

# King Offa Primary Academy -



## **Crisis Management and Critical Incident Policy**

**September 2023**

### **Preparation and Planning**

**A critical incident is any incident or sequence of events, which overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of the school.**

Listed are some of the types of incidents that may occur

- Death of a pupil or teacher,
- Violence or assault in school,
- Destruction or vandalism of part of the school,
- Pupils or teacher being taken hostage,
- Air, sea or traffic accident involving pupils,
- Natural disaster in the community,
- Death or injury on a school journey or activity,
- Civil disturbance and terrorism.

The key to managing a critical incident is planning. Research shows that schools, which have developed a **Critical Incident Management Plan (CIMP)**, are able to cope more effectively in the aftermath of an incident. Having a plan enables staff to react quickly and effectively to maintain a sense of control. It may also ensure that normality returns as soon as possible and that the effects on children and staff are limited.

**King Offa Primary Academy** has identified a Critical Incident Management Team involving the following:

- Executive Head Teacher
- Head of School
- Media Contact (CEO of the Trust)
- Identified Staff Contact - DHT
- Identified Children's Contact – SENCO
- Identified Parent Contact – School Secretary
- Identified Community Agency Contact - HoS
- Premises Manager

Some of these roles will overlap but there should be only one point of contact with the media, which will be the CEO of the Trust or someone explicitly authorised by the CEO to take that role.

**King Offa Primary Academy** will endeavour to keep up to date lists of parent and staff contacts and these will be easily available should they be required in an emergency. A copy of the layout of the school building will be displayed in key places and exits highlighted.

A small number of key documents will be available to the CIMT in an emergency pack that is readily available in the event of an emergency e.g emergency contact lists; checklist for the first 24 hours; layout of the school buildings; contact details for all staff.

### **Administration in the event if an incident**

- Ensure that the Nursery Manager and any other groups or classes that are not in the main school building are aware of the incident.
  - Identify a dedicated telephone line, which will be kept free for important outgoing and incoming calls.
  - Identify rooms which may be used for various purposes – individual and group support sessions; meeting parents; a quiet room; a waiting room etc. The ‘Meeting Room’ and ‘Training Room’ will always be made available during an incident.
  - Designate a point where a log of events and telephone calls made and received will be kept.
- SCHOOL OFFICE**
- All offers of help should be logged – the name of the agency, what they are offering, a contact name and number. These agencies may be contacted later if appropriate.
  - Agree arrangements for dealing with normal school business.

Any crisis or critical incident will go through stages. This policy will give general guidelines to cover three stages. It is not possible to predict the type of crisis or the length of time each stage will take or the overlap between stages.

## **STAGE ONE - Immediate reaction and response**

It is important to act calmly, positively and professionally at all times, both as individuals and collectively. The Headteacher or Head of School (or Deputy Headteacher in the Headteacher’s absence) remains responsible for the school’s response throughout any crisis. The Trust, Local Academy Board (LAB) and other agencies are there to support the Headteacher or Head of School who retains responsibility for the day-to-day management of the school.

The Headteacher or Head of School will have identified those personnel to be involved as part of CIMT in advance as part of this policy.

This first stage has three immediate challenges:

**1) The health and safety of people directly involved**

Nothing must get in the way of providing the most appropriate medical, police or fire brigade assistance to the victims.

**2) To inform the appropriate people**

The following people will be informed as soon as it is safe to do so:

- Parents/next of kin of victims,
- The CEO of Aurora Academies Trust,
- The Chair of the Local Academy Board.

At an appropriate point, as soon as is sensible and practical, it will be necessary to inform:

- All staff,
- Parents whose children are not directly affected,
- Local Academy Board members
- Support agencies who may be able to help i.e. social services, psychologists, grief counsellors, etc.,
- Media contact should only be through the CEO of the Trust.

Information should be the least amount that will give instructions and/or the information that people need and that provides the necessary reassurance. Regular updates may be necessary and people often find it helpful to know when they will receive the next update.

**3) To obtain factual information**

It is vital that the information obtained is factual to ensure that the best and most appropriate action is taken, both immediately and in the future. Information gathered early is likely to be more accurate and less contaminated by hearsay, conjecture and supposition. Information gathered needs to be recorded (written or recorded) at the time or as soon afterwards as is possible.

**Responsibility of staff**

It is the responsibility of the Headteacher or Head of School to organise the response but they will need to delegate tasks to other staff for example:

- Up to two people to answer the telephone with an agreed response,
- To deal with the emergency service(s) on the scene,
- Draw up a list of people involved with basic data,
- Operate the school gates.

It is vitally important that any role given is carried out thoroughly and without distraction. Failure to carry out a job properly at this stage could have serious repercussions.

## **Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)**

Once the needs of the victim/s have been dealt with and the appropriate people informed, a meeting needs to take place for the people who will be responsible for managing the crisis. This meeting might cover:

- All the information known to date,
- Actions taken, instigated and proposed,
- Who is to be told what, when and by whom e.g. staff, pupils, parents, media,
- Designate roles and define scope.

This meeting may only be short but must be thorough and will also need to cover 'housekeeping' issues such as: who is to meet incoming personnel, where they are to be taken and how they are to be briefed. Staff rotas, rest periods and refreshments may need early consideration. A decision needs to be taken as to whether the school will close.

## **Staff reactions**

Staff may be shocked and confused and people's ability to cope needs to be assessed quickly when assigning tasks, etc. People need to be told clearly and precisely what is expected of them.

## **STAGE TWO - The next few days**

A number of issues will need to be considered by the school and will be the focus of the crisis management team, which will initially meet at least daily.

## **Communication**

### **1. Informing pupils**

Who, when and how they are to be informed. In most cases, it is best done in class (or possibly team) groups by the teacher so that an adult the children feel comfortable talking to can do it in an informal and intimate atmosphere. This also means that the information can be shared at the right level and take account of particular circumstance.

### **2. Informing all parents**

This should be done by letter and quickly (preferably on the first day) they also need regular written updates. This reduces gossip and demonstrates the school's sensitivity, responsibility and control.

### **3. Informing staff**

This needs to be done regularly and it will be important for staff to be available for brief meetings before school, at lunchtime and after school. Briefing meetings will have a high priority, should start on time and have 100% attendance from the start.

#### **4. Informing media**

The media may need to be informed and updated but **only the designated press officer, who will normally either be the CEO of AAT, must do this**. Staff /Governors must not talk to the media without express permission. Advice and support must be obtained from the Trust Legal Dept.

#### **Identifying staff and pupils most at risk**

People react differently to a crisis and each person can have different reactions according to the particular situation. Early on it is important for staff to identify those people most vulnerable and who are likely to need monitoring and support. Any list drawn up should be shared appropriately.

Monitoring staff reaction is the responsibility of the Headteacher / Head of School, Deputy Headteacher, Business Manager and Phase Leaders but all staff must be able to report concerns to them. This is purely a support function and people's reactions should be noted and supported and not judged.

The monitoring of pupils' reactions is the responsibility of everyone but primarily of the class teacher, who needs to watch children closely and then report and support as appropriate. Information and changes should be updated and monitored regularly. A written record must be kept of pupils identified as at risk.

#### **Outside agencies**

In serious or tragic cases other agencies will be involved to help support victims, parents, staff and pupils. These agencies are likely to include:

- Educational Psychologists
- Children's Social Care
- Schools Medical Services
- Local Clergy
- Grief counsellors (Samaritans, Cruise, etc.)
- GP's.

Outside personnel need to be briefed and their role must be agreed on. Outside agencies will work under the direction of the school.

Counsellors will need to feed back general and specific information on findings to help school staff provide appropriate support and so confidentiality should not be guaranteed. Any information will be given on a need to know basis only.

#### **Opening the school**

The school should be kept open if at all possible as it enables the situation to be better assessed and monitored. Communication is also easier when the school is open. The school has a statutory duty to be open during term time if at all possible.

## **Staff reaction to questions**

Inevitably staff will be asked all sorts of questions and put under varying degrees of pressure to give a version of events. Staff who live in the catchment area are especially vulnerable. At the briefing meetings staff will be advised how to react but as a general rule staff should only talk about information that is publicly available and their own feelings (e.g. shock, upset, etc.). It is best to say as little as possible for several reasons:

- your information may not be up to date or accurate,
- you are at risk of being misquoted or having comments taken out of context,
- in the management of a crisis, control of information is important,
- there may be legal implications as a consequence of what you say.

The school will make relevant information freely available when appropriate. It is in everyone's interest that staff are cautious about what is said and to whom as any information from a member of staff will be deemed as authoritative.

## **The curriculum**

After the crisis, check what is being taught to see if it could be a cause of distress, for example a project on flight may need to be dropped after a tragedy involving an aircraft. This is an obvious example but more subtle ones are likely to be missed.

## **STAGE THREE - Medium and long term impact**

There is less need for detailed planning in advance of this stage because there should be time to give it appropriate consideration, in the light of the specific demands of the emergency. However, the management team may need to give consideration to some or all of the following:

1. How parents, staff, children, governors, the Trust, outside agencies and the media are to be kept informed of the situation over the next weeks, months and year.
2. How the impact and effect of the emergency on staff and pupils is to be monitored.
3. Attendance and other issues associated with funerals and memorial services.
4. The possible need to have a memorial service or to establish a long-term memorial.
5. The changes needed in the curriculum to ensure appropriate consideration to possibly sensitive work.
6. Impact on the PSHE curriculum.
7. How to maintain the links with outside agencies and to ensure support is maintained for victims.
8. What happens at the first anniversary and beyond?
9. What action can be taken to reduce the likelihood of a similar event reoccurring.
10. Modifying this document in the light of experience gained.

### **Victim support and monitoring**

Children and adults all react differently to situations and their needs and reactions change as time goes on. The teacher who coped magnificently at the time may suffer badly (and gradually) many weeks or even months later. A child who says nothing at the time might need to talk endlessly in a week or even year's time.

It is worth repeating in this section that people's reactions need to be responded to appropriately and not judged. The more judgmental people's reactions are the more inhibited that person becomes and the more difficult it is to help and support them appropriately.

Written monitoring of those deemed vulnerable is important.

### **Monitoring of children**

The class teacher needs to monitor the child and note situations and changes. They should also note down accounts and observations of other staff, who must be encouraged to pass information onto the class teacher. Children at risk must be regularly and formally reviewed, probably at team meetings and issues of concern passed to an appropriate person.

### **Monitoring of staff**

Everyone needs to look out for each other, again in a non-judgmental context. Staff should have access to confidential counselling.

## **SUMMARY**

Our reaction and support needs to be prompt, appropriate, consistent and last long enough. Whatever the cause, the support of all involved is of prime importance.

Accountability (if appropriate) for the emergency will be judged with the help of others outside the school and is entirely separate from the scope of this document, although its process and outcome may affect individuals and therefore the support that they need from us.

Although it is not true in many cases, there are certain incidents that can be avoided by a level of professionalism, attention to routine and detail and an open-minded on going review of our work and procedures. This document deals with our reaction to a situation and it does not reduce the value of proactive preventative work.

## Appendix A

### Emergency Contact Numbers for ESCC and Other Agencies

During office hours staff should contact the Personal Assistant to the Director of Children's Services on **01273 481316**.

**Out of hours, contact the Out of Hours Service: 01273 819179.**

These numbers should only be used in the event of a major emergency. Examples could include a serious accident or incident on school premises, or during an off-site activity, or major damage to a school building.

In the case of minor incidents affecting buildings (eg a burst pipe that has flooded a room) the first contact should normally be with the appropriate contractor, for schools that have opted into the term contracts established by CRD Property. In case of doubt, contact the Corporate Resources Department Property Help Desk on **01273 482000**.

An alternative out of hours contact, which should only be used if it is not possible to make contact with the above mentioned numbers, is the **Emergency Planning Duty Officer on 01323 644422**.

<i>Organisation</i>	<i>Phone Number</i>
ESCC Children's Services Department	<b>01273 481316</b>  Out of Hours  <b>01273 819179 01273 481316</b>
ESCC Business Services Department <b>Property Help Desk</b>	<b>01273 482000</b>
ESCC Emergency Planning Team	<b>01323 747090</b> 01323 747090  01323 747089
Emergency out of hours contact	<b>01323-644422</b>
ESCC Health and Safety Team	<b>01273 481143</b>
South East Coast Ambulance, General Enquiries	<b>0300 1230 999</b>
East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service, Enquiries	<b>0303 999 1000</b>



EDF Power Care	<b>0800 783 8866</b>	0800 78 38 866
Transco	<b>0800 111 999</b>	
Southern Water – Tech Dept (Emergency response)	<b>0845 278 0845</b>	0845 278 0845
Environment Agency Floodline	<b>0845 988 1188</b>	0845 988 1188