

CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY



Signature of Chairperson Board of Governors _____

Signature of Principal _____

Date _____

CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY / SCHOOL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PLAN

Rationale

Whilst critical incidents are difficult for all concerned, those that involve serious injury or death are inevitably traumatic. By their very nature and definition, critical incidents tend to disorientate and may overwhelm those involved. Planning ahead is therefore a necessary precaution and can be crucial in helping to minimise the impact on the welfare of pupils, staff and other stakeholders. This policy sets out the procedures to be followed in order to help safeguard the well-being of the whole school community in the event of a critical incident either on the school premises or involving members of the school community outside of school.

Aims and Objectives

1. To help to minimise the impact of a critical incident/emergency on the well-being of pupils, staff, visitors and other stakeholders who may be involved
2. To ensure awareness of planned arrangements/procedures in the event of a critical incident/emergency
3. To ensure that the help and support of other relevant agencies e.g. emergency services is secured and maximised through the implementation of clear procedures including communication links
4. To provide relevant and timely information to relevant stakeholders in the event of a critical incident/emergency

Definition

A critical incident can be a physical incident or psychological trauma that has a severe immediate impact and likely long term effect on pupils, staff or parents/carers.

This may include:

- Incidents that involve staff, children or young people or others
- People made disasters/emergencies
- Natural disasters/emergencies

There are three levels of incident as follows:

- **Level 1** - Major incident involving a large number of children/adults e.g. plane/bus/train crash, major violence.
- **Level 2** - Incident involving death or serious assault or other traumatic incident witnessed by children or staff.
- **Level 3** - Distress/trauma resulting from an incident such as the sudden death of a teacher or classmate through a road traffic accident for example, but not witnessed by the pupils.

Examples of a Critical Incidents

Examples of incidents which would meet our definition of a Critical Incident in and out of school as follows (Please note that this list is not exhaustive):

In-school/local environment

- The death of a pupil or member of staff through natural causes, such as illness
- A traffic accident involving a pupil or staff member
- A deliberate act of violence, such as a knifing or the use of a firearm
- A school fire or flood
- Allegations or actual incidents of abuse against pupils by staff and staff against pupils
- An arson attack on the school
- Sudden spread of serious illness/infection
- Severe weather conditions

Out-of-school

- Deaths or injuries on school journeys, trips or residential trips
- Tragedies involving children from many schools at public events such as football matches
- Civil disturbances
- Refugee children joining a school, uprooted from their countries and perhaps shocked by wars or atrocities.
- Abductions / disappearances
- Incidents involving the murder of school children that attract the attention of national and international media over prolonged periods
- A civil disturbance
- A disaster in the local community
- A transport accident involving school members
- An act of terrorism

Roles and Responsibilities

School Leadership Team (SLT)

- To act as the Critical Incident Team (CIT)
- To ensure all members of staff have access to and are aware of the school's Critical Incident Policy/Emergency Management Plan and associated guidance
- To produce and display a flow chart and relevant contact numbers
- To notify staff, pupils and other stakeholders as soon as practically possible
- To contact the relevant emergency services and the Local Authority as soon as practically possible
- To implement emergency evacuation procedures and adapt where necessary
- To maintain a written log of events
- To help reassure pupils, staff and other stakeholders where appropriate
- To ensure that thorough risk assessments are undertaken in respect to school trips and journeys and that all the appropriate paper work has been completed
- To safeguard the interests of all pupils, staff and other stakeholders
- To ensure appropriate delegation of CIT responsibilities in the case of absence of SLT and/or Site Manager/Caretaker
- To facilitate and review regular opportunities for practising emergency procedures e.g. Fire Drill, Lockdown procedures

All Staff

- To be familiar with the school's health and safety policy and emergency management plan including evacuation procedures and implement where necessary
- To undertake regular risk assessments in respect of carrying out curriculum activities
- To be familiar with and implement the school's security procedures and ensure that unidentified visitors are challenged promptly and escorted to the school office
- To ensure that policy and guidance for school trips and journeys are followed rigorously including the completion of associated risk assessments and identification of control measures in the event of a critical incident
- To be aware of pupils with exceptional medical or social needs/circumstances and provide for their needs accordingly
- Safeguard the interests of all pupils and staff
- Minimise loss and to return to normal working as quickly as possible

Governors

- To agree and review the Policy/Plan on a bi-annual basis
- To monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the Policy/Plan
- To offer support/advice and/or join the school's Critical Incident Team where it is appropriate and practical to do so
- To support the school's Critical Incident Team in dealing with the media
- To approve school journeys and ensure the appropriate safety measures are in place

Minimising the impact of a crisis in the event of a critical incident/emergency

In the event of a Critical Incident the school will follow any guidance given by the Local Authority as well as any advice given by the Police and/or other emergency services.

The school's reaction to a critical incident can be divided into the following categories:

- a) Immediate action
- b) Short term action
- c) Medium term action
- d) Longer term action

All actions will be undertaken by members of the school's Critical Incident Team or with their knowledge and support.

Immediate Action – Where appropriate the following actions should be taken:

- Implement the school's evacuation procedures if necessary i.e. assemble at Dukes Meadows via safe exit
- Notify the relevant emergency service/services
- Activate the school's Critical Incident Team
- Ensure medical first aid support is available
- Provide open and clear channels of communication between members of the Critical Incident Team and other relevant agencies. (This may include use of text messaging/e-mail and/or use of the school's website)

- Notify the staff, the Chair of Governors, the Local Authority and neighbouring schools
- Inform and instruct pupils in a sensitive and clear way and offer reassurance where possible
- Contact the families of any member of the school community who has been directly involved and set up an emergency contact number if necessary

Short Term Action - Where appropriate the following actions should be taken:

- Make accurate chronological records of the incident and associated actions
- Appoint a designated person or persons in school to be available to listen to any of the children's reflections, thoughts and feelings in respect of the incident
- Make arrangements with other professionals in order to provide support to any member of staff or pupil who requires professional help e.g. counselling
- Ensure staff monitor the reactions of children and colleagues and show sensitivity to their concerns
- Plan and deliver a debriefing session for staff and children
- Make contact with the families of anyone who has been significantly affected by the events to express sympathy and offer help and support
- Take advice from the Education Authority in respect to dealing with any interest from the media and ensure that no member of staff or the Governing Body communicates with the media unless arranged with full agreement of the Chair of Governors and the Principal
- Discourage parents or children from communicating with media in the interests of the school community. Provide the necessary support and guidance where this is not possible
- Seek alternative educational provision if the condition of the premises prevents the school from functioning

Medium Term Action - Where appropriate the following actions should be taken:

- Secure the safety of the premises and make flexible arrangements for school to return to normal routines as soon as possible
- Adapt the curriculum including assemblies in ways that supports children's' understanding of the incident including its consequences
- Provide a specific environment for pupils to visit if they feel upset or become overwhelmed by the recent events.
- Commission relevant outside agencies to provide ongoing support for affected staff and/or pupils and their families according to advice from Health Agencies or Local Authority
- Provide regular and clear communication with parents/carers in order to explain the events, their consequences, the reasons for actions and any measures taken to minimise the risk of a reoccurrence
- Ensure that the school is represented at any related service or memorial
- Make any necessary adaptations in order to improve safety and security of the premises

Long Term Action - Where appropriate the following actions should be taken:

- Introduce and maintain strategies to continue monitoring the most vulnerable pupils and staff
- Consult and decide on whether and how to mark the memory of the event, and pay respects to those who may have suffered as a result
- Plan how to deal with any legal processes, enquiries and even news stories that may bring back distressing memories and cause temporary upset within the school

(Please note that this is not an exhaustive list)

Evacuation Procedures

- The fire strategy evacuation plan will be followed unless the designated congregation areas in the school playground are deemed unsafe in which case all adults and pupils should be evacuated to the football pitches at the rear. This decision will be taken by the Principal.
- Designated fire wardens to check toilets and non-teaching spaces following evacuation. Teaching staff will complete a register call as soon as possible and immediately report any missing pupils or staff and/or any additional concerns to the Principal or member of the School's Leadership Team who will inform the emergency response team.
- For some students the emergency evacuation plan may need to be at individual pupil level e.g. where a pupil has specific medical/health needs or where complex lifting and handling or behaviour management is required
- Ensure easy access for emergency vehicles
- Keep students calm and still
- Await the all clear. Do not re-enter the buildings until they have been checked by emergency personnel and declared safe

Lockdown Procedures

The purpose of these procedures is to provide information for staff, pupils and visitors in order to ensure a swift response to an immediate threat to the safety of members of the school community.

These procedures would be triggered in response to the following circumstances either on or in the proximity of the school site:

- A reported serious incident e.g. a major fire, transport accident
- A reported civil disturbance e.g. a riot
- An occurrence or report of extreme weather conditions e.g. hurricane, flash floods
- A warning being received regarding a local risk of air pollution e.g. smoke plume, gas cloud
- A person or persons who show intent to or are attempting to commit serious violent actions e.g. an act of terrorism
- A dangerous dog roaming loose

(Please note that this list is not exhaustive)

Partial Lockdown

Partial Lockdown will be signalled by a member of the School's Leadership Team who activates the alarm system from a secure location in the Principal's office.

Partial Lockdown procedures will be typically followed where the threat is outside the school premises and must involve the following where possible:

- The immediate cessation for all outdoor activity and staff ensuring that they and all the pupils are inside their respective classrooms as quickly and safely as possible
- Securing and locking all exterior gates and doors and closing of windows
- Teachers take attendance register as soon as possible and immediately inform a member of the school office and/or a member of the school's leadership team in the case of a missing pupil
- Remaining inside the building and designated classrooms until an 'All Clear' signal has been received from a member of the school's leadership team. The only exception to this will be if the fire alarm sounds where after fire drill procedures will be followed

Full Lockdown

- Full Lockdown will be signalled by a member of the School's Leadership Team who activates the alarm available from a secure location in the Principal's office.
- Full Lockdown procedures will be followed where the threat is inside the school premises and must involve the following where possible:
 - Staff who are with children outside the school building will escort the pupils and any visitors to an alternative safe place e.g. hiding places in the school grounds or evacuation to Duke's Meadows. Typically, they will not attempt to return to the inside of the school building unless the level of an immediate threat presents no other reasonable alternative
 - Staff and pupils inside the school building will immediately return to their designated classrooms
 - Appropriate staff will lock classroom and office doors, close windows and draw blinds
 - Staff will instruct pupils to sit quietly and out of sight e.g. under desks, around corners and away from windows
 - Teachers take attendance register as soon as possible to identify any missing or additional students
 - Internal alarms to be deactivated, where this is not possible the sounding of these alarms must be ignored by staff and pupils
 - Staff and pupils remaining inside the building and designated classrooms or at a place of safety until an 'All Clear' signal has been received from a member of the School's Leadership Team or emergency services
- ***Emergencies on trips and visits***
 - Where an emergency/critical incident occurs on a school trip the lead teacher and members of the School's Leadership Team will be responsible for:
 - Adhering to any emergency and/or lockdown procedures from the relevant venue and any instructions issued by the emergency services
 - Seeking refuge in an appropriate place if the group are outside at the time of the incident
 - Ensuring all children are accounted for and informing the relevant party, e.g. the emergency services and school, in the case of a missing child or other member of the group such as a member of staff or adult helper
 - All members of the party are kept together if at all possible

- Informing the emergency services and school at the earliest possible opportunity and maintaining channels of communication via a designated school mobile phone
 - Ensuring that children understand that they should approach someone in an official capacity for assistance e.g. police officer, security guard if they become separated from the group
 - Carrying additional water and snacks in case of a prolonged incident
 - Children will wear wrist bands, which have the telephone number of the school
 - The person in charge of an outing should carry money and/or a credit card in case of emergency transport needs, or to buy any necessities, such as food and drinks
- **Summary**
 - It is essential that all staff and pupils are aware of their roles and responsibilities with regard to school emergencies and that the School's Leadership Team arranges for termly evacuation practice drills.
 - In addition, all staff must ensure that they are continually vigilant in terms identifying potential threats and that they take immediate steps to safeguard the children and adults in the school and/or attending school trips and visits thereby helping to minimise the risk of harm or injury whenever possible.
 - Finally, it is important to recognise that instructions from officials from the Emergency Services during a school emergency must be followed precisely and take precedent over this policy.