

DEALING WITH DISASTER

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Each emergency situation will inevitably require its own particular response and the planning will therefore have to be individually tailored to meet the unique circumstances of the occasion. However, the following guidelines should inform that planning.

Responsibilities

In the event of an emergency the Director of Studies is in overall charge, unless this responsibility has been delegated to a member of the Senior Management Team. In the absence of the Director of Studies, a designated member of the SMT, aided by other key staff (Health and Safety Officer) will take responsibility for emergencies in their respective buildings.

In the event of an emergency, the person in charge should:

- * Notify the relevant emergency services.
- * Free himself or herself from as many routine responsibilities as possible and remain in his or her office to ensure effective control and communication.
- * Meet with other senior or key staff to discuss planning.

Life Threatening Situations

Life threatening situations will require an immediate response and that response will vary according to the nature of the threat.

* In the event of a fire, a bomb scare, an explosion or other damage to the building, an appropriate response would be to evacuate students and staff from the building by sounding the fire alarm.

* In the event of an intruder on the premises making a threat to people's lives, evacuation may only make matters worse. Staff should contact the police by mobile directly in an emergency and are encouraged to intervene and offer support where doing so will not put themselves or students at risk. Situations are often most effectively tackled at an early stage before they escalate. However, members of staff should avoid provoking intruders.

* The person in charge should ensure that a member of staff meets the emergency services at reception, or elsewhere if deemed appropriate.

Casualties

Where a disaster involves casualties on the school site, a member of staff should take the names of those injured and the hospital to which they were taken. One of the senior staff should inform parents/agents as soon as possible. Where deaths have occurred, parents/agents should be told as soon as possible:

- (a) by contacting parents direct when it is known that they have a good command of English
- (b) by contacting their educational agent when the agent is known to be reliable
- (c) by contacting the appropriate embassy in London.

Students affected in some way by the incident should not be allowed to return to their accommodation until staff are sure that **either** an appropriate adult will be there to meet them **or, in the case of older students (18+)**, they will receive adequate support from a member of their peer group and preferably of their nationality. Consideration should be given to setting aside offices/classrooms for briefing and counselling students.

Briefing Staff and Pupils

Where an incident occurs during a school holiday, consideration should be given to informing staff (including non teaching staff) before their return. For all incidents it will need to be decided which students are to be briefed on the incident and by whom. In general briefings should be carried out by senior staff. The first briefing should be given on the day of the incident wherever possible to quash any rumours – this may need to be done by telephone or e-mail. Where briefings of students take place concerning traumatic incidents, staff should be provided with written briefing notes.

Briefings of students and staff may contain the following elements:

- (a) a factual account of the problem or incident
- (b) details of any arrangements necessary as a result of (a)
- (c) details of help that is available
- (d) information on coping with the media. Pupils should be advised not to talk to the media.

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 students in the way of further briefings.

Parents

The senior member(s) of staff in charge should ensure that parents/agents are kept informed by letter where applicable. Where parents/agents need to contact school for advice they should be advised whom they should contact - normally a senior member of staff.

Sources of Help

Staff, students and parents/agents may need help on coping with problems. Consideration should be given to contacting the following:

- social services
- local representatives of national and religious groups
- relevant embassies

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.

Consideration should be given to setting up meetings of students seriously affected by traumatic incidents to talk things through and to help one another. Leaders and groups may need to be assisted by educational psychologists from the pupil support service.

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

The Media

The member of staff in overall charge of an incident should be the one who speaks formally to the media. Consideration should be given to briefing the media on a daily basis.

The Police

The Police may need an incident room.

School Telephone

Consideration should be given to having the main telephone manned in the evening following an incident.

Health and Safety Issues

Where necessary, prime consideration should be given to health and safety issues.

These include:

- (a) Isolating electrical, gas and water systems in the event of damage to a building
- (b) Having electrical systems tested by a qualified electrician before using them again
- (c) Having electrical equipment tested where it has suffered damage.