

Stratford-sub-Castle Church of England VC Primary School

Life in all its fullness

Health and Safety Policy #10

The *Health and Safety Policy* was reviewed during the Autumn Term 2019.
This document is the result of that review.

DATE AGREED BY FULL GOVERNING BODY:	25/11/2019
REVIEW DATE:	November 2020
AUTHOR:	Mrs Kay Bridson, Miss Angela Britten & Mr Peter Habert
HEADTEACHER:	Mrs Kay Bridson
CHAIR OF GOVERNORS:	Miss Angela Britten
SIGNED:	
TO BE READ IN CONJUNCTION WITH:	<p><i>This policy should be read in conjunction with all safeguarding policies.</i></p> <p><i>The LA policies supporting this document are:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Employee Wellbeing Policy</i>• <i>Violence and Aggression towards Staff Policy</i>• <i>LA Policy Statement produced by Wiltshire Council.</i>

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Statement of Intent

The aim of the Governing Body is to provide a safe and healthy working and learning environment for staff, pupils and visitors. The Governing Body accepts that it has a responsibility to take all reasonably practicable steps to secure the health of pupils, staff and others using the school premises or participating in school-sponsored activities.

The Governing Body believes that the prevention of incidents, accidents, injury or loss is essential to the efficient operation of the school and is part of the good education of its pupils.

The Governing Body will take all reasonable steps to identify hazards and reduce the risks from them to a minimum. All staff and pupils must appreciate, however, that their own safety and that of others also depends on their individual conduct and vigilance while on the school premises or while taking part in school-sponsored activities.

Whenever required, the Governing Body, Headteacher and other staff seek advice from the Local Authority (LA), the Council's corporate occupational health and safety service or other competent persons to ensure that the most current and relevant information is used in carrying out this policy.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is:

- to fulfil the aims of the school, through a consistent approach to Health and Safety
- to supplement the Wiltshire Council safety policies
- to reflect the Health and Safety issues pertinent to our school

Statement of Aims

It is our aim to:

- provide a happy, safe and stimulating environment so that each pupil has the opportunity to achieve and acquire skills and knowledge required for life now and in the future
- provide a safe and healthy environment for pupils and visitors
- provide a safe and healthy working environment for employees, and ensure their work does not adversely affect the health and safety of others
- cultivate positive attitudes within individuals towards Health and Safety matters

Statement of Principles

We believe:

- an effective Health and Safety Policy is crucial to the regime of the school
- a safe learning environment is vital to the well-being of our pupils and staff
- all visitors/contractors have the right to conduct their business in a safe manner

Implementation:

The Governing Body and the Headteacher have overall responsibility for the implementation, enforcement and revision of this policy.

We:

- provide a safe, healthy working and learning environment
- ensure the security of children

- provide equipment and systems that are safe
- create safe arrangements for the use, handling and storage of articles and substances
- promote information, instruction, training and supervision enabling all employees to avoid accidents and contribute to their health and safety at work
- elect a Health and Safety (H & S) Working Party
- ensure a safe workplace and safe access to it
- teach children to become aware of Health and Safety issues

Organisation of School Health and Safety Structure

- Level 1 – Governing Body
- Level 2 – Headteacher / H & S Working Party
- Level 3 – Deputy Head Cleaner in charge
- Level 4 – Teachers Administrative Assistants Teaching Assistants Cleaners

Allocation of Functions:

Level 1 –

- set the *Health and Safety Policy* through the committee, keep the policy under review, and amend it where necessary

Level 2 –

- take day-to-day responsibility for health and safety matters in the school
- liaise with Governors / LA
- ensure adequate arrangements for efficient implementation of policy
- arrange for staff training as appropriate

Level 3 –

- arrange for staff to be informed on health and safety issues
- ensure procedures are followed
- act on reports from Level 4 within agreed timescale
- report problems to Level 2

Level 4 –

- check classroom areas are safe
- check equipment is safe before use
- ensure safe procedures are followed
- report defects to Level 3
- carry out special tasks as appropriate, e.g.; first aid, membership of H & S Working Party

(See Appendix 3 for specific duties)

School Health and Safety Working Party

The Governing Body appoints a school Health and Safety working party which report to the Premises Committee.

This comprises of:

- the Headteacher
- one representative from the school staff
- one member of the Governing Body

They are Mrs Kay Bridson, Miss Angela Britten and Miss Hannah Crook.

The H & S working party:

- arranges for regular inspection of school premises in order to identify and correct any risk to Health and Safety from any source
- ensures any contractors employed to carry out work in the school do so in a safe manner, and that no person using the premises is exposed to any hazards resulting from that work
- arranges for specific risk assessments to be made where the Health and Safety of any employee or person to whom they have a duty of care is thought to be at risk
- liaises with the Wiltshire Council's Health and Safety adviser for advice on detailed Health and Safety matters, and to the Local Authority's Health and Safety Liaison Officer for more general advice
- reports regularly to the Governing Body on Health and Safety matters
- arranges appropriate training for safety
- disseminates health and safety information
- investigates incidents which will cause or have the potential to cause injury to staff, pupils or visitors and report findings to the Governing Body
- ensures any premises defect is reported, rectified and action taken to prevent persons being affected by that defect
- liaises with the Headteacher to record and report any defect or concern together with the action taken to rectify the situation
- completes an annual audit, returns it to the LA and edits the Continuous School Development Plan for Health and Safety.

Pupil Safety

On the school premises we:

- ensure that no child is left unsupervised while in the care of the school
- ensure no adult is left isolated and unable to call for assistance from a member of staff because every adult carries a whistle
- ensure all adults have read and agreed with the Code of Conduct and Behaviour Policy for Staff and Volunteers to ensure safe working practice
- ensure children understand the difference between appropriate/inappropriate physical contact
- ensure all children move around the school in pairs
- ensure all visitors to school premises report in the first instance to the school office, where they sign the visitors book and wear a visitors badge
- ensure at least one adult is in the each play area during playtime and midday break
- ensure a phone is available on the playground should the emergency services be required (see Appendix 5)
- maintain pupil safety in line with the LA Policy
- follow "crisis management" procedures as set out in the Staff Handbook
- follow first aid procedures as set out in the Staff Handbook
- follow child protection procedures as set out in the Staff Handbook
- follow daily routines/procedures as set out in the Staff Handbook

On school trips we:

- only use contractors who can provide transport equipped with seatbelts
- do not expect children to share a seat with another child under any circumstances
- ensure appropriate adult / children ratio (see below)
- brief the children about crossing roads and other assessed risks
- ensure every group has their own first aid kit
- follow procedures for school trips as set out in the Staff Handbook

A professional judgement must be made by the Visit Leader, Educational Visits Co-ordinator, Headteacher/ Deputy as to the appropriate ratio for each visit. Ratios must not exceed 1:9 (EYFS/KS1) and 1:12 (KS2).

This will be determined by:

- type, duration and level of activity

- needs of individuals within the group (SEND)
- experience and competence of staff and accompanying adults
- nature of the venue
- weather conditions at the time of year
- nature of transport involved

On every occasion when these ratios change the Headteacher must be informed and must sanction the revised ratio. Please note: parents should not bring younger children.

The necessary Risk Assessments are completed by the individual teacher and agreed by the Education Visits Co-ordinator (Hannah Crook) and Headteacher. Risk assessments are completed using evolve.edufocus.co.uk.

First Aid

Certificates of registered First Aiders are on display in the office. There is at least one first aider in each classroom.

Paediatric First Aiders are Jeanette Hardiman, Alison Smith, and Caroline Webb.

First Aid boxes are located in each classroom and in the staff room. Their location is clearly indicated.

There is a defibrillator located outside the Reading Room. The code is kept on the information wall by the telephone.

We:

- ensure parental **contact sheets** are in the school office
- contact parents if a visit to hospital is necessary and notify the Administrative Officer who will contact the relevant Accident & Emergency Department and alert the child's doctor
- take the child's **contact sheet** to the hospital.

Pre-written notes covering minor injuries, to inform parents (bump notes) are located in the office and on the medical trolley. The first- aider dealing with an incident completes these forms. A record is kept in the **First Aid and Intimate Care Log Book**.

If a child sustains a head injury, a bump note is issued. The class teacher ensures a check is made to verify that the bump note has been received by parents.

Accident forms are kept in the school office. Duty personnel fill in the forms when accidents occur. Minor accidents are noted in the accident book in the office. All incidents (as required by Wiltshire LA policy), to be reported to them are made using the website reporting system. On line forms are to be used for the recording of incidents/accidents and near misses in school using the advice and criteria below (see Wiltshire Right Choice for more details).

NEAR MISS

*Use the **Near Miss** form for any unplanned event that did not result in injury, illness, or damage - but had the potential to do so. This will include near misses involving either employees or non-employees.*

EMPLOYEES

*The **Accident to Employee** form should be used when a physical injury has been sustained by an employee.*

*If the physical injury or emotional distress occurred through any form of physical or verbal assault or aggression (including intimidation/posturing/gestures/insults/innuendo) then use the **Violence/Aggression to Employee** form instead.*

NON-EMPLOYEES

*The **Accident/Incident to Non-Employee** form should be used when a physical injury is sustained or for any incidents involving violence and aggression to non-employees*

The Use of Restrictive Physical Intervention Report and Investigation Report form should be used to report any planned or unplanned restrictive physical interventions to the Behaviour Support Service. This form replaces the numbered Behaviour Management/Physical Intervention red book.

The Council is committed to the reduction of the number and severity of injuries in schools and to the reduction of ill health to its employees and those affected by the school's activities.

Prompt completion of this form is essential. If there is any difficulty or delay in completing this form, please contact the H&S Service at County Hall on 01225 713154.

Infection Control

The school follows the guidance from Public Health England, 'The Control of Communicable diseases in schools and nurseries' September 2015.

Flushing Regime

Following holidays and prolonged periods of school closure the school follows a "flushing through" regime to ensure the regular movement of water.

General Health Issues

Each class has a box in which inhalers (labelled) are stored during the day. This box is taken with the class to P.E. and other excursions out of the classroom. During P.E. this box may be used to store other valuables. It is kept in a convenient but child-safe place.

Each classroom has a bucket, gloves and "SANITAIRE" – clean up deodorizer for vomit, incontinence and other bodily fluids. Gloves are worn when dealing with bodily fluids.

FIRST AID BOXES ARE LOCATED IN EACH CLASSROOM.

Jeanette Hardiman and Lucy Ray are responsible for keeping them in good working order.

Fire Procedures

When a fire alarm is raised, staff

- ensure children leave the building in a quiet and orderly manner and assemble on the school field
- close all doors
- ensure classes make their way to the unaffected side of the school
- take the class register, and count the children to ensure no-one is missing. Registers, mobile phone, gate key and Visitors' Book are brought from the office

The Headteacher or Deputy ensures the Fire Brigade has been called

- fire procedure notices are prominently displayed throughout the school
- telephones are located in the school office and in the kitchen stock room.

A Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan is completed for pupils and staff who require assistance to evacuate the building or school site.

(See Appendix 2 for list of written procedures)

Vehicle Access to the School Site

The school gates are closed from 8:30am and locked at 9am until 2:30pm every day and unavailable for vehicle access between 8:30am and 5pm. Cones are also placed across the school entrance way to prevent turning and access to the school driveway, ensuring that the gates are clear for emergency vehicle access. When access is required permission must be sought from the Headteacher and a member of the SLT present at the time of access. There is no vehicle movement at play or lunchtimes under any circumstance.

Use of private vehicles to transport pupils

Our policy is to avoid using private vehicles wherever possible. If the use private vehicles to transport pupils is unavoidable, the following procedures are followed.

Parents and staff, who may transport pupils in their private vehicles, are asked to complete a form, to show their competence as drivers and their vehicle's road- worthiness. These forms are to be signed and supported by the following documentation

- driving licence
- MOT certificate (if required)
- insurance certificate

The Headteacher files these forms in the H&S file for future reference. Parental permission is gained before pupils are transported in a vehicle owned and driven by a member of staff or another parent.

Use of Chemicals

- hazardous substances are eliminated from use wherever possible
- cleaning chemicals are locked away in the cleaning cupboard when not in use
- no hazardous substance is to be introduced into the school without prior assessment of its risk
- all staff using such substances must be informed and trained in their use
- for those substances that *must* be used, the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations (COSHH) place a duty on managers to have a written assessment of the risk to health available for referral

Manual Handling

- no member of staff should attempt to lift or move any load likely to present a risk of injury unless they have been trained to do so
- any person who as part of their duties is required to manually handle loads must be given appropriate training

Electricity at Work

The Governing Body, through the premises committee, ensures that:

- all portable electrical appliances are inspected and tested every twelve months, or more often if subjected to heavy use
- staff are aware that they must routinely *visually* check any appliance which they use regularly, and report any mechanical or electrical defect to the Headteacher
- proper records are kept of all repairs, maintenance, inspections or testing of portable electrical appliances
- second hand electrical equipment and appliances brought from home must undergo PAT testing prior to use

Electrical equipment from home must not be used in school.

Gas Leaks

In the event of any suspected gas leaks the Headteacher must be informed immediately. The Headteacher will ensure the emergency services and the Gas Board are called and pupils evacuated to a place of safety.

Emergency Plans

The Headteacher ensures that an emergency plan is prepared to cover all foreseeable major incidents which could put the occupants or users of the school at risk. This plan will indicate the actions to be taken in the event of a major incident so that everything possible is done to:

- (i) save life;
- (ii) prevent injury;
- (iii) minimise loss.

The plan will be agreed by the Governing Body and be regularly rehearsed by staff and pupils. The result of all such

rehearsals will form part of the regular risk assessment survey. This sequence will determine the priorities of the emergency plan and the outcome will be reported to the Governing Body.

Contractors

When contractors are on school premises the Headteacher or Deputy will assume the role of Contract Liaison Officer, and will ensure that on arrival the contractor is made aware of:

- The school's "notice to contractors" handout *
- The school Fire Procedure *
- The "reporting procedure" note positioned at the entrance to the school giving guidance to contractors *

External contractors are required to sign a declaration form regarding safe practice of vehicles on-site.

(See Appendix 1)

The Headteacher ensures that the "Contractors' Safety Policy Statements" and safe working methods are requested and examined prior to work commencing. School staff are made aware of contractors working on site.

If any contractors are observed to be working in an unsafe manner, they are to be advised to cease immediately and the Headteacher informed immediately, in order for action to be taken.

The Governors have adopted the SCHOOL MANAGED PROJECTS GUIDANCE NOTES produced by Wiltshire Council. The procedures in this document are followed when the school undertakes works.

When employing contractors the school uses FORM CC01 to select safe contractors.

Specific procedures and Further Guidance

The Governing Body and the Headteacher ensure that written procedures, preceded by risk assessments, are produced and maintained to provide detailed and current information about the specific health and safety arrangements in place to deal with particular risks and situations. These procedures give instructions as to how staff should carry out duties or activities and clearly state who is responsible for doing what and in what circumstances (normal and abnormal). All staff are informed about these procedures.

(See Appendix 3 & 4 for list of written procedures)

The Legal Framework

It is the duty of every employer, under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 to prepare and when appropriate revise a written statement of the policy with regard to the Health and Safety at Work of all employees, and the organisation and arrangements for carrying out that policy, and to bring the statement and any revision of it to the notice of all employees.

The Governing Body will conduct their activities within the framework of all relevant legislation. Within that framework the adoption of more stringent safety standards may be appropriate in certain circumstances.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The H & S Working Party report to the Premises Committee. The Premises Committee and the Head teacher report to the Full Governing Body at each FGB meeting. An audit is completed annually and submitted to the LA. This informs future health and safety priorities.

Appendix 1

NOTICE TO CONTRACTORS

When you bring a vehicle onto this site, we would appreciate your co-operation in keeping our children safe.

- please read this notice and sign our book
- once parked **DO NOT MOVE YOUR VEHICLE** report to school office if necessary.
- if you have tools with you, make sure they are not left unattended
- if you need the Asbestos Register ask in office.
- when you are ready to leave the premises, report to the school office and a member of staff will assist in your safe departure.
- IMPORTANT-Please put orange note on drivers seat of your vehicle to remind you to **report to school office before moving your vehicle.**
- Fire Muster Point: go to top of the school playing field by the green sign.

DO NOT MOVE YOUR VEHICLE WITHOUT A STAFF MEMBER BEING PRESENT.

Please sign to say you have read and understood the 'Notice to Contractors' and will place orange note on the driver's seat of your vehicle.

Date Name of Company.....

Print Name.....Signature.....

REMOVAL OF VEHICLES BY CONTRACTORS
TO BE PLACED ON DRIVERS SEAT.

Please report to the school office when you are ready to leave the premises.

A member of staff must assist in your safe departure.
We appreciate your co-operation in keeping our children safe.

Appendix 2

STRATFORD-SUB-CASTLE PRIMARY SCHOOL

INSTRUCTIONS TO STAFF – ACTION IN CASE OF FIRE

FOR DISPLAY IN SMALL PREMISES WHERE NO FIRE ALARM SYSTEM IS INSTALLED

INSTRUCTIONS

IF YOU DISCOVER A FIRE -

- 1. Raise the alarm and ensure the Fire Brigade is called.**
- 2. Evacuate premises and assemble on the School Field.**
- 3. Attack the fire, if possible, with the appliances provided but without taking any personal risks.**

ON THE ALARM BEING RAISED -

- 1. Call the Fire Brigade immediately**
- 2. Evacuate the premises, assemble on the School Field**

**DO NOT STOP TO COLLECT PERSONAL
BELONGINGS**

DO NOT RE-ENTER THE BUILDING

October 2018

Appendix 3

Specific Duties

Duties of the Governing Body

In the discharge of its duty the Governing Body:

- (i) makes itself familiar with the Local Authority's Health, Safety and Welfare Policy (particularly Section 4.10 - Responsibilities of the Governing Body), the Local Management of Schools scheme and the advice and guidance provided by the LA;
- (ii) takes account of that policy and scheme within budget and other policy considerations;
- (iii) ensures that there is an effective and enforceable policy for the provision of health and safety throughout the school;
- (iv) periodically assesses the effectiveness of this policy and ensure that any necessary revisions are made;
- (v) establishes an effective health and safety management structure within the school and monitor and evaluate the Headteacher's performance on health and safety matters;
- (vi) brings to the attention of the Service Director, any health and safety concern outside of their control or any health and safety responsibility that they are unable to meet.

So far as is reasonably practicable the Governing Body, through the Headteacher, will make arrangements for all staff, including temporary and voluntary staff and helpers and those on fixed-term contracts, to receive comprehensive information on:

- (i) this policy;
- (ii) all other relevant health and safety matters;
- (iii) the instruction and training that is available to all employees so that they may carry out their duties in a safe manner without placing themselves or others at risk.

Duties of the Headteacher

As well as the duties which all members of staff have, the Headteacher has the general and specific responsibilities as set out in Section 4.11 of the LA's policy statement on health, safety and welfare. These are;

- (i) To manage the school's staff, site and activities so that the health, safety and welfare of all those involved is secured;
- (ii) To comply with LA policy and duties under the Local Management of Schools Scheme;
- (iii) To bring any health and safety concern outside of own control or any health and safety responsibility that is unable to be met, to the attention of the Governing Body and the Service Director (Resources, Improvements & Young People);

And specifically –

- (iv) To assess and record all significant risks to staff, pupils, visitors, contractors and hirers and to ensure that they are controlled as far as is reasonably practicable;
- (v) To develop and distribute school-specific policies on local health and safety issues;
- (vi) To monitor and secure compliance with the school's policy and the control measures identified through risk assessments;

- (vii) To ensure staff are properly trained, instructed and supervised for any relevant health and safety role and that all staff engage properly with LA and school health and safety procedures;
- (viii) To inspect the school site and property for any unsafe condition and to make safe in a timescale commensurate to the level of danger. This is carried out weekly on a formal basis and daily informally. A record is made in the "Site Inspection Record Book".
- (ix) To arrange routine maintenance and servicing of equipment through the LA mechanism or other competent means;
- (x) To consider health and safety in the selection of contractors and the planning of contracted work, and to provide general supervision to contractors whilst on the school site;
- (xi) To investigate all accidents, near misses and episodes of work-related ill-health;
- (xii) To monitor and evaluate the health and safety performance of staff;
- (xiii) To have and practise emergency and contingency plans;
- (xiv) To provide the means for consultation with staff on health and safety matters;
- (xv) To supply an annual health and safety performance report of standard indicators to the Service Director (Resources, Improvements & Young People).

The Headteacher is required to take all necessary and appropriate action to ensure that proper health and safety standards are maintained at all times.

Duties of Supervisory Staff

In addition to the general duties which all members of staff have; supervisory staff are directly responsible to the Headteacher, or the member of staff nominated by the Headteacher, to have overall day-to-day responsibility for the implementation and operation of the school's health and safety policy. As such the supervisory staff accept the responsibilities set out in Section 4.12 of the LA's policy statement on health, safety and welfare.

As part of their day-to-day responsibilities they ensure that:

- (i) safe methods of working exist and are implemented throughout their area of responsibility;
- (ii) health and safety regulations, rules, procedures and codes of practice are being applied effectively;
- (iii) staff, pupils and others under their jurisdiction are instructed in safe working practices;
- (iv) new employees working within their area are given instruction in safe working practices;
- (v) risk assessments are conducted in their area of responsibility as required by the Headteacher or as necessary;
- (vi) regular safety inspections are made of their area of responsibility as required by the Headteacher or as necessary;
- (vii) positive, corrective action is taken where necessary to ensure the health and safety of all staff, pupils and others;
- (viii) all equipment in the area in which they work is adequately guarded, in safe working order and restricted to authorised persons only;
- (ix) appropriate protective clothing and equipment, first aid and fire appliances are provided and readily available in the department in which they work;
- (x) hazardous and highly flammable substances in the area in which they work are correctly stored and labelled, and exposure is minimised;

- (xi) they monitor the standard of health and safety throughout the area in which they work and encourage staff, pupils and others to achieve the highest possible standards of health and safety;
- (xii) all health and safety information is communicated to the relevant persons;
- (xiii) they report any health and safety concerns to the Headteacher.

Duties of All Members of Staff

All staff are expected to familiarise themselves with the health and safety aspects of their work.

All staff have a responsibility to:

- (i) take reasonable care of their own health and safety and that of any other persons who may be affected by their acts or omissions at work;
- (ii) follow agreed working practices and safety procedures;
- (iii) report any accident, near miss, incidents of violence, including verbal abuse or any hazard;
- (iv) ensure health and safety equipment is not misused or interfered with.

Appendix 4

The written procedures required within the school are as follows:

- Storage and administration of medicines (Medication for Pupils Policy)
- Provision of first aid (Health and Safety Policy / Staff Handbook)
- Safety inspections (Health and Safety Policy)
- School managed projects (Wiltshire Health and Safety Manual for Schools- Wiltshire Wisenet)
- Fire and other emergency evacuations (Health and Safety Policy / Staff Handbook) (Emergency Plan)
- Stress and employee well-being (Staff Handbook)
- Organising outdoor education activities (Educational Visits and Activities Policy / Staff Handbook)
- Swimming (Educational Visits and Activities Policy / Staff Handbook)
- Unexpected loss of utilities (Emergency Plan)
- Site security (Staff Handbook and School Prospectus)
- Reporting of accidents, incidents, hazards and near misses (Flowchart)
- Use of or exposure to any hazardous substances or materials (Staff Handbook)
- Access to any height liable to cause injury (Staff Handbook)
- Violence to staff (LA Policy Wiltshire Wisenet)
- Lone working (Staff handbook)
- Use of contractors (Health and Safety Policy)
- Out-of-hours use of school buildings and facilities
- Vehicular movements on site (Health and Safety Policy)
- Managing water hygiene
- Waste disposal (Wiltshire Health and Safety Manual for Schools- Wiltshire Wisenet)
- High risk activities associated with the curriculum or school sponsored events Educational Visits and Activities Policy / Staff Handbook)

Appendix 5

NHS
South Western
Ambulance Service
NHS Foundation Trust
Safeguarding Team
safeguarding@swast.nhs.uk



Ringling 999 for an ambulance, a guide for education

It is always better if someone who is with the patient can ring 999, so you will need to get a telephone to the patient or get the patient to a telephone.

This is important for a variety of reasons, if the call is about an illness the call handler may want to know if there is a rash, what their breathing sounds like, any rapid swelling of the lips, face throat or tongue, does their skin feel a normal temperature etc. If the call is about an injury the call handler may ask questions like, is the limb cold, pale or blue, can the patient weight-bear, are there pins and needles in the limb, any bleeding etc.

When you first ring 999 you will go through to an emergency operator who will ask you what service you require (Police, Fire, Ambulance or Coastguard)

The South Western Ambulance Service uses a triage tool called Medical Priority Dispatch System (MPDS). MPDS is an International Academy of Emergency dispatch computer based operating system that provides a suite of clinical protocols for triaging 999 calls based on the symptoms reported when calling. Calls are prioritised so that patients with life threatening conditions receive the fastest response. The ambulances are only sent on lights and sirens to the most serious conditions, thus minimizing the risk to other road users and the public.

When you are connected to the ambulance service you will initially be asked if the patient is breathing, you will then be asked if they are awake, or if there is any serious bleeding. If the patient is awake & breathing you will be asked what the problem is, at this point we only want to know a brief summary of what is happening, i.e. "they have injured their ankle", "they have breathing difficulties" etc. and how this has happened.

You will then be asked to confirm the address of the emergency.

The call will then be triaged; in order to do this effectively we need to speak to either the patient or someone with the patient and we will also want to know the age of the child.

The call handler will carry out a safe effective assessment of the symptoms reported, as the clinical assessment progresses; each answer determines the next question to be asked.

Obviously these questions will vary depending on the symptoms and condition of the patient so it really requires the patient or someone with the patient to answer these questions.

By answering these questions it enables us to prioritise the call response. We may get a clinician (Paramedic, nurse or doctor) to call you back who will assess further & also might ask you if the school or the parents are able to transport the patient to hospital, Doctors surgery or Minor Injury Unit (MIU) following the assessment.

If, when asked is the patient conscious and breathing, you answer no to either then this could potentially be life threatening, and an ambulance will be dispatched immediately or diverted from a lower priority call.

If someone is not breathing the call handler will talk you through what you can do to help, this will include instructions on how to commence Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR), and will require you and the phone to be next to the patient. You will be asked to put the phone on loudspeaker and will be asked to shout out the chest compressions as you give them, so the call handler knows what is happening.

Do not stop CPR as soon as the Paramedics arrive as they will require a few seconds to assemble any equipment required.

Important – you don't need to be First Aid trained, all instructions will be given by the call handler.