

## Critical Incident Policy

### 1. Introduction

This policy is not intended to be prescriptive or to attempt to cover all possible events. A major fire at a weekend or a serious accident on a school trip, each require different types and scales of response. However, there is evidence that where a school has anticipated a major critical incident and made plans for managing a response, it is likely to handle the actual event more effectively and confidently.

This policy will aim to identify:

- Who will assume key roles.
- That checklists and procedures are in place.
- That contact lists are accurate.
- That there is a tested framework for communications.
- That there are some developed skills to draw on.
- That the response to a crisis will be more assured than that based on improvisation.

There can be no rigid formula for responding to incidents, but where damage to premises is the focus, the Business Manager will take the leading role in managing the crisis in collaboration with the Governors.

Where the crisis is related to people, such as in the event of a death or serious injury, the assumption is that the Head Teacher will take the leading role in managing the crisis in collaboration with the Governors.

Handling crises is a normal part of school life. Some incidents however, are of a more critical and overwhelming character in which staff, pupils and parents may experience acute, sometimes prolonged distress.

### 2. General Planning

The Head Teacher and Key Stage Coordinators will be the "Incident Managers", unless one of them is not available and then it will be the Senior Leadership Team, Business Manager, School Secretary and in that order. The chair of Governors or in their absence the Vice Chair of Governors (nominations pending) will also be identified to take a lead responsibility for liaison with the emergency services in the event of a crisis.

In the event of an emergency all staff will be notified as soon as is practically possible.

The school office will be the central liaison point for all incidents, as this is where the phone lines are based.

In the aftermath of an incident, it may be most appropriate to use dedicated mobile phones to separate incoming and outgoing calls.

Those dealing with incoming calls should provide an agreed factual statement along with reassurance of action being taken at the incident site. **It is important to avoid speculation or developments unless you are confident that they will be available.**

### **3. Contacting Parents**

It may be necessary to invite parents to come to a meeting. It might also be necessary to choose a venue away from the public and press.

### **4. Possible Major Incidents**

#### **4.1 Fire**

If there is a fire during a working day the school fire and evacuation plan details action to be taken. This can be found in the School Policies Folder in the school office and Employees' Handbook.

If there is a fire overnight or in school holidays then all parents and staff will be contacted and an emergency meeting held.

The following information that is vital to the running of the school should be held both on and off site:

- Pupil and staff database
- School financial accounts
- Anything that is stored on the networked computers which includes most curriculum documents and policies
- Premises and sites plan of the school including critical locations, copy of
- asbestos log book (if applicable)

The Chair of Governors has a list of key holders with telephone contacts.

The staff emergency contact procedures should be started.

#### **4.2 Bomb Alert**

If there is reason to believe that there might be a bomb in school, the fire evacuation plan would operate.

#### **4.3 Severe Weather**

If there is a sudden heavy overnight fall of snow/hurricane etc. Parents and staff will be contacted via Parentmail, email or phone advising of any likely closure.

Unless informed otherwise by the school or national emergency services, staff should make an attempt to attend school.

#### **4.4 Accident in a hired School Mini-Bus/Coach/Staff Vehicle**

The action would depend on the severity of the accident and the distance from school. The school should be alerted as soon as possible. (A mobile phone should accompany any out of school activity. The number of that phone should be recorded on the out of school documents.)

Parents will be informed via school and school will organise transport as appropriate to get parents to the hospital where our pupils may have been taken.

Trauma for both parents and pupils can be reduced by bringing them together as soon as possible. The most senior and available teacher will contact all Governors, Trustees and parents. All other staff not involved in the incident will be briefed with up-to-date information and reminded not to talk to the media.

When the situation is most immediately under control parents, staff and pupils may benefit from counselling, which school will organise.

#### **4.5 School Journey out of Hours**

The most senior teacher will keep a copy of all pupils and staff and their contact details when pupils are engaged in school activities out of schools hours (ie. French trip, residential trip, etc).

If there is an accident the above arrangements will still apply (section 4.4).

#### **4.6 Pupil Dies in School**

Following on from current well practised call alarm procedures, the ambulance will be called. Other pupils will be led from the same classroom while first aiders try to save the pupil. If they witness death or near death they will need opportunities to talk about their feelings and counselling.

Parents will be informed in most sensitive way possible.

A calm member of staff may have to collect parent of the dead/dying child and take them to hospital or wherever is deemed appropriate.

Their religious leader may need to be informed if they have one.

Be prepared for grief to show in the form of anger.

Refer all questions that are difficult to the Head.

School governors are to be informed as soon as possible and briefed about speaking to the press.

Counselling for all concerned to be brought in to school; Educational Psychology and EWO services can provide emergency counselling.

All press enquiries to be routed through Head Teacher, Chair of Governors and LA media team.

#### **4.7 Any Other Difficult to Predict Occurrences**

At time of a national emergency such as a petrol crisis or issues following on from terrorist attacks, the Governing Body will be alert to any briefing information/meetings for Head Teachers and key personnel with advice on how to protect schools and pupils and procedures to be followed if an event should occur.

## **5. General Advice for Dealing with the Media**

Today's media operate very quickly. They are likely to contact you before the contingency plan is in place. The following includes some key points:

Remember that whatever the incident, and particularly if it involves injury or death on a school trip, the likelihood is that information will be sketchy at best and possibly inaccurate.

Prior to the arrival of the press office:

- Buy time, e.g. the Head Teacher is not available, but will call you back.
- Be clear about which staff/governors/trustees are designated to talk to the press and who are not.
- Be prepared to accept that a designated person may not be the most appropriate person to handle the situation in some circumstances.
- Do not talk to a journalist by yourself; have a colleague with you to take notes of what is said.
- Do not provide anything other than facts.
- Give a prepared statement rather than an interview.
- Arrange a later time to undertake an interview.
- Be sensitive about personal information
- Do not apportion blame or admit liability to anyone, even in conversation.
- Establish who you are talking to and their organisation (name of journalist and short notes of what you have said).

## **6. DO NOT SPEAK OFF THE RECORD:**

This policy, guidelines and checklists will be reviewed at least once a year. This will help to ensure that the plan is a working document and kept up to date.