



Critical Incident

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CRITICAL INCIDENT & DISASTER POLICY

This Policy sets out the procedures to be followed to ensure the safety and protection of the whole school community in the event of a critical incident.

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.

This may include:

- Incidents that involve staff, children or young people or others
- People made disasters/emergencies e.g., explosion, fire
- Natural disasters/emergencies e.g. flood

Crisis management and recovery processes involve personal support, crisis intervention and a whole range of practical assistance.

The Policy will name the people who will assume key roles (Critical Incident Team), and the information and procedures that will need to be in place. The communication framework required to handle any contingency and the support structures for staff.

The Critical Incident Team has responsibility for ensuring that procedures are properly addressed at times of high emotion and that if the Principal is the subject of the incident then the response mechanism should proceed effectively.

If the incident subsequently involves legal action, a precise response to the incident should be known and be able to be verified by more than one person.

Major Incidents Focused on People

Whilst all 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 a necessary precaution and can be crucial. Communication during and following an incident is, of course, of great importance.

Planning for an Emergency

It is important that the school knows which people can be contacted immediately following an incident, what information is available and where this is stored.

Therefore, the Critical Incident Team will:

- Issue all staff with a Critical Incident Management Plan
- Display a flow chart and contact telephone numbers in the Staff Room and Administration Area
- Review the Critical Incident Management Plan at a staff meeting during the first term of each school year

The Critical Incident Team

Comprises of the CEO, Principal, Assistant Head teacher, Finance Director, Chair of School Committee, and the Site Manager

Others may be co-opted as necessary in light of the nature of the emergency and the availability of the people and personal involvement of those concerned. An Incident Manager will be appointed by the Principal (or Assistant Head in their absence) in response to the type of incident being faced. In the event of an emergency all staff, including non-teaching and temporary staff, should be notified as soon as possible. The School Office should be used as the central liaison point for all incidents. However, if this is not available, an alternative area will be identified (Principals' Office with separate telephone line). In the first instance, it may be appropriate to use dedicated

mobile phones to separate incoming and out-going calls. The Trust partner schools; will assist in contacting parents and other key people.

Information to be available on and off site

The following information will be held in school and accessible to members of the Critical Incident Team;

- Telephone numbers of all members of staff
- Names of key holders (probably including the Incident Managers)
- Pupil contact information
- Details of names, location and contact details relating to all pupils and staff off site at any time, e.g. school outings, etc
- Significant medical information relating to pupils and staff off site on school outings at any time
- Telephone numbers of all School Committee Members & Directors
- Contact list of all people, groups or organisations who visit or use the school and would need to be informed
- Contact list of people and groups used by the school, e.g. suppliers, contractors
- School's Bank details, e.g. account number and sort code
- Back-up disks for all accounts
- Key code to school safe
- Premises and site plan of the school, including critical locations, e.g. chemical storage, key salvage priorities
- Gas, electric and water mains control positions
- Copy of the Asbestos log

Responding to an Emergency

Initial responses should be to:

- Contact the Principal and all members of the Critical Incident Team
- Assess that all children and young people are safe – during a major incident the safety of all is paramount
- Build a profile of the incident, e.g. who is most affected by the incident and how it may have affected them
- Check to establish whether any individual or group needs immediate attention
- Assess immediate practical needs
- The incident will be reported to the Diocese by phone. These phone numbers are to be held by the Critical Incident Team members at home and at school and in the school office
- Identify a control point at or near the site to manage the incident in the initial hours or days.
- The Diocese will provide full support to enable the incident to be managed as effectively as possible. This could include making arrangements for:
 - Communication with all relevant Diocesan individuals and relevant groups
 - Emergency accommodation
 - Additional teaching resources
 - Additional staffing
 - Transport
 - Specialist advice
 - The dissemination of information

Communications

Those dealing with in-coming calls should provide an agreed factual statement together with re-assurance of action being taken at the incident site. A separate dedicated line will be needed for out-going calls; this will be a mobile phone. It is important to remember that mobile phones are not necessarily secure and that caution about what is said should, therefore, be exercised at all times.

Contacting Families Directly Affected

This will be done quickly and sensitively. Consistency of information is vital, therefore if parents cannot be contacted a message will be left with a relative, friend or neighbour identified in the information sheet. If parents are invited to a venue to meet school, the venue will be secure and the location not made known to the media. School will suggest individuals, groups or organisation that can offer suitable relevant support.

Responding to Calls from Relatives

An agreed member of staff will be delegated/permitted to talk to relatives.

They will:

- Use language and tone that alleviates anxiety
- Anticipate questions relevant to the incident, e.g. 'Did my child witness the incident?' and be prepared to answer them

Information for Teaching and Support Staff

Adults in contact with children and young people will be kept well informed and feel secure in handling questions and comments. A schedule for up-dating them will be arranged, e.g. breaks, at the end of the school day or first thing in the morning. This ensures that knowledge is common and questions are answered.

Staff will not talk to the media or respond to questions from reporters.

Informing Pupils about the Incident

Staff will be given advice and guidance on what the pupils should be told and how. Some information may be given in whole school assemblies and then discussed in class. Other types of information will be disseminated in small groups by the staff closest to the pupils. Our pupils may not understand the full implications of any incident, so information given will be tailored to cognitive and emotional levels of the children. Pupils will be given all the time they need to ask questions or talk about the incident. Families will be informed about the amount of information their children have been given as they will not be able to relay this information themselves.

Contacting Families and Others not Directly Affected

It may be sufficient to inform other parents by letter. In other cases, it may be more appropriate to call an early meeting at the school, especially if the incident is one which could call into question aspects of the school's organisation that could affect all pupils. A prepared verbal or written statement will provide necessary facts, expressions of sympathy and concern and possibly a message for the community. It is essential to remember that a letter can be passed on to the media. Legal advice will be sought before issuing any form of written statements. The school will make a decision based on the nature of the incident whether a letter is sent immediately or if it will be delayed until all facts are known.

Support for People

- Particularly in the event of a critical incident, it is easy for the emotions and stresses experienced by the person managing the incident to be overlooked.
- It is important that those managing the incident also take care of themselves and that someone takes on responsibility for ensuring this element is not forgotten.
- The Directors will have the responsibility of ensuring that the Principal or Incident Manager will be provided with personal advice and support.
- It is important to acknowledge the emotional state of all the people involved – staff, pupils and parents.
- It must be recognised that, depending on the nature of the emergency, not all staff may feel able to support others or the pupils and that a burden of support may, therefore, fall on a disproportionately small number of staff.

- It is important that this is openly acknowledge and recognised as an acceptable and possible inevitable position to adopt.
- Recognise that a critical incident could have an impact on emotionally vulnerable children and affect their behaviour or emotional state and be prepared to offer them support from appropriate professionals within or outside school.
- Staff closely involved in the incident in any way should be offered opportunities for debriefing and counselling, informally or through a more formal structure.
- Be aware that there may be long term effects on some people and staff or pupils may need to be offered professional therapeutic help.
- Consider designating areas for parents and others to meet so that support can be given but privacy maintained.

Formal and Informal Recognition and Rituals

- Arrangements may be made to express sympathy to the families directly affected
- Injured children can be visited in hospital and pupils can be encouraged to send cards and letters
- Staff and pupils may attend funerals if they are sure of being welcome. The school may be closed in recognition of funerals.
- Special Assemblies and in-school memorial services may be held