



'Where Children Come First'

Critical Incident Plan

CRITICAL INCIDENT PLAN

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

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

Critical Incidents affecting schools may ~~include~~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.

Critical Incident Management Team

In the event of a Critical Incident the school's Critical Incident Management Team or identified key personnel will need to act promptly and be responsible for dealing with the following issues:

Emergency Services

Check that these have been ~~contacted~~contacted, as

necessary. Gathering Information

For our school, the Critical Incident Management Team will consist of the Headteacher,

Deputy Headteacher, Nursery Manager and Office Staff.

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~~out: -

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

The school should contact the Senior Educational Psychologist at the Area Base who will initiate the Critical Incident Response Procedure.

Contact numbers (Julia Severn) Mendip:

Tel: 01749 678500

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~~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.

Informing Governors/LA

The Chair of Governors and the Principal Educational Psychologist should be informed as soon as possible after a major incident.

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.
- 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.

If using the telephone:

- There is an emergency mobile phone which should be used for school trips and becomes the emergency line during a Critical incident. This will be kept charged in the school office.
- 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~~given, or omissions made.
- 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.
- 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.

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~~; names.
 - * an explanation about the involvement of the Educational Psychology Service or other services supporting staff and pupils at the ~~school~~; school.
 - * how parents can get more information. (See Appendix 1 for example letter).

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 or year groups.
- Questions should be answered in a straightforward way, passing on only facts and avoiding speculation.
- Some classes, tutor groups or year groups may be more directly affected by the incident and will benefit from extra consideration, ~~support~~support, and sensitive handling of information.
- Siblings and other close relatives of victims should be informed separately and, where possible, in liaison with parents.

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 staff 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.

Dealing with the media

- Identify a senior member of staff to liaise with the media. This will normally be the Headteacher.
- Usually refer to LA Communications Team (Press Office) - who will advise on the content and presentation of any 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

Pupils need access to clear and concise ~~information~~information.

- Staff 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.

Give opportunities for pupils to talk through personal ~~reactions~~reactions.

- It is helpful to provide a quiet, private place for pupils to go to.
- 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.

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.

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

- 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, so 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, *e.g.* 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.
- Staff who are co-ordinating the school's response should be supported and scheduled for relief periods.
- 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.
- Allocate a member of staff to be available to talk parents and keep them up-to-date with information as it becomes available.

SUPPORT FROM THE EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY SERVICE

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.
- Psychological support 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.

This work will be very stressful for office staff, we must ensure that:-

- time on task is carefully ~~monitored~~ monitored.
- staff take regular ~~breaks~~ breaks.
- they have reserve staff on call to lend a ~~hand~~ hand.

We have a prepared pro-forma letter to parents - to give some brief facts and information about the incident and availability of support, etc. (see Appendix 2).

There will be hand-outs for staff/pupils/parents about "normal" reactions to trauma/shock - these can be collated in ~~advance~~ advance, but we make sure everyone knows where to find them.

The Critical Incident Contingency Plan will be discussed in Teaching Staff and Teaching Assistant Staff meetings. A copy will be in the policy folder on the P Drive and a hard copy will be in the policies folder in each office.

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.i.e.~~, within hours of the incident ~~occurring~~occurring.

1. Obtain and collate information relating to the incident – uncertainty breeds rumour and accurate information is ~~essential~~essential.
2. Gather and brief the CILT (Critical Incident Leadership Team) – brief the team, allocate roles and responsibilities;
3. Trigger support from the LEA and other contacts on emergency list – establish clearly who is going to contact whom;
4. Set up an incident management room and dedicated phone line – to deal with calls from anxious parents etc. CILT should agree a factual statement and avoid ~~speculation~~speculation.
5. Contact families affected – must be done quickly and with sensitivity. Consistency of information is vital. It may be appropriate for families to come to school and immediate emotional support could be a ~~possibility~~possibility.
6. Make arrangements to inform other parents – may need to take advice from LEA, especially if there is the possibility of legal liability. CILT may wish to send a letter to ~~parents, or parents or~~ prepare a leaflet.
7. 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.
8. 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 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.
9. Encourage people involved to talk – the incident may need to be discussed before children go home for the day, for both pupils and adults.
10. Deal with the media – it is most important to seek advice from County Office 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 CILT and a designated spokesperson briefed and prepared to respond on the school's behalf.
11. Devise a plan for handling the reactions and feelings of people affected – the most common reactions will include denial, distress, guilt, anger and helplessness. CILT 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 CILT will need to 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~~ be brought home, but sometimes parents and families need to visit the scene ~~of the~~ 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 CILT. If a crisis persists over many hours staff become tired, ~~weary~~ 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 probably would be appropriate for a member of the Critical Incident Leadership Team to offer a debriefing meeting for staff, children and parents to:
 - clarify what has ~~happened~~ happened.
 - allow for sharing ~~reactions~~ reactions.
 - reassure people that reactions are ~~normal~~ normal.
 - mobilise resources ~~e.g.e.g.~~, parental support ~~groups~~ groups.

An experienced person, possibly someone from outside the school community, should lead this meeting, for example the educational psychologist.

5. Formal and informal recognition of rituals – it is important to remember to express sympathy to families of the hurt or bereaved. Visits to children/staff in hospital. Pupils may wish to send cards and letters. The school may also need to consider attendance at funerals, and/or the desirability of holding special assemblies or memorial services. Anniversaries are also key times when support and sensitivity are required.
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 – ongoing monitoring and support for staff is a major consideration. CILT 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 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. CILT 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.

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

Signed.....*H. Thompson*..... Headteacher.

Signed.....*Kate Lovell*..... Chair of Governors

Date of adoption: September 2016

Date for next review: February 2024

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Signed..... Headteacher

Signed..... Chair of Governors

Date of adoption: September 2016

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Appendix 1

Exemplar letter to send to parents in the event of a tragic ~~incident~~incident.

Dear Parents

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

Explain that the pupils in the school have been told this sad news today by ~~their~~them teachers. And that we will/have remembered in a service/assembly.

Our thoughts are with’s parents at this sad time.

[In the event of a sudden/traumatic death in the school or local community – “During the day we have been supported by the Educational Psychology Service and ~~this~~this help will continue as necessary during the coming days”.]

I hope this information is helpful.

Yours faithfully

Appendix 2 - SOURCES OF FURTHER INFORMATION

Critical Incident Plan/Revised ~~February~~September 20203/Mrs H Thompson

Child Bereavement Charity

Tel: 0800 02 888 40

E-mail: enquiries@childbereavementuk.org

Web: www.childbereavement.org.uk

Child Death Helpline Department

Great Ormond Street Hospital

Great Ormond Street,

London. WC1N 3JH

Helpline: 0800 282 986

Web: www.childdeathhelpline.org.uk

Childhood Bereavement Network

Website: <https://childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/if-you-need-help-around-death/finding-support-local-you>

Childline

NSPCC Weston House

42 Curtain Road,

London. EC2A 3NH

Helpline: 0800 1111

Web: www.childline.org.uk

Compass (Somerset Children's Community-Based Palliative Care and Bereavement Service)

Children's Unit

Musgrove Park Hospital,

Taunton. TA1 5QD

Tel: 01823 344957

Web: <http://www.icpcn.org/members-directory/2159/compass-team-3/>

Compassionate Friends (Self-help organisation for bereaved parents)

53 North Street

Bristol. BS3 1EN

Helpline: 0345 123 2304

E-mail: helpline@tcf.org.uk

Web: www.tcf.org.uk

Cruse Bereavement Care

Helpline: 0808 808 1677

E-mail: helpline@cruse.org.uk

Web: <https://www.cruse.org.uk/>

Somerset NHS Foundation Trust

Children and Young People's Community Palliative Care Team

Community Families Hub

Level 2, East Reacher House,

Taunton. Ta1 3EN

Tel: 01823 344 693

Yeovil District Hospital

Children's Community Office Level 10

Higher Kingston,

Yeovil. BA21 4AT

Tel: 01935 384 558

E-mail: cypcpct@somersetft.nhs.uk

Web: <https://www.somersetft.nhs.uk/cypcpct/>

St Margaret's Hospice

Tel: 01823 333822 or 01935 709480

E-mail: info@st-margarets-hospice.org.uk

Web: <https://www.st-margarets-hospice.org.uk/home-page>

~~Grief Encounter~~~~The Rainbow Centre~~(For children affected by cancer, life threatening illness and bereavement)

~~South West~~~~Southwest~~

27 Lilymead Avenue

Knowle,

Bristol. BS4 2BY

Helpline Tel: 0808 802 0111

DD Tel: 0117 985 3343

E-mail: southwest@griefencounter.org.uk

Web: <https://www.griefencounter.org.uk/south-west/>

The Samaritans provide a 24-hour service offering confidential emotional ~~support~~support to anyone who is in crisis.

Helpline: ~~116 123 for free~~~~08457 909090~~

E-mail: jo@samaritans.org

Web: www.samaritans.org

Winston's Wish for anyone caring for a child who has been bereaved:

Critical Incident Plan/Revised ~~February~~~~September~~ 2020~~2021~~3/Mrs H Thompson

Winston's Wish
 4th Floor
 St James Square
 Cheltenham Conway House
 31-33 Worcester Street
 Glos., Glos. GL1 3AJ 50-3PR
 Helpline: 08088 020 021452-030405
 E-mail: ask@winstonswish.org info@winstonwish.org.uk

Web: <https://www.winstonswish.org/> ~~www.winstonwish.org.uk~~

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The Young Minds Parent Information Service provides information and advice on child mental health issues.

Parents Helpline: 0808 802 5544
 Tel: 0808 802 5544
 Web: www.youngminds.org.uk

Appendix 3:

Contact	Name	Telephone Number
DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES	Claire Winter	0300 123 2224 01823 359389
CHAIR OF GOVERNORS	Kate Lovell	01749 342322 (school)
HEADTEACHER	Honoria Thompson	01749 342322 (school)
FIRST AIDER	At School	
PRESS AND MEDIA CONTACTS	Media Officer	01823 355020 pressoffice@somerset.gov.uk
EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY SERVICE	Psychological Services Critical Incident Response	(Ashley Bloom Julia Severn) Mendip: Tel: 01823 35700749 822800
SOCIAL SERVICES/DIRECT		0300 123 2224
LOCAL COUNTY COUNCILLOR	Mr John Parham Mr Martin Lovell	01749 343852831513

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CHILDLINE		0800 1111
PCSO	Penny Freestone Richard	101
VICAR, ST. PETER & ST PAUL'S	Revd Revd. Jonathan Hunter Dunn	01749 342163 (Parish Office)
<u>SPECIALIST CAMHS</u>	<u>Mendip</u> <u>South Somerset</u> <u>West (Taunton,</u> <u>Sedgemoor & West</u>	<u>01749 836561</u> <u>01935 384140</u> <u>01823 368368</u>
PARENT AND FAMILY SUPPORT WORKERS	<u>Mandy Wilcox</u> <u>Jen Lynch</u>	<u>01749 342322 (school)</u>
Bath & West Diocese		01749 670777