



Staploe Education Trust

Critical Incident Policy

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Aim

The aim of this policy is to minimise the amount and length of any disruption to education, including maximising the number of children, pupils and students who are in face-to-face provision.

It is anticipated that by adopting the procedures outlined in this policy it will be possible to provide a more secure environment for everyone associated with the schools in the event of a critical incident.

Every emergency is different but, in all cases, educational and wellbeing impacts will be considered when taking any emergency and risk management actions.

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children will remain of paramount importance throughout any critical incident and the Trust and its schools will have due regard for any statutory safeguarding guidance that applies to our settings.

What is a critical incident?

A critical incident is 'any sudden and unexpected incident or sequence of events which cause trauma within a school community and which overwhelms the normal coping capacity of the school'. Critical incidents may occur in school or out of school, but both types will have a major impact on staff and pupils. An incident might be designated as critical where the result is likely to be serious disruption to the running of the school, or where there is likely to be significant public and/or media attention on the school.

There can, of course, be no rigid formula for responding to incidents, but broadly speaking, where the crisis is related to people, such as in the event of a death or serious injury, the assumption is that the school is likely to take the lead, with the support of the LEA, as necessary.

A single suspected public health outbreak or incident of infectious disease will not normally constitute an emergency. In large-scale public health incidents where decision about actions to take in education are made at a national level, the Trust will defer to the DfE and/or other national agencies.

During severe weather, such as extreme heat, flooding, storms, or snow, our schools will keep open for as many pupils as possible. However, it may be necessary to close temporarily due to inaccessibility or risk of injury.

The Trust and its schools will be mindful of the UK government's National Emergency Alerts system. Alerts are sent out by this system by the emergency services or government departments, agencies and public bodies that deal with emergencies. When alerts are received from the National Emergency Alerts system the effected school(s) will respond to this alert as a critical incident and put appropriate measures in place to allow the instructions in the alert to be followed both on the school site and off site as appropriate.

Examples of in-school critical incidents

- A serious accident to a child or adult
- The sudden death of a pupil or member of staff
- Gas leak
- A traffic accident involving a pupil or staff member
- A violent attack on a fellow pupil or a member of staff
- A school fire or explosion
- Destruction of part of the school building
- Abduction or disappearance

- A serious infectious illness within the school or the local community
- Floods from a major water leak, excessive surface run off, or a nearby river or watercourse flooding
- An external security risk or incident requiring the lockdown of the school premises
- Terrorism or a bomb threat or explosion
- A deliberate act of violence, such as the use of a knife or firearm on site
- An incident which affects access to the school
- A transport related incident near to school
- Civil disturbances

Examples of out-of-school critical incidents

- An incident off site whilst members of the school community are on a school visit
- A coach crash on a school visit returning to school, no pupil injured
- A terrorism event in general location of a school visit
- Transport strikes that mean pupils and staff are not able to return home as planned
- An accident to a pupil or staff while out of school on a visit or swimming etc.
- Death or injuries on a school journey including school bus and organised trips
- Tragedies involving children from many schools

Role of Staff

Critical Incidents Team

A central component of this policy is the identification of the composition, roles and responsibilities of the Critical Incidents Team (CIRT).

The role of the team is to review and direct the handling of the incident and the response and recovery process in order to:

- Ensure the safety and security of pupils, staff, other users of the premises and visitors;
- Minimise the loss to the School in physical and financial terms;
- Manage an incident to minimise disruption to regular operations;
- Liaise with appropriate agencies, including the media.

The CIRT will comprise the following personnel:

- Chair of Trust
- Executive Headteacher
- Headteacher of relevant school
- Operations Director
- Facilities Manager
- ICT Systems & Strategy Manager
- Designated Child Protection Officer of relevant school
- Executive PA

Class Teachers

Individual class teachers and Form Tutors have an important role to play in managing critical incidents and may well be the best people to deal with the pupils in their classes in the event of a critical incident. The main role of specialist agencies is to support pupils who cannot be helped by the teachers within the school alone.

By outlining the appropriate actions to be taken in the event of a critical incident, the school aims to reduce the effect.

Critical Incidents Room

In the event of a critical incident where the school buildings are usable or an incident off site, the critical incident room has been identified as the Headteacher's office.

Procedures during an incident

- The Headteacher or member of senior staff must be informed of any critical incident as soon as possible.
- As soon as an incident is confirmed, the CIRT will meet to decide strategies.
- The rest of the staff will be informed as soon as possible, preferably at a specially convened staff meeting.
- All staff should share the same information, whether on site or off site.
- Pupils will be told information simply and sensitively, without fabrication, preferably in smaller group situations.
- The school will try, as far as possible, to keep to the normal routine.

Action Plan

In the event of an emergency or critical incident our schools will follow the **S A F E R** principle as outlined below.

Stop – and gather information, Headteacher or senior leader to start to gather people to help from the Trust's Critical Incident Response Team. Start recording decisions and actions on the incident recording sheet.

- Bring together the CIRT
- Assign tasks and ensure each individual knows what is expected and logs their action on a central log of events record sheet
- Consider whether you may need to close the school
- Identify a member of the CIRT as the person to co-ordinate information
- Consider communication to school staff/pupils/community

Assess – what has happened, the CIRT Team will assess what they can see, what they heard, what people are saying, if there any known casualties, and if first aid or an ambulance is required? Who else needs assistance?

- What happened/where/when
- How many involved; who are they?
- Name and contact numbers of adults at location of incident
- Details and location of injured (severity, name of injured and supervising adult(s) name(s) /contact number)

- Details and location of non-injured names, and supervising adult(s) name(s) /contact number

Formulate – a plan for the next 5 minutes.

- The CIRT Team will bring people around them to help
- Launch the Critical Incident Plan.
- Work out where members of the CIRT team will be based and establish that base to operate with a dedicated phone line.
- What has been done already and what needs to be done next?
- Has anyone else been informed e.g. Emergency Services, Leadership Adviser? (What were they told?)
- Ensure Leadership Adviser/LA/Chair of Trust and Chair of Advisory Body are informed
- Does anybody else need to be informed?

Execute the plan and delegate the tasks.

- Identify actions for CIRT members and identify if more members are required
- CIRT to agree a statement for all incoming calls, which can be managed by properly briefed staff or via informative answer phone messages where not all school lines can be operated personally (e.g. after school hours)
- CIRT to brief personnel having direct links with public/media (factual brief statements only) (Discourage any speculative discussion; route all press enquiries to the county communications team in the case of a critical or major incident)
- Establish a press release in conjunction with the Communications Team
- Action the 'telephone cascade' for staff and governors if appropriate, to keep information flow fast and accurate
- Communicate with families whose relatives (children and adults) are or may be involved. This should be done quickly and with great sensitivity, preferably by a CIRT member. It is the responsibility of the police to notify next of kin in the event of a death. Consistency of information is essential, therefore use the agreed statement and the most up to-date information available
- Try not to leave messages or use extended chains of communication
- Establish a reception base for concerned relatives coming to the school and think carefully about the siting of this base. Ensure people who can comfort and inform relatives staff this Maintain direct contact with this base
- Prepare general information for all parents/staff/governors. Information should be simple, factual, express sympathy and concern and should indicate when further information may be available
- Regularly brief school staff and governors and ensure that staff and governors are discouraged from speaking to the media
- Brief pupils. This is best done in class or tutor groups and should be age appropriate

Re-assess – be prepared to stop, look around, is your plan working, does it need to be altered?

- How long is the incident going to continue for?
- Do staff need to be rotated into jobs and tasks?
- Is there somebody to hand over to?
- What continuing support is required for pupils, staff and relatives of those involved? A member of CIRT should have been identified as having responsibility for ensuring continuing support. Your Leadership Adviser may have mobilised help from a variety of agencies able to offer support and counselling to those immediately affected. These may include:

Educational Psychologists
 Experienced Counsellors
 Social Workers
 Emergency Planning Team
 District Teams
 Property Officers
 Health and Safety

- You will need to discuss likely continuing needs with relevant professional staff. Local religious communities may also be able to contribute or take a lead in providing a longer-term focus for support
- You may want to include in your plan details of who can offer specific support and for how long this can be continued.

Major incidents require the following procedures:-

- Convene the CIRT and enact the steps in the Trust's critical incident plan.
- Immediately inform the Chair of Trust and Advisory Body, Education Advisor and any other appropriate Officers/Agencies
- Collect, record and convey as much accurate information as possible.
- Identify two telephone operators to staff:
 - school phone for incoming calls
 - mobile phone for outgoing information/staff use.
- Reception area to be used for enquiries.
- Use the up to date list of students' next of kin (record files) and contact parents of affected children.
- Record all actions.
- Headteacher, or delegated staff member, to act as 'press officer' only.
- Refusal of access to press/television on school premises.

Action Plan Timing

Task	Time Scale
Obtain as much factual information as possible at start of crisis and assess what has happened.	Immediate
Alert Headteacher or designated substitute. Headteachers to alert the CIRT, Leadership Adviser/LA, emergency services if appropriate and Chair of Advisory Body	Immediate
Convene meeting of the CIRT and assign roles, tasks and responsibilities. Formulate a plan and launch the Critical Incident Plan.	Immediate
Start the incident log. Always keep a contemporary record of decision making to explain the context.	Immediate
Make arrangements for handling the media in liaison with Leadership Adviser and designated school media support.	Immediate
Carry out quick appreciation of immediate response required.	Immediate

Execute the plan.	Ongoing
Reassess	Ongoing
Communicate details of the incident to staff, pupils, governors and parents as appropriate.	Within hours if practicable
Inform pupils in a sensitive way – small groups if appropriate.	Within hours if practicable
Arrange a debriefing meeting for staff involved in incident.	Before leaving school
Arrange a debriefing for pupils involved in the incident.	Before leaving school

Even when the incident has ended, arrangements to return the school to normal could go on for some time as you enter the recovery phase.

Identify and agree a range of response and support measures. Facilitate support for high-risk pupils and assess who else requires ongoing support. These have the potential to run for many weeks or months after the critical incident has concluded.	Next few days, could go on longer
Consider the overall response of the school. Funerals, rituals and memorials. Consider arrangements following full consultation with all families/carers directly involved.	Next few days
Review and revise plans in light of experience	As soon as possible

To be read in conjunction with:

Staploe Education Trust Critical Incident Plan
 Responding to Critical and Major Incidents – Cambridgeshire County Council Guidance
 Procedures for Cambridgeshire Schools (Revised June 2019)
 Trust School's Educational Visits Policy
 Lockdown Procedures