

Rainow Primary School

Caring, Learning, Achieving.

Critical Incident Policy and Procedures

Members of staff responsible:	Headteacher
Date approved by the Governors:	Spring 2018
Date to be reviewed:	Spring 2022

Introduction:

The purpose of this document is to:

- outline routines and procedures that school staff will follow in the case of a critical incident so as to minimise the adverse effects of the incident and to resume normal working as soon as possible; assist staff in coping with disasters if and when tragic incidents occur.

Preventative and precautionary measures

Whilst no amount of planning can totally prevent accidents and problems occurring, it is hoped that some can be prevented and the effects of others minimised by taking sensible precautionary measures. It is expected that:

- all staff and pupils should be familiar with the school's routines for fire and the evacuation of the school building on hearing the fire alarm;
- all staff should be familiar with the routines and procedures for dealing with critical incidents (as detailed in this Policy);
- all staff and pupils should be familiar with the school's security procedures;
- all staff organising school trips and visits follow the school's guidelines, including the writing of an appropriate risk assessment;
- all staff are aware of pupils with health problems;
- all staff are aware of school health and safety policy.

A critical incident may be defined as:

- An accident leading to a fatality.
- Severe injury to or severe stress experienced by a student or member of staff.
- Circumstances in which a person or persons might be at serious risk of illness.
- Circumstances in which any part, or whole of the school is unable to function as normal due to external influences.
- Any situation in which the national press or media might be involved.

As such, critical incidents include:

- Death of a pupil or member of staff.
- Death or serious injury on a school trip.

- Epidemic in school or community.
- Violent incident in school.
- A pupil missing from home or school.
- Destruction or major vandalism in school.
- Flood or fire.
- A hostage taking.
- A transport accident involving school members.
- A disaster in the community.
- A civil disturbance or terrorism.

In the event of such an incident the priorities of those adults in charge of the school or trip at the time must be to:

- Save life.
- Minimise personal injury.
- Safeguard the interests of pupils and staff.
- Minimise loss and to return to normal working quickly.

A **Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)** may comprise the following:-

- Headteacher
- Deputy Headteacher
- Chair of Governors
- Governor with responsibility for health and safety
- School Administration Officer
- Other nominated staff or governors in the absence of above

The school's reaction to a critical incident can be divided into the following categories:

- a) Immediate action
- b) Short term action
- c) Medium term action
- d) Longer term action

IMMEDIATE ACTION – i.e. within hours of the incident occurring

1. Ensure that any casualties are attended to and safeguard uninjured members of the group as necessary;
2. Obtain and collate information relating to the incident – uncertainty breeds rumour and accurate information is essential;
3. Gather and brief the CIMT (Critical Incident Management Team) – brief the team, allocate roles and responsibilities;
4. Trigger support from the LA and other contacts on emergency list – establish clearly who is going to contact whom;
5. Set up an incident management room and dedicated phone line – to deal with calls from anxious parents etc. CIMT should agree a factual statement and avoid speculation;
6. Contact families affected – must be done quickly and with sensitivity. Consistency of information is vital. It may be appropriate for families to come to school and immediate emotional support could be a requirement;
7. Make arrangements to inform other parents – may need to take advice from LA, especially if there is the possibility of legal liability. School may wish to send a letter to parents, or prepare a leaflet. If appropriate, the school website will be updated as necessary.
8. Inform teaching and other school staff – staff need to be cautioned about talking to the media or responding to questions from reporters. It is vital that all staff in contact with pupils are kept well informed and feel secure in handling comments or questions from pupils.
9. Inform pupils – can be done in small or large groups depending on which is most appropriate. Care needs to be exercised to protect both children and adults closely involved in the incident. It is important that children receive a consistent account of the incident allowing for differences in their ability to understand.
10. Encourage people involved to talk – the incident may need to be discussed before children go home for the day, for both pupils and adults.
11. Deal with the media – it is most important to seek advice from the LA before agreeing to speak to the media. If this is not an option then an agreed text for release should be prepared by the CIMT and a designated spokesperson, ideally the Headteacher or Chair of Governors, briefed and prepared to respond on the school's behalf. The spokesperson should avoid media questioning.

12. Devise a plan for handling the reactions and feelings of people affected – common reactions may include denial, distress, violence, guilt, anger and helplessness. CIMT will need to consider the use of outside professionals to support pupils and staff affected by the incident.

SHORT TERM ACTION

1. Reunion of children with their families – especially where the incident occurs outside the school. Mostly children will need to be brought home, but sometimes parents and families need to visit the scene of the incident to understand how they deal with repercussions in terms of children's fears etc.
2. Managing staff – support needs organising for all staff, preferably from within the school, but using outside agencies if appropriate. Staff monitoring should be a priority, including members of the CIMT. If a crisis persists over many hours staff become tired, weary and stressed and this could affect their powers to make sensible decisions.
3. Encourage pupils to talk – activate strategies for enabling young people to talk about the incident, and their feelings, using outside agencies if appropriate. Staff will need briefing about ways to help the children affected by the incident, and how to identify patterns of behaviour etc. This may have implications for the wider curriculum e.g. training in bereavement counselling for staff, provision of a range of books, PSHE discussions, etc.
4. Debriefing meeting – it may be appropriate to hold a debriefing meeting for staff, children and parents to:
 - clarify what has happened
 - allow for sharing reactions
 - reassure people that reactions are normal
 - mobilise resources e.g. parental support groups

An experienced person, possibly someone from outside the school community, should lead this meeting.

5. Formal and informal recognition of rituals – it is important to remember to express sympathy to families of the hurt or bereaved. Visits to children/staff in hospital. Pupils may wish to send cards and letters. The school may also need to consider attendance at funerals, and/or the desirability of holding special assemblies or memorial services. Anniversaries are also key times when support and sensitivity are required.
6. Re-establishing routines – every attempt should be made to provide continuity for the children. The return to school of staff or pupils directly affected by the crisis will need to be managed carefully and with sensitivity but the re-establishment of routine is an important stage in emotional recovery.

MEDIUM TERM ACTION

1. Return to school for staff or pupils after long absence – reintegration will need to be planned carefully, and may involve home visits prior to return, part time attendance initially, reducing workloads, putting in place mentoring process etc.
2. Consulting professionals – consideration should be given to consulting the Educational Psychology Service for support and guidance, especially to help those showing unusual or prolonged reaction to the incident.
3. Keeping parents informed – it may be appropriate to produce a leaflet for parents giving guidance on the possible delayed reactions of pupils to an incident and making suggestions to help them deal with these.
4. Support for staff – ongoing monitoring and support for staff is a major consideration. Members of the CIMT will not be immune to reaction from their ordeal.

LONG TERM ACTION

Monitoring the vulnerable – the effects of a crisis can reverberate for years, and it is especially important that new staff and pupils are briefed in the school's history to help them understand and deal with potential repercussions especially at anniversary times.

Marking anniversaries – these difficult times need to be treated with sensitivity. Some suggestions for schools to mark anniversaries are by annual concerts, memorial services, memorial prize giving ceremonies, memorial gardens etc.

Legal processes – the length of time taken over some legal processes can prolong the recovery process following a critical incident. CIMT may need to plan for this especially where staff may be involved attending legal processes, and facing extended emotional trauma.

Curriculum implications – it may be appropriate to schedule INSET training for staff in loss counselling, bereavement etc.

Key points

- **The welfare of children and staff and the public, not property, is the priority.**
- **Maintain communications with key colleagues at all times.**
- **Try to clarify facts. Do not jump to conclusions.**
- **All colleagues to record the event, timings and their actions as soon as possible. Note down witness comments and details. Collect and preserve any vital evidence.**
- **Do not speak to the media without specific agreement from the Headteacher or Chair of Governors.**
- **Do not discuss legal liabilities with other parties.**
- **Do not allow pupils to speak to the media under any circumstances.**

Action Cards

These Action Cards give responsibilities for specified staff in the event of a critical incident

(a) in the school environs;

(b) away from the school.

These should be used in the event of a major incident and be carried by staff on school visits. Due to the nature of school life, which includes the absence of staff on courses, residential visits, at meetings etc., it is impossible to assign specific staff or names to the roles, however the procedure should be followed as closely as possible.

Where both the Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher are to be away from school at the same time for more than two days, approval should be sought from the Chair of Governors. Where approval is given, a nominated local Headteacher should agree to act as a professional contact to support the school in their absence.

ACTION CARDS 1

GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOL STAFF IN EVENT OF A MAJOR INCIDENT IN SCHOOL ENVIRONS

<u>INFORM</u>	
OBTAIN FACTS AND INFORMATION	
CALL THE EMERGENCY SERVICES USING 999	
RETAIN ANY RELEVANT EQUIPMENT	
INFORM REST OF SCHOOL STAFF AND CHILDREN AS APPROPRIATE	
CONTACT DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION (or his/her representative)	
CONTACT CHAIR OF GOVERNORS	
CONTACT HEALTH AND SAFETY REPS	
PREPARE TO DEAL WITH THE MEDIA	
	<u>ADULT 1 - INFORMS</u>
	Headteacher/CIMT
	SCHOOL PHONE: 01625 572021
	POST CODE: SK105UB

<u>SAVE</u>	
ADMINISTER FIRST AID WHERE POSSIBLE	ADULT 2 - SAVES
ESTABLISH A CONTACT POINT WITH THE EMERGENCY SERVICES	First aiders
TRAVEL WITH CASUALTIES TO HOSPITAL	SCHOOL PHONE: 01625 572021
COMPLETE ACCIDENT FORMS	POST CODE: SK105UB

<u>CARE</u>	
KEEP A RECORD OF WITNESSES	ADULT 3 - CARES
KEEP OTHERS INFORMED OF SITUATION	Headteacher/other nominated staff
ARRANGE FOR NON-CASUALTIES TO EVACUATE SCHOOL	SCHOOL PHONE: 01625 572021
CARE FOR RELATIVES ARRIVING AT SCHOOL	POST CODE: SK105UB
CONSIDER RELOCATION TO OTHER PREMISES	
REMAIN AVAILABLE TO EMERGENCY	

<u>ASSIST</u>	
KEEP OTHERS INFORMED OF SITUATION	ADULT 4 - ASSISTS
ENSURE ALTERNATIVE ACCOMODATION IS AVAILABLE IF NEEDED	Deputy Headteacher/ Chair of Governors/CIMT
KEEP OFFICE STAFF AWARE OF KNOWN FACTS	SCHOOL PHONE: 01625 572021
HELP TO ESTABLISH INCIDENT ROOM	POST CODE: SK105UB

ACTION CARDS 2

GUIDANCE FOR GROUP LEADERS ON OUT-OF-SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

ALLOCATE KEY RESPONSIBILITIES – as outlined by the emergency action cards

<u>INFORM</u>	
OBTAIN FACTS AND INFORMATION	
CALL THE EMERGENCY SERVICES USING 999 SYSTEM	
RETAIN ANY RELEVANT EQUIPMENT	
INFORM SENIOR SCHOOL STAFF	
CONTACT HEALTH AND SAFETY REPRESENTATIVES/ LOCAL AUTHORITY REPRESENTATIVES	
REQUEST ASSISTANCE ON SITE AS NECESSARY	
PREPARE TO DEAL WITH THE MEDIA	
	<u>ADULT 1 - INFORMS</u>
	Group Leader
	SCHOOL PHONE: 01625 572021
	POST CODE: SK105UB

<u>SAVE</u>	
ADMINISTER FIRST AID WHERE POSSIBLE	
ESTABLISH A CONTACT POINT WITH THE EMERGENCY SERVICES	
TRAVEL WITH CASUALTIES TO HOSPITAL	
COMPLETE ACCIDENT FORMS	
	ADULT 2 - SAVES
	Nominated adult to be shown on risk assessment
	SCHOOL PHONE: 01625 572021
	POST CODE: SK105UB

<p><u>CARE</u></p> <p>CALL OTHER ASSISTANCE AS NECESSARY</p> <p>KEEP A RECORD OF WITNESSES</p> <p>KEEP OTHERS INFORMED OF SITUATION</p> <p>CONSIDER ABANDONMENT OF ACTIVITY</p> <p>ARRANGE FOR NON CASUALTIES TO RETURN TO SCHOOL</p> <p>REMAIN AVAILABLE TO EMERGENCY SERVICES AND SUPERVISING COLLEAGUES</p>	<p>ADULT 3 - CARES</p> <p>Nominated adult to be shown on risk assessment</p> <p>SCHOOL PHONE: 01625 572021</p> <p>POST CODE: SK105UB</p>
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ACTION CARDS 3

GUIDANCE FOR SENIOR STAFF ON HEARING OF A MAJOR INCIDENT AFFECTING AN OUT-OF-SCHOOL ACTIVITY

ALLOCATE KEY RESPONSIBILITIES – as outlined by the emergency action cards

<p>INFORM</p> <p>OBTAIN FACTS AND INFORMATION</p> <p>ENSURE EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE HAS BEEN CALLED</p> <p>CONFIRM WHO IS IN CHARGE</p> <p>CONTACT HEADTEACHER/SENIOR STAFF</p> <p>CONTACT LA CRITICAL INCIDENTS MANAGEMENT TEAM</p> <p>CONTACT CHAIR OF GOVERNORS</p> <p>CONTACT OTHER STAFF</p> <p>PREPARE TO DEAL WITH THE MEDIA</p>	<p>ADULT 1 - INFORMS</p> <p>Office/nominated person</p> <p>SCHOOL PHONE: 01625 572021</p> <p>POST CODE: SK105UB</p>
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<p>CARE</p> <p>DECIDE WHO AND HOW TO TELL PARENT OF CHILDREN ON THE VISIT</p> <p>ESTABLISH INCIDENT ROOM</p> <p>ESTABLISH ROOM FOR RELATIVES</p> <p>REMAIN AVAILABLE TO SUPERVISING COLLEAGUES</p>	<p>ADULT 2 - CARES</p> <p>First call is Headteacher, then other designated staff</p> <p>SCHOOL PHONE: 01625 572021</p> <p>POST CODE: SK105UB</p>
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CONCLUSION

The prime objective, shared between the school and LA, is to serve the best interests of pupils and staff in coping with an incident, collectively and individually. Schools which have made contingency plans for responding to a critical incident are likely to cope better and recover more fully.

This policy has been compiled to provide guidance, in the hope that it will never be necessary to refer to it in the context in which it has been written. It is impossible to plan for every eventuality and by their nature, critical incidents will disorientate and overwhelm those involved. A format for a whole school response to such an incident will provide focus for those with whom the responsibility will rest.