



TRENT COLLEGE & THE ELMS

EMERGENCY PLAN

Copy 1 of ()

UPDATED 3 December 2009

EMERGENCY PLAN FOR TRENT COLLEGE & THE ELMS

1. Introduction

a. Objectives

To prepare Governors, academic and support staff to deal with situations that may turn into a major incident for the School.

b. Priorities

- To minimise or eliminate any danger or risks to individuals
- To ensure that the School acts in a lawful manner
- To facilitate effective recovery
- To take reasonable steps to minimise any adverse publicity and to ensure all external enquiries are handled consistently by nominated personnel.

c. Incidents Covered

- Site disasters
- Off-site disasters
- Off-site hazards
- Death / serious injury of pupils or staff
- Violence to staff or pupils
- Hostage taking
- Intruder access
- Strike action
- Bomb threat
- Infectious health hazard
- Vandalism / arson
- Adverse media attention

d. Decision Making Responsibilities

- The Head, on advice from the Bursar, should activate the Plan. If the Head is absent then the responsibility will fall to the Bursar. **One of these senior managers should be contactable at all times.**
- The Chairman of the Board of Governors should be informed as soon as possible and should nominate a spokesperson for the Board.

e. Statutory Reporting Requirements

In line with Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) and Health & Safety at Work (HSAW).

f. Training Requirements

The Plan should be rehearsed once per Academic Year after appropriate training of any new staff that will be involved; a table top discussion will suffice but a 'live' exercise should be planned at least once every five years.

g. Administration

Plan Update. The plan was initiated December 2002, and is reviewed annually, via a tabletop exercise, and will be reviewed again in December 2009. The plan is the responsibility of the Bursar.

The plan is stored electronically on the school's ICT system and backed up daily; so any back-up tape will retrieve the document.

h. Location of the Incident Management Team (IMT) Room.

i. On-site. Within the Haughton Lodge offices. See Annex A for the layout and organisation of the cell.

ii. Off-site. TBD based on location and type of incident.

iii. Distribution of the Plan. Copies of the Plan are kept as follows:

Action Copies	1 – 4	Bursar's Office
Expedition Copies	4 – 8	Bursar's Office
Insurance Copy	9	Oval Insurance
Chairman	10	Personal Copy
Off-site Copy	11	The Elms

2. Incident Management Team (IMT) Membership

a. Incident Management Team (Working Hours)

Team Leader / Co-ordinator	–	Head
Spokesperson	–	Director of Marketing
Welfare Representative	–	Dep Hd(pastoral)
Parent Liaison	–	Dep Hd (Academic)

Media Liaison	-	Director of Marketing
Works, Security, Safety Rep	-	Security Officer
Legal, Insurance, Finance Rep	-	Bursar
Incident Secretary	-	Bursar's PA
Collator	-	Head's PA

b. Incident Management Team (Out of Hours)

Team Leader / Co-ordinator	-	Head / Dep Head / Bursar
Spokesperson	-	Director of Marketing
Welfare Representative	-	Duty SMT Member
Relative Liaison	-	School Chaplain
Media Liaison	-	Director of Marketing
Works, Security, Safety Rep	-	Security Officer
Legal, Insurance, Finance Rep	-	Bursar
Incident Secretary	-	Bursar's PA
Collator	-	Head's PA

c. Support Staff

House Reps	-	HoMs/Matrons
Medical Rep	-	Nurses (During working hours)
Liaison / Escorts	-	As available but at least 4
Media Response Team	-	PR Officer
	-	+ one other
	-	IT Manager
Relatives Enquiry Team	-	Non-assigned SMT Members

3. Incident Management Team (IMT) Responsibilities

a. IMT Members

- i. Team Leader / Co-ordinator
 - Command and manage the IMT.
 - Brief IMT on a regular basis.
 - Inform and brief the Chairman of Governors on the incident.

- ii. Spokesperson
 - Prepare initial holding statement and later press releases (in conjunction with emergency services).
 - Provide primary contact with media.
 - Arrange press conferences.
- iii. Welfare Representative
 - Maintain an overview of movements of staff and students away from school.
 - Co-ordinate the provision of welfare assistance in school and to external locations (hospitals etc)
 - Liaise with school doctor, hospitals, ambulance service etc.
 - Arrange counselling for staff and students (if required).
- iv. Relative Liaison
 - Liaise with and brief the school Relatives Enquiry Team and Houses.
 - Provide liaison between Houses and IMT.
 - Locate personnel records of affected students.
 - Provide briefing to Houses on decision taken by IMT.
 - Brief staff on the incident.
- v. Media Liaison
 - Control Media Response Team
 - Provide basic facts on school
 - Monitor local radio broadcasts and press.
 - Provide advice to staff and students on dealing with the media
- vi. Works, Security, Safety Rep
 - Liase with contractors.
 - Ensure that the school buildings and grounds are secure.
 - Ensure safety of staff and students in school grounds.
 - Liaise with GPs, environmental health on medical issues (such as decontamination of kitchens etc).
 - Ensure that all visitors to school are met and escorted
- vii. Legal, Insurance, Finance Rep
 - Liaise with school insurers, accountants, bank and solicitors (and request their attendance at IMT, if necessary)
 - Preserve evidence and prepare for later inquiries.
 - Take legal record of proceedings (interview witnesses, take photographs, written inventory of damage etc).
 - Organise replacement equipment, and secure storage of salvage.
 - Account for costs.
 - Check all press releases, prior to their release.
 - Liase with local authorities and relevant regulatory authorities
- viii. Incident Secretary

Maintain a record of communications made and actions and decisions taken by the IMT.

b. Support Staff

- i. House Representatives
- ii. Medical Representative
- iii. Liaison / Escorts
- iv. Media Response Team
- v. Relatives Enquiry Team

4. Initial Actions in the Event of an Incident

a. Initial Alert Procedure

During Working Hours

Unless the emergency is an obvious physical incident on the site of the school the initial alert may well be in the form of a Press enquiry to the main School number.

Out of Working Hours

Will usually be by means of a telephone call to any school number or to the HM's, Deputy Head's or Bursar's houses or mobiles.

b. Initial Information Requirements

- Nature of the incident.
- Exact location and time of the incident.
- Number of casualties and details of injuries etc.
- Names and home numbers of those involved.
- Emergency services involved.
- Actions taken so far.
- Location and telephone number of where the call is being made from.
- Any media response.
- Name of person who took the initial call, and time the initial information was received.

5. Incident Management Team (IMT) Meeting Agenda

a. Situation

- What happened, when, where, why (if known).
- Details of actions presently being taken, including other parties involved
- Numbers of, name, injuries, present location of all casualties, and details of those not accounted for.
- Total number of persons involved and total known to be safe and their present location. (Record all names of personnel involved, including witnesses and obtain contact numbers before sending them home.)
- Details of any visitors or contractors involved.
- Estimate of immediate effect on the school.
- Estimate of obvious weaknesses in the response.
- Details of additional support immediately required.
- Dedicated numbers for communications including fax, mobiles and e-mails.
- Deployment of additional resources to the scene with communication links.

b. IMT Details

- i. Composition of the IMT
- ii. Location of the IMT
- iii. Responsibility of recording details of the incident

c. Liaison Requirements Contact arrangements are required for the following:

- Scene of incident
- Emergency services
- Parents
- Governors
- Media
- Regulatory authorities
- Hospitals
- Neighbouring premises
- Suppliers / contractors who also may be affected
- Associated schools

d. Pupils, Parents and Staff

- Locate personnel records.
- Flow of approved information to all including relatives.
- Accounting for persons who are missing and injured, requesting police assistance to inform Next of Kin (NOK).
- Informing parents of persons who are safe and collection actions.
- Reception, welfare and rehabilitation requirements.
- Advice regarding enquiries from the media.
- Advice regarding giving evidence.

e. Media Issues

i. Media Statements. Decision on the content of an immediate statement for release to public and media.

ii. Other Issues.

- Appoint spokesperson and support staff
- Formulate statements in co-operation with other parties involved e.g. Emergency services
- Monitoring of press and media broadcasts.
- Advice to staff, pupils and dependants regarding the handling of media enquiries.
- Hosting and escort arrangements for visiting media.
- Briefing of other sites to whom enquiries may be directed.
- Rehearsal of spokesperson
- Audio recording of interviews, press conferences etc.

iii. School Communications

- School Office to be briefed on what calls to go where.
- Enquiry lines, parents / relatives, media, others and manning requirements.
- Operational lines with no public access
- Fax machine with telephone attached
- Mobile communications for liaison personnel
- Tape recordings
- Redirection of mail

iv. Financial Issues

- Accounting for costs of incident including recovery considerations, nominate an accounting code.
- Funding of victims and their dependants' immediate requirements.
- Sources of additional funds.
- Appeal.

v. Insurance Issues

- Inform insurers and comply with conditions
- Third party insurers
- Assessor to the scene
- Photographic evidence and written inventory of damage
- Secure storage of salvage / replacement equipment.
- Disposal of waste.

vi. Legal issues

- Beware admission of liability, allocation of blame
- Obtain copies of any contracts / trading conditions that may be relevant
- Inquiry considerations
- Preservation of evidence
- Legal record of proceedings
- Interviewing of witnesses
- Statutory reporting requirements under HSAW or other regulations
- Contact third party legal advisers including dependants who may be affected.

vii. Medical Issues

- Independent advice
- Liaison with hospital, GPs, Environmental Health Officers
- Decontamination (kitchens etc).

viii. Administration

- Security of site, meeting rooms, records, salvage and replacement materials (high vulnerability to theft after replacements are made)
- Emergency power and lighting.
- Making place safe or cordon off unsafe areas.
- Controlled re-occupation.
- Alternative accommodation and facilities.

- Catering
- Transportation
- Overnight manning
- Off-site storage of records and plans

ix. Recovery. At an early stage appoint a separate team to look at recovery arrangements, which will include many of the items listed above including:

- Clean-up / disposal of waste (consider evidential requirements).
- Inventory damage.
- Prioritise the clean up / recovery.
- Welfare and counselling arrangements.
- Funding of victims' or dependants' immediate requirements.
- Attendance at funerals, purchase of wreaths.

6. Equipment and Records.

Facilities required at the IMT meeting room and alternate location, including databases, alternate communications, local and site maps with key locations and telephone numbers are kept in the Admin area.

7. Relative Response Guidelines

Guidelines on the handling of calls from parents, relatives and friends of pupils at the school are at Annex D

8. Specific Incident Checklists

See separate Enclosures

9. Key Contact telephone Numbers

See Annex B

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**Bursar
& Clerk to the Governors**

Date

Annexes:

- A. Layout and Organisation of the IMT
- B. Contact Details
- C. Relative Enquiries Guidelines

D. Actions in the Event of an Emergency on a School Trip

LAYOUT AND ORGANISATION OF IMT

CHECK LISTS – Main Event

- | | |
|--|------------------------------|
| • IMT | Haughton Lodge |
| • Media Response | School Office (2 phones) |
| • Parent Response | Bursary |
| • Press Briefing | May Hall |
| • Authorities / Emergency Services | TBC |
| • Telephone Answering | Reception / HM Sec / Bursary |
| • Ex-directory line | TBC |
| • House direct lines | Redirected to Bursary |
| • TV, video and spare tapes | Security |
| • Radio with double cassette & tapes | Security |
| • Log Books, notepads etc | Stationery Store |
| • Telephone directories | Bursary |
| • Map board and relevant maps | Bursar's Office |
| • Clocks in all rooms | Maintenance |
| • Flip Charts x 3 | Stationery Store |
| • Computer allocation, fax & photocopier | Available in Haughton Lodge |
| • Mobile Phones and chargers | Three at Security |
| • Video camera, camera & films | IT Manager |
| • Transport | Head of Security |
| • Telephone Recorder | Head of Security |

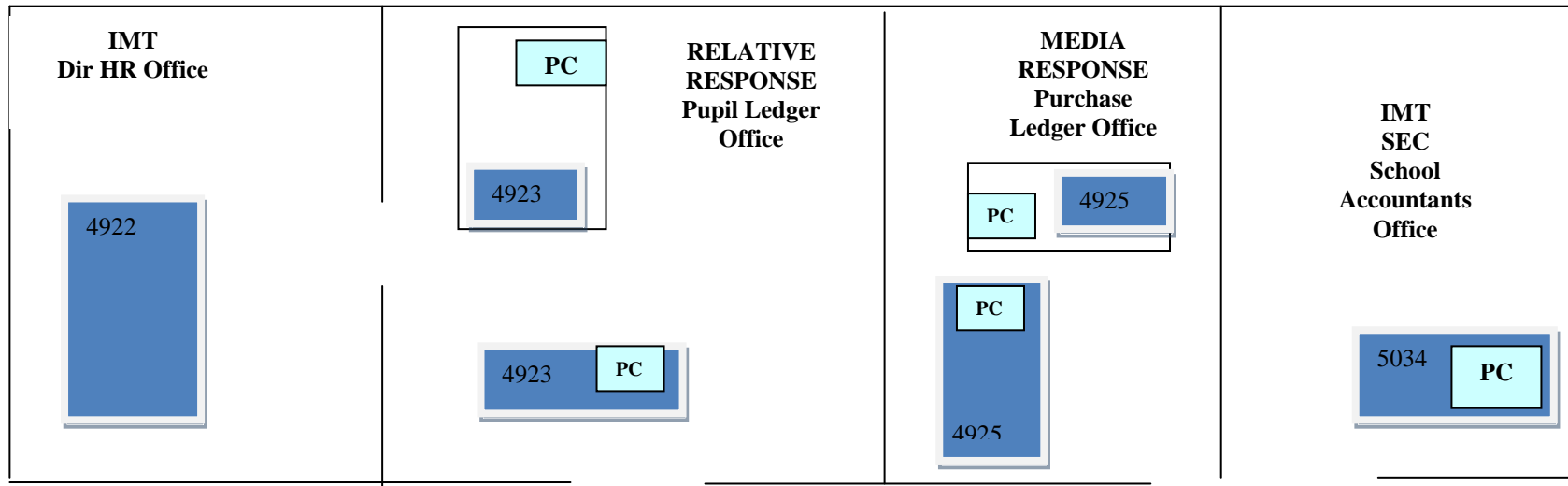
CHECK LISTS – Local Map

- External contact telephone numbers incl service suppliers
- Location of utility services cut-off valves and junction boxes
- Hazardous material stores
- Entrances and exits plus parking areas
- Location of hydrants & risers
- Fire equipment points
- Fire assembly points plus alternatives
- Underground pipes and drainage
- External telephone points and call boxes


Appendix:


1. Layout of IMT
2. Log Sheet


EMERGENCY PLAN - LAYOUT OF ADMINISTRATION OFFICES AFTER ACTIVATION (Haughton Lodge)



Key:

Ground Floor = 

First Floor = 

School Office = 

Mobile Tel Nos:

Security – 07970377145

Bursar - TBC

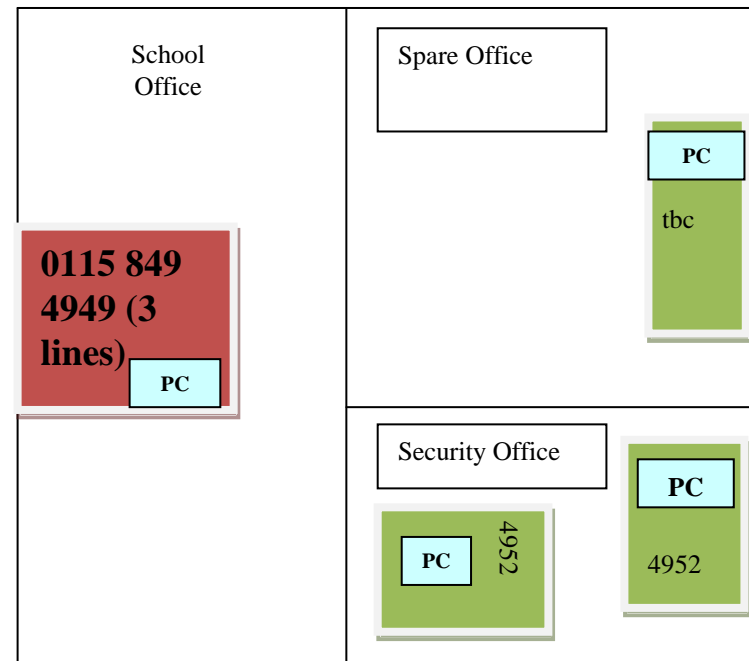
Head - 07748857484

Dir of Marketing - 07885427815

Spare 1 – SLT TBC

Spare 2 – SLT TBC

Spare 3 – SLT TBC



EMERGENCY PLAN - LOG SHEET

Your Name: _____ Date: _____ Sheet Number: _____

Serial	Time	Event	Action Taken	Initial

**Appendix 1 to
Annex B**

TELEPHONE CALL FORWARD SHEET

To pass to another extn – Dial R (extn)

Divert on from your extn – *21*(extn)#

Divert off – #21#

Pick up – *0*(extn)#

ANNEX C

RELATIVE ENQUIRIES GUIDELINES

The Aims of the Relatives Enquiry Team

- To draw calls away from other locations.
- To give assurance to callers.
- To ensure that external callers are dealt with in a professional and caring manner.
- To control the release of factual and approved information. The school must speak with one voice and be seen to speak with one voice.
- To gather information from relatives.
- To provide welfare assistance if required.

General Guidelines in Replying to Phone calls

Be considerate and caring:

- Be calm and controlled.
- Be prepared to listen to concern and do not interrupt.
- Ensure that your tone of voice is comforting not patronising.
- Treat them as individual important people.

Do not offer to call people back. Ask them to ring you in an hour, explain that you are very busy and that there are a number of relatives who will be waiting to call the team. **BUT, if you promise to ring back, keep your promise.**

- Avoid direct expressions of sympathy.
- Avoid attempts at reassurance (if you don't have confirmed information).
- Be patient and methodical.
- Reassure them that the school and the emergency services are doing all they can to respond to the emergency.
- Keep a record of all calls, and what was said on the calls.
- Ask them to stay on the number that they are on, or suggest that they move to a friend or relatives house for support (if they do, ask them to call in and let you know the new telephone number).

DO'S AND DON'TS

DO'S

- Only give approved confirmed information
- If in any doubt about any caller or your response, consult the Team Leader
- Always try to be helpful
- Be considerate
- Keep calm
- Give your name if asked
- Say that you are an authorised spokesperson if asked.
- Assume everything you say will become public knowledge
- Defend the School at all times
- Ensure calls are returned if you have promised to.
- Take a break if you are feeling over-stressed
- Refer the calls from the media to the Media Team

DO NOT

- Do not lose your temper
- Do not speculate
- Do not give out unofficial; information
- Do not promise to ring back unless you absolutely have to.
- Do not withhold any publicly available information

ACTIONS IN THE EVENT OF AN EMERGENCY ON A SCHOOL TRIP

Guidance on Emergency Procedures

A copy of the following guidelines must be taken by all party leaders and their deputies. This plan is included in the Schools Visits Policy.

- Establish nature and extent of the emergency
- Make sure that all other members of the party are accounted for and safe.
- If there are injuries, establish their extent and administer first aid (if you have been trained or feel capable – but be aware of consequences that might follow were you to give incorrect treatment).
- Establish names of the injured and call relevant emergency services
- Advise other party staff of the incident and that emergency procedures are in operation.
- Ensure that an adult from the party accompanies casualties to hospital or if on your own you go with the injured pupil(s); the Emergency Services will look after the rest of the party until another member of staff arrives.
- Ensure that the remainder of the party are adequately supervised throughout and arrange for their early return to base.
- Arrange for one adult to remain at the incident site to liaise with emergency services until the incident is over and all children are accounted for.
- Control access to telephones until contact is made with the Head, Deputy Head or Bursar and until they have had time to contact those directly involved. Pass full details of the incident (name, nature, date and time of incident, location of incident, details of injuries, names and telephone numbers of those involved, action taken so far).
- Telephone numbers for future communication; identify alternate telephone numbers in case telephone lines become jammed).
- The school will arrange to contact the parents of those involved. In serious incidents the parents of all party members should be informed.
- Media:
 - A designated person should act as the point of contact with the media to whom all involved should direct questions.

- Under no circumstances should the name of any casualty be divulged to the media.
- The Party Leader should write down as soon as practicable all relevant details. A record should be made of any witnesses. Any associated equipment should be kept in its original condition.
- Legal liability should not be discussed or admitted.
- All accident forms should be completed and insurers and HSE or Local Authority inspectors should be contacted.
- Inform parents of any delays that will be necessitated.

TRENT COLLEGE & THE ELMS
EMERGENCY MEDIA RESPONSE PACK

Principal Media Contact:

Mrs Carol McNiven-Young
Director of Marketing
Tel (Work): 01158494071
Tel (Home):
Mobile:

Alternative Media Contact:

Mrs Gill Dixon
Appointment: Head
Tel (Work): 0115 849 4945
Tel (Home):

TRENT COLLEGE & THE ELMS

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Boarding and day school for girls and boys from 3 to 18 years of age

Head: Mrs G Dixon

Chairman of Governors: Mr Malcolm McDowell

Plan only to be adjusted by:

The Bursar

Last Updated

PLANNING

1. The media strategy will be set by: IMT
2. Statements will be authorised by: Head / Director of Marketing
3. The spokesperson will be; School: Head/Director of Marketing
Governors TBN
4. The Deputy Spokesperson will be: Deputy Head (Academic)
5. The Media Response Team (MRT) will be in: Haughton Lodge.
6. Interviews will be held in: English Annex
7. Press Conferences will be held in: May Hall

WHEN THE INCIDENT HAPPENS – STRATEGY

1. Do the media already know about the incident?

YES / NO

2. Has the school been connected with the incident?

YES / NO

3. Is the school likely to be connected with the incident?

YES / NO

- *If the answer to any of these questions is no, then we may decide to keep quiet about it. If so, we need to prepare a short statement in case we are found out.*
- *Centralise all media enquiries and make sure that only one or two people reply to them.*
- *Prepare background material to reply to difficult questions and be sure to cover the areas where we may be criticised.*

4. If the media know about the incident and have connected it with us, are we likely to be shown in a bad light?

- *If the answer is YES, then prepare a short statement and use it to reply to any questions.*
- *Centralise all media enquiries and make sure that only one or two people reply to them.*
- *Prepare background material to reply to difficult questions and be sure to cover the areas where we may be criticised.*

5. The media know about the incident and about our involvement. Is the whole school unlikely to be criticised and do we emerge from the incident quite well?

- *If the answer is YES, prepare a short initial statement. It should tactfully and with restraint say what the school has done well (e.g. "The intruder was restrained by the Games Master and police were called").*
- *Should this statement be released proactively?*
- *Can we still be criticised? (e.g. Why was it only the Games Master that stood between Year 7 and oblivion?).*

6. Agree three or four positive points.

- *Our good record so far*

- *The care we have taken to try to prevent incidents such as this from occurring*
- *The speed and quality of our response to the incident*
- *The care that we are offering to children and parents (e.g. counselling)*

BRIEF EVERYONE ON THE POSITIVE POINTS. MAKE THE POSITIVE POINTS WHENEVER POSSIBLE. SPEAKING TO THE MEDIA IS LARGELY A MATTER OF REPETITION. THERE IS NO GUARANTEE THAT THE MEDIA WILL REPORT WHAT WE SAY: SO LET'S MAKE SURE WE SAY IT OFTEN ENOUGH.

7. What are we going to do about pupils and parents who may speak to the media?

- *We have no right to 'gag' pupils or members of staff; any attempt to do so may be counter-productive. It is better to shelter them from the media attention, at least for the first few hours of the incident when they may be shocked and distressed. The Police and health services may help with this. We can offer to let them stay on at school to keep them away from media intrusion, but we cannot keep them in school nor can we stop them using the 'phones. If the media can't find them then they can't talk to them.*
- *The media may track down and hound individuals. If so, a dignified appeal to the editors may help. Or we may be able to arrange protection e.g. by asking the Police for help or by sheltering the individuals on the school premises until the media go away. We can only do this if the individual asks us for help otherwise we may look as if we have something to hide. It may be worth persuading people at this stage to make a short statement or in writing through the school.*
- *Some parents or pupils may be interviewed in a state of shock shortly after the incident has occurred. They may say anything in such a condition. There is little that we can do about this, except possibly imply that "whilst we fully understand and even to some extent share their sense of anger and grief, they may take a different view when they have heard the full story"*
- *Some parents may set out to be critical of us. There is nothing that can be done about this except prepare our answer and take every opportunity to make it, try at all times to be sympathetic and understanding.*

(NB. Many people think that they can make a lot of money by selling their story to the newspapers. This has the advantage of taking the other media off our back as they will not want to build interest in a rival's story. However, there are two disadvantages:

- You do not get paid as much as you might think
- The buying newspaper wants value for its cash – i.e. a sensational story – and there is no control over what they print. Often it is not what might have been said to them.

If parents do sell stories in this way, we should take specialist advice.

There may be a lot of sympathy for Trent College & The Elms if the public view is that the incident was not our fault and we can show that we took reasonable steps to prevent it. In some cases an incident may even be a PR advantage to us, if we can demonstrate that we have taken sensible precautions and reacted quickly. We should take every opportunity in such cases discreetly to point out the advantages of the School. However, the tone we adopt is crucial. We can rapidly lose sympathy by seeming arrogant or uncaring or elitist.

Spokespersons must make sure that what is said is backed up by facts, respecting the feelings of others, and does not seem to dismiss the gravity of the situation.)

WHEN THE INCIDENT HAPPENS – INITIAL STATEMENT

1. Express regret. (*"I regret to confirm that"*)
2. **Briefly** describe the incident (*"two pupils from Trent College & The Elms were killed today in a climbing incident in Austria."*)

[Note: do not imply cause or blame. use neutral words like 'incident' or 'accident' wherever possible.]

3. Include whatever good news we can, providing we are certain that it is accurate. (*The remaining 14 pupils in the party are unhurt and are being looked after by school staff in Austria"*)

[Again, don't be too specific in an initial statement.]

4. Say what the school is doing (*"We are notifying the parents of the children concerned. Two additional members of staff are flying to Austria to be with the group."*)
5. If we haven't done so already, say whether the parents have been notified. At this stage we may wish to appeal to the media, if they have the names, not to publish them until the parents have been informed. This may work but we have no guarantee that it will. It is best reserved for special cases – e.g. if we can't contact a parent because they are on holiday, but expect to do so within a few hours.
6. Say why we can't say anymore at the moment. (*"Until we have more information ourselves I cannot tell you any more. We are busy here trying to make arrangements for the pupils"*)
7. Tell the media where they can reach us. Give names and telephone numbers.

WHEN THE INCIDENT HAPPENS – ANSWER TO DIFFICULT QUESTIONS

These answers cannot be prepared in advance and should be completed on the computer and then issued to the MRT and Spokespersons:

1. What is the school policy on security?

- What measures do we have in place?
- Have we taken police / professional advice?
- When did we last assess our security measures?
- Have we ever had a security incident before?
- Are parents aware of our policy and do they agree with it?

2. What is the school policy on safety?

- What measures do we have in place?
- Have we ever taken professional advice?
- When did we last assess our safety measures?
- Have we ever had a safety-related incident before?
- Are parents aware of our policy and do they agree with it?

3. What is the school policy on drugs?

- What do we do to prevent drug abuse in Trent College & The Elms?
- Have we had any examples of drug abuse (and what did we do about them)
- Do we keep in touch with the Police? (How often and at what level?)
- Are parents aware of our policy and do they agree with it?

4. What is the school policy on bullying / violence?

- What do we do about bullying / violence?
- Have we had any recent cases? What did we do about them?
- Do we keep in touch with the Police? (How often and at what level?)
- Are parents aware of our policy and do they agree with it?

5. What is the school policy on adventure training / outdoor activities?

- How often do we do this sort of activity and where?
- What national guidelines do we follow?
- What steps do we take to check out the activity provider?
- What training do accompanying staff have?
- Have we ever had problems like this before?
- Are parents aware of our policy and do they agree with it?

6. What is the school policy on overseas travel?

- Do we do this sort of activity? How often and to where?
- What national guidelines do we follow?
- What steps do we take to check out the activity provider?
- What training do accompanying staff have?
- What rules do we have (e.g. about the staff / pupil ratio)
- Have we ever had problems like this before?
- Are parents aware of our policy and do they agree with it?

7. What is the school policy on using minibuses?

- Do school staff drive them?
- Do the drivers have any special training?
- If we use outside companies, what steps do we take to vet them?
- Are parents aware of our policy and do they agree with it?

8. What are the school's arrangements for contacting parents in an emergency?

- Do we keep all their names and details centrally?
- How do we ensure that our records are up to date?
- How many people are available to ring around parents?
- Do we have a plan to bring people in out of hours?

- Are there any special problems (e.g. a large number of parents working overseas?)

Any other difficult questions?

WHEN THE INCIDENT HAPPENS – ANSWERS TO DIFFICULT QUESTIONS

We cannot prepare these in advance. Remember these as guidelines:

DO NOT

- Say anything that could be seen as libellous, that seems to imply blame of anyone else, or that might be held to prejudice a trial or inquiry.
- Admit any liability – this may invalidate our insurance.
- Say anything which identifies individuals, at least until their parents or next of kin have been informed; this applies to staff as well as pupils.
- Appear to speak on behalf of other individuals or organisations, unless you have agreed what to say with them first. *(To say that “I’m sure that Mrs Bloggins feels very upset but she understands that” or “The Fire Brigade said this couldn’t possibly have been an accident...” is simply inviting journalists to play your comments back, and Mrs Bloggins and the Fire Brigade to contradict you.)*
- Answer hypothetical questions

DO

- Say that full details are not yet available, so you cannot yet say exactly what happened. *(This is usually the case.)* But give details which you are sure of – e.g. the time you were contacted, the actions the school has taken.)
- Monitor the questions you are asked and identify what ‘angles’ the media are covering *(e.g. who are they criticising/ Us or someone else? What are they criticising us for? Try to prepare answers to these ‘angles’.)*
- Avoid controversy, especially anything which may seem to criticise others. *(e.g. if asked when you rang the Fire Brigade, bear in mind that this may be an attempt to criticise the Fire Brigade for slow response. Try to stay out of that sort of media argument: time enough to look at that once the incident is over.)*
- Provide factual details to back up our ‘positive points’. *(Rather than simply saying “we have a good safety record” it is much better to say “we haven’t had any injuries in school for 10 years”; but be sure you are accurate. Similarly, rather than saying “our staff are experienced at leading this sort of trip” it is better to say “the member of staff in charge speaks fluent German and has led three previous trips to this area in Austria....).*

- Provide factual details to counter allegations against us. (*"The school had its last fire inspection in We were only required to undertake limited work, which we did."*)
- Remember our positive points. Update or improve them as the situation develops.

MEDIA LIST

As provided by the current PR Consultant

SHOULD WE AGREE TO AN INTERVIEW ON TV OR RADIO?

- Depends if we have something we want to say; what is in it for us?
- Who will do the interview? Have they had training? Will they come over well?
- Make sure the interviewee has been properly briefed. Think through the difficult questions in advance that he/she may be asked, and prepare the answers.
- For a TV interview, try to resist having a dramatic background. If the school has just burnt down, the TV crew will want to film the interviewee in front of it. Is this image we want people to remember? (Maybe it is, if it wasn't our fault and we are appealing for help to rebuild it. Maybe it isn't, if we forgot to have the fire extinguishers refilled.)

SHOULD WE GIVE A PRESS CONFERENCE?

- This is not usually necessary unless the story is very big. Then it gives us the opportunity to get our message across to a lot of media at once; but remember to ask ourselves: what's in it for us? Why are we doing this? What message do we want to get over?
- If we give a conference, or take part in one organised by the Police, prepare thoroughly. Anticipate awkward questions and work out the answers.
- If it is our own press conference, field a team of people. One should chair and control it: his job is not to answer questions but to introduce the speakers and give them time to think and some protection. He may also allocate questions amongst our team. Others on the team should be a senior person (HM) and one or two people with special experience of the incident or problems that it raises.
- Only let in genuine media (ask to see their press cards or ID). Pressure groups can hijack the conference and make it a public debate (which TV will love but we won't).
- Agree ground rules with TV cameras before hand. If we don't want them coming on the platform, make this clear.
- Ensure the room is tidy and clean, and the background is suitable. Think about our overall image. Dress suitably.
- Let the journalists in by one entrance and have another exit for your own team to leave by. The chairperson should be firm and ensure that the team get away as soon as the conference ends. No 'off the record' private words.

IF THERE IS A TV CAMERA OR MICROPHONE IN THE ROOM ASSUME IT IS ON AT ALL TIMES!

