

CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY



1. INTRODUCTION

In responding to an incident the aim will always be to ensure:

- rapid and appropriate action is taken;
- accurate information is provided;
- normal school routines are maintained as far as possible, giving continuity to pupils;
- immediate, sensitive and non-intrusive support is offered.

This policy should be read in conjunction with Sunderland City Council code of Practice in responding to Crises and Critical Incidents in Children's Services.

2. DEFINITION OF A CRITICAL INCIDENT

An incident becomes a critical incident when it constitutes a serious disruption arising with little or no warning on a scale beyond the coping capacity of the school operating under normal conditions, and requiring the assistance of the Emergency Services and/or Sunderland City Council or others.

Examples of such incidents impacting on schools could include:

- death or serious injury as a result of violence, accident, self-harm and/or sudden/traumatic illness
- major fire
- building collapse
- riot and/or civil disorder
- natural and/or man-made disaster
- terrorism
- Intruder/hostage situation
- missing person(s)/abductions

These incidents might occur:

- on the school site during school hours
- whilst the pupils are taking part in activities away from the school site
- on school premises as part of after school activities

- within the local community involving pupils from the school.

Using this definition as a basis for decision making, an incident is declared to be a critical incident following consultation between the person(s) managing the incident within the school (normally the Head teacher, DHT, and/or the senior team) and the senior officer in Children's Services. If there is doubt it is always better to consult and err on the side of caution and declare an incident critical.

2. GOOD PREVENTATIVE PRACTICE

Behaviour policy

- As a positive measure to ensure our pupils' safety, our well-established behaviour policy applies off-site as well as within the school boundaries.
- Whilst careful pre-planning and effective risk management will minimise our pupils' exposure to dangerous situations, unforeseen hazards may well occur. In these situations, we will immediately brief children about how to proceed and require their compliance with any rulings we make.

Training

We will, from time to time, brief or train all relevant staff groups on their role in the prevention, management and response to incidents.

Security

We have put in place effective security measures to prevent unwelcome visitors entering the school; and out of hours security systems to reduce the potential for damage and vandalism.

Administrative practices

- We maintain a list of all pupils and staff, (accessible via computer using their individual passwords) for Data Protection, with next of kin contact details held centrally at the school (possibly on Central Register). Back-up data will be kept remotely through our ICT provider's main server. At Least four members of staff (Head teacher, Deputy Head teacher, School Business Manager and School Admin Clerk) will know how to access these lists
- We complete registers promptly at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session. Names of pupils who are late or leave school early will be recorded as well as those who are absent
- We maintain an inventory of equipment held on site in accordance with LA guidelines (Stock Control of all equipment) this is held on the computer. A second copy will be retained (print out) in the school safe. The inventory will be regularly updated.
- We operate a signing in and out procedure for all staff, visitors and volunteers in school. All contractors MUST sign in and be escorted whilst working in the school.
- We display details of emergency evacuation procedures in all areas of the school site as well as a plan of the building showing the emergency exits.
- Termly Fire Drills are carried out to ensure that the building is evacuated as calmly and quickly as possible. The School Business Manager keeps a record of these drills and the amount of time taken to evacuate the building. As well as carrying out a Fire Drill to evacuate the building we will put in place what is called a "Lock Down" procedure. This will be an alarm (sounding of a portable alarm) to alert all persons/pupils outside in play areas that they must get back into the

building as quickly as they can. An example of a lockdown would be if there was a suspicious person on the school grounds. Police will be notified and we would follow guidelines as detailed in our Emergency Procedure Plan.

Planning for Trips and Visits

We follow DfES guidance when planning and organising school visits (see our separate educational visits policy).

- All supervising adults will carry details of the members of the party. Supervisors will contact the school office if they need to contact a child's parent (& also see next bullet point). Details of the trip will be kept in the school office.
- Staff on school visits have a school mobile phone, and in an emergency can use this to contact parents/carers or the emergency services.
- We have insurance for all school visits, purchased via the LA.

Health and Safety

- We follow LA guidelines on the testing and maintenance of equipment, fixtures and fittings. All electrical, PE and firefighting equipment will be inspected and tested annually, in accordance with our SLA with the authority. All electrical equipment is PAT tested on an annual basis and any recommendations are carried out immediately.
- We follow regulations for the storage and security of potentially hazardous substances and chemicals. COSHH.
- We conduct regular health and safety checks on the buildings and site, with any potential dangers being reported and dealt with and take note of all recommendations mentioned in the school Asset Register which is updated annually. All findings are reported to the school governors.

3. DEALING WITH AN INCIDENT

- The emergency services should be contacted immediately- if appropriate.
- At this stage, it may be most appropriate to take whatever urgent action is needed to ensure the safety of others.
- As soon as possible, the Head teacher or next, most senior person deputy Head teacher will start to keep a simple log of all events and actions.
- The Head teacher should communicate with the LA, emergency services, etc. via mobile phone. This will leave the school's main phone line free for incoming calls from parents, etc. (The same procedure should be used for keeping contact with off-site parties if they have been involved in a critical incident.) Where appropriate parents will be contacted by text via the texting service (teachers 2 parents).
- The Head teacher (or next-most senior person) will deploy staff as necessary to manage the situation and ensure the safety of all concerned. This may involve the senior management team being relieved of their classroom duties, and their classes being covered by other colleagues.
- The chair of governors will be informed as quickly as possible.
- In many cases, the LA's senior education officer and his/her team will take over much of the management of the incident, leaving the Head teacher free to deal with pupils, parents and colleagues.
- The school admin staff will generally answer all calls from anxious parents. They will keep a log of callers and check this against school records to determine who might still need to be contacted.

- Parents will need to be contacted promptly, but the way in which this is done will depend on the nature and scale of the incident. Contact may be made in person or by phone. In very serious circumstances, it may be appropriate for the police to make the initial contact, with the Head teacher in attendance if appropriate.

Before making contact with parents:

- The Head teacher will confer with those who will be making contact about what to say, possibly rehearsing the message first. We will limit our comments to the known facts, and not speculate on the causes or responsibility for the crisis.
- The clerk or other colleagues will keep a strict log of those parents who have been contacted, noting date and time of call, the number called and the person who was spoken to (or if there was no answer). This list should be cross-referenced with those who have contacted us.
- We will ascertain if there are any colleagues who might offer help with transport to the school if required.
- We will endeavour to delegate these calls to those not actually involved in managing the incident.

When calling:

- We will check that parents are not left alone in distress, perhaps making suggestions for making contact with relatives or neighbours.
- We will offer any important phone numbers such as hospitals. (The clerk will make a note of hospitals and relevant phone numbers).
- An important task is to protect children, parents and staff from publicity. Press and television will not be given permission to enter the school premises or be given access to staff or children. One of the head teacher's first tasks on hearing of a crisis will be to contact the LA's support services, (see Section 2: Emergencies in schools – activation). All enquiries by the media will be directed to the officer, who will give factual information to the media whilst maintaining the privacy of staff, children and their families. In any event, the only other persons to speak to the media would be the Head teacher.
- Pupils should be told simply and without fabrication what has happened, in the smallest group possible – usually within their class. Questions should be answered as straightforwardly as possible. Children and parents should be informed by text, radio or letter by the end of the day if the school has to be closed. As far as possible the school's normal routine should be followed to maintain security and continuity for the children.
- In the event of deaths or serious injuries, the Head teacher will maintain close contact with the families involved and make arrangements for the school's representation at funerals, respecting the view, customs and wishes of parents.
- If an incident happens off-site, the Head teacher will arrange for all contact with the party to go via the school. Therefore, we will contact parents, the LA etc. on behalf of the party leader. It is also highly probable that the best course of action will be for children to be re-united with their families as soon as possible. The Head teacher, with advice and help from the police and the LA, will arrange to bring the children home. In some instances it may be appropriate to arrange for parents to be taken to the children.
- The leader of an off-site party may need to act 'in loco parentis' to authorise emergency medical treatment. However, they may only do this if every reasonable effort has been made to contact the parents.

- The whole school will be affected by a tragedy. The Head teacher will arrange de-briefing sessions for directly-affected staff, check that procedures are in place for monitoring staff and pupils, and activate strategies for allowing all involved to express their feelings if they wish. In the case of prolonged absences of anyone injured in an incident, the Head teacher will ensure that a member of staff makes contact with the child or colleague at home or in hospital, and subsequently make sensitive arrangements for their return to school, and thereafter check that monitoring procedures are in place. Consideration must also be given to arrangements for a special assembly or memorial service. In the longer term, the Head teacher may need to introduce strategies to continue to monitor vulnerable pupils and staff, consult and decide on whether, and how, to mark anniversaries, and to ensure that new staff are aware of which pupils/staff were affected and in what way.

Date: March 2022

Review Date: March 2023

Signed: Headteacher _____

Signed: Chair of Govs _____