



Critical Incident Contingency Plan

What is a Critical Incident?

A **Critical Incident** may be defined as a single incident or sequence of incidents which

- are sudden and unexpected
- contain real or imagined threats to a person
- overwhelm usual coping mechanisms
- cause severe disruption
- are traumatic to anyone

Critical Incidents affecting schools may include:-

- The death of a pupil(s) or member(s) of staff through sudden accident, murder, terminal illness or suicide.
- A serious accident involving pupils and school personnel on or off school premises.
- A violent attack or violent intrusion onto school premises, eg involving an armed intruder or a bomb alert.
- Fire, flood, building collapse or major vandalism in school.
- A hostage situation.
- A disaster in the community, eg transport accident, terrorism.

The TRAUMA caused by critical incidents challenges individuals mentally, physically, emotionally and spiritually.

Critical Incident Management Team

In the event of a Critical Incident the school's Critical Incident Management Team made up of the Headteacher and Senior Management Team need to act promptly and be responsible for dealing with the following issues:

1. Contacting Emergency Services

2. Gathering information

A vital first task is to obtain accurate information about the incident. Rumours spread quickly and can add to the distress of those involved. Find out:-

- What has happened
- Where and When
- Extent of injuries, numbers and names
- Location of injured and uninjured

3. Accessing Support

The school should contact the Support Service for Education (SSE) at the Mendip and South Somerset Area who will initiate the Critical Incident Response Procedure.

Tel: 01823 348266

Website : sse@somerset.gov.uk

Visit website for more details.

4. Informing Staff

- Ensure all staff are informed promptly of the incident - it may be necessary to convene a short staff meeting.
- Establish procedures for keeping staff up to date with incoming information.
- Agree how and when pupils will be informed
- Be sensitive to the feelings of staff, particularly those who are closest to the pupils and adults involved in the incident and to those who have had recent personal traumas.

5. Informing Governors/LEA

The Chair of Governors and the Corporate Director/Deputy Director Education for Somerset should be informed as soon as possible after a major incident.

6. Informing Parents - of children directly involved

- Parents of children directly involved should be contacted quickly and with sensitivity.
- Consistency and reliability of information is essential. Avoid relying on a chain of communication.
- The school may need to set a room aside in school for meetings with parents. The Quiet Room will be used for this purpose.
- Schools should always have an up to date list of pupils' next of kin and where to make contact with them. Ensure all adults with parental responsibility are informed.
- In the event of an incident involving death or serious injury, particularly off site, the police will often make the first contact with families.

When using the telephone:

- Fully brief the member of staff making the contact, recognising that this can be a very stressful task.
- Take careful note of those parents who have been contacted and those who still need to be informed so that duplicate messages are not given.
- Where appropriate offer help with transport arrangements.
- Check that the parents are not on their own. Make suggestions for contacting relatives or neighbours as appropriate.
- Inform parents of the telephone number in school that has been dedicated to receiving enquiries. This will be the direct line used by the school in the event of emergencies.
Telephone no.
- Inform parents how to obtain more information and when they can expect this to be available.
- Where appropriate and with permission, give the contact numbers of other families involved in the crisis.

7. Informing parents - of children not directly involved

Wherever possible, parents of all other children in the school should be informed that the school has experienced an incident and that their child may be upset.

Prepare a letter to parents:

- Prepare a letter to parents for distribution as soon as possible which gives:
 - * brief details of the incident without names;

- * an explanation about the involvement of the Educational Psychology Service or other services directly supporting staff and pupils at the school;
- * how parents can get more information.

(See Appendix 1 for example letter).

8. Informing pupils

- Some staff may find it difficult to be involved in the dissemination of information to pupils and the Critical Incident Management Team should be sensitive to this.
- Pupils should be told simply and honestly what has happened. This is probably best done in the smallest groups possible - classes, tutor groups or year groups.
- Questions should be answered in a straightforward way, passing on only facts and avoiding speculation.
- Some classes or year groups may be more directly affected by the incident and will benefit from extra consideration, support and sensitive handling of information.
- Siblings and other close relatives of victims should be informed separately and, where possible, in liaison with parents.

9. Dealing with enquiries

The school may be inundated with telephone calls. People will need to staff the telephone which can be a stressful task.

- The confidential nature of the task should be emphasised to all telephone operators and clear guidance given on what it is appropriate to say.
- An agreed factual statement should be available for the telephone operators, which includes reassurance about the action being taken at the school/incident site.
- Those answering the telephones should keep notes and have them checked against school records so that there is certainty about who has telephoned in and who should still be contacted. This should include media, governors, etc.

10 Dealing with the media

- Identify a senior member of staff to liaise with the media. This is most likely to be the headteacher.
- Prepare a brief written statement which can be read out or handed to reporters. Stick to the facts - do not be tempted into speculative comments.

- Liaise with the LEA Press Officer - who will advise on the content and presentation of the statement.
- Tell reporters when they can expect further information and aim to work co-operatively with the press.
- In the event of a death prepare some positive comments about the pupils/staff who have died and expressions of sympathy for the bereaved family.

Supporting pupils in the event of a critical incident

1. Pupils need access to clear and concise information

- Teachers should stick to the facts and not be tempted to give speculative comments.
- Act promptly to dispel rumours and misinformation which can cause unnecessary distress.
- Be explicit in acknowledgement of the event.

2. Give opportunities for pupils to talk through personal reactions

- It is helpful to provide a quiet, private place for pupils to go to. (The Meeting Room)
- Allow pupils to express feelings.
- Anticipate and understand pupils' reactions.
- It is important to help pupils realise that grief is a *natural* and *normal* reaction to loss.
- Children with previous bereavement/loss/separation experiences and those with special educational needs may need extra support.
- Be alert to the possible occurrence of unhelpful grief responses such as anger, bullying and scapegoating - act promptly and positively to defuse and deflect such behaviours.

3. Formal grieving

- Give opportunities for pupils to write and draw, send cards or flowers, letters of condolence, attend funerals, plant a tree, etc. A special assembly or memorial service may be appropriate.
- Be aware of differences in cultural, spiritual, religious values.

4. Establish normal routines

- School is the normal place for a child to be and offers security at a time of insecurity.

- Children will look to teachers for role models of how to deal with death and crisis.
- Trauma reactions are normal reactions and are best helped in a normal and familiar environment.
- Returning to the normal routine of school also reinforces a feeling of security.
- Encourage and support the return of school of pupils and staff most affected.
- Recognise that emotions and feelings may differ from pupil to pupil.
- Strong feelings and emotions are perfectly normal reactions in the immediate aftermath.

Supporting Staff

- The Headteacher/Critical Incident Management Team will take overall responsibility for coordinating the school's response to the incident but it should be recognised that they too will need support and should receive scheduled relief periods.
- There should be recognition of the differing needs of each affected individual.
- All staff need to be familiar with the school's Critical Incident Contingency Plan.
- Teachers need to consider their own feelings related to either the present incident or past experiences, to they can feel comfortable in dealing with children's distress.
- Some teachers may wish to take a less active role in supporting others.
- School staff need to be supportive of each other at this time, eg staff may wish to schedule staff meetings in order to receive further advice on how to support bereaved children.
- All staff need to be aware of possible delayed reactions, particularly of those actively involved.
- Arrangements may need to be made for staff to see a counsellor or talk with an outside agency/support worker, either singly or as a group.
- Some staff may find it helpful to make a personal gesture, such as by sending cards/flowers, letter of condolence, attending the funeral.

Supporting Parents

- Whether the incident has occurred at the school or off site, parents are likely to look to the school for information, advice and support.

- Prepare a room with tea/coffee making facilities where parents can congregate.
(The Meeting Room)
- Allocate a member of staff to be available to talk to parents and keep them up-to-date with information as it becomes available. (Member of SMT or office staff)
- Provide information leaflets about the impact of trauma and sudden death and likely reactions.
- Provide information about the types of support that are available to them and their children both in school and within their local community.

Support from the Psychological Service Critical Incident Response Team.

The team of Educational Psychologists who respond to the school's request for help in dealing with a Critical Incident work alongside the Headteacher and Senior Management.

This support is aimed at helping school staff manage and cope, both professionally and personally, with the impact of the incident on their school and local community. It is designed to be flexible and responsive to the school's needs at all times.

The team will be able to offer a range of support including:

- Advice and help for staff in dealing with distressed pupils, parents and colleagues.
- Structured Critical Incident debriefing for those pupils and adults most closely affected by the incident.
- Advice on dealing with the media and other demands made on school staff at this time.
- Advice on issues such as "marking the event" and "getting back to normal".
- Advice on ways to manage the likely short term and long term effects of the incident on individuals, the school and the local community.

POINTS TO REMEMBER

- You may do no more than your best.
- Expect to feel a range of emotions, eg anxious, guilty, frightened, upset.
- Mistakes may happen - we are only human.
- Do not expect instant results.
- Do not expect to please everyone.
- Learn from what has happened.

NB: *You will* be affected - remember to ask for help if needed.

Contact Telephone Numbers

The **Office Staff** will prepare and maintain up-to-date lists of contact telephone numbers for:

Pupils' parents/guardians
Staff (including part time/supply teachers and assistants)
Governors
Support Agencies

These lists will be kept in the main office and will be updated termly.

A hard copy of this information will be stored on a computer database.

The **Headteacher** will provide a contact number for office staff when off site.

Mobile telephone number: 07759 949491

The headteacher will maintain a list of staff and governor telephone numbers at home and also the names of the village representatives within the telephone tree. ('severe weather arrangements')

A list of staff with a First Aid qualification will also be maintained.

All the information in the school's Critical Incident Contingency Plan will be kept in the Head's office. The head should ensure all staff know where to find it and should include this area as part of the induction process for new staff.

School Educational offsite:

- The office should have an accurate list of all staff and pupils involved
- The teacher in charge should also have a copy of this list
- The teacher in charge should have a list of contact telephone numbers,
- They should take a mobile phone and ensure it is charged
- They should have up-to-date medical information about the pupils (re allergies, asthma, epilepsy, etc)

In the event of an emergency a line will be kept free for outgoing calls and important incoming calls

Planning for a School Evacuation:

If the Headteacher/Senior Leadership Team in consultation with the Chair of Governors make the decision to evacuate the school building the staff and pupils will either be taken to **St Barnabas Church** (Contact Rev Mike Perry or Church Warden, Marian Davis) or **Queen Camel Memorial Hall** where an incident room will be set up. Contact the chair of the Hall committee.

A Major Incident/Disaster

In the event of a major incident or disaster the **Emergency Services** (police, fire, ambulance) will take the lead role and the **Social Services Department** have a statutory duty to manage and co-ordinate the situation in line with Somerset County Council's Emergency Planning Procedures.

Date of this review: November 2017

Date of next review: November 2018

Dear Parents

You may have heard that/it is with sadness and regret that I have to inform you
(brief details of the incident, perhaps some positive remembrances of the person(s) lost, and the sense of loss).

As part of our contingency plan we are able to call on the Educational Psychology Service who are skilled in offering support to children and adults who are feeling upset. This will consist of talking to pupils in small groups and offering advice and reassurance as appropriate. In fact many of these conversations have already taken place today. This help will be available for all pupils and staff who request it.

I hope this information is helpful.

Yours faithfully