



# **POLICY FOR DEALING WITH A DISASTER**

**For St. James' School**

**Date: August 2011**  
**Annual Review**  
**Next Review: August 2012**

- A. **Dealing with a disaster during school hours**
- B. **Dealing with a disaster out of school hours**
- C. **Dealing with a disaster on an excursion or trip**
- D. Dealing with an incident of a runaway/missing child or children

## SECTION A – DEALING WITH A DISASTER DURING SCHOOL HOURS

The following information is given as a guideline only. Each emergency situation will need to have planning individually tailored.

### 1. Responsibilities

In the event of an emergency, it should be made clear who is in overall charge. Under normal circumstances this will be the Headteacher, although she may delegate this responsibility to one of the Senior Management Team. In the absence of the Headteacher, the Head of Prep Department or Head of Senior Department should take charge, and if they are unavailable, the Bursar or other senior member of charge. The Headteacher or person in charge should first of all ensure that the relevant emergency services have been called. She should free herself from as many routine responsibilities as possible and remain for most of the time in her office in order to ensure effective control and communication. Other senior staff responsibilities will be allocated as follows:

- (a) **Communications and records** : maintaining an event log and contacting parents and others, maintaining a communication log. **Bursar**
- (b) **Information and briefings** : ensuring a flow of accurate information **Headteacher**
- (c) **Liaison** with incoming helpers and visitors **Office Staff**
- (d) **Co-ordinating welfare support** among pupils, staff and parents **Designated First Aid Officer**

### 2. Planning

Under normal circumstances the person in overall charge should meet as soon as possible with all members of the senior staff who are available to discuss planning.

### 3. Life-threatening situations

Where there is a life-threatening situation staff should use the fire alarm to evacuate staff and pupils. There may be some situations, e.g. a person carrying a firearm or some other person on the premises making a threat to people's lives, where evacuating pupils could make matters worse. In such situations, where possible the School office should be informed. All staff not involved with the pupils at the time and all members of the Senior Management Team should meet in the Headteacher's office. Decisions will then be made as to how best to deal with the situation. The primary aim should be to preserve life. This should be balanced with the recognition that staff and pupils involved in the incident would need immediate support.

School staff should feel free to contact the police directly in an emergency and are asked to nip a situation in the bud and offer support where doing so will not put pupils at risk. Situations are often effectively tackled at an early stage before they escalate. However, members of staff should avoid

provoking intruders.

The Headteacher or person in charge should ensure that a member of staff meets the emergency services at the School office (or elsewhere if deemed appropriate). Once they have arrived it should be borne in mind that ultimately the police can take control. In practice there is likely to be a partnership.

#### **4. Casualties on the campus**

Where there are casualties the Matron should provide the person in charge with an up-to-date disabilities and medical problems list, including a list of pupils who should not be given a blood transfusion. The list might be copied for the ambulance incident manager. Where a disaster involves casualties on the school campus, one member of staff should take the names of those injured and the hospital to which they were taken. One of the Senior Management Team should inform parents as soon as possible.

When deaths have occurred, parents should be told in person as soon as possible

- (a) at home or at work by a member of the Senior Management Team or by the form tutor where this is deemed appropriate. Staff on such duties should travel by taxi and should be accompanied by a member of the police;
- (b) at home or at work by the police;
- (c) on site by a member of the Senior Management Team if parents arrive at the School. Informing parents should only take place following liaison with the police.

When parents arrive at the School after a disaster, which has taken place during the School day, it will need to be decided whether pupils not directly affected by the incident should be allowed to accompany parents home. Consideration will also be needed for the boarders. Pupils affected in some way by the incident should generally be allowed home if accompanied by a parent. Any pupils going home with a parent should sign out at the School office. Consideration should also be given to setting aside the Markham Hall or classrooms for briefing and counselling parents.

Where pupils or staff are injured, the Accident Book must be filled in.

#### **5. Evacuation**

In the event of one or more of the School buildings needing to be evacuated, consideration should be given to using the Paddock, Dining Hall, Markham Hall, Prep Department (to evacuate Senior Department), Senior Department (to evacuate Prep Department).

#### **6. Sending pupils home**

When this is necessary, pupils should have a letter to take with them if possible. Parents should be telephoned to make arrangements and where direct contact is not possible, e.g. for boarders, arrangements should be made to look after the pupils safely.

#### **7. Briefing staff and pupils**

For all incidents it will need to be decided which pupils are to be briefed on the incident and by whom. The first briefing should be given on the day of the incident where possible to quash any rumours or untruths. Where briefings of pupils take place concerning traumatic incidents, staff should be provided with written briefing notes. Briefings of pupils and staff may contain the following elements:

- (a) a factual account of the problem
  - (b) details of any arrangements necessary as a result of the problem
  - (c) details of help that is available
  - (d) information of coping with the press. Pupils should be advised not to talk to the press unless arrangements have been made for them to do so by a member of the Senior Management Team.
- Subsequently, briefings may be undertaken on a daily basis with staff meeting at the beginning of each day and being told what, if anything, is to be communicated to pupils in the way of further briefing. Subsequent briefings might advise staff and pupils of sources available help e.g. counselling.

When an incident occurs in the holiday, consideration should be given to informing staff, (including support staff) by letter before their return.

## **8. Parents and Governors**

The senior member of staff in charge should ensure that parents and governors are kept informed by letter where applicable. Information should be given to parents of sources of help that are available.

## **9. Sources of help**

Staff, pupils and parents may need help in coping with problems. Consideration should be given to contacting the following:

School Matron  
Social Services  
CRUSE etc.

Parents and staff should be informed of the various sources of help. Parents should decide which is the most appropriate for their children where this is necessary.

## **10. Home visits**

Consideration should be given to staff visiting the homes of pupils seriously affected by an incident. This should generally be from tutors. Staff might volunteer for such visits but each visit should be sanctioned by a member of the Senior Management Team. Such a visit might involve the discussion of sources of help available.

## **11. After the incident**

Consideration should be given to setting up meetings of pupils and parents seriously affected by traumatic incidents to talk things through and to help one another. The Senior Management Team should decide who is to lead such a group. Leaders and groups may need to be advised by educational psychologists.

## **12. Talking about traumatic incidents.**

Decisions should be made on whether the incident is to be discussed in School in a controlled way. If it is, it should be decided how this is to take place.

## **13. The Press**

The person in charge of an incident, normally the Headteacher or the Chairman of the School Council, should be the one who formally speaks to the press. Remember that through the press, the School will be able to contact parents and people in the local community.

## **14. The Police**

The Police may need an incident room.

## **15. Funerals**

Where deaths have occurred, consideration should be given to closing the School on the day of funerals as a mark of respect. Consideration should be given to at least one member of staff being present at each funeral to represent the School. Decisions will need to be taken as to whether staff and pupils are to be given time off School to attend funerals, and if so, who. Floral tributes or donations to charities will need to be considered.

### **SECTION B. DEALING WITH A DISASTER OUT OF SCHOOL HOURS**

1. Ensure the safety of all pupils. Consider which building would provide the most suitable accommodation, e.g. The Markham Hall or Dining Hall.
2. Inform the Headteacher, Bursar and Chairman of the School Governors.
3. Proceed as during School hours.

### **SECTION C. DEALING WITH A DISASTER ON AN EXCURSION OR TRIP**

This written guidance should be held by each member of the party.

1. Establish the nature and extent of the emergency.
2. Make sure all other members of the party are accounted for and safe.
3. If there are injuries, establish their extent and administer appropriate first aid if you have been trained and feel capable. Be aware of consequences that might follow were you to give incorrect treatment. Have regard to your own safety vis-à-vis blood contact. Call the appropriate emergency services.
4. Advise other staff present of the incident and of actions taken. Decide, if appropriate, who is in charge and responsibilities to be undertaken by each adult member of the group.
5. Ensure that an adult accompanies any casualties to hospital. If only one adult is available in the circumstances a decision will have to be reached as to the best course of action.
6. Ensure that remaining pupils are adequately supervised and arrange for an early return to base.
7. Arrange for one adult to remain at the site of the incident to liaise with the emergency services until the incident is over and all children are accounted for.
8. Contact a senior member of staff:

Headteacher 01472 505880 (home), 07912610094 (mobile)  
Director of Community Outreach – 07925 292911 (mobile)

Head of Senior Department - 01469 530622 (home)

Control access to telephones until the senior member of staff has contacted parents and others directly involved. Give full details of the incident including

- Name/s of person/s involved
- Nature, date, location and time of the incident
- Details of injuries etc.
- Names and telephone numbers of those involved
- Action taken so far
- Telephone numbers for future communication

9. No members of staff should discuss matters with the media.
10. The senior member of staff will contact the Headteacher and establish who will take charge of the situation and what immediate action will be taken. The Headteacher will contact the Chairman of the School Council, 01472 840179.
11. The party leader should, at the first opportunity, make notes on the incident as should other people involved. A record should be kept of the names and addresses of any witnesses or people involved.
12. Legal liability should not be discussed.
13. Ensure accident forms are completed as soon as possible.
14. Inform parents of any delays.

#### **SECTION D. DEALING WITH AN INCIDENT OF A RUNAWAY/MISSING CHILD/CHILDREN.**

1. As soon as an absence is noticed or reported, a thorough search of the premises should be conducted.
2. The fire bell to be sounded to evacuate buildings and registers to be taken. Ask pupils and staff for information.
3. Further searches to be made by staff beyond immediate premises, e.g. College Street, grounds around The Towers.
4. Parents to be contacted by Headteacher or member of the Senior Management Team.
5. Police to be contacted by Headteacher or member of the Senior Management Team.
6. Headteacher or member of the Senior Management Team to write up notes.

#### **Missing boarder policy**

In the event of the housemaster / housemistress on duty noticing the unaccounted-for absence of a boarder:

1. **Ask the other boarders** if they are aware of the missing person's whereabouts.
2. Ask a boarder to **check showers / toilets**.
3. If other boarders are not aware of their whereabouts, **phone their mobile.** \*1 [This could be done before point 2. at the duty staff's discretion.]

4. If there is no response from their mobile, **ask senior pupils to assist in a thorough search** of likely locations (music practice rooms, Gisby, Markham Hall, Masters Room, basketball court, etc.)
5. **Contact the member of staff on duty in the other house** so that they are aware and can be ready to assist with cover etc if necessary.
6. **Consider sounding the fire alarm**, depending on the level of suspicion that there is a genuine problem, the time of day (e.g. less likely if after younger boarders lights out), etc. <sup>\*2</sup>
7. **Consider other possible locations**, such as day pupil friends' houses, and contact them as appropriate.
8. If there is sufficient staff cover, **drive around** local streets / possible locations.
9. **Consider involving a member of senior management** at this stage – who will then advise on the decision as to whether to contact the police at this point.
10. If no member of senior management is available, **consider contacting police directly**.

**PLEASE NOTE that depending on the time of day, the age, history and character of the missing boarder(s), and other extenuating circumstances, intermediate steps can be missed out, and senior management or police contacted earlier in the process. In particular, the absence of a boarder after lights out should be treated as a very serious incident.**

NOTE: The likelihood of boarders going missing is reduced by the small size of the boarding houses, meaning that it is relatively easy for the housemaster/housemistress on duty to ensure that every few hours they have at least set eyes on each boarder in their care. This is encouraged in any case as it helps to create an environment of care and positive, open relationships. Naturally, due regard is paid to boarders' privacy, for example by always knocking on a bedroom door before entry.

**ON FINDING THE MISSING BOARDER:**

1. Discuss the situation with the boarder such that in future they let you (or at least other boarders) know if they are going somewhere more 'out of the way' (such as the music practice rooms).
2. If necessary, raise the issue in a meeting with the house to prevent future incidents.
3. If the boarder was off-site without permission, or infringing the school rules in any other way, issue suitable reprimand and / or sanction (most obviously gating).
4. Record the incident in the house diary, and the Head's serious incident book (??? Is this the right name?) if relevant.

<sup>\*1</sup> List of boarders mobile numbers should be available to all house staff and in the house office in the event of cover by non-regular staff – and checked regularly that they are up to date (asking boarders to inform housemaster / housemistress if they change their mobile number).

<sup>\*2</sup> Please bear in mind that the fire alarm is also heard in the other house, and that it is important that the boarders do not become complacent about the fire alarm sounding [of course if there is a fire alarm practice due in any case, sounding the alarm can serve a dual purpose].

## **SECTION E – DEALING WITH THE NECESSITY OF CLOSING THE SCHOOL**

There are a number of occasions when it may be necessary to close all or part of the School .e.g – severe weather conditions which make it impossible for a sufficient number of staff to get to school or where the safety of staff/pupils around the campus is compromised.

The decision is to be made by members of the SMT in negotiation with the Chairman of the Governors, whether whole or part of the school is to be closed.

Once this has happened, the following procedures must be followed:

1. The boarders should return to the boarding houses as soon as it is ascertained that there is adequate staff cover.
2. The day pupils should be gathered together in a safe place or places, depending on the incident which has necessitated the closure of the school.
3. The parents should be contacted (both by email and text and telephone if necessary) and asked to collect their child/ren at the earliest opportunity. The parents should be advised that they will be informed through the school website (and local radio) when the School will reopen. Key staff must remain until all pupils have been collected. Children must not be allowed to walk home or leave with anyone else, until there is confirmed authorisation from parents.
4. If the school is closed for more than day, all teachers should set work to ensure that the pupils' education is not compromised as a result of the closure. This can be emailed to Becky ([becky.fisher@saintjamesschool.co.uk](mailto:becky.fisher@saintjamesschool.co.uk)) who will then disseminate it to parents via the school's website. If a teacher needs to contact the school, this is possible by using the school's official mobile number – 07811 226492.
5. Teachers should also look at the school's website to find out when the school will reopen.