

Lucton School Critical Incident Policy, including Critical Incident Action Plan

Rationale

A critical incident can be defined as a sudden, unexpected and tragic event or sequence of events which causes trauma and confusion within a school community and which overwhelms its normal coping mechanism.

It may affect pupils, staff, parents and governors, may relate directly to the safety of the school community or may involve an incident beyond the school premises.

As a critical incident is likely to have a severe impact upon the school, both in the short and long term, our aim is to ensure that school strategies and procedures are in place to protect the physical and emotional wellbeing of every member of the Lucton School community.

The Critical Incident Policy and Critical Incident Action Plan cannot cover every aspect of recovery from a critical incident. Occurrences may arise which cannot be foreseen or considered. The critical incident may occur during the school day, during the evening, during the school holidays or on a school trip.

It is important that the incident policy is easily understood and swings into action immediately. The following must be remembered in relation to the incident policy:

- a. The plan is followed as closely as possible
- b. That designated personnel understand their tasks and are competent to carry them out
- c. Other people do not take unilateral actions
- d. Consideration and sensitivity is shown by all
- e. Pupils, staff and parents are protected from press intrusion
- f. Normal routines be resumed as soon as possible
- g. There is a realisation that total recovery may take a long time

The Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) has responsibility for ensuring that procedures are properly addressed at times of high emotion. If the incident involves legal action, a precise response to the incident should be known and is able to be verified by more than one person.

Aims of the Critical Incident Policy

The three main aims of the Critical Incident plan are:

- a. To maintain a duty of care throughout
- b. To minimise educational and administrative disruption within the school
- c. To enable normal working to be resumed in the shortest possible time

Objectives of the Critical Incident Policy

The main objectives for the Critical Incident Plan are to:

- a. Ensure that swift and appropriate action is taken in the case of the school being made aware that a critical incident has occurred

- b. Ensure that the welfare of pupils and staff is paramount
- c. Ensure that the school responds in a sensitive, consistent and effective manner which reduces confusion, panic and extreme emotion
- d. Have in place a Critical Incident Management Team, the membership of which is known to all relevant parties (see Annex A)
- e. Have in place a Critical Incident Action Plan, the details of which are familiar to all relevant parties (see Annex B)
- f. Maintain normality, as far as possible, in parts of the school which are not affected and to restore normality as soon as possible to the parts which are affected
- g. Have immediate access to all relevant contact details (including outside agencies)
- h. Be able to offer sensitive, non-intrusive support in the short and medium term to all those affected directly or indirectly by the incident

Examples of Critical Incidents

A critical incident is likely to involve death or serious injury to one or more members of the school community and / or, their families either at school, journeying to or from school, participating in a school related activity, at home or in some other context:

- a. In School:
 - 1. The death of a student or member of staff through natural causes
 - 2. An accident involving a student or member of staff
 - 3. A deliberate act of violence such as knifing or the use of a firearm
 - 4. A school fire, flood or an explosion in a laboratory
- b. Out of School:
 - 1. Deaths or injuries through accidents
 - 2. Suicide
 - 3. Civil disturbance

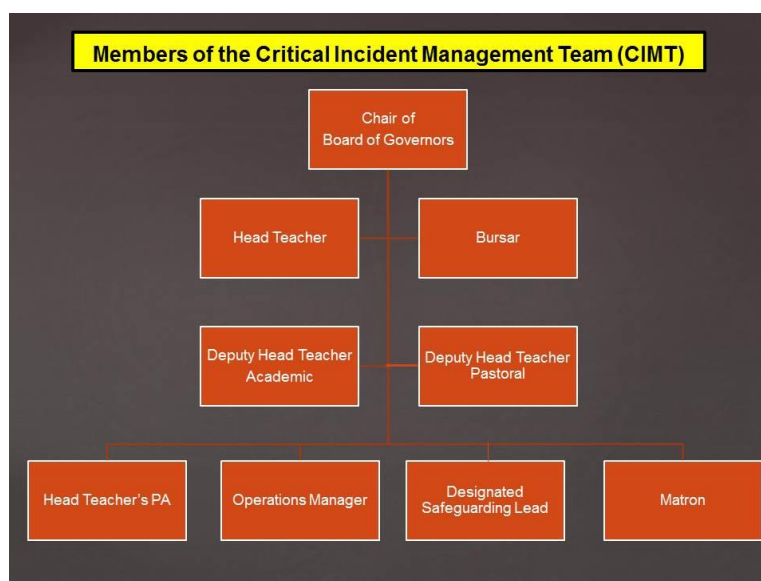
Guidelines for Managing a Critical Incident

During a Critical Incident the Headmistress will take charge of the school's response. In the case of the Headmistress being unavailable, the members of the Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) will take charge:

- a. The Headteacher's office will be the central liaison point
- b. The CIMT will assess immediate practical needs
- c. The CIMT will contact next of kin of those directly involved if required
- d. A short simple statement of facts will be prepared by the Headmistress (see Annex C)

- e. All contacts from the media will be dealt with by the Headmistress / Bursar
- f. Secretarial staff taking incoming calls will use a statement agreed by the CIMT
- g. When necessary, all members of staff will be informed and will be guided in relation to informing pupils
- h. The CIMT will determine the involvement of parents if appropriate
- i. Short and long-term support will be offered to those affected
- j. There will be an evaluation of the way in which the incident was managed

Members of the Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)



The CIMT may also be required to execute Operation CASCADE to certain members or all members of Lucton School Staff. Additional support staff may be required to assist in the administration such as the office staff to monitor and screen phone calls and emails to the school.

Other members of staff may be co-opted members of the CIMT as and when required. Additionally, one / two members of staff may be asked to take responsibility for the normal running of the school whilst the CIMT is engaged in dealing with an incident.

Procedures for CIMT – Key Roles

Headmistress, Bursar & Operations Manager

- a. Seeks clarification
- b. Calls emergency services if appropriate
- c. Summons the CIMT to inform of incident
- d. Prepares relevant statements/letters for the media, parents, pupils and office staff
- e. Convenes and informs staff
- f. Contacts the Prep School

Deputy Head - Pastoral & DSL

- a. Contacts external agencies – Local Authority / social services / consulting
- b. Contacts relevant parents
- c. Supports the physical and emotional wellbeing of pupils
- d. Arranges staff line if necessary & appropriate

Deputy Head - Academic

- a. Arranges staff cover if necessary & appropriate
- b. Liaise with Operations Manager to ensure access for essential personnel
- c. Ensure health and safety measures are in place

Headmistress PA

- a. Ensures phone lines are operative and all office staff available
- b. Ensures office staff do not vary from the script

School Matron

- a. Liaise with school first aiders to offer first aid as appropriate

Other Staff Co-opted in

- a. Manage the daily arrangements of the school, website / texts to parents / and school information.

Critical Incident Action Plan (CIAP)

The initial response in the event of a Critical Incident should follow:

- a. The Headmistress should be contacted first (if not available the Bursar)
- b. The Headmistress (or Bursar) should seek to clarify from relevant sources the nature, circumstances and gravity of the incident
- c. The CIMT will meet at the earliest opportunity and agree on procedures for managing the critical incident (See Annex 4)
- d. If the incident is on site, health and safety measures will be put in place and the emergency services contacted

Longer Term Issues

Although the initial incident may be dealt with quite quickly, other issues may arise which take a considerable more time to rectify:

- a. School structures and routines will be re-established
- b. Supportive strategies for pupils and staff will be implemented
- c. There will be ongoing contact with parents
- d. Actions taken will be reviewed and policies amended if appropriate
- e. The PSE and pastoral programmes will be reviewed
- f. Staff will be mindful of anniversaries and other special dates

The use of appropriate outside agencies is crucial to providing long term support as is the use of appropriately trained members of staff who are known to those in need of help.

Preventative Strategies

Lucton School may employ many preventative strategies to mitigate against some of the damage which may ensue with a Critical Incident:

- a. Regular review of relevant policies e.g. Child Protection, Health and Safety
- b. First Aid training
- c. Fire Drills
- d. PSE Programme
- e. Lockdown Procedure

Overarching Strategy

All members of the Critical Incident Management Team must:

- a. Have a copy of the Critical Incident Kit and Policy at home and at school
- b. Be aware of the roles of each part of the plan to enable the school to react swiftly and accordingly
- c. Have contact numbers of each other for 24-hour contact
- d. In the event of a school trip / visit, have access to a list of names for staff and pupils.
- e. Will have a register of emergency services and relevant outside agencies
- f. Relevant members of the secretarial staff will have a register of emergency services and relevant outside agencies
- g. Emergency evacuation drills are familiar to all members of the school community and practised regularly
- h. Opportunities to explore sensitive issues such as tragedy and death will be built into the PSHE and pastoral programmes.

Time Plan for a Critical Incident

| Ser | Task | Time Scale |
|---|--|-----------------------------------|
| (a) | (b) | (c) |
| 1 | Obtain as much factual information as possible at the start of the crisis | Immediate |
| 2 | Alert Headteacher – Headteacher to alert the CIMT | Immediate |
| 3 | Convene the meeting of the CIMT | Immediate |
| 4 | Start the Incident Log | Immediate |
| 5 | Make arrangements for handling the media in liaison with Education Officer / Press and PR | Immediate |
| 6 | Carry out quick appreciation of immediate response required | Within First Hour |
| 7 | Select and set up control arrangements – decide roles and responsibilities of CIMT | Within First Hour |
| 8 | Communicate details of the incident to staff, pupils, governors and parents as appropriate | Within hours if practicable |
| 9 | Inform pupils in a sensitive way – small groups if possible | Within hours if practicable |
| 10 | Arrange a debriefing meeting for staff involved in incident | Before leaving school |
| 11 | Arrange a debriefing meeting 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 | | |
| 12 | Facilitate support for high risk pupils | Next few days, could go on longer |
| 13 | Funerals, rituals and memorials | Next few days |
| 14 | Decide / agree a range of response and support measures. These have potential to run for many weeks / months | As soon as possible |
| 15 | Suggested reading and other resources | As soon as possible |
| 16 | Review and revise the plans in light of the experience | As soon as possible |

CIAP 1: Issues Requiring Immediate Action

| Ser | Action Point | Guidance Note | CIMT Action | Personnel Involved | Done | Who by | Time | Comment |
|---|---|---|--|--------------------|------|--------|------|---------|
| (a) | (b) | (c) | (d) | (e) | (f) | (g) | (h) | (i) |
| 1 | Gather Information | 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. Has anyone else been informed e.g. Emergency Services, Education Officer (what were they told?). Ensure Education Officer/ Local Authority and Chair of Governors are informed | Begin Critical Incident Log – details page | | | | | |
| 2 | Call a meeting of the CIMT for briefing | 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 CIMT as the person to co-ordinate information. Consider communication to school staff/pupils/community. | | | | | | |
| 3 | Establish a base for CIMT (this may be an off-school site) to operate with dedicated phone use. Preferred sites if appropriate / available: On site: School Office (2 Phone lines) | CIMT 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). CIMT to brief personnel having direct links with public / media (factual brief statements only). (Discourage any speculative discussion; route all press enquiries to County Press Office in the case of a serious incident.). Establish press release in conjunction with the County Council Press Office. Ensure telephone line(s) or mobile phones for outgoing calls available. Action the 'telephone cascade' for staff and governors [where appropriate] to keep information flow fast and accurate | | | | | | |
| Remember in most cases the first point of contact for the school will be the Bursar / Headmistress PA who will act as the key contact with the Local Authority. | | | | | | | | |

CIAP 2: Communication

| Ser | Action Point | Guidance Note | CIMT Action | Personnel Involved | Done | Who by | Time | Comment |
|-----|---|--|-------------|--------------------|------|--------|------|---------|
| (a) | (b) | (c) | (d) | (e) | (f) | (g) | (h) | (i) |
| 1 | Contact families whose relatives (children and adults) are or may be involved | Should be done quickly and with great sensitivity, preferably by a CIMT member – but remember 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 agreed statement and most up-to-date information from your contact adult on the site. Try not to leave messages or use extended chains of communication. Establish a reception base for concerned relatives coming to the school. Think carefully about the siting of this base (access phone/internet etc). Ensure people who can comfort and inform relatives staff this. Maintain direct contact with this base. | | | | | | |
| 2 | Prepare general information for all parents/staff/governors | If you have concerns about issues of legal liability or the likelihood of police action, any further information should be drafted with the help of the Head Teacher / Bursar. They can check with relevant agencies before letters are issued to the wider school community. Information should be simple, factual, express sympathy, concern, and should indicate when further information may be offered. | | | | | | |
| 3 | Briefing school staff and governor | Ensure CIMT have a schedule to brief staff on a regular basis. Ensure all staff (teaching and non-teaching) and governors are discouraged from speaking to the media. This responsibility should be referred to a named person in the team and/or the County Press Officer | | | | | | |
| 4 | Briefing pupils | Usually best managed in class or tutor groups by adults best known to the pupils. The agreed statement can then be delivered in a way that is age appropriate to the group. A large gathering can generate hysteria, which can become a management problem in itself. | | | | | | |

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| 5 | Briefing the media | <p>By contacting the County Press Office at the earliest opportunity colleagues can liaise swiftly to direct press interest away from the school and CIMT, who have enough to arrange initially.</p> <p>The County Press Officer can act as the local agent for media enquiries and can enable you to continue to manage the internal situation. Keep the Press Officer well briefed at all times.</p> <p>Even if you have good links with local media, it is essential enquiries be directed to the County Press Officer.</p> <p>If you have training sessions for CIMT on a regular basis, you may wish to invite a member of the County Council Press Office.</p> | | | | | | |
|---|--------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|

CIAP 3: Issues to be dealt with as soon as possible

| Ser | Action Point | Guidance Note | CIMT Action | Personnel Involved | Done | Who by | Time | Comment |
|-----|--|--|-------------|--------------------|------|--------|------|---------|
| (a) | (b) | (c) | (d) | (e) | (f) | (g) | (h) | (i) |
| 1 | Ensure continuing support for needs of pupils, staff and relatives of those involved in the incident is planned | <p>A member of CIMT is identified as having responsibility for ensuring continuing support. Your Bursar / Headmistress PA / Operations Manager may have mobilised help from a variety of agencies able to offer support and counselling to those immediately affected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Educational psychologists - Experienced counsellors - Social Workers - Child protection staff - Civil Protection Team - Locality teams - Area Directors - Property, Press and PR - Health and Safety <p>You need to discuss likely continuing needs with relevant professional staff. Local religious communities may be able to contribute or take a lead in providing a longer-term focus for support. You may want to make a detailed plan of who can offer types of support and for how long this can be continued.</p> | | | | | | |
| 2 | Provide a focus for expressions of sympathy if appropriate. Refer to Bereavement Guidance in Managing Cambridge Schools (October 2006) for more detailed information | <p>You may wish to place a table in the foyer or a vase of flowers, with a book for tributes/condolences. Sufficient space for items of remembrance may be helpful – the public and the school community may wish to place flowers or other tributes which can block fire exits or emergency service access points if not managed. It may be more appropriate to negotiate a location away from school, i.e. church or public building.</p> | | | | | | |
| 3 | Further information Bulletin | In your statements to the press and letters to the wider school community, you should indicate when you expect to be able to give more information. Try to honour this even if the update is very limited. You will create tension or possibly aggravate recipients of | | | | | | |

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| | | your information if your timescales are not adhered to. Clear your letters and statements with the County Press Officer and Police if necessary | | | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|

CIAP 4: Supporting people involved – action extending over time

| Ser | Action Point | Guidance Note | CIMT Action | Personnel Involved | Done | Who by | Time | Comment |
|-----|--|---|-------------|--------------------|------|--------|------|---------|
| (a) | (b) | (c) | (d) | (e) | (f) | (g) | (h) | (i) |
| 1 | Share information and advice about what has happened (this will apply immediately but will continue) | All staff will need information about what has happened. Staff should be advised about how to talk to and support children. Information should be provided for staff on counselling available to pupils and to themselves. Parents may need information and advice on supporting and getting help for their children. | | | | | | |
| 2 | Acknowledge the consequences of the event on the school's community, their reactions and feelings | The incident may cause stress throughout the school. Acknowledge openly that the incident may affect people (children and adults) emotionally in different ways and at different times. Recognise that the behaviour, concentration and performance of children and adults may change. Recognise that not all staff will feel able to support others. Be aware of staff who are taking the brunt of supporting others, and ensure that they, too, receive support. | | | | | | |
| 3 | Provide opportunities for pupils and staff to express personal reactions (immediate and continuing need) | Pupils should be encouraged to talk about their feelings in class, smaller groups, or individually, with active listening. Some pupils may show signs of needing support beyond the staff's competence or confidence. Extended counselling should be identified (with parental permission). Staff closely affected by the event should have opportunities for debriefing and counselling if they require it. Staff responsible for managing the critical incident should be offered supervision and relief. Some adults and children may need therapeutic help for an extended period after the event. | | | | | | |
| 4 | Consider the overall response of the school | The CIMT may need to consider: Attendance at a funeral. (It will not normally be appropriate to close the school.) Discuss attendance with the Bursar / Headmistress PA. Visit(s) of staff / children to hospital. Expressions of sympathy to families affected. An assembly or service to mark the event. | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---------------------------------|---|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| | | A memorial in the school or school grounds. It is advisable to consider this carefully and ensure full consultation with all parties. | | | | | | |
| 5 | Re-establishing normal routines | <p>Normal routines should be established as soon as possible as these provide security and stability at a time of stress and/or emotional upheaval.</p> <p>Bear in mind the need to create time and space for thinking and grieving about the event.</p> <p>Pupils should be encouraged to resume normal attendance.</p> <p>Children who cannot attend school due to injury or distress may need other ways of maintaining the contact with the school and school personnel.</p> <p>Consider how/when personal effects of deceased pupils should be removed</p> | | | | | | |

CIAP 5: School Critical Incident Log

Incident: _____

| Ser (a) | Date / Time (b) | Details of Incident (c) | Action Taken (d) | By Whom (e) |
|------------|--------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|----------------|
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
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More than one log sheet may be in use at any one time due to multiple personnel dealing with the incident – please collate throughout the incident.

CAIP 6: Local Authority Services Directory

<https://www.cruse.org.uk/for-schools/bereavement-policy>

<https://www.cruse.org.uk/publications/fact-sheets>

Sample Announcements

After a Known Fatality:

We are taking this time to think about, a Year 12 died last night in a road traffic accident. was travelling with her family to We do not know any details about the accident at this time except that the rest of the family is safe and no one is injured seriously.

.....'s funeral is being held at on.....

A funeral is a special time to remember a person who has died. The school will let your families know about the specific time and address of the funeral in a written note which will be sent home tomorrow. Let's take a moment of silence to think of, to remember all the good things about her, and to say goodbye. In our silence we will express our loving thoughts.

After a Suspected Suicide:

A tragedy has happened., a Year 8 pupil, has died suddenly. Details of 's premature death will not be released to protect the privacy of family members. You will be given information about funeral arrangements as soon as possible.

This kind of tragic news is hard to accept. You may experience many feelings within the next few days. Everyone deals with loss differently. It is important to respect the way others grieve. Counsellors are available in

Feel free to arrange to go and talk to the counsellors. They want to listen to your feelings and concerns.

Sample Press Release 1:

Date

School Grieves Sudden Death of Pupil

As reported by the West Mercia Police, a pupil of Lucton School died tragically on The circumstances of 's death are not known at this time and an investigation is currently ongoing.

This is a tragic loss to 's family and to our school community. To assist in supporting our staff and pupils through this time of grief, additional trained staff from the Herefordshire County Council's Critical Incident Response Team have been assigned to the school to provide support. A letter has been sent by the school to parents, informing them of this incident and providing information on the support services available through the school.

A special assembly to remember has been arranged for.....

Contact: Headmistress, Lucton School at
.....

Pro Forma Letter (for parents)

'With great regret, we have learnt of the death/deaths of and we extend our deepest sympathy to the family circle.

Prepared Statement for Media

We are sorry to learn of the tragic.....of.....
We hope at this time the school would be given the privacy needed to support our pupils at this difficult time, etc

NB: If the Head Teacher wishes to comment about the pupil, they may want to gain permission from the family to include:

Sporting achievements / Musical talents / Academic success / Personal attributes

Sample Letter to All Parents

Date:

Dear Parents / Guardians;

It is with great sadness that I have to tell you of the sudden death of NAME, (a pupil in Year/ a Year Teacher / Learning Support Assistant, etc). The children were told this morning by their class teacher / Headteacher at assembly.

NAME died of (an asthma attack, meningitis etc) and the children have been assured this is something that does not happen very often. Your child may or may not want to talk about it but it is likely that he / she will need extra love and support from you in the days ahead. This does not mean that anything is wrong with him / her. It only means that this traumatic event has been too powerful for him / her to deal with on his / her own. He / she may be feeling anxious. Take time to listen to your child and try to provide a predictable routine for him / her at home. Avoid too many absences to start with.

We have enclosed an information leaflet for you which may be useful at this time.

Trained staff from Herefordshire County Council's Critical Incident Response Team are helping to support us through this difficult time. It is sometimes necessary for a member of the team to speak to a class or individual pupils who may be distressed. He / she will be guided by the Headmistress / class teacher in this.

If you do not wish your child to receive such support from the team, please contact us immediately. We are deeply saddened by this great loss but are trying, for the children's sake, to keep the school environment as normal as possible. Our thoughts are with NAME's family at this tragic time and the school community sends them sincerest sympathy and support.

NAME's funeral is on DAY/ DATE at TIME am/pm at (Name of Church or Crematorium). We are in touch with the family regarding their wishes for the school's representation at the Service.