



CARLTON
ACADEMY TRUST

Carlton Academy Trust
Critical Incident, Disaster Recovery and
Business Continuity Policy

Approved by Trustees:

Roger Butterfield

Date:

August 2023

Next Review:

August 2024



Policy Aims and Scope

This policy supports effective pro-active steps to mitigate the effects of a critical incident or disaster and the maintenance of business continuity through:

- Enabling schools to make a swift and effective response to a critical incident/disaster, and minimising disruption to normal school routines.
- Preventing/minimising injuries or death.
- Detailing support mechanisms following a critical incident/disaster.
- Facilitating effective working with the media.

Definitions

Critical incident - where the operation of a school is affected for less than 24 hours.

Disaster - when a critical incident has a duration greater than 24 hours.

Responsibilities

Trustees are responsible for reviewing and approving this policy on an annual basis. They delegate responsibilities for delivery of its' provisions to the CEO and Director of Facilities and Compliance.

Heads of School are responsible for being aware of the provisions of this policy and acting in accord with it should a critical incident or disaster occur.

Procedures for Dealing with Specific Critical Incidents/Disasters

It is impossible to specify in advance what actions will be taken in each critical incident/disaster, as each may have vastly different circumstances which require differing responses. Therefore, to specify tightly prescriptive actions within this policy is inappropriate and could lead to greater losses. In recognition, following is a description of the general procedures to follow should a critical incident/disaster occur in what are the most likely scenarios facing Trust schools.

Should a school face a critical incident/disaster not specifically mentioned, the guidance would follow the same format as generally prescribed below: Contact the Director of Facilities and Compliance and/or CEO for support, assistance, and advice.

In the event of any critical incident or disaster situation, a Crisis Management Team will be formed, with membership depending on specific circumstances - but will always include the Director of Facilities and Compliance, CEO, and Head of School.

Adverse Weather Conditions

The decision to close a school due to adverse weather conditions (normally snow) can only be made by the Head of School. Where circumstances allow, this decision should be discussed with the Director of Primary (primary schools) or Secondary Executive Headteacher (secondary schools), prior to being communicated to staff, students, and parents/carers. The Director of Primary/Secondary Executive Head will inform the CEO, who may inform the Chair of Trustees dependent on prevailing circumstances.



Wherever possible, the decision to close should be made as early as reasonably practicable. This prevents staff and students from making needless, potentially hazardous journeys, and enables more time for parents/carers to make appropriate care arrangements.

Each Head of School is responsible for ensuring that they have effective systems to communicate school closures to all staff, students, and parents. These commonly include bulk text messages or emails; information on school websites; pre-recorded messages on school telephone lines.

Data Breach, Loss of Data, Internet Outages

Cybersecurity breaches are the most significant business continuity threat facing the Trust, with hackers seizing data which prevents the effective operation of school/Trust. Whenever this is suspected, staff members must immediately report this to the Head of School, who in turn must **immediately** report this to **both** the CEO and Director of Facilities and Compliance. This will then be reported to the Risk Protection Arrangement (Trust Insurers) and the Trusts network management company, who will develop and lead an appropriate response.

The internet is now a business-critical element to the operation of all schools. In recognition, secondary internet service providers have been commissioned for all schools so that services are maintained in the event of an outage of the main provider.

Serious Injury or Loss of Life

Heads of School must report these without delay to the Trust Director of Facilities and Compliance. They will make a report to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) as soon as practically possible, also informing and updating the CEO. Further details can be found in the Trust Health & Safety policy.

Adverse Publicity and Dealing with the Media

Heads of School should immediately report to the CEO any incidence of negative publicity which they reasonably believe could cause significant reputational damage to the Trust. Any contact or requests for comment from the media should immediately be referred to the CEO, who will respond or advise a response to the Head of School.

The Trust favours a pro-active approach rather than declining to comment, due to the inherent negative perceptions of 'No Comments', which the media often responds to by using a more negative commentary of their own.

Staff Shortages

There may be occasions where shortages of staff lead to reduced school services. This predominantly occurs due to reasons of illness, such as the Covid pandemic. If a safe, quality education cannot be maintained - avoiding the excessive use of cover or supply staff - it may be appropriate for some year groups to revert to home learning. Heads of School must gain approval from the Director of Primary or Secondary Executive Headteacher (as appropriate) before these changes are made..

Serious Damage or Loss of Use of a Building

Heads of School must inform the Director of Facilities and Compliance without delay when there is serious damage or significant loss of use of a building or grounds. Initial priorities are to make the area safe, then to advise as to further usage. Where required, contingencies will be developed by the Head of School in liaison with the Director of Facilities and Compliance working with the Director of Primary/Secondary Executive Headteacher, as appropriate.

Loss of Critical Supplies or Services

Heads of School must inform the Director of Facilities and Compliance and CEO without delay. Responses may include using alternative suppliers, partial or full school closures, or other contingencies.

Gas Leaks

When a gas leak is suspected the following actions **must** be taken::

- Do not turn any electrical switches on or off or press any electrical buttons, as these can ignite the gas.
- Do not smoke, use matches or naked flames.
- Open windows and doors to let the gas out.
- Check to see if the gas has been left on or if a pilot light has gone out. If so, turn them off.
- Turn the main gas tap to the "Off" position.
- If gas can still be detected, phone the National Grid (gas) hotline number (0800 111999) from a fixed line telephone (not a mobile phone as this may ignite gas)
- Inform the Head of School as soon as practicable, who will then inform the Director of Facilities and Compliance without delay.

Loss of Utilities

Heads of School should contact suppliers in the event of any loss of utilities, as follows:

Gas national grid 0800 111 999
Electric national grid 088 40 40 90
Yorkshire water 0800 57 35 53

If it appears that there may be a protracted loss of service which threatens the operation of the school, they should contact the Director of Facilities and Compliance for advice. Responses may include measures up to and including school closure.

Bomb Threats and Suspect Packages

Please see the Trust 'Bomb Threat' policy.

Asbestos

Where asbestos is discovered or disturbed, the area must be vacated and secured and the Director of Facilities and Compliance informed without delay.

