



## CRITICAL INCIDENTS POLICY

<b>Date of approval by the Trust Board</b>	<b>15 October 2025</b>
<b>Review cycle</b>	<b>Annual</b>

## **Action Plan for Critical Incidents**

### **1. Definition**

A critical incident may be defined as any sudden and unexpected incident or sequence of events which causes trauma within a school community and which overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of that school.

Examples include:

- Serious accidents during school trips.
- Serious injury, death or disappearance of a pupil or colleague.
- Violent/disturbed intruder(s) and/or violent event on school site.
- Serious damage to school building or property, e.g. fire, flood or vandalism.
- Civil disturbance in local community.
- Pupil with/outbreak of serious contagious illness.
- Immediate evacuation of the school with no likelihood of return for hours.
- Incident attracting unusual attention from the media.
- Incident involving serious threat.
- Arrest of a pupil.
- Serious disruption to supply chain for fuel and resources.

### **2. Establishment of the critical incident management team (CIMT)**

- The CIMT may consist of the following (as necessary) and may delegate responsibilities to individuals, or small groups of relevant individuals:
  1. The Chief Executive (CEO) or other senior member of the Trust Team.
  2. Head of School.
  3. Head of Finance/Resources.
  4. Two members of the leadership team e.g. Deputy Headteacher or Assistant Headteacher.
  5. Two members of the administration/business staff e.g. HR and Finance.
  6. Chair of LGB or other Governor as appointed by the LGB Chair.
  7. Chair of the Trust Board or other Trustee as appointed by the Trust Chair.
  8. Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)/Social Care/Local Authority (LA)/other agencies, as necessary.

With other members of the school leadership team, staffing team and local governing body joining as necessary.

- The team will usually operate from the Headteacher's office/CEO's office/online; otherwise, a base for coordinating the work of the CIMT will be provided.
- A telephone line and a mobile 'phone will be available for use. E-mail contact will be restricted/allocated to specific e-mail addresses.

The lead of the CIMT will be the CEO of the Trust, or senior member of the Trust Team, or Head of School, as appropriate for the incident and for the roles required. Other roles to consider may include:

- Business continuity.
- Communications and log-keeping.
- Media.
- Resources.

- Welfare – including child protection as well as support for staff, students and parents/ carers.
- LADO.
- Executive Compliance Lead.

### 3. Action and guidance in the event of a critical incident

The school will refer to the DfE guidance on dealing with incidents kept with this policy in the leadership network area, as well as any LA guidance (most recent also kept with this policy); copies of this guidance are also kept in the Critical Incident folder and in the Business Manager's office and on-line. The team will also take advice from relevant professionals, such as HR/Legal, as well as Health and Safety advisors and the police.

**Appendices 1 and 2** give advice for out of school hours e.g. holiday periods and weekends. At other times, the Chief Finance Officer (CFO), Head of School or CEO would usually take an initial lead, including gathering any information before convening the CIMT.

#### 1. Obtain and collate information

- A log should be kept of events throughout the incident, including communications, responses, and timing of these. The school has a telephone recording system which can be used for external and incoming calls to its telephone lines.
- Gather as much factual information as possible, particularly in the event of off-site incidents, including: what, where, who, etc.
- Establish who has been informed of the incident and what has been said.
- Contact the police or other emergency services, where appropriate, if this has not already been done.
- If, or when, the emergency service has been informed, they may establish management of some aspects of the incident.

#### 2. Brief the CIMT and ensure that Governors and Trustees have appropriate summary information

- The CIMT should be able to convene at very short notice; if not, those available will convene.
- All available information should be shared and collated.
- A plan of action should be drawn up to deal with issues relating to the specific incident. This will include any impact on the normal running of the school e.g. emergency assembly or closure, etc. as well as allocation of roles, allocation and briefing of staff to handle e.g. any increased parent/carers enquiry.
- The team will agree a statement of factual information in order to deal with initial enquiries, and information to give parents and/or others directly involved; information to share with students and how to share this (preferably at the same time, to minimise anxiety or rumours) will also be agreed. Students will be advised to be careful what they post on social media and to not automatically believe rumours, or other information that does not come from the school. The use of the website news area as a form of sharing information will also be considered (depending on the nature of the incident); parent e-mail can also be used, as appropriate.
- Staff will be briefed of the main facts, and given details of an appropriate response to any queries they may receive; they should not give press or media interviews unless, as an individual, they are specifically authorised to do so, and must follow guidelines given for communicating with parents/carers or students.
- The team should consider whether there are vulnerable staff and pupils who may be at risk and what action can be taken to safeguard them; they should share support services available for students and staff once these are known. They should also consider whether there is any appropriate advice that can be shared with parents/carers with regard to supporting their children who may be affected by the incident (even if not directly involved).
- The team will agree its next meeting time(s) and how to keep records up to date to ensure progress can be monitored.

3. Inform the LA (and other relevant organisations) as needed
  - The Strategic Director of People and Services and/or Executive Head of Education should be informed of any incident and asked if there are any relevant support services that are available to the school (e.g. counselling).
  - Support may be available e.g. press, public relations, health and safety, insurance, legal through the LA or the school's own contacts (there is a Health and Safety SLA with the LA, as well as the Trust's own HR and Legal contract; the LA's media team will also usually help).
  - Contact should be made with the school's legal, insurance and health and safety providers if there is a possibility of legal liability, a health issue or police action.
4. Contact families directly affected
  - Families directly involved, e.g. of pupils on a trip, should be informed of an agreed statement outlining current known information and appropriate assurances.
  - Where matters relate to an individual or a very small number of students, where appropriate/possible, a statement regarding facts can be agreed with the family in advance (e.g. individual student death).
5. Dealing with the media
  - All media contact should be conducted with the agreement and involvement of the CEO/ Deputy CEO of the Trust
  - Support may be available from the relevant local authority's Head of Communications who should be contacted via the Strategic Director of People's Services and/or Executive Head of Education's office in the first instance.
  - In the event of direct contact with the school by the media, a member of the CIMT will deal with the enquiries.
  - See guidance papers for further advice.
6. Follow-up and ongoing action
  - E-mail will be used to inform staff and others of developments or will be used to share where/ when updates can be found.
  - A contact list of appropriate support agencies will be available.
  - Guidance will be provided on how staff can support pupils in the period immediately after the incident.
  - Where possible, guidance will be provided on how parents/carers can support pupils in the period immediately after the incident.
  - The CIMT will meet to agree any further action and to record the final outcomes of the incident.
7. After the incident
  - Consider whether students directly involved need additional support and care and put together the relevant support plan.
  - Consider whether there are staff who need additional support.
  - Consider whether there are students who continue to be affected and need additional support, even where not directly involved.
  - Consider whether some event is needed to provide 'closure' to the incident.
  - Consider, where there has been a bereavement, whether the school has memories e.g. photographs, videos or written work, that the family may want to have.
  - Consider whether any dates need marking in some way, e.g. anniversary of event, or public examination results after a bereavement.

8. Carrying out a review within six weeks of the incident

- The school will cooperate fully in any serious case or other formal review, remembering that its purpose is to learn from what has happened in order to safeguard others in the future, and providing detailed information.

Any internal review should address the following questions:

- What went well?
- What was most/least helpful?
- Were there any gaps?
- Have all necessary referrals to support services been made?
- Is there any unfinished business?
- Have all records relevant to the Critical Incident been secured?
- Are there any identified training needs?
- Does the Plan need to be reviewed/changed/updated?

**Person(s) responsible for updating this policy:**

**Chief Executive Officer  
Chief Operating Officer**

## APPENDIX 1

### Holiday period contact protocol

Where any member of the CIMT is on site, then they should take the call if readily available. Otherwise, the receiving person should gather information as shown below before contacting on the CIMT:

1. Gather as much information as possible, including:
  - i. Who is calling, their role (if any) and their contact details
  - ii. What has happened
  - iii. Who is involved
  - iv. Where has this taken place
  - v. Establish who has been informed of the incident and what has been said
  - vi. Establish if any police or other emergency services' involvement
2. Contact the Head of School, CFO, CEO, Chief Operating Officer and Deputy Headteacher by e-mailing a very brief summary of event e.g. fire in school, accident on school trip, and asking all to contact, then telephone individuals' emergency contact numbers in the order shown in this paragraph i.e. Head of School first. The first contact made with then advise of any immediate action required (see below for contact details held in Critical Incident folder and for further guidance held in this folder).
3. The members of the CIMT who are available will then take an initial lead and keep others in touch by e-mail (if secure/appropriate) or by some other communication agreed.

School contact numbers for the relevant staff and governors/directors and Local Authority contact numbers are kept as follows:

- a) On SIMS (staff only). Staff with access to these can access these off-site or on-site. These include: the CEO of the Trust, Headteacher, Business Manager.
- b) On VLE – those with access to this folder can access these off-site or on-site. Details are stored under the Critical Incident folder stored under Governors' Area/Critical Incident. Those with access to this folder include all members of the Leadership Team, including the CFO, Governors, Trustees.
- c) In the CFO's office in a folder marked Critical Incident stored on the shelves to the side of the desk; there are additional copies in the Head of School's office and CEO's office.

## **APPENDIX 2**

### **Weekend or other school closure periods**

Information is likely to come through social media (e.g. an individual who happens to be a member of staff), though the Local Authority hold the Chair of the LGB and the Head of School's contact details and may contact directly.

The first member of staff who is aware of a significant incident should e-mail the CFO, CEO, Headteacher/Head of School and Chief Operating Officer to let them know what they have heard e.g. sharing the link or summarising the information. The first of the CIMT to pick up this will contact other members of the team by telephone/e-mail and also gather any information available (see above for where contact details are held).

The lead of those contactable will then decide what action to take and form an initial CIMT given appropriate and available contacts made. They should also alert the Chair of the Trust Board and LGB once facts are known.

Other relevant documents:

- Fire Drill
- Bomb Threat Protocol
- School Lockdown Procedure
- Risk Assessment – Business Contingency

## **APPENDIX 3**

### **In the case of an on-going critical incident/international/national/local pandemic**

An ongoing critical incident process will be managed; led by each Headteacher in each school and reviewed by the Trust's Executive Team, responding daily to staffing issues, infections and changing government guidance.

If a school in the Trust needs to close/partially close, the Trustees and local Governors will be alerted to the status and the incident will be managed by the CEO in liaison with the local authority, health, leadership and governance as appropriate.