



Norfolk Safeguarding Children Partnership

Scrutiny Report – Thorpe St Andrew School Part of the Broad Horizons Education Trust

Executive Summary

This independent scrutiny review examined the multi-agency response before, during and after the serious incident at Thorpe St Andrew School on 11 March 2026. It concludes that the school, Trust, police and wider partnership responded professionally, proportionately and effectively in exceptionally difficult circumstances. Their actions reduced risk, protected the wider school community and prevented more staff and young people from being harmed. The review also identifies practical learning that should be used to strengthen preparedness across education settings in Norfolk and, potentially, more widely.

Areas of good practice:

- **Effective immediate response:** staff acted quickly and calmly, administered first aid, protected pupils and supported the emergency services. Pupils also responded with notable composure during a prolonged lockdown.
- **Strong emergency-service response:** Norfolk Constabulary acted promptly, professionally and proportionately, helping to prevent further harm.
- **Established preparedness:** the school had clear lockdown guidance, staff and pupils understood the lockdown signal, and effective attendance systems enabled the school to identify pupils' locations.
- **Visible leadership and partnership working:** the Headteacher, Trust Chief Executive and senior partners provided decisive leadership, with good communication between the Trust and police and appropriate safeguarding strategy meetings involving relevant agencies.
- **Comprehensive recovery support:** staff, pupils and parents were offered workshops, targeted support and specialist input, with forward planning for anniversaries and other potentially difficult events.
- **Open learning culture:** the school, Trust and partners engaged positively with scrutiny, shared reflections candidly and demonstrated a strong commitment to improving practice across the wider education system.

Recommendations and Learning for the Norfolk education sector:

1. **Accessible lockdown guidance:** all education settings should maintain clear, accessible lockdown procedures for staff, pupils, parents and emergency services, including key contacts and essential operational information.
2. **Annual practice:** settings should consider practising lockdown arrangements at least once each academic year, ideally early in the year, with age-appropriate guidance for pupils about what to expect.
3. **Operational information for responders:** schools should ensure emergency services can quickly identify key locations, gain access to buildings and restricted areas, locate pupils and staff, identify missing children and use accurate site maps. Arrangements should be developed with the local authority and emergency services.
4. **Strengthened lockdown planning:** strategic leaders should review the detailed learning from the incident, including initial reporting, rendezvous points, delegated decision-making, resilient communication methods, alternative arrangements when IT fails, parent messaging, prolonged lockdowns, armed police responses and safe exit strategies.
5. **Post-incident recovery:** settings should develop trauma-informed strategies to support pupils, staff and the wider school community after a major incident, in consultation with trusts, the local authority and relevant partners.
6. **Shared multi-agency learning:** Norfolk Constabulary should share relevant learning from its multi-agency debrief alongside this report so that education settings can strengthen their own arrangements.

The review does not recommend a uniform approach for every setting; leaders should assess the learning against their own size, age range, estate and pupil needs. Consideration of whether there were earlier opportunities to identify or manage risk relating to the perpetrator has been deferred until the legal process is complete, to avoid prejudicing those proceedings.