an allocated emergency contact, who is responsible for completing and managing the emergency plan.

The Trust Chief Operating Officer can provide advice and guidance to individual Academies on completing their emergency plan and can offer advice on emergency planning issues.

Plan distribution

All staff should have access to a copy of the plan which can be referred to during Academy hours and outside of hours (including holidays and when on educational visits). An electronic copy should also be provided to the Trust Chief Operating Officer in order to provide a central record, that is off site. A distribution log should be kept within the Plan.

The Plan must be reviewed regularly, with hard copies in a ring folder so that frequently updated sections of the plan (e.g. contact details) can be easily replaced.

New members of staff must read the Academy emergency plan and be told where the electronic and paper versions are held as part of their induction process.

Training

Staff need to be made aware of the emergency plan and their roles when responding to an incident. Records should be kept of staff who have attended training events, both for audit purposes and to ensure their training is kept up-to-date.

The amount of training staff require will vary. Members of the Incident Management Team (IMT) and their deputies will need to undergo more extensive training due to their specific responsibilities. All staff should have a general overview of the Academies emergency procedures. It is unreasonable to expect temporary staff to read a copy of the plan before they start work. Nevertheless, they should be briefed on the fundamental aspects of the plan (e.g. evacuation procedures and who to contact for help if there is an emergency).

Consideration should be given on how 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.

Academies should consider undertaking discussion-based exercises involve assembling staff together and asking them to consider how the Academy would respond to a particular scenario. Participants are provided the opportunity to talk about their roles and discuss what actions the Academy 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.

Grab bags

Each academy is required to have a Grab Bag, the location of which must be notified in the Emergency Plan. Grab bags should be stored securely but made easily accessible to staff should an incident occur. Consider storing one in the academy building (e.g. office, staff room)

Having the necessary resources available during the onset of an emergency can prove very beneficial to the response.

Contact details

This is the most important section of the emergency plan and must be updated on a regular basis.

Knowing who to contact, and being able to contact them, is fundamental in responding successfully to an incident. Therefore, up to date contact details must be maintained for use during an emergency.

Arrangements for contacting people during academy hours and outside academy hours often vary so such distinctions must be made within the plan. Alternative methods of contact for staff (e.g. mobile phone number, home telephone number) and back-up contact details for organisations must be included wherever possible.

Examples include:

- Academy staff
- Governors
- Pupils
- Parents / carers
- Extended services
- The emergency services
- Trust Central Services
- Local radio stations.

At least one copy of the plan must be held off-site should include contact details of pupils and parents / carers.

It is important the emergency services and the Trust Executive Team are able to contact a member of staff if an incident occurs outside academy hours. The Trust Executive Team must be provided with up-to-date emergency contact details on a regular basis.

Site information

Site information must be included in the plan as this can prove particularly useful for personnel involved in the response to an incident, particularly the emergency services. This could include:

- Internal hazards (e.g. asbestos, chemical stores)
- External hazards (e.g. rivers, reservoirs, industrial sites, main roads)
- Utility supplies (e.g. isolation points for gas, water and electricity)
- Evacuation procedures (e.g. evacuation routes, assembly points)
- Notable premises in the vicinity (e.g. places of safety, buddy academys, rest centres)
- Pre-designated areas to be used during an emergency (e.g. IMT briefing area, media briefing area, suitable rooms for lockdown procedures).

Activating the plan

Potentially any member of staff could be notified of an emergency so it is important that all staff are aware of the plan and a copy is made readily available (e.g. near the telephone in the academy office). Throughout the response to an emergency staff should maintain an incident log.

When an incident occurs, those on-site must be safeguarded as a priority (i.e. pupils, staff, parents / carers, visitors) and the emergency services must be alerted if necessary. The Trust Executive Team should then be informed as appropriate.

Roles and responsibilities

The actions required to respond will depend on the nature of the emergency; it is unlikely that staff would need to implement all of the actions outlined during one incident.

When responding to an incident staff should consider the long-term implications of any decisions made.

Once the response has finished all those who were originally notified of the incident should be informed and a recovery strategy should be established. Support will be available from the Trust Executive Team in organising remedial work to property and providing post incident support to pupils and staff.

The recovery phase may last for a significant period of time. Reconstruction work, formal inquiries or police investigations into an incident will require the co-operation and support of academy staff, pupils and parents / carers.

Academy emergency management team

The Head of School – Gail Padfield/Ange Brown with support from the Trust Executive Team will take responsibility for co-ordinating the response to an emergency.

PFI academies will need to work closely with the Facilities PFI Team and the PFI FM Manager.

Unless the incident is minor, it will be impossible for the Head of School – Rebecca Paddock/Kate Ainley to implement all the actions required on behalf of the academy. A Incident Management Team (IMT) should be established at the onset of an incident which can assist Rebecca Paddock/Kate Ainley in managing the response.

Staff should be identified and assigned prior to an emergency so that they have prior understanding of their role, which can cover Co-ordination, Communication, Media management, log keeping of the incident, resources welfare and business continuity.

The size of an IMT will vary depending on the size of the academy and the nature of the emergency. In some cases, more than one member of staff will need to be assigned to a role (such as ‘welfare’ which can prove especially labour intensive). Staff not within the IMT still have a crucial role in the response to an emergency; their presence will be needed to reassure pupils and minimise disruption to the academy routine. They may also be required to provide assistance in other ways, such as accompanying pupils to hospital.

A pre-designated venue should be allocated for the IMT to meet during an incident. Ideally this location will have access to telecommunications and enough space to incorporate the IMT and other responders. In many instances, the academy office or staff room will be particularly suitable for this role.

Emergencies on educational visits

Leaders of educational visits have a legal duty of care for the people under their charge. Procedures must be in place for educational visits and be referred to when planning an event.

Prior to an educational visit at least one member of staff should be identified who can be contacted in the event of an emergency on the trip. This person must be adequately prepared to support the educational visit leader and have access to documentation related to the trip (e.g. a list of all attendees, contact details for the group and parents / carers).

These arrangements must work outside academy hours and during holidays if activities are taking place at these times. A back-up contact should also be identified.

Communications

During an emergency, it is likely that concerned parents / carers will contact the academy for further information and the general academy telephone number may quickly become jammed with incoming calls.

One method of alleviating this pressure is to set-up an answer machine that can be set to 'message only' (i.e. callers cannot leave messages). Updating the answer machine message regularly with information on the emergency can inform and reassure parents / carers whilst reducing the burden on office staff. Many answer machines also have the capacity to change the message and call recording system remotely which may prove useful if staff cannot easily get to academy.

During an emergency it may be appropriate to consult the emergency services and Trust Executive Team about what information can be provided to pupils and parents / carers.

Those who have been directly affected by the incident should be notified personally (either by a telephone conversation or face-to-face). A log of communications should also be maintained so as not to disturb people by contacting them more than once if it is not necessary.

Media management

Any significant emergency is likely to attract media attention. The scale of the interest will depend on the incident and could vary from telephone enquiries from the local media to national and international television crews arriving at the academy asking for interviews.

If handled successfully, media management can directly assist personnel involved in the response and enhance the reputation of the academy.

Other organisations, such as the emergency services or The Trust Executive Team may be able to assist in responding to media requests and thus alleviate some of the pressure on academy staff. All media statements should be approved by the academy and those organisations involved in the response prior to release.

Post incident support

The effects of a traumatic event upon a academy, such as the serious injury or death of a pupil, can be profound and have significant long-term effects. After an incident, there will be a continuing need to support pupils, parents / carers and staff. Appropriate monitoring procedures should be in place so any individuals who require assistance can be identified and supported.

Staff will play an important role in supporting pupils as they recover from an incident but they should not be expected to perform a counselling role. If support is needed, further professional help should be arranged following discussion with, and the consent of, parents/ carers. This will be a very sensitive matter and staff should seek advice from trained specialists if they are unsure how to proceed.

Staff will need support if they are to be effective at caring for pupils as dealing with crises can be an enormously stressful experience. The effect on staff should not be underestimated as in some cases it may be more significant than the impact on pupils.

Business continuity

The aim of Business Continuity Plan (BCP) is to ensure critical services continue to be delivered during and after an incident. Arrangements need to be in place to cope with a business continuity incident. Even whilst responding to an emergency, academies should aim to maintain pupils' education and minimise disruption to timetables and examinations.

Causes of business interruption commonly include:

- Loss of utility supply
- Loss of supplier
- Loss of premises
- Loss of personnel
- Loss of telecommunications.

The loss of important paperwork, records and data can prove particularly damaging. Academies must think about where important resources are stored (e.g. coursework) as loss of these can significantly harm the morale of pupils. Measures could include:

- Storing essential documentation in a fire-proof safe
- Making copies of important documentation and storing these off-site
- Scanning important paper-based records and storing these electronically.

The Academy Asset register must be kept up to date so that it can be used for calculating loses for insurance purposes. Electronic records on the Trust network are stored remotely and copies of data stored off-site.

Evacuation

Evacuation, shelter and lockdown procedures are particularly important sections of the plan as they outline the initial actions that should be taken to safeguard pupils and staff, both from internal and external hazards.

All staff must be aware of these procedures as warning signals may need to be triggered immediately, before advising others of the threat. In other situations, the emergency services might alert the academy to a potential hazard, such as a plume of smoke or a potential intruder.

In some circumstances, it can be difficult to know whether to evacuate the premises or take shelter; the emergency services will be able to advise on the best course of action.

Academies must distinguish between the different signals used for:

- Evacuation procedures
- Shelter procedures
- Lockdown procedures.
- Sounding the all-clear

The difference between these signals should be easily identifiable (e.g. using a different ring tone or pattern) clearly communicated to staff and documented in the plan.

The purpose of an evacuation is to move people away from danger to a safe place. This is likely to involve withdrawal from a hazard within a specific part of the academy building but in some circumstances, could require evacuation of the whole site. If the entire site has to be evacuated pupils and staff may need to move from an initial assembly point to alternative premises.

A nearby academy or community building should be arranged to act as a place of safety if pupils and staff need to be moved from the initial assembly point to alternative premises. Information about how to travel to a place of safety, including at least one alternative route in case the primary one becomes unsuitable, needs to be considered, along with arrangements for contacting key holders. This should be agreed in advanced and documented in the plan.

If such an arrangement is reciprocal the implications of receiving a request for support from the buddy academy must be considered and also recorded in the plan.

A nearby rest centre also needs to be established in the event the academy is evacuated for a significant period of time and pupils cannot be easily collected by parents / carers. This location can be another academy in the Trust or a nearby academy or community building. Consideration needs to be given as to how pupils would be transported.

Shelter

Some emergencies may require staff and pupils to shelter within the academy building. If it is an environmental hazard (such as a smoke plume) employees should ensure all doors and windows are closed and ventilation / air circulation systems are switched off. In such circumstances the emergency services may issue a public message to 'go in, stay in, tune in'.

Depending on the nature of the incident it can be difficult for the emergency services to provide an accurate estimation of how long it will be necessary to shelter for. Every effort should be made to enable pupils to return home but only as long as it is safe to do so.

In very rare cases (such as exceptionally heavy snowfall) pupils and staff may become stranded at academy. Pupils and staff should be reviewed to see if they would require any special assistance (e.g. those with medical needs) were they to remain at academy for an extended period of time or even forced to shelter overnight.

Lockdown

The purpose of a lockdown is to prevent an intruder from causing harm to pupils and staff. Entrances to the academy must be secured in an effort to prevent the intruder from entering the premises and staff and pupils must find a suitable place to protect themselves.

Lockdown arrangements will depend heavily on the size and layout of the academy. Identify those rooms most suitable for lockdown (and entrances which need to be locked) on a map which could be included within this section. It is important to ensure these rooms have an exit route in case the intruder does gain access to the premises.

The signal for a lockdown should be clearly distinguishable to that of an evacuation. Any confusion may result in pupils and staff congregating at an assembly point, thus potentially making themselves more vulnerable to an intruder.

If pupils are outside when the signal for a lockdown is sounded, staff could consider taking pupils to the nearest possible building that can be secured. Pupils could also be asked to hide or disperse if this will aid their safety.

During a lockdown staff may find it difficult to obtain a clear overview of the situation. Consider how communication could be maintained between employees, whether by two- way radio or mobile phone.

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

Closing the academy

The decision to close a academy is taken by Rebecca Paddock/Kate Ainley liaising with the CEO. Occasionally local and central government may also recommend this course of action (e.g. in the event of a public health incident).

When to take the decision to close is important; it must balance the benefits of an early decision (avoiding unnecessary journeys and providing parents / carers with enough time to arrange childcare) against the drawbacks (finding that the situation is not as bad as initially feared). Heads of Academy are best able to judge the severity of the incident but should always consider safety in arriving at a decision. Pupils and parents / carers should be notified of a academy closure at the earliest possible opportunity.

Bomb threats

Although bomb threats usually turn out to be hoaxes, they must always be taken seriously. All staff need to be aware of the actions to take if they receive a call from someone claiming to have information about a bomb.

Bomb threats can come from a variety of sources, including truants, former pupils or strangers. A threat is more likely to be real if:

- A codeword is used that is known to the Police
- The Police are aware of potential terrorist activity in the area
- The threat is specific rather than general
- The threat is credible.

Whilst it is not reasonable for staff to assess the accuracy or validity of a threat, employees should record as much detail about the call as possible; this information will prove useful to the Police. A bomb threat is a crime so even if employees are confident the call is a hoax they must still report the incident to the Police.

Suspicious packages

In most cases a suspicious package turns out to be a hoax or genuine mistake. Nevertheless, all appropriate precautions should be taken if such a package is received. Any member of staff who handles post in the academy should be aware of procedures relating to suspicious packages.

Log-keeping guidelines

In an emergency, events can occur very rapidly and it is vital to keep an accurate record of events. All staff involved in the response to an emergency should maintain an incident log. Within this log, staff should record decisions made, actions taken, significant conversations and any other important information pertinent to the incident.

Any emergency affecting a academy may afterwards become the subject of a detailed inquiry. It is important that accurate written records are kept and that no piece of information related to the response is lost. Information related to the incident should be copied, retained and archived for future reference. Records of expenditure should also be kept.

Reviewing

An emergency plan needs to be reviewed on a regular basis in order to remain effective. Contact details will need reviewing regularly; it is recommended that these are updated at least annually. Staff, pupils and parents / carers should also be encouraged to notify the academy whenever their contact details have changed.

Policy circulation

This Policy will be circulated to every Member, Trustee/Director, Governor and Senior Employee by sending an email on an annual basis and when each new Member, Trustee/Director, Governor and Senior Employee joins the Trust.

The Trustees, in consultation with the Local Governing Bodies, are responsible for overseeing, reviewing and organising the revision of this Policy.