

Critical Incident Policy

Aim

To be prepared to enable the academy to cope more effectively after a disaster or major incident and thereby to reduce the distress of young people, staff and families and to be able to deal with media attention.

Each incident will demand a slightly different response, but it is important that we have support structures in place and senior staff are allocated clear roles. It is also essential that emergency contact numbers are accurate and that bells, lighting and security arrangements are regularly checked.

Yule and Golde in 'Wise Before the Event' state, "A school able to promote an atmosphere of support, trust and confiding among its staff and pupils will be better able to cope with a disaster". If a strong pastoral structure is not already in place for pupils and staff, you cannot expect suddenly to create such relationships in the event of a trauma.

Serious or major incidents are, fortunately, extremely rare, but if one does occur it will make great physical and emotional demands.

Possible scenarios

- the death of a pupil or member of staff;
- 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 an explosion in a laboratory;
- deaths or injuries on school journeys;
- tragedies involving children from many schools, eg at a sports event;
- refugee children, who may have experienced trauma, joining a school;
- epidemic in school or community;
- any situation in which the national press or media might be involved

Priorities

In the event of such an incident, the priorities of those in charge of the school or party must be:

- to save life
- to minimise personal injury
- to safeguard the interests of pupils, students and staff
- to minimise loss
- to return to normal working quickly.

Support through the Curriculum

Ideally, pupils should be able to feel that they can explore difficult feelings and private thoughts in public or with staff. The school can prepare by identifying points in the curriculum where matters of birth, death, bereavement and other rites of passage can be

explored through a multi-cultural and multi-faith framework. These issues can, for instance, arise through the tutorial programme, English literature, history and religious studies.

Reactions to major stress:

Post-traumatic stress disorder manifests itself by:

- re-experiencing the trauma
- not talking with parents
- not talking with peers
- losing faith in their future and changing their personal priorities
- feeling guilt as a survivor
- heightened anxiety and arousal appearing through concentration difficulties; sleep disturbance; separation problems (e.g. clinging to parents); memory problems (affecting school work); heightened alertness to dangers; developing fears; irritability; depression; bereavement reactions (which complicate other symptoms); anxiety and panic

Those who are likely to be most affected:

- those whose lives were at greatest risk
- those who have witnessed death and carnage
- children who come from unstable family relationships
- children who are less able intellectually
- girls more than boys

Support agencies:

Police (PCSO Simpson 07810 057131 / PCSO Prince)	999 / 462222 / 01754 762222
Fire	999
School doctor/s	463262
Louth Hospital	600100
Boston Pilgrim Hospital	01205 364801
Lincoln County Hospital	01522 512512
Grimsby Diana Princess of Wales Hospital	01472 874111
Educational Psychologist	01522 554673
LCC Employee Support Counsellor (staff)	01522 555440
The school's Educational Psychologist	01522 553341
The School Liaison Officer	01522 554884
Social Services Lincolnshire	01507 554701
Samaritans	01522 528282
	01205 311311 / 116 123

Press and Media

Louth Leader	01507 353200
Skegness Standard	01205 311433
Target	01507 600200
Grimsby Evening Telegraph (News Desk)	01472 808444
Lincs FM	01522 549900

Radio Lincolnshire

01522 511411

Emergency Planning Unit 24/7 cover
Critical incidents not tragic

01522 582229 office hours
01522 888111 out of office hours

Critical Incident Management Plan

1. Procedures for Party Leaders

Leaders of school trips should leave a list of all participants on the staff board and in the office and have emergency numbers to make contact with senior leadership team at school and at home.

2. Collecting and disseminating information

The Senior Leadership Team should make every effort to get full and accurate information. It may be necessary to bring parents into school.

It is essential to keep a record of actions taken.

The family of a child or adult involved in a major incident needs to be contacted quickly and offered help and information updated regularly. Consideration will need to be given to whether this information should be relayed on the telephone, by visit to the home or at an incident room. Remember mobile phones are not secure and should never be used to relay information about casualties. In the event of a fatality, the police will be prepared to visit the family.

3. Enquiries

The main switchboard must be staffed to deal with a possible inundation of worried enquirers. This can be stressful when there is uncertainty or bad news. Those answering the telephones must be briefed and rehearse one clear message to all callers. They should keep notes and check them against school records so that there is certainty about who has telephoned and who should still be contacted. Up-to-date information on next-of-kin and contact numbers should be available on Integris. They should inform parents and guardians of how further information will be conveyed and by whom, and try to ensure that no parent is left alone in distress by making suggestions to contact relatives or neighbours. Other relevant telephone numbers may be given, such as a hospital or an emergency disaster number, if it has been necessary to set one up. Sometimes it may be appropriate to give contact numbers of other families involved in the crisis.

4. Inform Chair of Governors and others who have previously agreed to offer assistance

5. Informing staff

As soon as an incident is confirmed, the Senior Leadership Team must meet to decide strategies and to form a small team, which is relieved of its other duties, to deal with the crisis over the next few hours.

The rest of the staff, including support staff, should be informed as soon as possible, preferably at a specially convened staff meeting. This avoids the circulation of untrue rumours.

6. Informing pupils and parents

Pupils should be told the facts simply and without fabrication. Staff undertaking this task should not speculate on the causes of the crisis or its consequences. Where questions cannot be answered, this should be acknowledged.

This should generally be done in the smallest groups possible, preferably by form; but it may be necessary to have a clear statement to read out or for the whole school to meet together to avoid a variety of messages.

Wherever possible, parents of all the other children in the school should be warned that the school has experienced a crisis and that their child may be upset.

7. School Closure is to be avoided wherever possible as normal routines ensure some security in the pupils' lives.

If closure is necessary, it is best announced concurrently with informing the parents of the incident.

8. Dealing with the media

Children, parents and staff must be protected from the glare of publicity. The press and media should *not be permitted onto the site or given access to children*. NB The press are not allowed to speak to children under 16 without parental/staff permission.

A senior member of staff, not dealing directly with families involved, should be the nominated press officer to whom all media enquiries should be directed. S/he may give factual information, but the privacy of staff, pupils and families must be maintained.

NB Other staff should not talk to the media. A press briefing session may be arranged in a particular part of the school at a set time.

9. Short term action

Children away from school should be re-united with their families as soon as possible. Sometimes parents may need to be taken to their children.

Staff need an opportunity to express their emotional reactions and a senior member of staff should be available to them. Arrangements should be made for additional outside help (see list of support agencies).

Before accepting offers of outside help, the Headteacher should vet volunteers. What happens to pupils in the school is the Headteacher's responsibility. The Headteacher retains this responsibility when referring children to other agencies.

In the first days, every adult should be prepared to **listen** to children. After this there should be designated members of staff available to offer support. Staff should give strong signals to children that it is safe for them to talk. Other pupils may need some education about 'normal' stress reactions and longer-term understanding of how those concerned will feel. They may wish to correspond with those injured and, if necessary, focus on memorials. Expressions of sympathy are appropriate.

Staff should be alert to monitor those who return for signs of lack of concentration, deteriorating work, tiredness or distress, and there should be liaison with the parents.

A debriefing meeting, usually led by an experienced person from outside, is recommended for staff and children involved in the incident.

10. Medium term action

As the academy settles back to normal routine, strategies for easing pupils' re-entry into school can include:

- form teacher visits to children in hospital/at home;
- keeping contacts with the academy and discussing what is happening in school in relation to the incident;
- checking if any work or books have been lost;
- checking out worries about public examinations and rescheduling work deadlines;
- deciding on part-time attendance;
- checking on worries about meeting other pupils and discussing how to react to them;
- setting up 'sanctuary' arrangements in school, if pupils become distraught.

Affected staff may need specialist support and this should be offered and arranged where appropriate.

When the children are in school they may need to be taught coping strategies, both for their emotions and for their work.

If outside consultants are used, the ground rules must be very clear, including those on confidentiality. Responsibility lies with the Headteacher. The academy must consult parents about help (Children Act 1989).

Survivors should be encouraged to attend the funerals of those who died; they should be accompanied by parents wherever possible. Planning a special assembly or memorial service can be therapeutic. A memorial service acts as an acknowledgement that the incident is now over and that the healing process can begin. Some lasting memorial may be planned.

Families should be informed of:

- who has been called in to advise pupils
- how parents can have access to help
- whom to contact if worried about their child's progress

Children affected should be kept under review. If a child's distress remains high six to eight weeks after the incident, s/he should be referred to a specialist in Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

11. Longer term planning

The vulnerable need to be kept in mind, especially to new staff and to staff new to vulnerable children and who may need training.

Anniversaries should be anticipated; there could be a memorial prize, assembly or concert. The wishes of victims' families need to be considered.

Legal processes and enquiries may bring back distressing memories and cause temporary upset within the school. The academy needs to be aware of these events and to assist again with emotional support.