

The Bishop Wheeler Catholic Academy Trust



BUSINESS CONTINUITY POLICY

Published: October 2024

To be reviewed: 2027/28



The Bishop Wheeler Catholic Academy Trust



Our Mission

Outstanding Catholic education for all pupils. As a family of schools, we will enable our young people to develop spiritually, morally, intellectually and personally, putting their faith into action, through serving Christ in others, in the church and in the world around them.

This policy was approved by the Resources Committee on behalf of the Trust Board

Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Helen Mills', written over a faint, larger version of the same signature.

**Mrs Helen Mills
Chair of the Trust Board**

Date: 01/10/24

Version		3.0	
Date		October 2024	
Approved by Resources Committee		01/10/24	
Version	Date	Description	Revision Author/s
1.0 Published	March 2016	Trust Policy	DBY/Previous Chair of Trust Board
2.0 Review	June 2022	Trust Policy Review	GNE/Resources Committee
3.0 Review	September 2024	Trust Policy Review	GNE/Resources Committee

Change review

Version	Date	Changes
3.0	October 2024	Page 5 – Business Continuity advisor changed to WorkNest. Page 6 – Bullet points updated. Page 7 – Information updated.

Contents

1. INTRODUCTION	4
2. BUSINESS CONTINUITY PROCESS	5
3. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES	6
4. CRITICAL INCIDENT PLAN ACTIVATION	6
5. CRITICAL INCIDENT PLAN ESCALATION	7
6. PROCEDURES FOR SCHOOL CLOSURE	7
7. RECORD KEEPING	8
8. CONFIDENTIALITY	8
9. REVIEW	8

1. INTRODUCTION

Schools remain relatively safe and secure places in which to work and educate our children. Unfortunately, however, there are rare occasions where schools can be affected either directly or indirectly by critical incidents. Emergencies affecting the local area, region, the country or internationally can also have a major impact on schools, their communities, and the Trust as a whole. Effective planning can minimise the impact of a crisis, save lives and prevent or reduce injury, damage or harm to people, resources and reputation.

At the Bishop Wheeler Catholic Academy Trust our overarching aim is to conduct our business with the highest regard for the health, safety and welfare of staff, pupils, parents, visitors and the wider community. The Trust also seeks to protect and preserve the environment, its premises and its reputation. Continuity of operations must be maintained wherever it is practical and safe to do so.

A critical incident is an incident or sequence of events in or local to the school or Trust affecting students, staff or property requiring immediate responsive action beyond that which could be reasonably expected from the school's management team during the day to day running of the school.

Critical incidents may involve our premises or one or more children or staff members, or members of the wider local community. A non-exhaustive list of examples includes:

- The sudden death of a member of the school community;
- An accident or significant incident involving students or staff on or off the school premises, or the disappearance of a member of the school community;
- A physical attack on staff or children, or intrusion into the school;
- Serious damage to the school building through fire, arson, vandalism, floods etc;
- A terrorist or other criminal threat to the school;
- The loss or significant disruption to key data, systems and services (e.g. ICT, utilities).

A wider emergency is an incident or sequence of events in the local area, the region, nationally or internationally, affecting students, staff or property across more than one Trust site or the Trust as a whole, requiring immediate or planned responsive action beyond that which could be reasonably expected for the Trust's management team during the normal operation of the Trust. A non-exhaustive list of examples includes:

- An epidemic or pandemic;
- National or regional industrial action, within the education sector or in areas the Trust depends on (such as school transport, or the emergency services);
- National or regional disruption to key supplies and services, such as fuel shortages or failure of the utility supplies;
- A major accident, incident or tragedy in the wider community, such as a terrorist attack, train or air crash or large fire;

- A significant radiation threat (such as the Chernobyl disaster in 1986) or chemical or biological leak or attack (such as the Salisbury poisonings in 2018);
- A major war that disrupts international communications, trade, supplies and services or generates a significant flow of refugees into our school communities.

2. BUSINESS CONTINUITY PROCESS

The staff and management of Bishop Wheeler Catholic Academy Trust (BWCAT) recognise business continuity management as ‘a holistic management process that identifies potential threats to an organisation and the impacts to business operations that those threats, if realised, might cause. It also provides a framework for building organisational resilience with the capability for an effective response that safeguards the interests of its key services.’

The aim of our business continuity planning and management is to prepare our organisation to cope with disruption, respond effectively to it, and recover well from it.

Our Trust business continuity process consists of a two-tiered approach:

- 1. Critical Incident Plan (CIP) – individual school level:** Each school has their own, specific, Critical Incident Plan, created using a template provided by the Trust’s business continuity advisor, WorkNest. The CIP is reviewed and updated annually or as changes to the site or staffing occur. The individual critical incident plans are supported by the School Emergency Response Guide provided by WorkNest. Included in the CIP are:

- Key contacts information sheet
- Details of the ‘incident management team’ (IMT)
- Key tasks template / guidance
- Flowcharts
- Incident log sheets
- Action checklist
- Evacuation / shelter / lockdown procedures

Training for Headteachers and executive staff in the Trust Office is provided as required, through the Trust’s Health and Safety advisors and the Chief Operating Officer as appropriate. Lessons learned from actual incidents are also provided to Headteachers as part of this training.

An individual school’s IMT is responsible for **immediate response** and activation of the CIP. Often a critical incident will be resolved within 24 hours, without the need for school closure or further escalation. The aim of the CIP is to help the IMT to react quickly and effectively in the event of an incident, to enable them to maintain control and to ensure that appropriate support is offered to students and staff. Our procedures aim to minimise disruption on our school community and enable us to affect a return to normality as soon as is practically possible.

- 2. Business Continuity Process (BCP) – Trust level:** Our Trust-wide business continuity process has been developed to ensure the continuance of critical business functions in the event of a significant disruption/loss of service. Some incidents or emergencies require more intense and extended periods of management for the school and the Trust to respond and recover. In such

instances the individual schools will seek assistance from the Trust Central Team or, particularly in the case of a wider emergency, the CEO and Central Team will initiate the BCP. When the BCP is initiated a Business Recovery Team (BRT) will be established at Trust level. Depending on the circumstances the members of this team are likely to be:

- Chief Executive Officer
- Chief Operating Officer
- Head of HR
- Head of Estates
- Head of Finance
- Head of Governance
- ICT/Network Manager at St Mary's Menston and/or at St John Fisher, Harrogate
- The Trust's H&S advisors.
- The Trust's solicitors.
- The Diocese of Leeds Public Relations Officer.

The BRT will be mobilised when the individual school or the Trust Central Team is unable to return to 'business as usual' within 24 hours. The BRT will establish clear lines of management and communication and prioritise tasks, such as relocating people and communicating with outside bodies and agencies, in addition to investigating the root causes of the incident. Incidents requiring this level of support will normally be of a severe and significant nature and likely to span several days, weeks or even months. Guidance for the BRT is included in the School Emergency Response Guide.

3. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Roles and responsibilities are detailed, with full guidance, in the schools' individual CIPs. As a summary:

1. **The Trust Board** is responsible for approving and reviewing this policy and ensuring it is disseminated to Academy Councils;
2. **Individual Academy Councils** are responsible for ensuring the individual school CIPs are reviewed annually;
3. **Headteachers** lead the incident management teams (IMTs) in their schools;
4. **School Office Managers** keep the CIPs up to date and ensure all members of the incident management team has a hard copy
5. **The Trust Business Recovery Team (BRT)**, under the direction of the Chief Executive Officer, has access to all individual CIPs and is responsible for managing business continuity with stakeholders such as parents and governors, the Diocese of Leeds, local authorities and external agencies such as ICT providers, insurance brokers, transport providers, ESFA, HSE, the media.

4. CRITICAL INCIDENT PLAN ACTIVATION

It is important that all employees are aware of our CIP arrangements and how and who to notify in the event of a crisis situation. It is essential that whoever receives an 'alert' obtains as much

information from the source as possible. Any information provided will help the IMT to decide on the appropriate response.

The decision to invoke the CIP process by the IMT will be based on one or more of the following criteria listed below as a guide:

1. Loss of both mobile and landline telecommunications for more than six hours;
2. Loss of curriculum IT function for more than six hours;
3. Loss of premises or access to premises (teaching spaces) for more than one hour;
4. Loss of premises or access to premises (offices / administrative / support functions spaces) for more than two days;
5. Loss of one or more children from the school site for more than ten minutes;
6. Loss of one or more children whilst off-site (UK or abroad) for more than five minutes;
7. A serious incident occurring on an offsite activity which jeopardises the overall safety of staff and or students;
8. The circumstances of the incident prohibit the normal services provided by the school for more than 24 hours, at which point the Business Continuity Process would also be invoked irrespective of the nature of the incident;
9. A wider community incident/emergency is so widespread or has such a significant impact on the whole community that the business continuity process is automatically invoked.

5. CRITICAL INCIDENT PLAN ESCALATION

Should it transpire the incident cannot be managed within the boundaries of the individual CIP and the BCP needs to be mobilised, the IMT leader should:

1. Outside office hours, ring the local authority '**crisis line**' – which operates a 24 / 7 telephone service, for immediate support;
2. Contact the CEO and/or the COO (or, if they are unavailable, other senior members of the Trust Central Team) via mobile phone or if necessary their personal/home phone numbers, to alert the Trust to invoke the BCP.

6. PROCEDURES FOR SCHOOL CLOSURE

Each individual school has a documented, communicated procedure for school closure either in advance of the school day, for example owing to bad weather, or during the school day owing to any other incident. Most schools use a texting service for staff and parents, website messages and local radio messages.

7. RECORD KEEPING

In the event of a critical incident, the IMT will keep records of phone calls made and received, letters sent and received, meetings held, persons met, decisions taken, interventions used, costs incurred, first aid administered, as guided by the templates in the individual CIPs. These records will be retained in line with the Trust Records Management Policy.

8. CONFIDENTIALITY

The management and staff of BWCAT have a responsibility to protect the confidentiality of information held and people involved in an incident. We will treat all information held by our school sensitively and only disclose information to those persons authorised to hold it. Any disclosures to third parties will only be undertaken where authorised by the Trust CEO, Trust Head of Governance or other BRT leader, and will be done so in an appropriate and sensitive manner. Any information disclosed must follow the BWCAT Data Protection Policy and Subject Access Request Guidance. The Trust Head of Governance must be informed of any disclosures made.

9. REVIEW

The individual school CIP should be reviewed annually and as changes to IMT staff, premises or other resources and arrangements occur. The CIP is approved by individual Academy Councils.

The Business Continuity Policy will be reviewed every three years, or as changes in good practice, advice or needs occur.

The 16 schools in our Trust:

St. Mary's Menston, a Catholic Voluntary Academy

St. Joseph's Catholic Primary School Otley, a Voluntary Academy

Ss Peter and Paul Catholic Primary School, a Voluntary Academy

Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School Ilkley, a Voluntary Academy

St Mary's Horsforth Catholic Voluntary Academy

St. Joseph's Catholic Primary School Pudsey, a Voluntary Academy

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School Harrogate, a Voluntary Academy

St Mary's Catholic Primary School Knaresborough, a Voluntary Academy

St. Stephen's Catholic Primary School and Nursery, a Voluntary Academy

Holy Name Catholic Voluntary Academy

St Roberts Catholic Primary School, a Voluntary Academy

St John Fisher Catholic High School Harrogate, a Voluntary Academy

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School Tadcaster, a Voluntary Academy

Barkston Ash Catholic Primary School, a Voluntary Academy

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School Barnoldswick, a Voluntary Academy

St Wilfrid's Catholic Primary School, a Voluntary Academy



The Bishop Wheeler Catholic Academy Trust

The Bishop Wheeler Catholic Academy Trust is a charity and a company limited by Guarantee, registered in England and Wales.

Company Number: 8399801

Registered Office: Bradford Road Menston, LS29 6AE

Website: www.bishopwheelercatholicacademytrust.org

Tel: 01943 883000

Email: j.johnson@bwcat.org

Chair of the Trust Board: Mrs Helen Mills