

Our Lady of Fatima School

Critical Incident Policy

Critical Incidents defined

Handling crises and dealing with difficult 'incidents' on a daily basis is viewed by some as a normal aspect of school life. However, there are occasions when schools will experience incidents of a significantly more extreme nature. What seems to distinguish these incidents is their nature and scale, and it is this type of occurrence, which has come to be termed a 'critical incident'.

“An incident becomes a critical incident when it constitutes a serious disruption arising with little or no warning in a scale beyond the coping capacity of the School operating under normal conditions, and requiring the assistance of the Emergency Services.”

It is important to note that these approaches, which view 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.

Some examples are:

- 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

Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)

Clare van Vliet	Headteacher
Daniel O'Connor	Deputy Headteacher
Jo Murgatroyd	Office Manager
Lorraine Cemm	Chair of Academy Committee
Steve Rollason	Building Services Manager(if incident directly related to school site or buildings)

All members of the CIMT, and anyone else drafted in to assist them, MUST keep a written record of actions taken using a standardised recording system:

- Incident Log see Appendix 1
- Subsequent Actions see Appendix 2
- Incidents occurring away from school during term time see Appendix 3
- Incidents occurring away from school during vacation see Appendix 4

These records may be of critical importance post event, particularly if legal or similar proceedings are to take place.

Contacts:

The Headteacher and Office Staff hold contact details for all members of the School staff.

Preventative 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 off by the Headteacher
- 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 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
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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
- Immediately
- In the medium term
- In the longer term

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

IMMEDIATE ACTION – i.e. within hours of the incident occurring:

1. Obtain and collate information relating to the incident – accurate information is essential.
2. Gather and brief the CIMT – brief the team, allocate roles and responsibilities.
3. Study the LA document “Critical Incident Management – Guidance for Schools” – copies of which are held by the Headteacher, the Office Manager and the Chair of Governors to obtain guidance on the specific type of Critical Incident that has occurred.
4. Trigger support- establish clearly who is going to contact whom;
5. Advise the Parish Priest and the Diocesan Education Service, particularly if loss of life or injury is involved in the incident.
6. 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.
7. Contact families affected – must be done quickly and with sensitivity. Consistency of information is vital.
8. Make arrangements to inform other parents – may need to take advice from HR, especially if there is the possibility of legal liability. CIMT may wish to send a letter to parents, or prepare a leaflet.
9. 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.
10. 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 and/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.
11. Encourage people involved to talk – the incident may need to be discussed before children go home for the day, for both pupils and adults.
12. Deal with the media – most important to seek advice from DES 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.
13. Devise a plan for handling the reactions and feelings of people affected. 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 consider/plan their short term reaction to the incident.

SHORT TERM ACTION – the next stage:

1. 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.
2. 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.

3. 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.

4. 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.

5. Formal and informal recognition of rituals.

6. 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.

MEDIUM TERM ACTION:

1. 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.

2. 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.

3. 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.

4. Support for staff – on-going monitoring and support for staff is a major consideration. CIMT especially will not be immune to reaction from their ordeal.

LONG TERM ACTION:

1. Monitoring the vulnerable – the effects of a crisis can reverberate for many months/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.

2. 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.

3. 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.

4. Curriculum implications – it may be appropriate to schedule INSET training for staff in loss counselling, bereavement etc.

OFF-SITE EVACUATION:

1. In the event that a decision is taken to evacuate the premises, all pupils and staff will respond to the signal and proceed to KS2 playground as usual, where upon further instructions will be issued.
2. Roll call will be taken before leaving the premises and upon arrival at the place of safety.
3. Safe Place for Evacuation: Lightwoods House, off the Hagley Road, B67 5DP. Warden's Contact Details: John Guard: 0121 659 2538. The Senior Office Manager will telephone ahead to inform of our arrival. Accompanied pupils will leave the school via Winchfield Drive, towards the Hagley Road. If this exit is obstructed, accompanied pupils will vacate the premises via Hannah's Way onto the Hagley Road. The crossing point will be the pedestrian crossing to walk down Galton Road, onto Lightwoods Park and to the place of safety.

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 environment

They should be used in the event of a major incident and, due to the nature of school life, which includes the absence of staff on courses, at meetings and off site visits, be carried by staff when they are away from the School.

ACTION CARD 1.

GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOL STAFF IN 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
- _ CONTACT SNOMAC/DES FOR ADVICE
- _ CONTACT CHAIR OF GOVERNORS
- _ ADVISE PARISH PRIEST IF LOSS OF LIFE OR SERIOUS INJURY IS INVOLVED
- _ PREPARE TO DEAL WITH THE MEDIA ie Prepare to make NO Comment
- _ SEE ALSO ACTION CARD 3

ACTION CARD 2

GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOL STAFF IN EVENT OF A MAJOR INCIDENT OFF SITE

- _ ADMINISTER FIRST AID WHERE POSSIBLE
- _ ESTABLISH A CONTACT POINT WITH THE EMERGENCY SERVICES

- _ ALLOCATE RESPONSIBILITY TO ENSURE OTHER PUPILS ARE SAFE
- _ TRAVEL WITH CASUALTIES TO HOSPITAL
- _ INFORM SCHOOL
- _ COMPLETE ACCIDENT FORMS

ACTION CARD 3

GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOL STAFF IN EVENT OF A MAJOR INCIDENT ON SITE – E.g. Fire/Flood

- _ SEE ALSO ACTION CARD 1
- _ KEEP A RECORD OF WITNESSES
- _ KEEP OTHERS INFORMED OF SITUATION
- _ ARRANGE FOR NON-CASUALTIES TO EVACUATE SCHOOL
- _ CARE FOR RELATIVES ARRIVING AT SCHOOL
- _ ***CONSIDER RELOCATION TO OTHER PREMISES***
- _ REMAIN AVAILABLE TO EMERGENCY SERVICES

All emergency contact numbers can be found in **Birmingham City Council's Critical Incident Management Guidance for Schools**- January 2016.

Policy to be reviewed as required and immediately following the occurrence/resolution of a Critical Incident.

APPENDIX 1 OUR LADY OF FATIMA SCHOOL - CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY

INCIDENT LOG

Date Time commenced.....

What happened:

Where:

Who was involved:

Casualties (if any) / pupils or staff in need of support:

Action Taken (*including City Council officers contacted*):

Print name of person reporting incident

Signed.....

Position.....

APPENDIX 2 OUR LADY OF FATIMA SCHOOL - CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY

SUBSEQUENT ACTIONS (Hours/Next Day/Within One Week)

Within hours:

- Contact Chair of Governors.

Chair to establish cascade to inform other governors as appropriate.

- Head/Deputy 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 / re-opening of school);
 - Promise of further information in the near future (e.g. special assembly).
- *Consult the DES and press office for advice. The statement can be used for informing the media and general public.*

Within 1 day:

- Call a meeting for staff to give detailed factual information about the incident.
- Phone parents of children directly involved and send 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

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**

APPENDIX 3 **OUR LADY OF FATIMA SCHOOL - CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY**

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 obtains factual information Date logged Time logged about the incident
- Head establishes communication link with emergency services Time logged
- Establish phone/ fax lines to be used

APPENDIX 4 **OUR LADY OF FATIMA SCHOOL - CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY**

INCIDENTS OCCURRING AWAY FROM SCHOOL DURING VACATION (Home Or Abroad)

'Head' refers to head teacher or person nominated to deputise.

- Head 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 to consider whether incident serious enough to warrant his/her travel to the scene
- Head to liaise with DES and City Council contact officers _
- Head 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.