

CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY (Draft)

Rationale

While every effort will be made to avoid the occurrence of emergencies by striving to ensure that staff and pupils adhere to school policies and procedures on Health and Safety, critical incidents may occur in any school. By its very definition, a critical incident is one that has not been foreseen. The nature of the incident may affect pupils/parents and/or staff and Governors; it may relate directly to the safety of the school premises; it may involve an incident away from the school. A critical incident will have a severe immediate impact upon the school and has the potential to have long term consequences. In the earliest aftermath of a traumatic event, emotions are likely to be intense. Clarity of thought and purpose may be difficult to attain in the face of immediate responsive action. Therefore, this policy sets out the precise procedures to be followed to manage the aftermath of a critical incident.

Purpose:

- To ensure that the welfare of pupils and staff is recognised as paramount;
- To enable the school to respond sensitively yet effectively and consistently to a critical incident;
- To have in place a Critical Incident Management Team, the membership of which is known to all concerned – see Appendix;
- To have in place a Critical Incident Management Plan, the content of which is understood by all concerned – see Appendix;
- To maintain the normal running of any parts of the school that are not affected;
- To return the whole school to normal as soon as possible;
- To have at hand a register of all relevant contact details, including those of relevant outside agencies.

Guidelines:

In a crisis:

- The Principal will take charge of the school's response. If not available, the members of the Critical Incident Management Team – see Appendix;
- The Critical Incident Management Team will make an assessment of immediate practical needs, if any;
- The Critical Incident Management Team will make contact with the next of kin of those directly involved.
- The Principal's office will be used as the central liaison point for all discussion and dissemination of information;
- If necessary, separate venue(s) in the school will be designated as a meeting point(s) for pupils/parents/staff/outside agencies;
- A short, simple statement of facts will be prepared by the Principal or deputy – see Appendix;
- All contacts from the media will be dealt with by the Principal or deputy. The prepared statement will be read/emailed by the Principal or deputy; no *ad hoc* comments will be made to the media;
- Secretarial staff taking in-coming phone calls will avoid making any comment, directing all enquiries to a member of the Critical Incident Management Team, who will respond by using the agreed statement. No additional comments will be made;
- All members of staff will be informed, as soon as possible, of the facts of the incident;
- Staff will be guided and supported in relation to (a) what (b) how and (c) when pupils are told of the incident;
- The Critical Incident Management Team will determine (a) what (b) how and (c) when parents are told, depending on the nature of the incident;
- Support, short term and long term, will be offered to those affected, as appropriate, in the aftermath of the incident;
- When the incident has been dealt with, the way in which it was dealt with will be evaluated.

1. Membership of the Critical Incident Management Team:

- Principal
- Vice-principals

Other members of staff, including the Bursar, Facilities Manager, Senior Teachers and the School Nurse, may be additional members of the Critical Incident Management Team, as and when required.

2. Critical Incident Management Plan:

(a) As preventative strategies:

- The school's Health and Safety policies and procedures will be kept under continual review;
- The school will continue to add to its number of those trained in First Aid procedures;
- Where appropriate, 'drills' will replicate simulated incidents, such as a fire on school premises.

(b) In preparation for the eventuality of a critical incident:

- Each member of the Critical Incident Management Team will have ready access to all pupil, staff and Governor contact details;
- As part of the School Trips and Educational Visits Policy, each member of the Critical Incident Management Team will have a copy of the contact details of participating pupils and staff, including mobile phone contacts;
- A current register of appropriate outside agencies, including emergency services, will be held by each member of the Critical Incident Management Team;
- The register of appropriate outside agencies, including emergency services, will be kept on hand by relevant members of the school's secretarial staff;
- A phone line will be designated for out-going calls;
- A critical incident reporting form will be devised, to ensure efficient, effective recording of the incident;
- Members of the secretarial staff will be given appropriate training, as those most likely to be contacted initially by the public;
- Locations will be decided upon for carrying out meetings (with parents, pupils, media and so on);
- Staff will receive training in the means of supporting those going through such as loss, change and bereavement;
- Strategies to cope with loss, change and bereavement will be included in the PD programme for pupils;
- The Critical Incident Policy will be reviewed regularly and amended as necessary by the Critical Incident Management Team.

(b) In the event of a critical incident, the following approaches will be taken, as appropriate to events:

- The Principal should be contacted first, who will then ensure that all other members of the Critical Incident Management Team are informed;
- The Critical Incident Management Team will meet at the earliest opportunity;
- The team will establish facts as accurately and speedily as possible;
- In the case of an incident on the school site:
 - (a) Health and Safety measures will be put in place - the first priority being that of ensuring that pupils and staff are safe and remain safe;
 - (b) Relevant emergency services will be contacted.
- A short, simple statement of facts will be prepared by the Principal or deputy, including:
 - (a) What happened
 - (b) Why it happened (if known)
 - (c) What is being done by the school (as relevant)
 - (d) Expressions of sympathy and concern (as relevant);
- Any communication about the incident will follow the guidelines set out in the Policy.