

Debden C of E Primary Academy



Business Continuity Plan

September 2025

Business Continuity Plan

Distribution List

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Part One

Business Analysis

1.1 Introduction

This building continuity plan sets out the framework for dealing with a major disaster affecting the day-to-day operations of the school. It also identifies measures that the school has either in place or in hand to prevent or minimise the impact of a disaster.

A disaster has been described as:

'any unwanted significant incident which threatens personnel, buildings or the operational structure of an organisation which requires special measures to be taken to restore things back to normal'

The overriding objectives of the plan are to ensure that:

there is minimal risk of injury to pupils, staff and visitors;

the school is in a position to respond quickly and effectively;

there is continuity of key functions that support the operation of the school;

teaching is maintained with as little disruption as possible.

Much of the contents will be second nature. However, it serves as a reminder when dealing with a stressful situation, as well as providing a format for making essential records of action taken.

1.2 The School

The school is located on High Street, Debden. The Governing Body, as delegated by the Trust, has responsibility for the educational and financial performance of the school. It also has responsibility for building standards and maintenance.

The Headteacher, Sarah Bailey, leads a strong team committed to the highest standards of teaching and learning.

The oldest part of the building is on two floors dating back to 1852 and is Grade 2 Listed. The external walls comprise brick walls. The steeply pitched tile roof has ornate dormers. One classroom is located on the ground floor of this original part of the building, along with the library and the administration areas. In 1978, a modern extension was built to harmonise with the original scheduled building. The remainder of the classrooms are in single story classrooms located in this area – as is the school hall. The school has its own kitchen. The school has an adjacent playing field to the rear, which backs onto farmland. The school also has two demountable classrooms which are situated at the southeast corner of the school's land.

A location plan and position of the heating boiler and electrical intake are shown at Appendix 1.

1.3 School Mission, Aims and Objectives

At Debden Church of England Primary Academy, **OUR VISION** is for the children in our care to:

- Progress exceptionally well academically, across a broad and knowledge-rich curriculum;
- Develop into confident compassionate, well-rounded individuals, in a safe, caring, Christian environment;
- Become equipped with the learning skills needed to deal with future challenges;
- Create happy, positive memories of their childhood.
- Develop a global perspective, inspiring them to become active, responsible and empathetic global citizens.

MISSION STATEMENT: In order to achieve our vision, we pledge to:

- Ceaselessly drive to improve the strength and consistency of teaching and learning across the school;
- Provide a stimulating, creative and engaging curriculum which develops the skills, abilities and talents of all pupils;
- Ensure that children are happily challenged in their learning and nurtured as individuals;
- Hold high expectations of behaviour, which are driven by Christian Values.
- Provide children with opportunities to develop their innovation, problem-solving, resilience and reflectiveness skills;
- Embed mutually-supportive and trusting partnerships between children, staff, parents, governors and the wider community.
- Ensure that children feel valued, safe, and confident to learn and excel.
- Continually and collaboratively reflect, challenge ourselves, and drive to improve.

In order to guide our children towards the core goals of our vision, we encourage them to espouse our core **VALUES** which are to NURTURE, PROGRESS, and EXCEL.

1.4 Staff

Debden C of E Primary Academy is a part of the Great Oak Multi Academy Trust. Consequently, there are some members of staff who have duties shared across this school and other schools in the trust. These include:

- Executive Headteacher – Sarah Mitchell
- Finance Manager – Helen Edwards
- Office Manager – Sharon Dyster
- Finance Assistant and Premises Manager – Alice Balchin

Other staff are based predominantly at Debden Primary Academy:

- Headteacher – Sarah Bailey
- Deputy Headteacher – Julia Bacon
- 8 x Class Teachers (four of these teachers are part-time)
- 10 x Teaching Assistants
- 2 x Office Administrators (both part-time)
- 1 x Catering Manager and 1 x Catering Assistant

1.5 Pupils

In the Spring 2025 census, there were 144 pupils on roll organised into six classes.

Part Two

Risk Management

2.1 Definition

Risk management is the planned and systematic approach to the identification, evaluation and control of risk. It is concerned with measures that are in place to manage risk and the action taken to control such risks effectively.

2.2 Aims

The aims are to:

- secure the assets of the school
- to reduce the total cost of risk to which the school is exposed
- to reduce the cost of insurance premiums
- to promote risk awareness and its benefits
- to avoid prosecution

Risk management must be viewed as a continuing commitment. Systems of control must be embedded in the operation of the school and form part of its culture.

2.3 Business Impact

Disaster can strike at any time. It can arise in the shape of arson, explosion, impact, vandalism, fraud, structural failure, a serious breach of health and safety procedures, the loss of IT services or the corruption or loss of financial or other essential data.

The threat of fire, however caused, vandalism, or the corruption or loss of computer held data, probably pose the greatest areas of risk to the school.

A major disaster would disrupt class teaching, affect staff and parents. It would also threaten school property, equipment and business processes. A significant part of the school buildings could be out of action for a long period of time.

Whilst the school is insured, major costs could be incurred through financing a return to normal day-to-day activities.

2.4 Risk Assessment

The identification of potential risks or hazards faced by the school and their impact should a major disaster occur is fundamental to business continuity. Addressing shortcomings or weaknesses has to be part of an on-going cycle of risk analysis and review. Correcting these and taking preventative action will automatically reduce the risk or impact of disaster and vulnerability to events.

A whole raft of procedures and systems are already in place and are reviewed and updated on a regular basis. They represent good business practice and are an essential part of the school's risk management strategy.

Details of procedures and systems in place are set out in Appendix 3.

2.5 Risk Analysis

In the sections that follow individual areas of risk are considered. Each makes reference to the procedures and safeguards in place.

Additional measures being taken to further safeguard the interests of the school, together with a risk assessment are highlighted. For ease of reference, the areas covered are:

2.6 Premises Maintenance

2.7 Security

2.8 Fire

2.9 Energy Supplies

2.10 Information Technology

- Business including Financial Database

- Pupil Records

2.11 Manual Records

2.12 Communications

2.13 Health and Safety

2.14 Fraud

2.15 Loss of Key Staff

2.16 Default of Suppliers

2.17 Insurance

2.6 Premises Maintenance

The school aims to ensure that the buildings are adequately maintained and defects are rectified as soon as they occur. Particular attention is paid to any risk to health and safety.

The biggest threat to buildings is from fire or vandalism. There are other potential threats, for example from serious storms or flooding.

Measures in hand or planned are:

regular condition surveys

planned maintenance programmes

termly Health and Safety inspections

timely remedial work

Risk Assessment

It is not possible to eliminate risks altogether from those determined to cause damage to the buildings, or a major disaster resulting from environmental or other factors totally beyond the school's control.

Nonetheless, the elements of risk will be reduced by the positive steps outlined above.

Overall, premises maintenance is currently regarded as a medium risk

2.7 Security

The arrangements for security are directed at preventing unauthorised access to the buildings, reducing theft and the incidence of vandalism. In particular:

Paxton control system at entry points

Signing in and out procedure for all visitors

Vulnerable parts of the site's rear boundary adjacent to housing have been made more secure

Pedestrian gates are locked when not in use

Emergency call-out numbers for school managers are regularly updated

Chemicals and other dangerous substances are locked securely; access is controlled by authorised staff and monitored by the Health and Safety Adviser

Secure locking of external doors

External lighting in place

Additional measures planned:

Changing codes on the electronic keypad.

Risk Assessment

With the measures in place and outlined, the overall risk is assessed to be low.

2.8 Fire

Fire Safety, including First Aid and Evacuation, forms part of the school's comprehensive Health and Safety Policy Document.

Fire prevention measures are underpinned by:

- the appointment and regular training of Fire Marshalls
- identification and clear signage of escape routes and assembly points
- the provision of fire extinguishers as recommended by the Fire Officer and regular maintenance; records are held in the Finance Office
- directing the maintenance of buildings to high-risk areas
- routine inspection of electrical and mechanical services
- the removal of surplus material which may pose a fire threat
- monitoring and regular inspections of the buildings by Fire Marshalls recorded in Safesmart
- regular monitoring and reporting by the Health and Safety Adviser of hazardous areas and the means of escape from all areas of the buildings and a termly report
- staff awareness of the evacuation procedures
- weekly testing of fire alarms
- termly practice of evacuation of the buildings, with results and timings recorded by the Headteacher in the Fire Register
- Annual PAT testing and 5 year Full Electrical testing regime in place
- Annual Fire Risk Assessment – internal
- Fire Risk Assessment – external 3 yearly

Risk Assessment

Notwithstanding all the measures listed above, fire remains at this point in time a medium risk.

Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans are implemented for children and adults with disabilities or temporary injuries.

2.9. Electricity

Our current suppliers are Corona Energy.

Electricity Supply Risk Assessment

The disruption of supply is a low risk.

2.9.2 Oil

Current supplier is Speedy Fuels.

Oil Supply Risk Assessment

The disruption of supply is a low risk.

2.10 Information Technology

The school's Data Protection Policy provides that it will:

Ensure that clear and robust safeguards are in place to protect personal information from loss, theft and unauthorised disclosure, irrespective of the format in which it is recorded .

All hardware is security marked with item number and listed on an inventory.

Additional measures in hand or planned are:

Record assets on Safesmart monitoring system
Add postcode to all portable equipment

Management Information

A database of all pupils and staff, with next of kin contact details, is held on the Arbor cloud-based system. This secure on-line system can be accessed anytime, anywhere from any computer with the correct log in details. Access is available to Sarah Bailey, Jo Arundell and Sally Dale.

Financial Database

Maintained on Sage cloud-based on-line software.

Data is held online and can be accessed remotely by the School Business Manager, Office Manager, and Office Administrators.

Pupil Records

As well as the data held on the Arbor cloud-based system, pupil contact folder, with contact details, are held in the school office and Headteacher's office for access by staff.

There is prompt completion of electronic registers at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session. Names of pupils who are late or who leave school early are recorded.

Pupil records are regularly updated with change of address and attendance figures.

Risk Assessment

Management information, including the financial database, is held on a cloud based secure system with backup. The loss of data is assessed to be low.

2.11 Manual Records

Hard copies of pupil's reports are held in the school office. These are kept in a locked filing cabinet. Pupil records are passed on to the new school when pupil leaves. In the case of pupils who move out of the country or electively home educate, the records are kept on site until the child is aged 25.

Hard copies of financial records and reports are kept off site. Records are kept for six years plus the current year.

HR records are kept in a secure cabinet in the school office at Great Chesterford Primary Academy, our sister school in the Great Oak Multi Academy Trust. Archived records are kept in secure filing cabinets in an upstairs storage area.

Risk Assessment

Assessed as being medium risk.

2.12 Communications

Telephones

The telephone system was installed in 2023. There are and seven extensions on this VOIP system. It is provided by VSL Group.

Internet

The school's broadband is provided by RM Education.

Risk Assessment

Assessed as being a low risk.

Phone access will be disrupted if there is no internet connection or a powercut.

2.13 Health and Safety

Ensuring that high standards of health, safety and wellbeing are provided and maintained in order that there is a safe and healthy working environment for all staff, students and visitors is regarded as of the utmost importance.

The Health and Safety Policy sets out the key responsibilities of the Governing Body, Headteacher, Managers, all employees and other key staff. It also outlines how health and safety is organised within the School and signposts all employees to the detailed arrangements for implementing the policy through risk assessments and standards.

School staff experience many pressures and demands on their time. However, initial whole-staff training on the prevention, management and response to incidents raises their awareness and understanding of these issues and what to do. Regular reminders and updates serve to keep the issues live and enhance the sensitivity of staff to preventative measures.

Fire evacuation drills are practised termly.

A large proportion of staff are First Aid trained and the school also has paediatric first aiders.

The school adheres to guidelines and advice on the testing and maintenance of equipment, fixtures and fittings. All electrical, PE, and fire-fighting equipment, playground and climbing apparatus are inspected and tested annually. Termly health and safety checks on the buildings and site are conducted, with any potential dangers reported and dealt with.

The school also subscribes to Safesmart Health and Safety compliance management software which includes staff training packages.

Risk Assessment

A serious breach of Health and Safety is regarded as a low risk.

2.14 Fraud

The Academies Financial Handbook, published annually by the Education Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), sets out rigorous requirements in relation to the duties and requirements of academy schools. They must take full control of their financial affairs, maintain accounting records and produce audited accounts.

In accordance with these requirements, the school maintains sound internal controls, risk management and assurance processes. It has in place measures to reduce the risk of fraud, theft and/or irregularity occurring. Independent checks are carried out by the Responsible Officer, on a proportionate basis, of financial controls, systems and transactions. In addition, an external financial advisor reviews the company accounts and assists with the preparation of a monthly management report.

Audited accounts are produced annually by independent Auditors

Risk Assessment

The importance of maintaining rigorous internal financial controls, supported by independent scrutiny, is fundamental.

With the measures in place, the risk of fraud is considered to be low.

2.15 Loss of Key Staff

Staff are the school's most valuable resource and every effort is made to attract and appoint the best candidates. Of equal concern is the need to ensure that, through good practice, the school does not lose staff for reasons that are avoidable. There is an extensive programme of staff development, training and performance review.

In the case of senior managers, the effects of unplanned loss would be mitigated since they work in a close team and have experience, knowledge and understanding of each other's roles. In the short term, with reallocation of tasks and duties, the risk can be managed. If necessary, the school could have recourse to support from other experienced managers. The school, for example, works closely with a cluster group of primary schools.

Risk Assessment

Although it is not possible to eliminate the risk of unplanned losses, the school would be able in the short term drawing on experienced managers.

The impact of such a loss is considered to be low.

2.16 Default of Suppliers

The school works with recognised suppliers for the provision of goods and services, selecting suitable products and ensuring value for money. Potential new suppliers are investigated before entering into a commitment. If a company fails to honour a contract, payment is withheld.

Risk Assessment

The risk of default by suppliers is low as the school is well placed to switch suppliers very quickly should the need arise.

2.17 Insurance

Insurance is provided by Zurich, through Essex County Council. This is for both general contents, computer equipment and buildings. Terrorism, public liability, school journeys, motor, legal and travel insurance is also included within the policy.

Risk Assessment

The policy is reviewed regularly and seen by the Auditor. On this basis, the risk is assessed to be low.

Part Three

Recovery Strategy

3.1 Important Principles

There is no one response to disaster. The response will need to vary just as the nature and effects of the disaster will vary. It may be as the result of fire, building collapse, natural disaster such as flood and, in the worst scenario, cause serious or life-threatening injuries.

This part of the plan is, therefore, intended to provide a framework for dealing with the response, however caused, and to facilitate speed of business recovery. It sets out the role of the Incident Manager and the Recovery Team.

There are two important principles:

managing the response and business recovery has to be integrated into the existing management structure because normal provision has to continue, as far as circumstances permit, whilst the emergency is handled

operation of the plan has to be flexible. It has to work at any time, whether or not the school is in session, at weekends and in any conditions

Initial action must be in response to the incident and not the cause. What is done in the first few hours may determine how quickly the school is able to recover. It is often referred to as the "golden hour".

The Plan has been constructed to:

- enable the school to cope with the impact of an incident
- ensure an effective and appropriate response
- enhance and expedite recovery
- make use of available support services
- enable the school and wider community to come to terms with the emotional and psychological impact and its consequent effects
- provide support for all children and staff affected

- maintain the normal running of any parts of the school not affected

- return the whole school back to normal as soon as possible

3.2 Contact with Emergency Services

The Police and Emergency Services will provide the initial response, as appropriate.

It is the role of the Police to co-ordinate and communicate between emergency services and organisations providing support.

Enter time of contact in the Incident Record (Appendix 4)

3.3 Evacuation and Containment

Evacuation is necessary to avoid risks to life or health from:

- spread of fire

- threat of explosion

- structural damage

- threat of environmental contamination

Fire Safety, including First Aid and Evacuation, forms part of the school's comprehensive Health and Safety Policy Document.

The role of Fire Marshalls is critical ensuring that all the premises are vacated, including the arrangements for the safety of disabled persons. If their own safety is under threat, they must report the situation immediately to the Emergency Services in attendance and to the Headteacher.

The database of all pupils and staff held in the school office can be accessed remotely.

All learning support assistants/ midday supervisors are qualified to administer first aid.

Administrative staff, as well as teaching staff, will offer support so that the school respond quickly and efficiently to any crisis and to queries from distressed families.

Evacuation procedures are rehearsed termly.

3.4 Casualties

The names of any known casualties must be recorded and passed to the Police.

The Headteacher will brief the school office on how to handle enquiries, especially in dealing with enquiries from parents, their friends and relatives.

See also sections 3.7, 3.8 and 3.9

3.5 Initial Evaluation and Reporting of Incident

The incident, together with a very quick assessment of the situation is to be reported immediately, if they are not already aware, to the

- Headteacher
- Deputy Headteacher
- Chair of Governors
- Office Staff
- Executive headteacher
- MAT Office Manager/MAT Premises Manager & Finance Assistant
- Chair of Trustees

A list of emergency call out numbers is given in Appendices 2, 5 and 6.

It will be possible to evaluate from initial observation how long the incident and disruption is likely to continue.

Under no circumstances must anyone enter the disaster area unless it is safe to do so.

3.6 Records of Incident

In the event of a disaster, good administrative and back-up systems assist effective management and ensure a fast response. The incident record in Appendix 4 is a check list of steps to be taken during the incident and recovery.

The importance of recording action both during the incident and the recovery stage cannot be overstated. The Office staff will be responsible for this function

working closely with the Headteacher. Additional support is available from the MAT Office Manager and MAT Premises Manager.

Everything of significance must be documented. This will include telephone calls made and received, letters sent and received, postings on the school website, meetings held, interventions used etc.

If some things do not go to plan, it will be essential to draw on information to support decisions that were made at the time, and for later debriefing and review.

3.7 Management of Incident: Recovery Team

The Headteacher and Executive Headteacher will be responsible for managing the incident, working closely with the Deputy Headteacher, the Chair of Governors, Office staff, MAT Office Manager and MAT Premises Manager. This will include the actions listed below, some of which are referred to in other paragraphs of this section of the plan:

- appointing a Recovery Team
- managing the immediate effect, working closely with the Police and other Emergency Services, as required
- assessing the actual or potential impact of the incident on normal day-to-day operations
- briefing the Governing Body and Trustees
- calling into the school, if outside school hours, staff to assist with the incident and recovery process, co-ordinating and directing them as required
- contacting the school insurance brokers and loss adjustors
- determining priorities in the light of whether the impact is likely to be short or longer term
- leading the work of the Recovery Team
- directing the communications and guidance given to staff, parents, Governors, media and outside bodies

- posting news on the school website and sending updates to parents via email
- briefing everyone entering the premises, if conditions permit, on health and safety issues
- making arrangements for a photographic record of the incident area and recovery work in progress
- engaging contractors and suppliers to carry out emergency work
- directing contractors and utilities on the work of ensuring the safety of services and securing damaged premises, as well as structural integrity
- engaging the services of the School Architect and other professionals to assess damage and restoration
- ensuring that priority services such as telephones, IT equipment and essential data are accessed and restored at the earliest possible moment
- purchasing equipment and items required to enable operations to continue
- investigating, if necessary, the availability of alternative premises
- ensuring the records are kept of action taken and recording, separately, all expenditure incurred during the incident

3.8 Communications and Media

Frequent and accurate reporting is essential. Those who will need to be kept informed include:

- staff
- parents
- pupils
- governors
- trustees
- public

- neighbours

- suppliers

The Headteacher will brief the school office on how to respond to enquiries.

It is also important to avoid speculating on anything that is not positively verified, including the cause of the emergency, damage estimates, losses etc.

Skilful and consistent handling of the media can bring positive benefits in a potentially difficult situation, including reporting the school's good safety record, the steps that are in place to reduce the risks of disaster and plans for recovery.

3.9 Staff and Pupil Counselling

The care and treatment of people caught up in the disaster is an extremely important aspect in dealing with the response. This applies not only to those who may be injured and traumatised and their relatives and friends, but to everyone involved in the emergency.

The school curriculum addresses sensitive issues such as death, bereavement and serious injury so that pupils will have had some familiarity with them, using well-chosen resources.

This programme is sensitive to helping teachers deal with these delicate issues and take into account their personal experiences; the pupils' backgrounds; having an informed understanding of the different cultural and religious attitudes to disability, disasters, death, bereavement, mourning and funerals.

It also highlights how different religions and cultures interpret the causes of disaster and explain the events.

It is sensitive to the atmosphere of support and trust amongst pupils and the extent to which they would be able to talk and share their feelings.

Experience from major disasters suggests that staff morale is likely to remain high among those immediately involved in dealing with the response. However, fatigue will reduce effectiveness of performance. What is more, the psychological impact may only become apparent sometime after the disaster has happened. Both staff, parents and pupils will be affected in a number of ways:

- classes will be disrupted

- some may have to transfer to alternative premises
- it could be a critical time for assessments
- work may be damaged or lost
- they may have close friends or know of others who have been injured or who have life threatening injuries

Experience also indicates that if they believe their friends and relatives may have been involved, people will travel to the scene.

For some of those affected, stress and long term counselling may be required. The Local Education Authority provides specialist 'trauma' psychologists and counsellors who offer such support. Normally this service is delivered on a one to one basis to enable the response to be tailed according to need.

3.10 Making Premises Safe and Secure

Before re-entry to those parts of the premises affected, a judgement will need to be made as to whether emergency building work is required to ensure safety of personnel.

Appendix 5 gives a list of contractors who will be able to carry out emergency work.

The disconnection of services may also require bringing in a contractor or service providers.

3.11 Salvage and Damage Limitation

As soon as it is declared safe to re-enter the affected premises, priority must be given to the removal to temporary secure storage of:

essential documents and records

re-usable equipment and materials

A record must be kept of items removed.

3.12 Drying Out Premises

It may be necessary to call in specialist contractors or to hire equipment for this purpose.

3.13 Procurement

In an emergency there will be a requirement for a quick response for the replacement of equipment and materials. In the short term, it may even be possible to loan items from another school.

Initially, priority will be given to the procurement of those items regarded as essential to facilitate business continuity and recovery.

Appendix 6 gives details of the main suppliers of goods and services with whom the school currently works. It may be necessary, in an emergency, to refer to other suppliers.

In assessing the extent of damage and loss, it will be possible to refer to the stock inventories which are updated on a regular basis.

It does not follow, however, that items destroyed or damaged will be replaced automatically. In some cases it may be more appropriate to obtain alternative items of comparable value. In any case, the whole cost of replacement may not be covered by insurance or there may be more pressing priorities.

3.14 Relocation to Alternative Premises

If alternative premises have to be found, issues to consider will include:

- location
- suitability
- security of site for pupils
- planning consent
- toilet provision
- access for deliveries and parking
- provision for broadband and telephone
- the need, or otherwise, for transport for pupils
- catering provision
- procurement

-costs

3.15 Re-instatement of Premises

Where damage is superficial, minor works and cleaning may suffice.

More extensive damage, or re-building, will require involvement with Architects etc. and the whole process of design and inviting tenders. The opportunity may in any case be taken to review options and longer term needs before any commitment is made. In the final analysis it will be for the Governors and Trustees to decide after consultation with the insurers and Education Funding Agency.

Part Four

Review Strategy

4.1 De-briefing

Once the school has returned to normal day-to-day operations, which for this purpose may still involve the use of temporary alternative accommodation, the effectiveness of the arrangements and issues set out in this plan should be reviewed.

Steps required to strengthen procedures and systems should be initiated immediately.

4.2 Review of Plan

This plan is not, quite deliberately, a prescriptive document, essentially because it is not possible to guess the nature and extent of any disaster that may occur. Therefore, the approach has been to set out in Part Two those measures that seek to avoid or minimize risk. Part Three provides a framework for responding to an emergency whatever the scale or cause.

Any document of this nature needs to be kept under review. In particular, it is important to:

- improve awareness and understanding of the need for robust contingency arrangements
- update, as required, preventative measures to eliminate or reduce risk
- ensure that appropriate procedures and systems are in place, kept under review and updated where necessary
- increase the school's chances of surviving a major disaster
- engage all staff in the review to give ownership of the plan.
- keep up to date emergency call-out lists
- keep inventories up to date
- update the plan annually

4.3 Report to Governors and Trustees

Annual report on Business Continuity Plan review and any changes made to Governors and Trustees.

Part Five

Monitoring

This policy will be reviewed and approved by the Governing Body annually or before if required.

Signed: Headteacher	
Signed: On behalf of the Governing Body	
Next Review Date:	

Appendices

Appendix 1	School Location Plan and Position of Heating Boiler and Electrical Intake
Appendix 2	List of School Emergency Call Out Numbers
Appendix 3	List of Procedures and Systems in Place
Appendix 4	Record of Action Taken
Appendix 5	School Premises Contacts
Appendix 6	School Admin Contacts

