



Critical Incidents Management Plan Guidelines

Formally adopted by the Governing Board of:-	The Clare School
On:-	26th February 2021
Headteacher:-	Rebecca Wicks
Last updated:-	Spring 2020
To be Reviewed:-	Spring 2022

*To be read in conjunction with the Local Authority Green Book, 'Critical Incidents – A Support Framework for Norfolk Schools (2012-13 Edition) and the companion guidance 'The Red Book)' which provides details of first response and operational guidelines in the event of a crisis and on <http://www.csapps.norfolk.gov.uk>.

1. Definition

1.1 A critical incident may be defined as:

"An event or events, usually sudden, which involve the experience of significant personal distress to a level which potentially overwhelms normal responses, procedures, and coping strategies and which is likely to have emotional and organisational consequences."

2. Aims

The development of this plan is of crucial importance in preparing the school to cope with a traumatic incident. The plan will have several aims:

To ensure that swift and appropriate action is taken the moment the school is made aware that a critical incident has occurred.

To provide accurate information effectively to staff, pupils, parents, Governors and the LA.

To offer sensitive, non-intrusive support in the short and medium term to all those affected, directly or indirectly by what has happened.

To maintain as far as possible the normal routines of school life so as to offer a secure framework of continuities to all pupils.

Such a plan will address the school's response at several levels and phases.

3. Preparation

In order to enable actions to be taken quickly in the event of an incident, the following provisions will be made:

General Measures

Recognise that a climate of support, trust and confiding will strengthen the school's response at a time of crisis. Therefore, all staff will be involved in planning at some level.

Recognition of the relevance of multi-cultural and multi-faith factors in the response.

Consideration given in the School Improvement and Development Plan for the needs of staff training in areas such as bereavement.

Provide relevant fiction and non-fiction books in the School Library and Staff Study

Recognise and utilise ways in which the Curriculum Programmes of Study serve to help staff to provide learning experiences for pupils about loss, change, and bereavement.

Practical Measures

A list of all pupils' next of kin and contact phone numbers is held centrally both on computer and in readily accessible folders and is regularly updated.

A list of pupils out on visits on any day is held in the school office and via Evolve for level 2 trips.

Staff leading groups of children on any visit carry contact telephone numbers and will carry a mobile phone.

A Crisis Response Team will have responsibility for co-ordinating the school's response in the event of an incident.

Consideration will be given to communication issues, including the likely difficulty in communicating with the school should a traumatic event occur.

The roles of all members of staff will be clarified, particularly for tasks such as informing parents and others.

Staff will be identified who might be able to quickly provide support to very distressed pupils.

The Headteacher or Deputy Head will have responsibility for communicating with the media. Such incidents are usually characterised by confusion in the early stages and are of immediate interest to the media. The Headteacher or Deputy Head will make prior contact with the County Council's Communications Officer who can offer support to schools as

needed.

A list of the telephone numbers of emergency services, Local Authority support services, trained counsellors and relevant voluntary agencies is held by the school.

Secretarial staff will be trained to help them respond adequately to the queries of distressed parents.

Standing arrangements will be made with the LA that may be activated in the event of a tragic incident. This will include key LA contact officers, and a whole range of support services. This will be done through 'The Red Book' contact telephone numbers held centrally in the School Office.

4. The Response: Stage One

This section refers to the immediate aftermath of a situation where pupils are involved in an incident where serious injury and even death has been the outcome. It might apply to motorway accidents, plane crashes, suicide and similar tragedies.

General Measures

When it becomes clear that an incident has occurred every attempt will be made to obtain accurate information. This is not always easy as while information that something has happened spreads quickly, confusion may surround the event for some hours. However, it is important to clarify the facts as quickly as possible as inaccurate information may be damaging to children, families and the school.

As soon as possible parents will be contacted by phone and be given information either by a senior member of staff, or via the telephone tree if appropriate. They may be asked to come to the school for a full briefing by the Headteacher and senior colleagues. The decision here will depend on the nature and scale of the incident. The information will need to be given sensitively to avoid misunderstanding and later complications.

Depending upon the nature of the incident the school, may need to enlist the help of LA Officers, GPs, Clergy and the Police if there are a number of parents to be contacted and supported.

In the case of a major incident (for example, the crash of a school mini-bus, a plane or a ship) the scale of the incident is likely to be beyond the resources available to the school and it is likely that parents will hear of the incident from other sources.

In such a situation the LA will mobilise all of its resources and would be likely to involve other Departments and Agencies. Where appropriate, the Social Services and County Council Disaster Plans could be activated.

If appropriate, emergency telephone numbers, hospital numbers, or other support agency numbers will be given to parents and arrangements will be made for informing them of developments in the situation.

It is possible that the media will have heard of the name(s) of those involved in the incident. Those name(s) should not be released nor confirmed by the school to the media until the Authorities have confirmed the identity and the parents have been informed. Even then, consideration will need to be given to how staff and other pupils should be informed.

Clearly, if a major accident occurs, the school could be inundated with phone calls from distressed parents. A record of who has called in will be kept, so that parents will not be further distressed by additional calls. Those operating the switchboard will be briefed by the senior member of staff co-ordinating the response or by the Headteacher in order to ensure that the best information available is relayed to parents. An independent line for outgoing calls is vital to ensure two-way communications.

A number of practical measures may help in this situation. For example:

the school will have a prepared statement for dealing with telephone calls;

another local school could be approached for the use of extra telephone lines

the loan of a mobile phone could be requested from the LA.

The Headteacher will work with the Local Authority Communications Officer. Staff and children will be advised to avoid talking to the media. Information should be released to the media through the designated Communications Officer.

Every attempt will be made to discourage the interviewing of parents or pupils or staff. The right to privacy of staff, pupils, and parents should be safeguarded as far as possible.

If deemed helpful, a media briefing will be held and will be attended by the Headteacher or Deputy representing the Head, the Communications Officer and, if appropriate, an LA Officer. The media should be informed of all such arrangements.

Staff directly involved in the incident will be advised to make a written

record of the event as soon as possible and not to make any admission of liability.

As early as possible the Senior Management team will meet to discuss their strategy with the Crisis Response team.

The Chair of Governors and LA officers will be informed as soon as possible. This will enable various support services to be accessed according to arrangements made for such eventualities. For example, advice can be given about initial actions, guidance materials can be faxed to the school, and there can be a visit within hours by a member of the Critical Incident Team to talk to staff and, where appropriate, children.

There is an LA contact point and procedures so that help can be provided quickly to the school. This links to a Critical Incident Team Core group, which can quickly direct advice, and support to schools. Members of an LA support team can provide advice or materials quickly. It can sometimes be important that highly distressed children have access to support quickly and, again, a rapid LA response can be requested.

Measures for Staff

The whole staff will be informed of the situation at the first opportunity so that the true facts are known. At the same time they:

Will be reminded of the guidance given in this Plan about how to support and talk to children, and the measures that are in place in the school to provide further help for very distressed children.

The management of a critical incident can result in a great deal of stress. It is important to stay in touch with people's feelings, to monitor the emotional state of staff and to allow time and space when needed.

Recognise that some staff may not wish, or may be unable to be directly involved in supporting children because of their own experience of loss.

Recognise too, that the burden of dealing with the incident may fall disproportionately upon a small number of staff and they may need the support of outside professionals.

Measures for Children

If some children remain in the location of the incident their physical safety should be the priority and all steps necessary should be taken by staff responsible to care for them. For example, they should be kept warm, together, and staff should be as calm and reassuring as possible.

Pupils within school should be informed simply of what has happened. This will be done by class teachers in the first instance, so that in this familiar situation, they may feel able to ask questions. At this stage facts rather than speculation should be the focus.

Once this has happened children should be reunited with their parents in a manner commensurate with the situation. This may not be easy and the advice of the Police should be sought about whether the parents should travel to the scene of the incident or whether the children should be taken home. Some parents may not have access to transport and shocked staff should avoid driving. One solution might be to provide a coach to take parents to the scene or to take the children back to the school.

5. The Response: Stage Two

For the first few hours following a traumatic event it will be necessary to consider a range of other actions that may need to be taken.

Measures for Children

Pupils who were involved in or witnessed the incident will be identified quickly as they may require higher levels of support.

Similarly, it is known that children who are themselves emotionally vulnerable may be particularly susceptible to adverse reactions to such events even if they were not directly involved. Such children will be identified and their reactions monitored.

It is important to be alert to changing and varied expressions of grief in children.

Be sensitive about the demands practical issues may be making on pupils (e.g: worries about the ability to concentrate, work deadlines causing difficulty).

At traumatic times it is important to provide as much continuity and security to children as possible. Every attempt should be made therefore to maintain the normal school day, so as to ensure that children are unsettled as little as possible. At the same time they should be given the opportunity to talk about their feelings if they wish to.

Some children may not be attending school after the incident and it will be necessary to assist their return to school in ways that meet their individual needs as far as possible. The school will consider such arrangements as:

- negotiating a date for return with parents.
- arranging with parents for a visit by the form teacher to a child's home.
- briefing children who may be able to help in the process of resettling. This is likely to be children in the same form group.
- arranging for part-time attendance at first if this is considered helpful.
- arranging for a 'sanctuary' that a child could go to if upset during the school day.
- making sure that all staff who teach the child are aware of the need for sensitivity in relation to missed work and the possible need to reschedule projects.
- checking whether special arrangements with Examination Boards will be needed.

It might be useful to talk to children about what is a normal stress reaction and to give them guidance about measures to alleviate the stress response (for example, muscle relaxation, deep breathing, positive imagery). Guidance on this could be offered by the Critical Incident Team and the LA Support Team.

Some children may require support at a level, which cannot be provided in a class or small group situation. This will be brought to the attention of the Senior Management Team who can provide short-term counselling and support outside the normal timetable.

If suitable, with parental permission, groups of children might be brought together to work with outside professionals who will seek to help them develop coping strategies and to understand their reactions. If children do not wish to be involved with this support, families will be contacted and advised on the kinds of help that are available to them and their children.

For vulnerable or very distressed children immediate access to outside professionals may be appropriate. If any other children remain distressed after 6-8 weeks referral should be made to a support agency for help.

Measures for Staff

Staff closely associated with the pupils involved, especially those responsible for them at the time of the incident, will be offered opportunities for debriefing and for counselling. Many staff however, may require some support, and Local Authority services will be made available to those requiring specialist help.

Members of staff working directly as team members co-ordinating the school's response should be supported and relieved depending on the length of time required to perform all aspects of the task. Again, LA support staff are available to assist.

School staff can access confidential support and counselling through the Norfolk Support Line.

General Measures

Arrangements may be made to express sympathy to the families directly affected by the incident. Injured children can be visited in hospital and other children who know them encouraged to send letters or cards.

LA services will be contacted through the emergency contact system in order to activate previously agreed procedures. Professionals from the Authority can work within the school to support the work of teachers with pupils and to be available to staff who wish to consult them.

Other sources of help may be called upon at the discretion of the Head Teacher. For example:

local religious groups could be contacted and their representatives be invited to meet the Head Teacher to discuss ways in which they might help in the school's attempts to support all involved.

the school will also consider contacting agencies such as Cruse and the Samaritans with a view to making their support available to the bereaved or to others who may wish to talk to them.

the Head Teacher will decide on the suitability of using offered help from volunteers.

6. The Response: Stage Three

The available evidence suggests that the difficulties caused by a traumatic event can continue for many months or even years. This Plan will need to take account of this.

Measures for Children

Staff will continue to monitor children informally during the months following the incident.

All staff, however, should seek to be available to children who wish to talk to them about what has happened.

If they feel further professional help may be needed they can arrange for this to be given if a child wishes it, following discussion with, and the consent of, parents. This will be a matter of great sensitivity and staff will seek advice from the Head Teacher or Senior Management colleagues and appropriate professionals if they are unsure of how to proceed.

Some children, and perhaps staff, will need therapeutic help for a considerable time.

It may be necessary to arrange for children to say goodbyes within the school and the community.

It is possible that affected individuals will experience renewed grief on the anniversary of the incident in the years following its occurrence. The Headteacher will need to ensure that staff are made aware that this is a time of remembrance for some and that sensitivity and support may be needed.

General Measures

Discussions may need to be held with Governors, parents, and staff about the desirability and the form of events such as special assemblies and memorial services.

Senior Management Staff will evaluate the effectiveness of the measures, which were introduced and modify the action plan in the light of this evaluation.

Staff will be aware of any legal proceedings, and their implications.

The school has identified a Crisis Response Team - a group of trained adults from within the staff. This team may according to the incident:

assess the immediate demands of the situation.

assess the emotional needs of staff and pupils.

co-ordinate rapid action to inform staff and pupils sensitively and to provide immediate support to distressed children.

carry out initial staff stress debriefing procedures.

support class teachers who will undertake classroom debriefing.

arrange special groups for very distressed pupils.

initiate staff, pupil, parent support groups (calling on outside help as necessary).

support the Head Teacher, e.g. a letter to parents.

The Crisis Response Team consists of the Senior Management Team, Health & Safety Coordinator, Caretaker, Assistant Caretaker and School Office Staff.

Appendix 1

Operation Plan Notes

To be read in consultation with the Emergency 'Red Book'

Operation Tasks

1. A decision may have to be made to provide extra staff support and transport to get children home.
2. Telephone lines are likely to be quickly jammed which will limit the school's ability to receive information from the crisis point or support from other sources. The school will seriously consider borrowing mobile phones or alternative phones e.g. use of fax or e-mail. (Care would need to be taken when discussing confidential matters).
3. A cascade method of contacting governors is in place. Those governors directly supporting should be asked to come into school.
4. The nominated Education Officer contact will trigger a sequence of responses from Communications Officer at County Hall or Police, as appropriate. **(It is important that the Local Authority is aware of the telephone number being used to receive information so that the dialogue between the school and the Local Authority can continue).**
5. Telephone tree: A simple, Senior Management team sanctioned message will be relayed to parents, all parents will be made aware of the difficulties and the impact these difficulties may have had on the children not directly involved in the crisis. A letter at the end of the day confirming and updating the message as well as stressing the operational needs of the school will also be considered. *Staff should remember that any letter could come to the attention of the media.
6. Precise information for contact families involved in the crisis will be essential. An assessment will have to be made as to whether the information can be given over the telephone or whether the contact should be face to face. Problems will also arise if partners are not available to support etc. GPs could be asked to help where the injuries to children may cause shock to parents.
7. Be sensitive in how news is given to parents or others as the perception of the accident by parents or others can sometimes be altered by the way in which they receive the news.

8. Record in writing what actually happened in the incident while the memory is fresh and before other people's opinions change one's own views of what happened.
9. While being as helpful as possible avoid admissions of liability that may be inaccurate and cause complications later.
10. The need for Headteachers to be supported is just as great if not greater. It is clearly up to the individual Head Teacher to assess their own situation carefully. It would be of the utmost help to enlist the (possibly mutual) support of a Head teacher or colleague Head teacher able to drop everything in his/her own school and to go to the school to provide support advice and help with the logistical problems of dealing with a crisis. The Head teacher will consider this support line if deemed necessary.

Operational Plan when the school is closed or on holiday

The following points will be included in the school's contingency planning.

1. Contact from the media. It is possible that the first the Headteacher may hear of an incident is through the media. On the record, comments are often sought which may place the Headteacher in the situation of being asked to comment whilst still adjusting to the news of the crisis. *The Headteacher will contact the Communications Officer where media interest is an issue.*
2. Staff may not be aware of the crisis even though it has been in the local/national media. School will contact each member of staff, so that they are fully informed.
3. There will be an expectation that the school responds to the crisis as soon as it re-opens. Preparations will be made to meet that expectation.
4. Advice sources may be more difficult to access during weekends and holidays although the LA does provide emergency contact numbers (see the Red Book). *The Headteacher will follow the guidance in the Red Book.*

**See also the school Bereavement Policy for further guidance and information.*

Appendix 2

Critical Incidents Management Plan **A Quick Guide - Early Response**

(To be read in conjunction with the guidelines)

1. Try to obtain accurate information - clarify facts - keep calm
2. Contact LA Critical Incidents Team via the 'Red Book'
3. Inform Chair of Governors or Vice Chair
4. Make contact with County Council Communication Officer

Tel No: 01603 228888
5. Contact parents - invite into school if appropriate or keep them informed
6. Keep independent telephone line open
7. Record those parents who phone school for information
8. Have at hand appropriate emergency telephone numbers and support agency numbers
9. Avoid talking to the media without advice from the Communications Officer
10. Discourage media from talking to parents/pupils/staff
11. Inform staff, Governors/pupils when appropriate
12. Support emotional needs of staff and pupils.

***While being as helpful as possible avoid admissions of liability that may be inaccurate and cause complications later.**

