

HANDEL HOUSE SCHOOL
Northholme, Gainsborough, Lincs. DN21 2JB
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HANDEL HOUSE SCHOOL
CRITICAL INCIDENTS POLICY

This policy which applies to the whole school including the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is available on the school website and upon request from the school office.

Legal status: This policy should be read in conjunction with the current version of:

- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Health and Safety (First-Aid) Regulations 1981
- Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
- Civil Contingencies Act 2004
- Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025
- Martyn's Law
- DfE Emergency Planning Guidance
- UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018
- Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014

Last Review	October 2025
Revised	June 2026
Next Review	September 2026

Policy Owner: Headteacher/Proprietor
Approved By: Advisory Board
Review Date: Annually
Date of Next Review: September 2026

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,1.Introduction

Handel House School has set procedures which must be followed in response to a major critical incident in the vicinity of the School, or to a major critical incident within the premises of the School. A **major critical incident** from our School's perspective is an unexpected, serious event or situation that significantly disrupts the normal operation of the school and poses a substantial risk to the safety, wellbeing, or security of pupils, staff, or the wider school community. Such an incident requires an immediate, coordinated response beyond routine school procedures and may involve external emergency services or other agencies to manage the situation and support recovery. Therefore the purpose of this policy is to minimise risk to pupils, staff and visitors, provide a clear framework for responding to critical incidents, support effective communication with emergency services and families, and enable Handel House School to recover safely following an incident.

This policy covers such incidents as:

- A fire or other emergency in School
- A major fire in the vicinity of the School
- A reported incident/civil disturbance in the local community (with the potential to pose a risk to pupils and staff)
- An intruder on the School site (with the potential to pose a risk to pupils and staff) - Martyn's Law
- A warning being received regarding a risk locally, of air pollution (smoke plume, gas cloud etc)
- The close proximity of a dangerous dog roaming loose
- Adverse weather
- An outbreak of pandemic disease
- Bomb threats
- Utility failure (gas, water, electricity)
- Structural collapse
- Serious medical emergency including the death of a pupil or member of staff
- Serious assault
- Missing child
- Hazardous substance spill

2. General Principles

The procedures outlined in this policy should be seen as a sensible and proportionate response to any external or internal incident which has the potential to pose a threat to the safety of the pupils and staff in the School. The procedures aim to minimise disruption to the learning environment whilst ensuring the safety of all pupils and staff.

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It is recognised that the news of a major critical incident near the School, or within the School, could spread panic. Pupils and staff should remain calm and follow staff instructions.

It is also recognised that parents will be concerned for the safety and welfare of their children. By publishing this policy to parents it is hoped that they will be reassured that their children will be looked after.

3. Types of Procedure:

- If a major critical incident occurs which requires the evacuation of the building then the fire alarm will be sounded and pupils and staff will follow the usual fire drill procedures
- The procedures that the School will follow in the incident of a fire are outlined in **Appendix 1 - Fire Procedures**
- If a major critical incident occurs which requires the invacuation of all pupils and staff, then a member of staff will instigate Lockdown, with a verbal signal of LOCKDOWN, LOCKDOWN, LOCKDOWN transmitted throughout the School and playground and accompanied with short, sharp blows on a whistle. The persistent sounding of the school bell internally will also signal lockdown.
- The procedures that the School will follow in the incident of a lockdown are outlined in **Appendix 2 - Lockdown Procedures**
- If an incident occurs relating to adverse weather the procedures that the School will follow are outlined in **Appendix 3 - Adverse Weather Procedures**

4. Major Critical Incident Occurring over the School Day:

- Any incident or development will be communicated to parents as soon as is practicable
- Handel House School will keep lines of communication open with Emergency Services as they are best placed to offer advice as the situation unfolds. The School site may or may not be cordoned off by Emergency Services depending on the severity of the issue that has triggered the incident. Emergency Services will support the decision of the Headteacher/Proprietor regarding the timing of communication to parents.
- It is possible that mobile phone networks might be compromised. For this reason all pupils and staff will be required to stay in the designated building until a member of staff gives permission for people to leave. In the case of a major critical incident in the vicinity, this could be up to 24 hours after the event. Remember the advice from the Government is to stay in until it becomes clear

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what the issues are, how widespread the damage is, and how safe it is for pupils and staff to start making their way home.

- Parents must try not to make their way to School - instead the parents should expect the School to keep their children here at Handel House or at a designated location (Leisure Centre, Gainsborough) until it is safe for parents to come and collect their children.
- Parents are asked not to travel to School unless instructed to do so. This enables emergency services to access the site safely and allows staff to focus on pupil welfare.
- It is probable that, in the event of a critical incident, the Headteacher/Proprietor will close the School to outside personnel (apart from the Emergency Services) at least in the short term - and until it is clear that it is safe to reopen the gates.
- As information becomes available, we will endeavour to post information via email.
- For some major incidents it is possible that decontamination may be necessary. The Emergency Services are well equipped to decontaminate large numbers of people very quickly. However, it is very important for individuals not to spread contamination before they have been dealt with by health service personnel. In these circumstances it is particularly important for parents not to make their way to School.
- In the event of a prolonged or severe scenario, the Local Authority has the capacity to provide humanitarian assistance by establishing a reception centre for friends and family outside the cordoned area.
- Following a major critical incident it is unlikely that the School will reopen for several days. Notices about reopening will be published on the School website, and sent via email.

5. Major Critical Incident Occurring over the Weekend or during the Holidays:

- If a major critical incident occurs over the weekend it is possible that Handel House School will be closed on Monday morning. If this situation occurs then notices will be posted on our website and sent via email. There will be a member of staff at the front gate to give advice to those who make their way to School. In these circumstances please check the school website and your email daily.
- Note that we will also follow this procedure in the case of an outbreak of disease (pandemic) where the School Advisory Board and/or Government (local or national) advise us that schools should be closed in order to limit the spread of the infection.

6. Responsibilities

The Headteacher/Proprietor together with the School Advisory Board will ensure:

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- appropriate policies, procedures and checks are in place and reviewed from time to time.
- these policies and procedures are implemented and adhered to.
- an appropriate system for carrying out training is in place.
- suitable and sufficient risk assessments of intruder access are carried out.
- new members of staff receive a Major Critical Incident briefing as part of their induction procedure, and that Major Critical Incident training is undertaken by the whole staff.
- fire practices are conducted, to effectively prove evacuation procedures, at appropriate intervals, but at least termly and are recorded and retained.
- action plans, Lockdown precautions and evacuation procedures, resulting from fire risk assessments, are implemented, that fire escape routes are kept unobstructed, and that control measures for controlling the risk from fire are maintained.
- for any site users with disabilities, appropriate Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs) have been prepared and disseminated as required. Appropriate reasonable adjustments will be made to support pupils with SEND during evacuation or lockdown.
- Inspections and tests on CCTV and alarm systems are carried out termly to ensure their continued effectiveness.
- That all Major Critical Incidents are recorded; decisions logged; communications retained; incident reports completed and actions monitored in chronological order to include: time, action taken, by whom, advice received, decisions made.
- That any personal information shared during emergency situations will be managed in accordance with UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018
- That should the media be involved, only the Headteacher/Proprietor or a nominated Deputy should speak with them.
- That arrangements are made for emotional wellbeing, counselling and post-incident support for pupils and staff. Particular consideration will be given to staff directly involved in traumatic incidents and arrangements made for a phased return where appropriate.
- That following any Major Critical Incident there will be a debrief, discussion on lessons learned and a policy review.

Critical Incident Management Team

Role	Responsibility
Headteacher/Proprietor	Overall Incident Lead
DSL	Safeguarding and Pupil Welfare
EYFS Manager	EYFS Co-ordination
Advisory Board	Strategic support/business continuity

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Communication Hierarchy

During a critical incident communication should follow this order:

Emergency Services → Staff → Parents → Advisory Board → Media

Business Recovery

After the Major Critical Incident has passed the School will consider:

- Reopening arrangements
- Temporary accommodation
- Continuity of education
- Counselling support
- Insurance
- Communication with regulators
- Record keeping
- Review of lessons learned

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Appendix 1 - Fire Procedures

In the event of a Fire or Emergency, it is necessary that Handel House School has an action plan for the safe evacuation of the School premises, and a method of accounting for pupils, staff and visitors. The Headteacher/Proprietor together with the DSL and EYFS Manager have responsibility for supervising any evacuation, and will give instructions either directly or via certain members of staff.

1. If you discover a fire or emergency situation, it is important to spread the word urgently, but calmly. Shout FIRE or EMERGENCY until an alarm has been sounded by breaking the glass on one of the red boxes on the walls of the School by all exits (There are 4 - labelled A, B, C and D). This will sound the alarms throughout the School.
2. Vacate the building in silence by the nearest safe exit and assemble in the School playground close to the double gates on Charles Street. All fire routes are protected by magnetic fire doors which will close automatically after 30 seconds.
3. The Fire Assembly Area for the whole School is the playground. Pupils will assemble in lines according to their year group. Visitors are to assemble with staff. Any pupil away from their year group at the time the alarm is sounded should, in all cases, return to their own year group line-up.
4. A simple procedure of checking pupils, staff and visitors will then take place. The Headteacher/Proprietor will take the school register, staff signing in/out sheets and visitor book to the muster area. In the Headteacher/Proprietor's absence it is the responsibility of the DSL or EYFS Manager to do the same.
5. In the case of a significant emergency posing a threat to the on-site Assembly Point, the gates on Charles Street will be unlocked and the children and adults walked to the Leisure Centre, Gainsborough.
6. No person should re-enter the School until authorised by the Fire and Rescue Service or the Headteacher/Proprietor

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Appendix 2 - Lockdown Procedures

With such a small staff (6), all staff will have the authority to instigate lockdown. Staff will be alerted to the activation of the lockdown procedure plan by a recognised signal, transmitted throughout the school which will consist of the repeated verbal instruction 'LOCKDOWN, LOCKDOWN, LOCKDOWN' accompanied by short, sharp blows on a whistle. Lockdown will only end following an 'ALL CLEAR' given personally by the Headteacher/Proprietor or DSL/EYFS Manager in their absence.

On hearing this signal:

- Pupils who are outside of the school buildings are to be brought inside as quickly as possible by the staff on supervisory duty
- Those inside the school should remain in their classrooms;
- All staff are to ensure all external doors and, as necessary, windows are locked. (Depending on the circumstances, internal classroom doors may also need to be locked where possible). Once in lockdown mode, staff should notify the head/DSL immediately, where safe to do so, using the most appropriate available method, of any pupils not accounted for. No member of staff should leave a place of safety to conduct a search unless directed by the Emergency services.
- The headteacher/proprietor will return to the office to monitor the CCTV;
- Staff should encourage the pupils to stay calm;
- As appropriate, a member of staff should establish communication with the Emergency Services as soon as possible;
- If necessary, parents should be notified, as soon as it is practicable to do so, via email or phone;
- Pupils will not be released to parents during a lockdown;
- If it becomes necessary to evacuate the building, the fire alarm will be sounded and standard fire evacuation procedures followed;
- Staff should always await further instructions via email and text;
- During the lockdown, staff will keep agreed lines of communication open but not make unnecessary calls as this could delay more important communication;
- Examples of discreet communication channels might be:
Where staff have access to the internal email system then they should access their account and await further instruction. Email to be used to communicate instructions via text message in an emergency. Emergency contact numbers for all pupils and staff are kept on the staffroom noticeboard, in the office, and in all medical kits.
- Free movement may be permitted within the building (Partial Lockdown) depending upon circumstances. All situations are different. Once all staff and pupils are safely inside, senior staff will conduct an ongoing and dynamic risk assessment based on advice from the emergency services. This can then be communicated to staff and pupils. Partial lockdown is a precautionary measure but puts the school in a state of readiness (whilst retaining a degree of normality) should the situation escalate. In the event of an air pollution issue, air vents can be closed (where possible) as an additional precaution. Emergency Services will advise as to the best course of action in respect of the

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prevailing threat.

- 'Full lockdown': this signifies an immediate threat to the school and may be an escalation of a partial lockdown. Classroom doors to be locked wherever possible or barricaded accordingly; windows closed and locked; blinds drawn; pupils to sit quietly out of sight. Nursery and Kindergarten pupils are to be brought upstairs as quickly and as safely as possible and relocated safely into the library or any other secure classroom.
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Implementation

It is of vital importance that the School's lockdown procedures are familiar to all staff and to all pupils. To achieve this, a lockdown drill will be undertaken at least annually, with additional drills as appropriate. Pupils should be aware of the plan. (Regular practices will increase their familiarity). Parents, too, should know that Handel House School has a Lockdown plan, and a copy of this policy will be on the School's website.

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Appendix 3 - Adverse Weather Procedures

Handel House School will endeavour to stay open for as many pupils as possible for as long as possible, and will aim to return to normality as soon as possible during any period of inclement weather, including snow, flooding, extreme heat (UKHSA guidance); ice, thunderstorms and high winds. School will refer to Met Office National Severe Weather Warnings at all times.

Please note that no pupil, parent or staff member should travel to school if they cannot do so safely.

Handel House School will restrict its opening if, in the opinion of the Headteacher/Proprietor, based on the best advice available at the time, the risk to pupils, parents and staff from travelling to school or remaining on site is too great.

If the adverse weather is likely to disrupt learning for more than 24 hours we anticipate that we would move to remote learning wherever possible. This would, at a minimum, involve posting work via email for pupils to complete.

M.Raisborough
Revised June 2026

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