



## **Stepping Stones Pre-School** **Disaster Recovery Plan, Policy and Practice.**

This Policy aims to ensure that all staff and committee are can deal with any crisis affecting the running of Stepping Stones preschool and its staff, children and families. All staff members and committee must be clear about their responsibilities and duties at such times. It is the responsibility of the play leader and deputy to ensure that the contact lists are kept up to date and that they keep the personal information that it contains as confidential.

The pre school maintain an “Open Door” Policy for parents and visitors but this must be balanced against the likelihood of serious threats to staff and children and their families. These threats may take the form of –

- Theft of equipment and/or personal belongings of either staff or pupils.
- Vandalism of equipment and/or premises.
- Violent pupils threatening either fellow pupils and/or staff.
- Violent parents threatening either pupils and/or staff.
- Unknown intruder threatening either pupils and/or staff.

All visitors must sign the visitors’ book, this ensures visitors’ safety if a fire evacuation or drill should one take place during their visit.

All staff should feel confident in issuing a polite challenge to any visitors; “Can I help you?” or “Are you lost?”. If any member of staff feels uneasy about the presence or behaviour of any visitor they should report their concerns immediately to the Play Leader who should notify the school office. Any serious concerns or threats should follow the procedures below.

Try to categorise the intruder and the degree and type of threat posed. Any knowledge of the intruder, their motivation or background, will be of help for the school and possibly the emergency services should they become involved. All staff and children should come inside until the risk of threat has passed.

Look out for people who are not staff but appear to have authority to be there. Wearing a suit, carrying a clipboard or wearing overalls are all good cover for a sneak thief.

- Do not invade personal space, this could trigger violent confrontation.
- Avoid an aggressive stance such as finger wagging or folded arms.
- Be polite. Stay calm; speak gently, slowly and clearly.
- Explain your authority to challenge them if it is questioned.
- Always tell another person when going to speak to possible intruders.
- Avoid arguments.
- Never place your hand on a potentially aggressive intruder.
- Do not turn your back, and if you leave the room, do so backwards.
- Try to leave yourself an escape route which you have planned on entry to the area.
- Be on the look out for weapons.
- If there is more than one intruder, do not confront them on your own, seek support first or enlist the help of the police.
- If you do not feel sufficiently confident to challenge an intruder, do not do it. Seek help; no-one will think the less of you.

If it is deemed that the following are a real risk the William Barnes office should be phoned to contact the police. If there is no answer to their phone then the playleader will call 999 and try to contact the school office until the call is answered. All children and staff should leave the outside area and come inside.

In order to reach a decision on how to deal with an intruder, you may need to contact another member of staff quickly without the intruder knowing your intention. You may also need a way of summoning help, such as calling the police. You can send the red help needed card to the office.

In cases of severe risk children, staff and any legitimate visitors will be evacuated to The Exchange with the rest of the school where all parents will be contacted to collect their children. All staff should be aware of their own safety, other staff members safety and the safety of the children is paramount. Nobody should attempt, or feel that they are expected, to “have a go” if there is any question of their being at risk of injury as a result. If there is a risk of equipment being stolen it is better to lose such equipment rather than risk a violent incident. Similarly, if there is a risk of assault, an intruder could claim you used unreasonable or unjustified force on them.

Avoid direct confrontation until the police arrive. Where staff or pupils are not in immediate danger from an intruder, try to keep track of their movements and inform the police of their whereabouts when they arrive.

In the case of attempted abduction or direct physical threat to a pupil you will be required to make an immediate judgement. Consider –

- Will the victim be in greater danger or lesser danger if the intruder is confronted?
- Is it possible to speak to and reason with the intruder?
- Is the intruder known to you and the pupil?
- Do you have any knowledge of the victim or intruder that may assist your judgement?

After the event

Any violent incident that takes place in a school that involve Stepping Stones Staff, parents or children must be reported to the school and an incident log submitted. It is possible that staff or pupils may be traumatised by intruder incidents, even if they do not display immediate signs of trauma or disturbance. It may be appropriate to seek support from the Early Years Consultant who may suggest contacting other outside agencies.

William Barnes Primary School Head teacher has the right to order an unwelcome or unauthorised visitor off the school premises

### Lock down

To signify a lock down of the school there will be three blasts of an air horn to signify that all staff and children to go into the play room and to gather in the toilet and hall area of the setting staying clear of the windows, and to remain there until two blasts signify it is safe to return to normal pre school session.

### Less Serious Cases

All cases of nuisance or disturbance (e.g. persons allowing dogs to foul playing fields, parents persistently smoking on school premises etc.) will be repeated to the school Office.

It is emphasised that if at any stage of this process an authorised person believes that they or others may be at risk; they should withdraw and summon police help by dialling 999.

## **Keeping Staff Safe**

Violence or the threat of violence towards school staff is still comparatively rare. Nonetheless, it is advisable to consider the circumstances in which violence or threat might occur and the precautions which can be taken to minimise risk.

## **Be Aware of Your Own Behaviour**

Violent confrontation may occur as a result of inappropriate behaviour by school staff. Whilst there is no excuse for violence, all staff should ensure that their own behaviour is assertive but controlled and reasonable.

## **Be Prepared**

Staff may know in advance that a meeting is likely to be difficult and that certain parents are prone to over-react, or that they will strongly disagree with the pre school's action or decision. If staff think these circumstances may apply ensure that a colleague is present during any such meetings.

## **Drink, Drugs & Stress**

If it is apparent that someone you are meeting has been drinking, or if there is a suspicion that they may be under the influence of drugs, all staff should be very cautious. If it is possible to withdraw from the situation to enlist assistance then do so. People suffering from stress or over-tiredness may also be more prone to commit acts of violence.

## **Try to Remain Calm**

In a confrontational situation, try to gently persuade the aggressor to back down or compromise and –

- Keep calm, speaking gently, slowly and clearly.
- Do not show aggression in response to aggression.
- Do not argue.
- Do not invade personal space by standing too close.
- Avoid wagging your finger or folding your arms.
- Never place your hand on an aggressive person.
- Be aware of the person's movements and body actions which might signal that it is time to withdraw from the situation/seek help.

## **Staff Working Alone**

Staff should complete the lone working risk assessment if coming into school alone is not part of their role.

If a member of staff is working outside school hours at the school or is working alone they should

- Consider whether it is really necessary to work alone.
- Ensure that the building is secure and that no other person can enter without their knowledge.
- Notify someone of their whereabouts and agree with them a system of checking on their safety at regular intervals.
- Consider how they would summon help and who they would contact.
- Consider the use of personal alarms and mobile telephones.
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## **Assaults on School Staff**

Staff should bear in mind the following key points –

- Violence does not only include physical assault but also distressing or intimidating verbal aggressions. Incidents arising from racial, sexual or religious harassment are also included. Intimidating behaviour can also include malicious damage to property, rude gestures and innuendo.
- All violent incidents, including threat and abuse from whatever source (e.g. intruders, parents, other employees, pupils, etc) must be recorded and reported to the Health and Safety Team using Form P25.
- People will have differing reactions to violence, threats and abuse and differing perceptions of what constitutes such behaviour. All staff should bear in mind that what might seem trivial to one person may cause another substantial distress.
- Report any violent incident to the Headteacher as soon as possible however minor it might seem.
- Staff present at a violent incident should act to prevent further violence but must be mindful of the potential risk to themselves. If possible, try to remove the assailant from the scene or move the assaulted person to a safe place.
- The Headteacher should interview the victim and any witnesses as soon as possible and obtain written statements. If the police have been involved, no investigation or interviews should be undertaken prior to their arrival.
- Requests by the employee for legal advice should be referred to Legal Services immediately.
- If an employee is injured they should obtain a medical statement about their injuries.

- Any serious assault should normally be reported to the police but Headteachers should be mindful of the wishes of the employee.
- Counselling support is available for employees from DCC

Additional duties and responsibilities may need to be undertaken by some members of staff in times of crisis in order that a return to a normal state of working may be expedited for the school as a whole. The school must accept that in order to continue to work as a team, it may be necessary to work in an environment that is unfamiliar and possibly inconvenient from a communications point of view as there are few sites nearby which could accommodate all staff and pupils. The length of time in achieving this will be determined by the extent of the damage to the building.

It is an advantage for the purposes of this plan to have some current knowledge on the availability of other suitable accommodation or at least the details of a number of estate agents so that alternative accommodation can be quickly arranged.

#### Action Check List

1. Establish extent of damage
  - Accommodation
  - Documentation
  - Information Communication Technology
  - Staff injuries
  
2. Accommodation
  - Not ascertainable but beyond day 1
  - Likely to be less than 5 days
  - More than 5 days but not total
  - Total loss
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#### **Loss of power, water or Drainage**

The head teacher will make the decision to close the school if condition become too cold or unhygienic in the school. If it is only the pre school who are affected then the playleader with support from the chairperson will make the decision to close the pre school. All staff will be made aware of the situation as soon as possible.

## **Death of Pupil or Staff Member**

- The LA, via the Health and Safety Team should be informed of the incident as soon as possible. Assistance for the school can then be given.
- It is the responsibility of the Police to advise the parents, or next of kin of the staff member, of the tragedy.
- The play leader will ensure that all staff members and committee members are made aware of any such incident. The County Media Team should be informed. They will be able to assist in devising an initial Press Statement.
- All staff should be asked to respect the need for all communications with local community, parents, media etc. to only be done through the DRT.
- The DRT should ensure that the educational psychologist is informed.
- The DRT should make arrangements to close the school if necessary (although as far as possible, normal practice should continue) and ensure that the Health and Safety team is notified.
- The DRT should make arrangements to write a letter home to parents as soon as possible giving as much information as is felt appropriate.

## **Coping With Crises in School**

### **Reactions of Pupils**

The effect upon a school community of a tragedy, whether through violent, accidental or natural causes, will inevitably be severe and long lasting. The most immediately affected survivors will only be able to return to normal school life with a considerable degree of support and understanding on the part of other members of the school.

The reactions of pupils involved in a crisis will vary. Staff can help pupils by looking out for signs of nervousness, anxiety or depression, difficulties with concentration, memory or sleeping and anti social behaviour. Some survivors of tragedies suffer from severe feelings of guilt that they have been spared, when their friends have died.

Those most likely to be seriously affected are those whose lives were put at greatest risk, who witness injury and death and who suffer other disadvantages (unstable family relationships etc.). It is not always possible to tell whether or how much children are suffering. Staff, parents and other pupils can all help by keeping a watchful eye.

The emotional, social and academic effects of a tragedy can be very long term. Minor and seemingly unconnected occurrences can trigger off emotional reactions.

It is important to encourage pupils to express their feelings in an environment where they feel it is safe to do so. Children should be praised for recognising problems they may be experiencing and allowed to talk about or relive the experience – perhaps through mime, dance or other art forms. This is not a sign of ghoulish obsession with death or injury but a repressive approach can lead to inherent dangers. Survivors should be encouraged to attend funerals, a formal farewell helps to come to terms with grief.

Pupils whose appearance has changed as a result of injuries will need to be prepared for their return to school and the likely reactions of fellow pupils. They may need home visits from teachers or the ability to attend part time for a while.

### **External Support**

Regular staff meetings will be needed to keep children under review and decide upon appropriate action, including any need for specialist referral. The Headteacher and Deputy should liaise with the county psychologist. Therapists and counsellors can be made available to supplement (not replace) the resources of the school. It is important that the school remains in control of the situation and any supportive external guidance that may be offered, staff should not allow themselves to be overwhelmed by well meaning but potentially intrusive assistance.



In a major incident involving the wider community outside the school, special procedures will be initiated by the Social Services Department to co-ordinate the provision of aftercare of victims.

### **Reactions & Roles of School Staff**

The most important role of school staff after a tragedy is to observe and listen to the children. They need to be sensitive that pupils respond in different ways and to beware of the danger of adding to the burden of children through inappropriate behaviour on their part.

The Headteacher should be aware of the difficulties that staff are likely to face and that they themselves have had to come to terms with the trauma. The Headteacher should monitor work pressures and look for any signs that staff are becoming overwhelmed with the distress of the pupils and themselves. Staff may need their own support group.

### **Dealing with the Media**

The experience of some schools has shown the relationship with the media is not always positive. The press can be invasive to the point of rudeness and constantly looking for “an angle”. This can sometimes take the form of attempts to attribute blame for the tragedy to parents, the school and other public agencies involved.

The Headteacher, Senior Teacher and Chair of Governors should be prepared for likely questions and should be clear what they are prepared to say and what not to say to the media. The Disaster recoveryTeam should meet to agree this before anyone talks to the media. It is never appropriate to allow the media onto the school premises or to give them access to staff or pupils.

### **CLOSURE DURING THE SCHOOL DAY**

For safety reasons we are unable to send children home during the school day until we have made sure that someone is available to meet them. In practice this would mean having to telephone every emergency contact and as this will take some time,

we will only close if the situation is very severe. Parents who are concerned about local conditions are welcome to collect their children from school. Please note that booked dinners will have to be paid for.

If we do have to close we will do so by sending the children who live the furthest away home first.

If we cannot contact you, the children will remain in school until they are collected. It is important that parents do not keep telephoning the office as this prevents us from making arrangements to send the children home.



