

Critical and Major Incidents Guidance

Revised September 2026

RESPONDING TO CRITICAL AND MAJOR INCIDENTS

Guidance for Schools

Contents

Page

3	Critical and other Incidents
4	The Cambridgeshire Context
5	What can schools do to prepare for the unexpected?
10	Designing a plan
14	Managing bomb and hoax threats
15	Evacuation, Invacuation and Lockdown procedures
17	Emergency procedures for off-site visits
18	Implementing the plan
23	Useful contacts and numbers
23	Additional school specific contacts
24	The Emergency Management Team
24	Educational Psychologists
24	Business Continuity
29	Appendix 1 Useful contacts and numbers
30	Appendix 2 Critical Incident Preparation Checklist
33	Appendix 3 Critical Incident Plan Template
36	Appendix 4 Example timeline for managing critical incidents
37	Appendix 5 School critical incident recording sheet
38	Appendix 6 Hoax threat model letter
40	Appendix 7 Sample business continuity templates

This guidance is designed to support schools in developing a structured and staged approach to critical and major incidents and in developing their plans. It includes a range of contact numbers and a selection of templates which you can use or adapt and may find useful in your planning. It is not in itself a critical incident plan but provides the information and tools for developing one.

CRITICAL AND OTHER INCIDENTS

A school may experience a range of situations that require different levels of response. Understanding the distinction between an incident, an emergency, a critical incident and a major incident will help schools determine when additional plans, resources and external support may be required.

Incident

An **incident** is a situation that can be managed effectively through normal school procedures and resources. It may require involvement from senior leaders, communication with parents or carers, or limited support from external agencies. However, the member of staff or team involved remains able to manage the situation without activating emergency or critical incident arrangements.

Emergency

An **emergency** is an incident that exceeds the normal coping capacity of a staff member or team and requires the school's Emergency Plan or Business Continuity arrangements to be activated. The school remains in control of the response but may require support from external agencies or specialist services. The school has sufficient resources and capacity to manage the situation safely.

Critical Incident

A **critical incident** is any sudden, unexpected or developing event, or sequence of events, that causes significant distress, disruption or trauma to the school community and overwhelms the school's normal capacity to respond. A critical incident requires activation of the school's Critical Incident Plan and may involve support from emergency services, the Local Authority (LA), Educational Psychology Service, safeguarding partners or other specialist agencies.

Major Incident

A **major incident** is an event formally declared by the emergency services, usually the Police, because of its scale, severity or complexity. Where a major incident is declared within the United Kingdom, emergency services and partner agencies will implement established multi-agency response arrangements and may assume overall coordination of the incident. In these circumstances, the school's Critical Incident Plan will continue to operate but must work alongside the direction and requirements of the emergency services and other responding agencies. Where a major incident occurs overseas during an educational visit, the school will work with the relevant authorities, emergency services, travel providers, insurers, the LA and other agencies as appropriate.

Incidents may escalate rapidly. What begins as an incident may develop into an emergency, critical incident or major incident depending on factors such as:

- The number of people affected.
- The severity of harm or disruption caused.
- Safeguarding implications.

- Media and community interest.
- The level of external agency involvement required.
- The impact on the school's ability to operate safely.
- Schools should therefore adopt a proportionate response while remaining prepared to escalate arrangements whenever circumstances change.

THE CAMBRIDGESHIRE CONTEXT

What do we mean by a critical incident?

A critical incident may be defined as:

“Any sudden, unexpected or developing event or sequence of events which causes disruption, distress, trauma or threatens the safety and wellbeing of pupils, staff or the wider school community, and which overwhelms the normal coping capacity and resources of the school.”

A critical or major incident requires the school's Critical Incident Plan to be activated. Such incidents often require the support of the emergency services, the LA, public health agencies or other external partners.

Incidents may occur on school premises, during educational visits, while travelling, online, within the local community or at a location which indirectly affects the school. Examples include:

- Death or serious injury of a pupil, member of staff or member of the school community.
- Serious safeguarding incidents.
- Fire, explosion, gas leak or structural failure.
- Severe weather, flooding or utility failure.
- Public health emergencies and infectious disease outbreaks.
- Significant cyber incidents or ICT system failures affecting critical services.
- School transport incidents.
- Missing or abducted children.
- Community violence or disorder affecting the school.
- Knife incidents, firearms incidents or other serious violence.
- Terrorist-related incidents.
- Bomb threats or suspicious packages.
- Malicious communications, hoax threats or online threats directed at the school.
- Environmental contamination or hazardous substance incidents.
- Major incidents occurring during educational visits in the UK or overseas.

Schools should recognise that incidents increasingly have both a physical and digital dimension. Information about an incident may spread rapidly through social media and other online platforms, requiring timely, accurate and coordinated communication.

Security and preparedness

The Department for Education (DfE) advises all schools and colleges to maintain proportionate security plans alongside safeguarding, health and safety, emergency planning and business continuity arrangements. Security planning should form part of a whole-school approach to keeping children, staff and visitors safe.

Schools should adopt a culture of preparedness which enables staff to identify vulnerabilities, report concerns promptly and respond confidently to incidents.

Martyn's Law

The Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025 ("Martyn's Law") received Royal Assent in April 2025. The legislation is intended to improve organisational preparedness and protective security across publicly accessible premises, including many education settings. A national implementation period is currently underway before statutory requirements come into force.

Schools with 200 or more people attending (staff and pupils combined) reasonably expected to be present will generally fall within the scope of the legislation when implemented. Schools below this threshold are not expected to fall within scope but are strongly encouraged to adopt the same principles of preparedness.

Regardless of statutory requirements, all schools should:

- Maintain clear lockdown, invacuation and evacuation procedures.
- Ensure staff understand how to respond to security incidents.
- Review site vulnerabilities and protective security arrangements.
- Develop effective communication arrangements.
- Exercise and review plans regularly.
- Consider the needs of vulnerable pupils, including those requiring Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs).

Schools should use current guidance available through GOV.UK, ProtectUK and ACT for Education resources when reviewing their plans.

WHAT CAN SCHOOLS DO TO PREPARE FOR THE UNEXPECTED?

Establish a Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT)

Every school should identify a Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT) which can be convened immediately following a critical or major incident. The purpose of the CIRT is to provide strategic leadership, coordinate the school's response, support effective decision-making and oversee recovery arrangements.

In most schools, the CIRT will comprise members of the Senior Leadership Team together with other staff whose expertise is required during an incident. Depending on the nature of the incident, this may include safeguarding staff, administrative staff, site staff, pastoral leaders, communications staff or governors.

Having a clearly identified team reduces uncertainty during an emergency and ensures that responsibilities are understood in advance.

Schools should consider:

- Who will lead the response during and outside normal school hours.
- Delegation arrangements if key personnel are unavailable.
- Holiday and out-of-hours arrangements.
- The inclusion of non-teaching staff whose responsibilities may be critical during an incident.
- The circumstances in which governors should become involved.
- Maintaining a wider pool of trained staff who can support and supplement the CIRT when required.

The size and composition of the team will vary between schools. Some functions may be combined in smaller settings. However, each function should be clearly allocated within the school's Critical Incident Plan.

Suggested CIRT functions:

1. Security Lead

The Security Lead should coordinate the school's protective security and preparedness arrangements. This role works alongside, but does not replace, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). Responsibilities may include:

- Maintaining oversight of site security arrangements.
- Coordinating security risk assessments.
- Monitoring emerging threats and vulnerabilities.
- Supporting the development and testing of emergency plans.
- Liaising with Police and other security partners where required.
- Promoting a security-minded culture throughout the school.

All staff should know who the Security Lead is and how concerns can be reported.

2. Incident Manager

The Incident Manager leads the school's response during a critical incident and chairs the CIRT. Responsibilities may include:

- Activating the Critical Incident Plan.
- Coordinating decision-making and actions.
- Assigning tasks and priorities.
- Liaising with senior leaders or governors.
- Maintaining oversight of the overall response and recovery.

3. External Liaison Lead

This role provides a single point of contact for external agencies and stakeholders. Responsibilities may include liaison with:

- Emergency services.

- LA officers.
- Insurance providers.
- Health agencies.
- The Chair of Governors or other governors.
- Other specialist agencies involved in the response.

Depending on the nature of the incident, media responsibilities may either form part of this role or be allocated separately.

4. Communications Lead

Effective communication is vital during any critical incident. Responsibilities may include:

- Preparing and coordinating messages.
- Liaising with LA communications teams.
- Managing communications with staff, pupils, families and governors.
- Updating websites and approved communication platforms.
- Monitoring misinformation, rumours and social media activity where appropriate.
- Supporting media management arrangements.

Communication should be timely, factual, proportionate and sensitive to those affected.

5. Family Liaison Lead

This role focuses on supporting pupils, families and those directly affected by the incident. Responsibilities may include:

- Coordinating communication with families.
- Gathering and verifying key information.
- Identifying support needs.
- Working alongside safeguarding staff and external agencies.
- Ensuring communication remains compassionate and consistent.

6. Administration and Information Lead

Accurate record keeping is essential during and after a critical incident. Responsibilities may include:

- Maintaining a contemporaneous incident log.
- Recording decisions and actions taken.
- Keeping records of communications.
- Logging visitors and agency involvement.
- Maintaining documentation required for safeguarding, insurance, legal or investigative purposes.

7. Welfare and Recovery Lead

Consideration should be given to identifying a lead person responsible for recovery and wellbeing. Responsibilities may include:

- Coordinating support for pupils and staff.
- Liaising with Educational Psychology and other support services.
- Identifying vulnerable individuals who may require additional support.
- Planning longer-term recovery arrangements.

Whilst not necessarily part of the CIRT itself, schools may also need to identify a senior leader who can maintain the day-to-day running of the school while the incident response is being managed.

All staff should be aware of the school's CIRT structure, how the team is activated and their own responsibilities during an incident.

Individuals identified within the plan should provide appropriate emergency contact arrangements. Schools should ensure business continuity arrangements are in place so that key functions can continue if designated personnel are absent.

Create a Protective Culture

Creating a protective culture is one of the most effective ways of reducing vulnerability and improving preparedness. Security should not be viewed as a standalone activity but should sit alongside safeguarding, health and safety, risk management and wellbeing arrangements. Schools should seek to develop an environment where everyone understands their role in helping to keep the community safe.

The Security Lead should support the school to:

- Conduct regular security and preparedness assessments.
- Identify vulnerabilities relating to people, premises, activities and events.
- Review and update emergency response arrangements.
- Ensure staff understand their responsibilities during different types of incidents.
- Coordinate appropriate training and exercising.
- Maintain effective relationships with emergency services and partner agencies.
- Support a culture of vigilance, reporting and shared responsibility.

Cyber Security and Digital Resilience

Schools are increasingly reliant on digital systems to support safeguarding, attendance, communication, finance, teaching and learning, examinations, and business operations. A significant cyber incident has the potential to disrupt critical functions, compromise sensitive information and affect the school's ability to operate safely.

Schools should ensure that cyber security forms part of their wider risk management, business continuity and critical incident planning arrangements. Consideration should be given to:

- The protection of pupils, staff and financial data.
- Cyber-attacks such as ransomware, phishing and account compromise.
- Loss of access to management information systems, safeguarding records or communication platforms.
- Backup and recovery arrangements.
- Alternative methods of communication and record keeping during ICT outages.
- Staff training and awareness.
- Incident reporting and escalation procedures.

The Cyber Security and Resilience Bill, expected to be introduced as part of the Government's wider cyber resilience agenda, is intended to strengthen cyber security arrangements across critical sectors and supply chains. Whilst schools may not be directly subject to all legislative requirements, they should ensure that they maintain appropriate cyber security controls, follow National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) guidance and regularly review their preparedness for cyber-related incidents.

Schools should also ensure that cyber incidents are included within business continuity exercises and critical incident planning, recognising that a cyber-attack may require activation of both the Business Continuity Plan and the Critical Incident Plan.

Building awareness

Schools should ensure that staff receive regular information about emergency procedures, protective security and reporting concerns.

Age-appropriate discussions about personal safety, risk awareness and emergency procedures may also be incorporated into the curriculum, including through PSHE and safeguarding education where appropriate.

Pupils should be encouraged to report anything that causes concern, including:

- Unusual behaviour.
- Unidentified individuals on site.
- Suspicious items.
- Threatening communications.
- Concerns encountered online.

The National Counter Terrorism Security Office promotes the principles of **See, Check and Notify (SCaN)**, which can support staff in recognising and reporting suspicious behaviour or activity. Schools may wish to incorporate these principles within staff awareness training.

Understanding local risk

Every school should assess risks specific to its location, community and physical environment.

Consideration should include:

- Access routes and entrances.
- Visitor management arrangements.
- Perimeter security.
- Areas of congregation and movement.
- Local transport infrastructure.
- Nearby industrial, commercial or public premises.
- Community risks and environmental hazards.
- Vulnerabilities affecting pupils or staff with additional needs.

Schools should identify suitable locations for evacuation, invacuation and lockdown responses and ensure that these arrangements are regularly reviewed.

Appropriate planning should also take account of PEEPs and the needs of pupils, staff and visitors who may require additional assistance during an emergency.

Security-minded communications

Security is not limited to physical measures such as fencing, locks, access control systems or CCTV. Information management can also contribute significantly to security.

Schools should carefully consider information shared through:

- Websites.
- Social media.
- Newsletters.
- Event publicity.
- Publicly accessible documents.

Individuals intending harm may use publicly available information to identify vulnerabilities or gather intelligence about a site. Schools should therefore consider whether information about events, locations, access arrangements or attendance numbers needs to be restricted until registration or verification processes have been completed. This should be balanced appropriately against community engagement and transparency.

A strong protective culture is characterised by preparedness, vigilance, clear communication, regular review and shared responsibility across the whole school community.

DESIGNING A PLAN

Each school should develop a Critical Incident Plan that reflects its own context, site, community and risks. The plan should provide a structured framework for responding to incidents, emergencies, critical incidents and major incidents, whilst supporting effective communication, safeguarding, business continuity and recovery.

Appendix 1 contains useful contacts and numbers; Appendix 2 contains a preparation checklist; and Appendix 3 contains a template which schools may wish to adapt for local use.

When developing or reviewing a plan, schools should undertake a proportionate assessment of the risks that may affect their setting. These risks will vary depending upon factors such as location, site layout, age range, community use, educational visits, transport arrangements and local infrastructure.

For example, schools located near major roads, railways, industrial premises, watercourses or public venues may face risks and response requirements that differ from

those of other settings. Schools should consider whether identified risks are most likely to result in an incident, emergency, critical incident or major incident and plan accordingly.

Current DfE guidance recommends that emergency planning, security planning and business continuity planning are aligned wherever possible.

The following information may assist schools when developing or reviewing their plans:

1. Basics

The Critical Incident Plan should be concise, practical and straightforward to implement during periods of significant pressure.

The plan should:

- Be reviewed at least annually and after any significant incident, exercise or organisational change.
- Be accessible to those who may need to activate it.
- Be familiar to all staff, with enhanced awareness for those with designated responsibilities.
- Clearly identify roles, responsibilities and escalation procedures.
- Be aligned with safeguarding, security, emergency planning and business continuity arrangements.
- Include arrangements for incidents occurring both during and outside normal school hours.

Consideration should be given to the possibility that some incidents may continue for several days or weeks. Plans should therefore include arrangements for staff rotation, relief, welfare, succession and decision-making throughout an extended response and recovery period.

The plan should address:

- Immediate response actions.
- Ongoing management arrangements.
- Recovery and restoration of normal operations.
- Lessons learned and post-incident review.

Where appropriate, key members of the CIRT should have access to an up-to-date copy of the plan away from the school site. Schools should consider how plans will remain accessible in the event of loss of power, ICT failure, cyber incidents or loss of access to buildings.

When staff are involved in educational visits, the school's Critical Incident Plan should normally be activated through the school's emergency contact arrangements rather than the full plan being taken on the visit. Visit leaders should instead follow educational visits procedures and emergency arrangements, ensuring that the school can coordinate any wider response if required.

2. Contact Information

Accurate contact details are critical during an emergency and should be reviewed regularly. The plan should include:

- Staff emergency contact details.
- CIRT contact arrangements.
- Governors.
- Key LA contacts.
- Emergency services contact information.
- Educational Psychology and safeguarding contacts.
- Site contractors and utility providers.
- Transport operators.
- Insurance providers.
- Keyholders.
- Alternative accommodation providers.
- Parent and carer emergency contact information.

Schools should ensure that arrangements comply with data protection requirements whilst allowing essential information to be shared appropriately during an emergency.

Consideration should also be given to maintaining access to contact information during ICT outages or cyber incidents.

3. Resources

Schools should identify the resources that may be required to support an effective response. This may include:

- Mobile telephones with chargers and power banks.
- Emergency contact lists.
- Site plans.
- Pupil and staff information.
- Hi-visibility identification vests.
- Incident logging materials.
- First aid supplies.
- Copies of emergency procedures.
- Visitor and signing-in records where appropriate.

The plan should also identify alternative arrangements should the school site become unavailable. This may include:

- Alternative administrative accommodation.
- Temporary teaching accommodation.
- Community facilities.
- Partner schools.
- LA premises.

Schools should identify the minimum resources required to maintain critical functions, particularly safeguarding, communication, leadership and business continuity.

4. Emergency Grab Pack

Schools may find it useful to maintain an emergency grab pack that can be removed quickly if evacuation or relocation becomes necessary. The contents will vary but may include:

- A copy of the Critical Incident Plan.
- Contact lists.
- Site plans and utility information.
- Emergency keys or keyholder details.
- First aid information.
- Incident recording sheets.
- Notepads and stationery.
- Mobile phones, chargers and power packs.
- Details of vulnerable pupils, staff or visitors who may require additional support.
- Relevant safeguarding and business continuity information.

Schools should review grab pack contents periodically to ensure information remains current.

5. Practice, Exercising and Review

A plan that has not been practised may be difficult to implement effectively when needed. Schools should ensure that emergency procedures are communicated appropriately and exercised periodically. Exercises may range from discussion-based scenarios through to practical drills. Consideration should be given to practising:

- Evacuation.
- Invacuation.
- Lockdown procedures.
- Communication arrangements.
- Business continuity arrangements.
- CIRT activation.

Following exercises or incidents, schools should conduct a structured review to identify strengths, potential improvements and lessons learned. DfE and ProtectUK guidance emphasise the importance of exercising and reviewing plans regularly.

6. First Aid and Welfare

Schools should maintain clear records of staff holding current First Aid qualifications and ensure adequate cover is available throughout the school day and during educational visits. The plan should identify:

- Qualified First Aiders.
- Locations of first aid kits.

- Automated External Defibrillator (AED) locations where applicable.
- Procedures for obtaining emergency medical assistance.
- Arrangements for supporting the physical and emotional wellbeing of pupils, staff and visitors following an incident.

7. Critical Incident Resource Folder

Schools may wish to maintain an easily accessible Critical Incident Resource Folder, either in hard copy, electronic format or both. This may include:

- The school's Critical Incident Plan.
- Key contact lists.
- Example timelines and action prompts.
- Incident recording sheets.
- Communication templates.
- Business continuity documentation.
- Site plans.
- Safeguarding guidance.
- Educational visits emergency procedures.
- Lockdown, invacuation and evacuation procedures.
- Relevant LA and emergency planning documentation.

The resource folder may form part of the emergency grab pack or be held by designated members of the CIRT. Regular review should ensure that all information remains accurate, accessible and fit for purpose.

MANAGING BOMB THREATS, SUSPICIOUS ITEMS AND HOAX THREATS

Schools nationally and within Cambridgeshire may receive malicious communications, hoax threats and reports of suspicious items. Whilst the vast majority of these incidents prove not to be credible, every threat must be taken seriously and assessed appropriately.

Any bomb threat, suspicious package, malicious communication or threat of serious violence should be reported immediately to the Police and managed in accordance with police advice. Schools should avoid making assumptions about credibility and should not undertake unnecessary searches that place staff or pupils at risk. DfE guidance recommends that schools have clear procedures, supported by checklists and decision-making processes, to assist staff in responding to such incidents.

Schools should notify a Leadership Adviser or their School Improvement Adviser as soon as reasonably practicable following receipt of a threat. Depending upon the circumstances, the LA and other partner agencies may also need to be informed.

Schools should consider maintaining a **Bomb Threat and Suspicious Item Checklist** within their Critical Incident Plan. Relevant staff should know where this information is located and understand how it will be used during an incident.

When dealing with suspicious items, staff may find the **HOT Protocol** helpful:

- **Hidden** – Is the item deliberately concealed?
- **Obviously suspicious** – Does it contain suspicious signs such as wires, batteries, smells or unusual packaging?
- **Typical** – Is it typical of the environment in which it has been found?

If there are concerns about an item, staff should not touch, move or interfere with it and should immediately follow police advice. ProtectUK and DfE guidance provide further information regarding suspicious items and bomb threats.

Communication with parents and carers should be factual, proportionate and guided by police advice where appropriate. Model letters are included within the appendices to support schools should communication be required. Schools should remember that information shared with families may quickly circulate on social media and be reported by local or national media.

Further guidance and templates are available through:

- [DfE School and College Security Guidance](#).
- [DfE Protective Security and Preparedness for Education Settings Guidance](#).
- [ProtectUK resources](#) and [ACT for Education materials](#).

LOCKDOWN, INVACUATION AND EVACUATION PROCEDURES

Schools should ensure that emergency planning addresses a range of possible responses. Whilst all schools routinely practise fire evacuation procedures, some incidents may require people to remain on site or move into buildings rather than evacuate them.

Critical Incident Plans should therefore include arrangements for:

- **Evacuation** – moving people away from danger to a place of safety.
- **Invacuation (Shelter)** – bringing people inside a building and away from external hazards.
- **Lockdown** – restricting movement and securing parts of, or all of, the site when there is a threat from an intruder or another serious hazard.

Schools should recognise that incidents may occur:

- Before or after the school day.
- During break and lunchtimes.
- During community use of the premises.
- Whilst pupils and staff are travelling to or from school.
- During educational visits and off-site activities.

Plans should therefore be sufficiently flexible to respond to different operational circumstances.

Planning for all site users

The school's plans should identify:

- Evacuation routes and assembly areas.
- Alternative assembly or relocation sites.
- Lockdown locations and secure areas.
- Invacuation arrangements.
- Communication methods.
- Roles and responsibilities during activation of procedures.

Schools must also consider the needs of pupils, staff and visitors who may require additional support during an emergency. Where PEEPs exist, schools should consider how these arrangements apply not only to fire evacuation but also to lockdown, invacuation and other emergency scenarios.

Lockdown arrangements

Lockdown procedures should be proportionate to the school's local risks and should reflect the site's layout, age range, community context and security arrangements. Possible triggers may include:

- Serious violence in the local area.
- A reported weapons incident.
- An intruder on site.
- A terrorism-related incident.
- Police advice.
- Hazardous environmental incidents.
- A serious security threat affecting the local community.

Schools should consider a staged approach, allowing escalation where necessary. Many schools use arrangements equivalent to:

1. Partial Lockdown

Implemented where there is heightened risk but no immediate threat inside the school.

Examples may include:

- Restricting external movement.
- Bringing pupils indoors.
- Securing external doors and gates.
- Restricting access to the site.
- Continuing teaching and learning where appropriate.

2. Full Lockdown

Implemented when there is an immediate or significant threat to the school community.

Measures may include:

- Securing rooms and buildings.
- Restricting movement.

- Keeping people away from doors and windows.
- Preventing entry to and exit from the site.
- Maintaining communication with emergency services.

Schools should determine procedures based on local circumstances and the nature of the threat. In all cases:

- Staff should be alerted using a clearly identifiable signal that differs from the fire alarm.
- Emergency services should be contacted if they are not already involved.
- Pupils, staff and visitors should be accounted for as far as is practicable.
- Unaccounted-for individuals should be reported promptly.
- Staff should seek to maintain calm and reassurance.
- Decisions regarding communication with parents and carers should take account of police advice and operational considerations.
- Pupils should not normally be released during a lockdown unless advised by the emergency services.
- Visitors should be managed in accordance with established procedures.

Exercising and rehearsing plans

DfE and ProtectUK guidance emphasise the importance of testing and exercising emergency plans. However, exercises should always be age-appropriate and proportionate to the needs of learners.

For Early Years and many primary settings, it may be appropriate to focus on staff understanding and preparedness rather than involving younger children in formal security-based exercises.

In secondary settings, lockdown and security procedures are more commonly shared and practised with pupils as part of wider security awareness and safety education. Any exercise should be planned carefully, communicated appropriately and reviewed afterwards to identify lessons learned.

Following each exercise or real incident, schools should review arrangements and update procedures where necessary.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES FOR OFF-SITE VISITS

Schools should ensure that emergency arrangements for educational visits are fully integrated into their Critical Incident Plan.

The Cambridgeshire Outdoor Education Adviser provides guidance, training and support for managing emergencies during off-site visits and educational activities. Schools should continue to use Evolve and follow current Outdoor Education Advisers' Panel (OEAP) guidance when planning and managing visits.

Visit leaders should carry appropriate emergency information and be familiar with relevant emergency procedures before departure.

Schools should ensure that:

- Emergency contact arrangements are clear and tested.
- School-based emergency contacts understand their responsibilities.
- Visit Emergency Support Network (VESN) cards are available to visit leaders.
- Emergency information can be accessed outside normal school hours.
- Relevant medical, safeguarding and contact information is available when required.
- Critical incidents occurring on visits can be escalated quickly to the school and appropriate agencies.

In the event of a serious incident during a visit, the visit leader's primary responsibility is the safety and welfare of those involved. The school should then activate its Critical Incident Plan and coordinate communication with parents, the LA, insurers and other agencies as required.

Current OEAP guidance and emergency planning resources should be consulted regularly to ensure that procedures remain aligned with national best practice.

The Outdoor Education Adviser provides guidance, training and advice for managing emergencies off-site and access to the Evolve website for managing off-site visits. Fold up action plans for staff to take with them on visits are available. VESN cards should also be part of the plan. Spare copies are available from the Outdoor Education Adviser.

Guidance on visit emergencies can be found [here](#)

IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN

IMMEDIATE

When responding to a critical or major incident, schools should follow the **SAFER** principle. This provides a structured framework for managing the immediate response, maintaining effective communication and supporting recovery.

Throughout the incident, decisions, actions and communications should be recorded on the school's incident log. Accurate and contemporaneous records may prove essential for safeguarding, insurance, investigations, learning reviews and any future legal proceedings.

S – Stop

Pause briefly to gather information, assess immediate priorities and bring together the appropriate members of the CIRT. Avoid making assumptions. Establish what is known, what is unknown and what requires urgent verification.

Key actions include:

- Convene the CIRT as soon as practicable.
- Confirm who is leading the response.
- Begin and maintain an incident log.
- Allocate roles and responsibilities.
- Consider whether emergency services are required.
- Consider whether the school can continue operating safely.
- Identify an individual responsible for coordinating information.
- Establish communication arrangements.
- Consider immediate safeguarding concerns.
- Activate relevant emergency procedures, including evacuation, invacuation or lockdown if required.

The priority at this stage is always the safety and welfare of pupils, staff and visitors.

A – Assess

Gather and verify factual information. Avoid speculation and ensure key decisions are based upon the best information available at the time.

Questions to consider include:

- What has happened?
- Where and when did it occur?
- Is the incident ongoing?
- Who is involved?
- Are there any casualties?
- Is medical assistance required?
- Are emergency services attending?
- Are there immediate safeguarding concerns?
- Are any pupils, staff or visitors unaccounted for?
- What risks remain?

Information that may need to be gathered includes:

- Names and locations of those involved.
- Details of injuries or welfare concerns.
- Contact details for responsible adults.
- Information from witnesses.
- Information from emergency services and partner agencies.
- Current site conditions and operational impacts.

Schools should ensure that information is continually reviewed as circumstances may change rapidly during an emergency.

F – Formulate

Develop a short-term action plan focused on the next phase of the response. Planning should be dynamic and reviewed regularly as information emerges.

Consider:

- What actions have already been taken?
- What are the immediate priorities?
- Who needs to be informed?
- What resources are required?
- Where will the CIRT operate from?
- How will communication be managed?
- What safeguarding arrangements are required?
- What support may be needed in the coming hours?

Actions may include:

- Activating the Critical Incident Plan.
- Establishing an incident management base.
- Setting up dedicated communication channels.
- Informing the Leadership Adviser, LA and Chair of Governors or equivalent.
- Liaising with emergency services.
- Identifying additional staffing requirements.
- Preparing communication statements.

Plans should focus on achievable actions over the next few minutes and hours rather than attempting to solve every aspect of the incident at once.

E – Execute

Implement the agreed plan and ensure actions are coordinated effectively. The Incident Manager should maintain oversight of progress and ensure that responsibilities are clearly delegated.

Actions may include:

- Deploying additional CIRT members.
- Establishing communication arrangements.
- Implementing safeguarding measures.
- Coordinating with emergency services and external agencies.
- Supporting affected pupils, staff and families.
- Managing business continuity arrangements.
- Maintaining accurate records.

Communication during a critical incident should be:

- Accurate.
- Timely.
- Consistent.
- Compassionate.
- Evidence-based.

The CIRT should prepare a holding statement for enquiries and ensure that all staff use agreed messages. Schools should:

- Communicate quickly with affected families.

- Keep staff regularly updated.
- Inform governors as appropriate.
- Provide information to parents and carers when it is safe and appropriate to do so.
- Regularly review website and social media communications.
- Monitor misinformation and rumours where appropriate.

In the event of a fatality, it is important to remember that notifying next of kin is the responsibility of the Police.

Media enquiries should be managed through the identified Communications Lead and, where appropriate, the LA communications team. Staff and governors should be encouraged not to comment publicly or speculate about events.

In some circumstances, family members may attend the school seeking information or support. Schools should consider establishing a suitable reception area that:

- Is separate from media activity.
- Provides privacy and dignity.
- Allows information to be shared sensitively.
- Provides access to emotional support where required.

R – Reassess

Incidents are dynamic and responses must remain flexible. At regular intervals, the CIRT should pause to evaluate whether the current approach remains appropriate.

Consider:

- Is the plan achieving the desired outcomes?
- Has the risk level changed?
- Are additional resources required?
- Are there emerging safeguarding concerns?
- Is staff welfare being adequately supported?
- Is communication effective?
- Is there a need to escalate or de-escalate the response?

The CIRT should also consider:

- The likely duration of the incident.
- Arrangements for staff rotation and relief.
- Handover arrangements if leadership changes.
- Emerging recovery requirements.

Support may be available through a range of agencies including:

- Educational Psychology Services.
- Safeguarding Services.
- Health professionals.
- Counselling and wellbeing services.
- Social Care.
- Emergency Planning teams.

- Property and Health & Safety teams.
- Faith and community organisations where appropriate.

Schools should consult relevant professionals when determining the nature and duration of ongoing support.

THE RECOVERY PHASE

Recovery begins as soon as the immediate threat or disruption has been stabilised. Effective recovery planning can significantly reduce the longer-term impact on pupils, staff and families.

The pace of recovery will vary according to the nature of the incident and the needs of those affected.

Schools should:

- Continue to provide accurate information.
- Acknowledge the impact of the incident on the school community.
- Maintain regular communication with staff, pupils and families.
- Ensure ongoing safeguarding oversight.
- Monitor the wellbeing of those affected.
- Consider the needs of vulnerable individuals.
- Recognise that recovery may take weeks, months or, in some cases, years.

The Educational Psychology Service can provide advice and support regarding communication, trauma responses and recovery planning. Staff should be provided with guidance on supporting children and young people following traumatic events. Information regarding staff wellbeing and counselling services should also be readily available. The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) should maintain oversight of any ongoing safeguarding concerns and ensure staff are aware of available support services.

The CIRT may need to consider a range of sensitive issues including:

- Attendance at funerals or memorial services.
- Hospital visits where appropriate.
- Expressions of sympathy.
- Support for affected families.
- Assemblies, commemorative activities or acts of remembrance.
- Requests for memorials within the school environment.
- Anniversary planning and communications.

Particular care should be taken when considering permanent memorials, ensuring that the views of families, staff, governors and the wider school community are appropriately considered.

Schools should also remember that communications may be shared publicly and could attract media or social media attention, including on significant anniversaries of the incident.

REVIEW AND LESSONS LEARNED

There should be a formal review whenever the Critical Incident Plan is activated and at least annually thereafter.

The purpose of the review is to:

- Identify strengths in the response.
- Highlight areas for improvement.
- Review communication arrangements.
- Assess the effectiveness of safeguarding and welfare support.
- Update procedures and contact information.
- Improve preparedness for future incidents.

Reviews should take account of feedback from staff, pupils, families and partner agencies where appropriate. Any lessons learned should be incorporated into revised plans, training programmes and future exercises to ensure that the school's preparedness continues to develop over time. Recent DfE and ProtectUK guidance emphasises the importance of exercising, reviewing and continuously improving emergency and security arrangements.

USEFUL CONTACTS AND NUMBERS (see Appendix 1)

This guidance is designed to support schools in developing a structured and staged approach to critical incidents and in developing their individual Critical Incident Plan. Appendix 1 includes various contact numbers for key LA personnel. Other appendices include a range of templates and examples that you may find useful in your planning.

The initial contact should be made to a Leadership Adviser. The table includes their contact numbers and numbers for other LA staff you may find useful. The Leadership Adviser will contact other LA colleagues who can help and assist. This will be discussed with you when you call.

ADDITIONAL SCHOOL SPECIFIC CONTACTS

Many maintained schools have contracts with a variety of organisations within and beyond the LA. You will have school-specific internal and external contacts that you will want to add.

Below is a starter list:

- CIRT members
- SEND Specialist Services Team Manager
- Educational Psychologist
- Health & Safety
- IT Support
- Insurance
- Legal support

- District Team Manager
- Property Adviser
- Chair of Governors
- Site Manager
- Counselling Services
- School Transport Contractors
- Key School Contractors
- Local PCSO
- Key Site Users
- Finance Contact

THE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT TEAM

The Council's Emergency Management Team (EMT) forms part of a 24/7 operational response to civil emergencies and major incidents to ensure that the LA is always contactable by the emergency services and partner organisations. The Council has a duty to operate within the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and other legislation pertaining to resilience and business continuity. The EMT also prepares an Emergency Management Plan, which outlines how the authority would respond to a civil emergency.

EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGISTS

Educational Psychologists (EPs) work closely with schools at a systemic level to promote the wellbeing, inclusion and educational engagement of children, young people and the wider school community. Schools have an allocated link EP who develops an ongoing working relationship with school leaders, SENDCos and other key staff. Following a critical incident, EPs typically provide consultation and advice to school leaders and members of the Critical Incident Response Team, helping them to understand and respond to the psychological impact of the event. EPs support schools to assess needs, communicate sensitively with staff, pupils and families, identify individuals or groups who may require additional support, and access appropriate resources. A key focus is strengthening the capacity of school staff to support recovery and wellbeing, recognising that trusted adults within the school community are often best placed to provide ongoing support.

BUSINESS CONTINUITY

Business Continuity Management (BCM) is the process by which schools identify potential disruptions to their operations and plan how essential functions will continue during and after an incident. Effective business continuity planning helps schools prepare for, respond to and recover from a wide range of disruptions, including critical incidents, major incidents, severe weather, cyber-attacks, utility failures, public health incidents, loss of key staff and loss of access to buildings. DfE guidance recommends that emergency planning, security planning and business continuity arrangements operate together as part of a school's overall resilience framework.

The aim of business continuity planning is not to eliminate disruption entirely, but to ensure that the school's most critical activities can continue or be restored as quickly as possible.

Schools should consider:

- Which activities are essential to the safe operation of the school.
- The consequences if those activities are disrupted.
- The resources required to maintain or restore them.
- The dependencies upon key staff, suppliers, contractors, ICT systems and external organisations.
- Alternative arrangements that could be implemented during an emergency.

The templates in Appendix 7 are intended to support schools in developing proportionate business continuity arrangements as part of their wider Critical Incident Plan.

School Activities

Schools should identify the activities that would be prioritised during recovery following a significant disruption.

The example table in Appendix 7 contains common school functions, but each school should tailor the document to reflect its own circumstances.

Examples may include:

- Safeguarding and child protection.
- Teaching and learning.
- Attendance and welfare monitoring.
- Examinations and statutory assessments.
- ICT and information management.
- Catering and free school meal provision.
- Educational visits.
- Transport arrangements.
- Premises management.
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) provision.
- Early Help and pastoral support.
- Wraparound care.
- Community and lettings activities.

For each activity, schools should record:

- A brief description of the activity.
- When and where it takes place.
- The number of people affected.
- Whether it is statutory or non-statutory.
- Any key dependencies required for delivery.

This process helps identify which functions are most critical to the continued operation of the school.

Assessing Business Continuity Impact

Once activities have been identified, schools should assess the impact of disruption over different timescales.

Consider:

- Immediate impact (0–24 hours).
- Short-term impact (24 hours to 1 week).
- Medium-term impact (1 week to 1 month).
- Longer-term impact where relevant.

The impact may be described qualitatively or assessed using the Impact Chart provided in Appendix 7.

Schools should consider the effect of disruption on:

- Safeguarding and welfare.
- Teaching and learning.
- Health and safety.
- Statutory duties.
- Financial sustainability.
- Reputation.
- Regulatory compliance.
- Community confidence.
- Staff wellbeing.
- Operational effectiveness.

Completing this assessment helps schools identify which activities require the fastest recovery and the greatest level of protection.

Recovery of Time-Critical Activities

After identifying priority activities, schools should determine how those services would be restored following disruption.

For each time-critical activity, schools should identify:

- The minimum level of service required.
- Recovery priorities.
- Key actions necessary to restore the activity.
- Internal resources required.
- External support required.
- Alternative delivery arrangements.
- Recovery timescales.

For example, schools may identify alternative accommodation arrangements, remote working solutions, temporary ICT arrangements or mutual support from partner schools or local services.

Recovery planning should recognise that some incidents may need to be managed over extended periods and that restoration of services may occur in stages.

Dependency and Reliance Mapping

Business continuity planning should also identify key dependencies and relationships.

Schools should consider organisations and individuals the school relies upon. Examples may include:

- Staff and leadership teams.
- ICT providers.
- Utility suppliers.
- Transport providers.
- Catering contractors.
- Premises contractors.
- Safeguarding partners.
- Examination boards.
- LA services.

Schools should consider organisations and individuals that rely upon the school. Examples may include:

- Pupils and families.
- Staff.
- Community users.
- Partner agencies.
- Alternative provision providers.
- Early Years providers.
- Transport providers.
- Neighbouring schools.

Understanding these dependencies helps schools assess vulnerabilities and develop contingency arrangements should key services become unavailable.

Business continuity arrangements should not sit separately from the school's emergency and critical incident planning. The two should be closely aligned.

Critical incidents often have significant operational consequences, and decisions made during the response phase may directly affect recovery. Schools should therefore ensure that business continuity considerations are included within CIRT discussions from an early stage.

Once completed, the business continuity templates in Appendix 7 should be incorporated into the school's Critical Incident Plan and reviewed regularly. Reviews should take place following incidents, exercises, significant organisational changes or at least annually to ensure arrangements remain current, proportionate and effective. DfE guidance emphasises the importance of maintaining, testing and reviewing business continuity arrangements as part of effective emergency preparedness.

Document Control:

Author(s) / Contact:	Chris Meddle, Diane Stygal, Stephen Brown (2019) Phil Nash, Stephen Brown (2021) Rachael Schofield (2026)
Publication Date	September 2021 (Updated September 2026)
Review Date	September 2027
Related Documents	www.oeapng.info section 4
Distribution	All Cambridgeshire Maintained Schools
Previous Versions	2019 and 2021

APPENDIX 1 USEFUL CONTACTS AND NUMBERS

Any Critical Incidents:		
Rachael Schofield	Leadership Adviser Rachael.Schofield@Cambridgeshire.gov.uk	07765 742629
Phil Nash	Senior Adviser for Leadership (Wed-Fri) Phil.Nash@Cambridgeshire.gov.uk	07920 270820
Stephen Brown	Outdoor Education Adviser Stephen.Brown@Cambridgeshire.gov.uk	01480 379677 07879 436541
Communications	Communications@Cambridgeshire.gov.uk	01223 699281 07833 480348 (Out of hours)
Property Issues:		
John Clayton	Education Capital Programme Manager ed.cap@Cambridgeshire.gov.uk	07879 434636
Chris Finch	Head of Facilities Management	07435 735788 01223 715341
Mel Bennett	Compliance Manager (from 02.11.26)	
Rachael Pinion	Strategic Education Capital and Place Planning Manager Rachael.Pinion@Cambridgehire.gov.uk	
Stuart Wood	Strategic Health & Safety Manager	07789 397291
Mike Beales	Head of Insurance Services	07483 400662
Angela Galway	Claims Team Leader, Insurance Services	07940 952041
Louise Torrance	Underwriting officer, Insurance Services	07826 069473
Sarah McAnulty	Underwriting Manager, Insurance Services Sarah.Mcanulty@Westnorthants.gov.uk	07850 854295
Transport Issues:		
Sue Eagle	Passenger Transport Delivery Manager	01223 715598 07557 900963
Martin Kemp	Passenger Transport Development & Quality Officer	07979 703869
Shelley Kingston	Strategic Passenger Transport Manager	01223 714773 07342 700287
Pupil/Staff Issues:		
Jackie Cannell	Acting Education Safeguarding Manager	07391 731118
Dr Joanna Stanbridge	Principal Education Psychologist Joanna.Stanbridge@Cambridgeshire.gov.uk	
Sarah Tabbitt	Head of Targeted Support	07824 569459
Emma Fuller	Head of School Improvement	07881 852441
Health Assured	Maintained schools Employee Assistance Programme	0800 030 5182
YOUnited	Emotional wellbeing and mental health support	0300 3000 830
Other/wider issues:		
John Chapman	Head of ICT Service	01223 935552
Annette Brooker	Head of Early Years and Childcare	01223 714743
Duty Officer	Emergency Management Team	0300 300 1004
Stewart Thomas	Head of Emergency Planning	07803 118550
School Closure	Emergencyschool.closure@cambridgeshire.gov.uk	

APPENDIX 2

Critical Incident Preparation Checklist

Coding: A = In place and up to date B = Requires review/update C = Not applicable

Core Planning

Preparedness Measure	Code (A/B/C)
An up-to-date Critical Incident Plan is in place and reviewed at least annually	
A designated CIRT has been identified	
Named deputies are identified for all key CIRT roles	
Staff know how to activate the Critical Incident Plan	
Out-of-hours and holiday arrangements are included	
Plan reviewed after incidents/exercises	

Leadership and Contact Information

Preparedness Measure	Code (A/B/C)
CIRT contact details are current	
Emergency contact details for staff are available	
Emergency contact details for pupils/families are current	
Leadership Adviser contact details recorded	
Emergency services contacts recorded	
Insurance contacts recorded	

Safeguarding and Vulnerable Learners

Preparedness Measure	Code (A/B/C)
DSL and Deputy DSL arrangements documented	
Vulnerable pupils identified	
Medical needs identified	
PEEPs current where required	
SEND emergency arrangements documented	
Support agency information available	

Site Security and Safety

Preparedness Measure	Code (A/B/C)
Security Lead identified	
Security risk assessments completed	
Visitor management procedures established	
Site plans up to date	
Assembly points identified	
Lockdown procedures documented	
Invacuation procedures documented	
Bomb threat checklist available	

Communications

Preparedness Measure	Code (A/B/C)
Emergency communication procedures documented	
Parent communication templates available	
Media handling procedures documented	
Website/social media arrangements identified	

Educational Visits

Preparedness Measure	Code (A/B/C)
Visit emergency procedures current	
Evolve access available	
VESN information available	
School emergency contact arrangements tested	

Resources and Information Management

Preparedness Measure	Code (A/B/C)
Emergency grab pack available	
Incident recording sheets available	
Paper copies available for key documents	
Spare chargers/power banks available	
Cyber incident arrangements documented	

Business Continuity

Preparedness Measure	Code (A/B/C)
Business Continuity Plan in place	
Critical functions identified	
Alternative accommodation considered	
Supplier dependencies identified	
Recovery priorities documented	

First Aid and Welfare

Preparedness Measure	Code (A/B/C)
Current list of First Aiders available	
AED locations documented where applicable	
Staff wellbeing support identified	
Pupil welfare arrangements documented	

Training Exercising and Review

Preparedness Measure	Code (A/B/C)
Evacuation procedures practised	
Lockdown arrangements tested appropriately	
Scenario exercises completed	
Lessons learned recorded	
Annual review completed	

Critical Incident Resource Folder

Preparedness Measure	Code (A/B/C)
Critical Incident Plan included	
Contact lists included	
Site plans included	
Communication templates included	
Business continuity documents included	

Action Plan Following Review

Action Required	Lead Person	Completion Date

APPENDIX 3 – CRITICAL INCIDENT PLAN TEMPLATE

Name of School Critical Incident Plan

Date:

To be reviewed by:

Note: A version of this document should be developed by each school in association with the Cambridgeshire guidance for handling critical and major incidents. You should use the checklist in Appendix 2 to help ensure you include all the necessary information.

School Details

Information	Details
School Name	
Address	
Telephone Number	
Headteacher	
Chair of Governors	
Date Prepared	
Review Date	

Purpose of This Plan

This plan outlines how the school will prepare for, respond to and recover from incidents, emergencies, critical incidents and major incidents.

School Risk Profile

Risk	Likelihood	Potential Impact	Existing Controls

Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT)

Role	Named Person	Deputy	Contact Number
Incident Manager			
Security Lead			
DSL			
Communications Lead			
Family Liaison Lead			
Welfare and Recovery Lead			
Administration			

Emergency Contacts

Organisation/Contact	Number
Headteacher	
Chair of Governors	

Police	
Fire and Rescue	
Ambulance	
Leadership Adviser	

Invacuation Arrangements

Triggers / Procedures	

Evacuation Arrangements

Item	Details
Primary Assembly Point	
Secondary Assembly Point	
Alternative Relocation Site	

Lockdown Arrangements

Item	Details
Lockdown Signal	
Partial Lockdown Actions	
Full Lockdown Actions	

Communications Plan

Audience	Method
Staff	
Parents	
Governors	
Media	

Business Continuity

Priority Activity	Recovery Priority
Safeguarding	
Teaching	
ICT	
Catering	

Educational Visits

Item	Details
School Emergency Contact	
Evolve Access	
VESN Cards Available	

Welfare and Recovery

Support / Consideration	Details
Educational Psychology	

Counselling Services	
Vulnerable Individuals	

Incident Log

Date/Time	Decision/Action	Person Responsible

Post-Incident Review

Review Item	Details
Lessons Identified	
Changes Required	
Completed By	

APPENDIX 4 – MANAGING A CRITICAL INCIDENT

This timeline is intended as a guide only. Every incident will be different, and actions should be proportionate to the nature, scale and impact of the incident.

Immediate Response

Action	Status/Notes
Ensure immediate safety of pupils, staff and visitors	
Activate evacuation, invacuation or lockdown if required	
Activate the Critical Incident Plan and convene the CIRT	
Begin an incident log	
Notify Leadership Adviser and key contacts	

First 24 Hours

Action	Status/Notes
Maintain communications	
Monitor safeguarding concerns	
Support affected families	
Review business continuity arrangements	

Recovery Phase

Action	Status/Notes
Provide ongoing welfare support	
Liaise with Educational Psychology services	
Monitor attendance and wellbeing	
Review operational arrangements	

Longer-Term Recovery

Action	Status/Notes
Plan for anniversaries and memorial requests	
Conduct lessons learned review	
Update plans and training	

SAFER Prompt Card

STOP – Are people safe?

ASSESS – What do we know?

FORMULATE – What are the priorities?

EXECUTE – Allocate actions and communicate.

REASSESS – Is the current approach appropriate?

APPENDIX 5

SCHOOL CRITICAL INCIDENT RECORDING SHEET

DATE:

INCIDENT:

Date/Time	Who	Details / Action Taken

APPENDIX 6 HOAX THREAT

Model letter A - Letter to be used if a school has not received a threat but parents may be aware of incidents affecting other schools

Dear Parent/Carer

You may be aware, through the media or social media, that a number of schools have received a hoax threat today.

I am writing to reassure you that [School Name] has not received any threat. However, as a precaution, we have reviewed our arrangements and followed the advice provided by the Police and the Local Authority.

The Police assess all reported threats carefully using the information and intelligence available to them and provide guidance to schools accordingly. On this occasion, schools have been advised to remain vigilant, follow established security procedures and report any concerns immediately. The safety and wellbeing of pupils, staff and visitors remains our highest priority. We have appropriate emergency procedures in place, including arrangements for evacuation, invacuation and lockdown if ever required. We regularly review these procedures as part of our wider safeguarding, security and emergency planning arrangements.

We recognise that reports of this nature can cause concern for parents and carers. Hoax threats are designed to create anxiety and disruption, and it is understandable that families may feel worried when they hear such reports. We would therefore ask parents and carers to rely on information provided directly by the school, the Police or other official agencies rather than speculation circulating on social media.

At the present time, there is no indication that any additional action is required at [School Name], and normal school activities continue as planned.

Should the situation change, we will communicate with parents and carers as quickly as possible through our usual communication channels.

Thank you for your continued support.

Yours faithfully

[Headteacher Name]

Headteacher

Model letter B - Letter to be used where the school has received a hoax threat.

Dear Parent/Carer

You may be aware, through the media or social media, that a number of schools have received hoax threats today.

I am writing to inform you that [School Name] was one of the schools that received a threatening communication.

Following receipt of the threat, the school immediately activated its established procedures, contacted the Police and followed all advice provided. The Local Authority and other relevant partners were also informed in accordance with our Critical Incident Plan. The Police take all threats of this nature extremely seriously and assess them using all available intelligence and information. Following this assessment, the threat received by the school was deemed not to be credible, and the advice provided was that the school could continue operating normally. As part of our response, appropriate checks and precautionary measures were undertaken in accordance with police advice. At no stage was there any information to suggest that pupils, staff or visitors were at immediate risk.

We appreciate that receiving this information may cause concern. Threats of this nature are specifically intended to create disruption, anxiety and uncertainty. However, I would like to reassure you that the school acted promptly, followed established procedures and worked closely with the Police and Local Authority throughout. The safety and wellbeing of pupils, staff and visitors remain our highest priority. The school has clear emergency procedures, including arrangements for evacuation, invacuation and lockdown if required. These procedures are reviewed regularly as part of our wider safeguarding, security and emergency planning arrangements. We would ask parents and carers to rely on information provided directly by the school, the Police or other official agencies rather than speculation circulating on social media.

At the present time, the school continues to operate as normal. Should there be any further information that we need to share, we will communicate with parents and carers through our usual communication channels as quickly as possible.

Thank you for your support and understanding.

Yours faithfully

[Headteacher Name]

Headteacher

Optional paragraph (if pupils were evacuated or lockdown procedures were used)

Schools could insert the following paragraph if applicable:

As a precaution, the school implemented elements of its emergency procedures while the situation was assessed. Throughout this period, pupils remained supervised and staff followed established school procedures. We would like to thank pupils, staff and families for their cooperation and patience.

APPENDIX 7 BUSINESS CONTINUITY TEMPLATES

These templates support schools in identifying critical activities, assessing impacts of disruption, planning recovery and maintaining essential services during and after an incident.

School Activities

Key Activity	Brief Description	Statutory/Non-Statutory
Safeguarding		
Teaching and Learning		
Attendance		
SEND Provision		
ICT Systems		
Catering		
Examinations		
Transport		
Site Management		
Wraparound Care		

Business Continuity Impact Assessment

Activity	0-24 Hours	24 Hours-1 Week	1 Week-1 Month
Safeguarding			
Teaching			
ICT			
Catering			
Transport			
Site Management			

Recovery of Time-Critical Activities

Activity	Recovery Actions	Resources Required
Safeguarding		
Teaching		
ICT		
Examinations		
Site Management		

Dependency Mapping - We Rely Upon

Organisation/Person	Purpose	Impact if Lost
ICT Provider		
Utilities		
Transport Provider		
Catering Provider		

Dependency Mapping - Rely Upon Us

Organisation/Group	Purpose	Impact if Lost
Pupils		
Families		
Community Users		
Partner Agencies		

Alternative Accommodation Planning

Item	Details

ICT and Cyber Recovery Planning

Item	Details

Staffing Contingency Planning

Item	Details

Communications Continuity Plan

Item	Details

Lessons Learned and Annual Review

Finding / Lesson	Action Required	Lead Person

Impact chart

You can use this chart to complete to inform your decision making and priorities.

School Critical Incident Impact Assessment Matrix

Impact Area	1. Insignificant	2. Minor	3. Moderate	4. Major	5. Extreme
Service Delivery	Minimal disruption	Some disruption	Significant disruption	School closure >48 hrs and <7 days	School closure >7 days
Health & Safety	Minor first aid incident	Injury requiring medical attention	Serious injury or threat of violence	Multiple serious injuries	Fatality or multiple life-changing injuries
Financial Impact	< £25k	£25k-£175k	£175k-£500k	£500k-£1m	> £1m
Performance	Negligible impact	Limited effect on objectives	Partial failure of objectives	Significant impact	Failure of key objectives
Reputation	Limited concern	Negative local attention	Significant local/regional coverage	Significant regional/national coverage	Sustained national adverse attention
Environment	Negligible impact	Minor local damage	Moderate damage requiring remediation	Significant local damage	Regional/national implications