

New Perspectives School Critical Incident Policy

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Critical Incident Policy

1. OVERVIEW

There are occasions when the School will experience incidents of a significantly more extreme nature than expected. What distinguishes these incidents is their nature and scale, and it is this type of occurrence, which has come to be termed a 'critical incident'.

2. WHAT IS A CRITICAL INCIDENT?

Although the concept of a critical incident is difficult to precisely define, authors who research and write in this field have, in the past, attempted to define critical incidents as: 'Unexpected occurrences, which may suddenly have a major impact on school'. However, in recent years some authors have noted that this type of description does not capture the relative nature of some critical incidents, which to some may seem relatively small-scale but, to others who experience them, can seem overwhelming. In this respect Gibson (1999) would suggest that an incident could be described in critical terms when it

'Overwhelms or overcomes the normal coping strategies and strengths of those involved'.

It is also important to note that this approach, which views critical incidents as situations or crises that are beyond the everyday experiences of school life, contains an implied understanding that these incidents would be markedly distressing to a significant number of adults and children.

3. PREVENTIVE AND PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES

Whilst no amount of planning can totally prevent accidents and problems occurring, it is hoped that some can be prevented and the effects of others minimised by taking sensible precautionary measures. It is expected that:-

- all staff and pupils should be familiar with the school's routines for fire and the evacuation of the school building on hearing the fire alarm.
- all staff should be familiar with the routines and procedures for dealing with emergencies (as detailed in this Policy).
- all staff and pupils should be familiar with the school's security procedures, in particular that all visitors not wearing a visitor's badge should be questioned and escorted to reception.
- all staff organising school trips and visits follow the guidelines and write a risk assessment to be signed of by the Headteacher
- all staff should sign in and out of the premises
- all staff are aware of pupils with medical needs or health problems
- all staff are aware of school policy in dealing with violence at work.
- all staff are aware that they should assess associated risks to children before carrying out a curriculum or other activity
- all staff are aware that they are responsible for assessing risks to themselves before undertaking an activity

A major incident may be defined as:

- An accident leading to a serious injury or fatality;

- Severe injury or severe stress;
- Circumstances in which a person or persons might be at serious risk of illness; Circumstances in which any part, or the whole of the school is unable to function as normal due to external influences and Any situation in which the national press or media might be involved

As such, major incidents include:

- Death of a pupil or member of staff;
- Death or serious injury on a school trip;
- Epidemic in school or community;
- Violent incident in school;
- A pupil missing from home;
- Destruction or major vandalism in school;
- A hostage taking;
- A transport accident involving school members;
- A disaster in the community;
- A civil disturbance or terrorism
- Arson attacks on schools
- Major fires at a school
- Significant vandalism
- Pupil suicides and sudden deaths
- Violent attacks on pupils and staff members
- The sudden death, in tragic circumstances of members of staff
- Incident involving an intruder, believed to be armed, on school premises
- Road traffic accidents, involving fatalities within a school community
- Abductions / disappearances
- Allegations or actual incidents of abuse against pupils by staff and staff against pupils
Incidents involving the murder of schoolchildren that attracted the attention of national and international media over prolonged periods
- Floods
- School used in an emergency.

In the event of such an incident the priorities of those adults in charge of the school or trip at the time must be able to:

- Save life Minimise personal injury
- Safeguard the interests of pupils and staff
- Minimise loss and to return to normal working quickly

4. CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM

The team will comprise the following:

.....- Chair of the Governing Body
Michelle Baker – Head of School
Caroline Dhir – Administration Manager

Responsibility of the Critical Incident Policy

Michelle Baker – Head of School

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

5. IMMEDIATE ACTION

Immediate action to be taken ie within hours of the incident occurring:

- (i) Obtain and collate information relating to the incident – uncertainty breeds rumour and accurate information is essential;
- (ii) Gather and brief the CIMT (Critical Incident Management Team) – brief the whole staff team, allocate roles and responsibilities;
- (iii) Trigger support from the LA and other contacts on emergency list – establish clearly who is going to contact whom;
- (iv) Set up an incident management room and dedicated phone line – to deal with calls from anxious parents etc. CIMT should agree a factual statement and avoid speculation;
- (v) Contact families affected – must be done quickly and with sensitivity. Consistency of information is vital. It may be appropriate for families to come to school and immediate emotional support could be a possibility;
- (vi) Make arrangements to inform other parents – may need to take advice from DFE, especially if there is the possibility of legal liability. CIMT may wish to send a letter to parents, or prepare a leaflet.
- (vii) Inform teaching and other school staff – staff need to be cautioned about talking to the media or responding to questions from reporters. It is vital that all staff in contact with pupils are kept well informed and feel secure in handling comments or questions from pupils.
- (viii) Inform pupils – can be done in small or large groups depending on which is most appropriate. Care needs to be exercised to protect both children or adults closely involved in the incident. It is important that children receive a consistent account of the incident allowing for differences in their ability to understand.
- (ix) Encourage people involved to talk – the incident may need to be discussed before children go home for the day, for both pupils and adults.
- (x) Deal with the media – most important to seek advice from DFE before agreeing to speak to or be interviewed by the media. If this is not an option then an agreed text for release should be prepared by the CIMT and a designated spokesperson briefed and prepared to respond on the school's behalf.
- (xi) Devise a plan for handling the reactions and feelings of people affected – the most common reactions will include denial, distress, guilt, anger and helplessness. CIMT need to consider outside professionals to support and debrief staff and pupils affected by the incident. Those providing support also need support. At this point the CIMT will need to plan their short term reaction to the incident.
- (xii) CIMT should liaise closely with the management team of the Community Hub & other residents in formulating a response to any incident to ensure a cohesive united action plan is agreed.

6. SHORT TERM ACTION

The next stage:

- (i) Reunion of children with their families – especially where the incident occurs outside the school. Mostly children will need to be brought home, but sometimes parents and

families need to visit the scene of the incident to understand how they deal with repercussions in terms of children's fears etc.

- (ii) Managing staff – support needs organising for all staff, preferably from within the school, but using outside agencies if appropriate. Staff monitoring should be a priority, even members of the CIMT. If a crisis persists over many hours staff become tired, weary and upset and this affects their powers to make sensible decisions.
- (iii) Encourage pupils to talk – activate strategies for enabling young people to talk about the incident, and their feelings, using outside agencies if appropriate. Staff will need briefing about ways to help the children affected by the incident, and how to identify patterns of behaviour etc. This may have implications for the wider curriculum i.e. training in bereavement counselling for staff, provision of a range of books, PSHE discussions etc...
- (iv) Debriefing meeting – it may be appropriate to hold a debriefing meeting for staff, children and parents to:- clarify what has happened - allow for sharing reactions - reassure people that reactions are normal - mobilise resources e.g. parental support groups An experienced person, possibly someone from outside the school community, should lead this meeting. Formal and informal recognition of rituals – it is important to remember to express sympathy to the families of the hurt or bereaved. Visits to children/staff in hospital. Pupils may wish to send cards and letters. The school may also need to consider attendance at funerals, and/or the desirability of holding special assemblies or memorial services. Anniversaries are also key times when support and sensitivity are required.
- (v) Re-establishing routines – every attempt should be made to provide continuity for the children. The return to school of staff or pupils directly affected by the crisis will need to be managed carefully and with sensitivity but the re-establishment of routine is an important stage in emotional recovery.

7. MEDIUM TERM ACTION

- (i) Return to school for staff or pupils after long absence – reintegration will need to be planned carefully, and may involve home visits prior to return, part time attendance initially, reducing workloads, putting in place mentoring process etc.
- (ii) Consulting professionals – consideration should be given to consulting the Educational Psychology Service for support and guidance, especially to help those showing unusual or prolonged reaction to the incident.
- (iii) Keeping parents informed – it may be appropriate to produce a leaflet for parents giving guidance on the possible delayed reactions of pupils to an incident and making suggestions to help them deal with these.
- (iv) Support for staff – ongoing monitoring and support for staff is a major consideration. CIMT especially will not be immune to reaction from their ordeal. **LONG TERM ACTION**
Monitoring the vulnerable – the effects of a crisis can reverberate for years, and it is especially important that new staff and pupils are briefed in the school's history to help them understand and deal with potential repercussions especially at anniversary times. Marking anniversaries – these difficult times need to be treated with sensitivity. Some suggestions for schools to mark anniversaries are by annual concerts, memorial services, memorial prize giving ceremonies, memorial gardens etc ... Legal processes – the length of time taken over some legal processes can prolong the recovery process following a critical incident. CIMT may need to plan for this especially where staff may be involved attending legal processes, and facing extended emotional trauma. Curriculum implications – it may be appropriate to schedule INSET training for staff in loss counselling, bereavement etc.

8. ACTION CARDS

It may be useful for the CIMT to consider and devise a set of Action cards. The Action Cards give responsibilities for specified staff in the event of a critical incident

- (a) away from the school
- (b) in the school environs

These should be used in the event of a major incident and be carried by staff on school visits. Due to the nature of school life, which includes the absence of staff on courses, at meetings etc. The following are three possible suggestions.

ACTION CARD 1 - GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOL STAFF IN THE EVENT OF A MAJOR INCIDENT IN SCHOOL

- Obtain facts and information
- Call the emergency services using 999
- Retain any relevant equipment
- Inform rest of school staff and children as appropriate
- Ensure register of all children is maintained
- Contact local authority for advice. Contact Chair of Governors Contact health and safety reps
- Prepare to deal with the media

ACTION CARD 2 - GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOL STAFF IN THE EVENT OF A MAJOR INCIDENT OFF SITE

- Administer first aid as appropriate
- Establish a contact point with the emergency services
- If in the local area, Michelle Baker and the First Aider are the only staff member to be allowed off site to support the emergency services and be a contact for the School
- Allocate responsibility to ensure other pupils are safe including registering
- Inform school
- Use systems eg Phone/Text/Website to communicate with parents
- Travel with casualties to hospital
- Complete accident forms

ACTION CARD 3 - GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOL STAFF IN THE EVENT OF A MAJOR INCIDENT ON SITE – E.g. Fire/Flood

- Keep a record of witnesses
- Keep others informed of situation
- Ensure register of all children is maintained
- Arrange for non-casualties to evacuate school and relocate to other premises
- Use systems e.g. Phone/Text/Website to communicate with parents
- Manage traffic onto the site to ensure that emergency access vehicles can arrive
- Care for relatives arriving at school
- Remain available to emergency services

Following School provide contact information and Action Sheets for detailing action to be taken in the event of a critical incident.

A1 - Action Sheet: Immediate Actions

1. OBTAIN FACTUAL INFORMATION

What has happened? **Who** is involved? **Where** and **when** has this taken place?

If the incident is away from school, what is the location and what is the name and contact number of an appropriate adult at the site. Any injuries - children/staff?

2. CONTACT EMERGENCY SERVICES REQUIRED

Time.....

Police []

Fire []

Ambulance []

3. EVACUATE SCHOOL, IF SAFE AND NECESSARY.

4. ARRANGE STAFF TO LOOK AFTER PUPILS.

5. ALLOCATE AN INCIDENT MANAGEMENT ROOM WITH A DEDICATED PHONE LINE IF POSSIBLE.

6. CONTACT CITY COUNCIL OFFICERS (DURING SCHOOL HOURS):

During School Hours Out of School Hours

For all critical incidents during school hours please contact the relevant manager below.

If not available please contact:

Amanda Daniels, Head of Education Psychology

Tel: 0121 464 1364 Mobile: 07766 925 152

For all critical incidents outside of normal school hours please phone the Press Office out of hours number: 0121 303 3287. The Press Officer on duty at the time will contact the relevant People Directorate Director or Assistant Director.

Dave Yardley, School Support Manager (North)

Tel: 0121 464 3174 Mobile: 07881 617 187

Kathy McDonough, Acting School Support Manager (Central)

Tel: 0121 303 2193 Mobile: 07775 407 332

David Bridgman, School Support Manager (South)

Tel: 0121 303 8394 Mobile: 07771 339 061

7. CONTACT FAMILIES OF THOSE INVOLVED. GIVE EMERGENCY CONTACT NUMBERS AS NECESSARY.

8. COMPLETE INCIDENT LOG PROFORMA.

When time permits, complete the incident log:

INCIDENT LOG

Date:
Time Commenced:
What happened?
Where?
Who Was Involved?
Casualties (if any)/Students or staff in need of support:
Action Taken (<i>including external agencies contacted ie local authority</i>):

Signed:

Date:

Name of Reporting Officer:

Position:

A2 Action Sheet: Subsequent Actions (Hours/Next Day/Within One Week)

1. WITHIN HOURS

- Contact Chair of Governors. (*Chair to establish cascade to inform other governors as appropriate*)
- Head Teacher meet with emergency services and support service personnel.
- Decide which staff are going to do what tasks and when.
- Prepare written statement and letters for parents covering the following points:
 - Factual information about the incident;
 - What the school has already done;
 - What the school intends to do in the next few days (e.g. meeting for parents);
 - Where parents can find out more information (e.g. helpline);
 - Practical information (e.g. closure/reopening of school);
 - Promise of further information in the near future (e.g. special assembly).

Consult the press office for advice. The statement can be used for informing the media and general public.

2. WITHIN 1 DAY

- Call a meeting for staff to give detailed factual information about the incident.
- Phone parents of children directly involved and send a letter to all parents giving a statement about the incident.
- Inform pupils appropriately about incident in small groups in consultation with EPS and other involved support services [if police allow]. *Groups should be small if possible, ideally no more than 10 pupils.*
- If any child has died in the incident – see Section 32 of the Birmingham Safeguarding Children Board (BSCB) child protection procedures which can be found at www.lscbbirmingham.org.uk

3. WITHIN 1 WEEK

- Arrange further meeting for involved staff to explore lessons learned (when police allow)
- Consult EPS and other involved support services concerning care and support for pupils involved in the incident in consultation with support service (when police allow)
- Promote some discussion in classes (with support services if required). *Try to achieve a balance between responding to children's emotional needs while aiming to get things back to normal.*
- Identify high risk pupils and staff (i.e. those who appear to be profoundly affected by the incident) in conjunction with support services
- Identify any other needs for group or individual intervention / support
- Organise intervention / support as appropriate, in conjunction with support services

A3 Action Sheet: Incidents Occurring Away From School During Term Time, eg School Trips.

**STAFF ON TRIPS OUTSIDE SCHOOL SHOULD REFER TO EXISTING SCHOOL POLICY IN AN EMERGENCY.
'Head' refers to head teacher or person nominated to deputise.**

- Head Teacher obtains factual information, Date logged and Time logged about the incident
- Head establishes communication link with emergency services Time logged
- Establish phone/ texts to be used (*Ensure these are likely to be free*)
- If school closure is to be considered, inform pupils and parents via the media if outside school hours

Note: Birmingham City Council's Policy and Guidance for Educational Visits and Learning Outside the Classroom 2015 advises schools to refer to the Outdoor Education Advisers Panel National Guidance documents:

4.1a "Off Site Visit Emergencies: The Employer's Role" 4.1b "Off Site Visit Emergencies: The Establishment's Role"; 4.1i "Emergencies and Critical Incidents – An Overview"

N.B. 'Head' refers to Head Teacher or Head of School or person nominated to deputise.

- Head Teacher to decide role school should play following an incident (e.g. Information point for parents; centre where parents can meet etc.)
- Consider opening the school in order to facilitate information flow to families and pupils and to organise support for them
- Head Teacher to consider whether incident serious enough to warrant his/her travel to the scene
- Head Teacher to liaise with City Council contact officers (See Action Sheet A1)
- Head Teacher to consider management of pupils returning to school after the vacation in terms of first assembly, memorial services etc. with advice from support staff as required

Note: Birmingham City Council's Policy and Guidance for Educational Visits and Learning Outside the Classroom 2015 advises schools to refer to the Outdoor Education Advisers Panel National Guidance documents: 4.1a "Off Site Visit Emergencies: The Employer's Role" 4.1b "Off Site Visit Emergencies: The Establishment's Role"; 4.1i "Emergencies and Critical Incidents – An Overview"

During School Hours Out of School Hours

M Baker, Head Teacher, 07481 622628

For all critical incidents during school hours please contact the relevant manager below.

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David Bridgman, School Support Manager (South)

Tel: 0121 303 8394 Mobile: 07771 339 061

City Council Press Office (during normal office hours)

Sarah Kirby, Press Officer 0121 303 3885 / 07920 088 571

Emergency Duty for out of hours

Emergency Duty Press Officer on duty at the time 0121 303 3287

Education Safety Services Communications Team

Business Support Press Office

0121 464 8564

0121 303 2420

0121 303 3287