

Critical Incident Policy and Procedures

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<i>Policy Agreed</i>	November 2020
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<i>Owner</i>	RUTH SHIELDS
<i>Signed</i>	
<i>Designation</i>	OPERATIONS MANAGER

What is a Critical Incident?

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 of critical incidents that may affect New Park Academy and settings include (but are not limited to):

- Sudden death of pupil or member of staff
- Disappearance of a pupil or member of staff
- Death or injury of a pupil or staff member on a school outing
- Severe injury to pupil or staff member as a result of road traffic accident
- Serious assault on pupil or staff member in school
- Violent/disturbed intruder on school premises during school day
- Serious damage to school building or property through fire, flood or vandalism
- An incident which affects access/egress for the school
- Civil disturbance or terrorism in local community
- A more widespread emergency in the community for example, the release of hazardous substances, severe weather etc.
- Pupil or member of staff with contagious illness
- Immediate evacuation of the school with no likelihood of return for a number of hours
- Death or serious injury of someone within close proximity of the school

Implementing the Critical Incident Management Plan

No incidents are alike. As soon as the school becomes aware of any incident that might have an impact on it, the Head Teacher or Critical Incident Team Leader will find out the facts and assess its significance for the school.

The Head Teacher or member of Critical Incident Management Team decision will determine the response. The position can be reviewed as new information emerges.

When a critical incident occurs the school will inform key contacts and keep them updated. These may include the emergency services, the Advisory Board, Salford City Council and other relevant agencies which may have a role in providing support.

The key tasks will include:

- responding to any inevitable risk or threat eg evacuation or first aid
- notifying the emergency services/other relevant authorities and agreed parties
- mobilising the Critical Incident Management Team
- agreeing the school routine for that day
- informing staff
- establishing a dedicated, telephone line
- setting-up recovery/designated room
- informing pupils and parents/carers
- preparing/adapting a media statement
- assessing initial impact of the critical incident on staff and pupils

Normal school routine

New Park Academy will aim to restore normal school routine as soon as practicable. It may be useful to continue certain curriculum activities at intervals during the days following the critical incident. Sustaining the normal routine, with timetable flexibility to allow pupils and staff to access support, will maintain a sense of continuity and stability for the whole school community.

Briefing sessions for staff

It is essential that staff receive factual information on what has occurred, how the incident will be handled and how they can contribute to the school's response. A formal staff briefing will take place as soon as possible after the circumstances of the incident are known with a time set for formal debriefing at the end of the school day(s). Absent teachers will also be briefed on the situation.

The initial briefing will:

- give a brief statement of factual information
- outline the school's response and proposed plan of action
- allow staff to ask questions and to get a response
- outline staff responsibility for monitoring pupil and staff welfare
- identify vulnerable staff and pupils who may be at risk
- clarify specific responsibilities for staff
- advise staff on procedure for dealing with media enquiries
- advise staff on agreed procedure for informing pupils and parents/carers
- inform staff of the support services that are available
- reassure staff and pupils that they will be supported
- advise staff of time/place of next briefing and debriefing session

Breaking the news to pupils

It's important to inform pupils of a critical incident as soon as possible. Delaying a formal announcement may make the situation worse, as rumour can add another aspect to handling the critical incident and pupils may feel that a delay shows a lack of concern or sensitivity by the school staff and could undermine the credibility of information given later.

With social media, it is possible that those outside the school may be aware of the incident before you contact them, and names of those affected may be circulating. This will be taken into consideration when informing pupils of an incident.

Consideration will be given to the range of different groups among the pupils and how they are to be informed.

Very young children and those with special educational needs must be informed in a way which is appropriate, using language and methods of communication already familiar to them.

In some cases, where emotions may be running high, the school will consider informing pupils in small groups, for example, siblings, close friends, class group, and year group preferably in their regular classroom setting.

Many pupils will likely be in shock so a small group setting will also act as a 'safe space'. The best person to communicate this difficult news will normally be the class/form teacher or another member of staff known to the pupils. Staff will be able to decline this task if they feel unable to do it.

Before making the announcement at a critical incident, attention needs to be given to what the pupils are to be told as well as how they are to be told.

Teachers will be given a carefully worded announcement to read aloud in classrooms.

Where there has been a death it is important that the bereaved family's right to privacy is respected. In this instance the announcement made to pupils will usually include a statement of condolence and this will be sensitive to the different religions and cultures present in the school community. The announcement will also advise pupils of the support arrangements to be put in place and how these can be accessed.

Staff will be aware that young people's understanding of death will depend on their cognitive and developmental stage.

In the case of a suspected suicide there are a number of issues that need to be considered.

- Making the announcement to pupils
 - Staff will make the announcement simultaneously, where possible, to ensure that pupils attending school hear about it at the same time.
 - Before making any announcement, staff will be mindful of vulnerable pupils in the group including those recently bereaved, those with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language. When making the agreed announcement staff will pass on the facts that are known, never speculate on the cause or causes of the incident and be truthful when questions cannot be answered.
 - After the announcement, staff will always allow sufficient time for pupils to begin to discuss their feelings.
 - Staff have a listening, supportive and containing role and will be encouraged to remain calm and to listen to the pupils.

- Supporting pupils
 - After making the announcement staff will allow time for discussion, allowing pupils to share experiences helps with recovery.
 - There is also a need for on-going monitoring of pupils while in class, corridors and school grounds to ensure they are supported.
 - The school will always provide a designated area/areas for pupils will they wish to come out of class. There, they will be allowed to talk about their feelings to someone, for example, the school counsellor.
 - It is best that pupils have the opportunity to discuss their feelings with someone they know, but, if appropriate, the school can also be supported by the Educational Psychology Team.
 - Although most pupils would benefit from remaining in school with their friends, consideration may need to be given for these pupils to go home. Arrangements will be made directly with parents/carers to ensure that the pupils are supported at home.

Support from Salford Educational Psychology Service

On receiving a request for support from the Head Teacher, the team will respond promptly with a level of support which is judged to be appropriate to the nature, size and severity of the event.

It is possible that a critical incident may not fit the criteria for one particular level. In this case professional judgement will be used to respond appropriately.

Level 1 – *Bereavement and Loss*

- Accident, illness, death of a pupil/member of staff/parents/carers, out of school
- Event is not sudden and/or traumatic
- School has support strategies in place
- Low impact/awareness for majority of pupils/staff

- Advice needed for staff – coping with bereavement and loss, normal grieving process

Level 2 – *Critical Incident*

- Accident, illness, death of a pupil/member of staff/parents/carers at or near school, or on a school trip
- Event is sudden and traumatic
- High media interest
- The school feels unable to cope; significant numbers of distressed pupils and staff
- School requests support from Educational Psychology for support and advice to manage the critical incident

Level 3 – *Major Incident/Emergency*

- Large scale incident affecting the school and/or the local community

The response by the Educational Psychology Team will be evaluated on a case by case basis, and the appropriate response deployed to the school concerned.

Pupils absent from school

Pupils who are absent from school due to illness, work experience, educational trips or fixed period exclusion will also be informed. This is of particular importance if a pupil has died and the absent pupil is in the same class or is a known friend. In such a case, early contact will be made with the pupil's parents/carers by the class or form teacher. A pupil's return to school in any of these circumstances requires sensitive management.

Vulnerable pupils

New Park Academy acknowledges that the critical incident may act as a trigger for an extreme response by some pupils who are vulnerable even though they are not directly involved.

Vulnerable pupils include:

- close friends and relatives of those affected
- pupils with a history of self-harm or suicidal thoughts
- pupils who have experienced recent bereavement, separation or other significant loss
- pupils with mental health difficulties
- pupils with a history of substance abuse
- pupils with child protection needs
- pupils with learning, communication or sensory difficulties
- non-communicative pupils who have difficulty talking about their feelings
- pupils experiencing serious family difficulties including mental/physical illness

Pupils with special educational needs, including pupils with learning and communication difficulties, will require special consideration from staff. They may be at a different developmental level to their peers, which may affect their understanding of trauma and death. These pupils will be told the news separately if possible by using short simple sentences in language appropriate to their level of understanding. They may ask the same questions repeatedly and need extra patience and support.

Informing parents/carers

When a critical incident occurs, parents/carers must be informed. The type of critical incident will determine the nature of contact with parents/carers, who is best placed to inform parents/carers and the urgency with which this is done.

Parents/carers of pupils directly involved will be telephoned or visited. If the death of a pupil has occurred, the school will be mindful of the bereaved parents/carers' needs. It is important

for the Head Teacher or another school representative to make contact with the parents/carers as soon as possible to express sympathy, liaise over messages of condolence from staff/pupils and to ask about funeral arrangements. The school will always take into account the wishes of the family before sending school representatives including pupils to a funeral and be sensitive to different religious practices and cultures.

Other parents/carers also need to be informed; this is likely to be done most effectively by text message.

When making contact with parents/carers it is important that any correspondence issued will give the facts of the critical incident and ensure that only accurate information is shared.

New Park Academy has a contingency plan where the critical incident requires all parents/carers to be contacted as a matter of urgency. It may be useful to provide those making the calls with a 'script', so that all parents/carers receive the same message and avoid any confusion.

Media management

While the school is under no obligation to speak to the media, co-operation with the media can make the difference between accurate and inaccurate reporting. Agreed necessary procedures must be in place to deal with the media before a critical incident occurs. It is important that a structured approach to media management is developed to ensure a positive and supportive response from the media.

Before making a statement:

- A check is carried out with the police, ambulance, and fire and rescue service
- The relevant Sovereign Trust communications officer for New Park Academy is contacted for advice on the statement for the media or an interview for radio or TV.
- Salford LA will be consulted parallel as local communities might be affected
- a decision is taken on whether all media enquiries and follow up enquiries are handled by the Head Teacher or another designated member of the Critical Incident Management Team
- An accurate, factual report is prepared as background to any questions
- No other staff will make comment or provide comment on the incident
- Pupils will also be advised about dealing with contact from or with the media
- Pupils will also be encouraged to use discretion when commenting about the incident on social networking sites

Support for staff

The impact of a critical incident on staff may be distressing and some may have difficulty coping. The extent of this impact will depend on staff involvement in the incident and the particular circumstances surrounding it.

The impact will also vary according to staff experience and training, coping skills, past trauma history and current stresses.

Sources of help and support need to be in place as an integral part of the Critical Incident Management Plan and not hastily arranged at times of tragedy. The school has an ethos that promotes a caring, supportive community; an important pre-requisite for helping all staff to feel valued and to cope at times of great stress. In addition to support arrangements for all staff from within the school, external sources of help will be identified and made known to all. Any practical and emotional support, and potential longer term counselling, will be considered within the framework of a whole school approach to managing a critical incident.

The needs of the Head Teacher and other senior members of staff, who are expected to exercise sensitive and strong leadership during the incident, are also provided for in the plan. While this group of staff may be well supported from within the school, it is likely that support will also come from outside the school. Sources of help may include accessing the Educational Psychology Team, the Chair of Advisory Board and relevant clergy/faith workers.

Support within school

Informal support in school is available through staff, colleagues and friends who can help each other and, if appropriate, someone in the Senior Management Team, if not already involved. More formal support may include, for example, providing cover arrangements for staff that are temporarily unable to carry out their normal duties, arranging for staff to have time out if necessary and advising staff of external support that may be available to them.

Assisting statutory investigations

The school is aware that a critical incident such as the sudden death of a pupil can trigger an investigation that may involve a number of statutory agencies.

The sudden death of a pupil is an extremely difficult and emotionally charged time for all concerned. The school is aware that, alongside a coroner's inquest, there may be other officially established reviews, such as serious case reviews (SCRs) or inquiries into the pupil's death and the circumstances surrounding it.

The school will be prepared to contribute information about the pupil to any such review or inquiry and ensure that all relevant records relating to the pupil are secured. It is important to stress that the purpose of such reviews is not to inquire into how a child died or who is culpable. It is to learn from the experience on how best to protect children in the future and if there are ways of improving the practice of all professionals working with children particularly in relation to multi- disciplinary and inter-agency working.

Important Contacts

BASED:	NAMES:	TEL NUMBERS:
SCHOOL:		
Head Teacher	Almut Bever-Warren	07906 610 782
Deputy Head Teachers	Laura Clegg Philippa Peploe	07955 193 407 07955 193 396
Assistant Head Teachers	Claire Brennan Nicola Webster (Primary)	0161 532 3254 07517 871857
Operations Manager	Ruth Shields	07563815987
ADVISORY BOARD:		
CEO	Paul Eckley	07951669180
Head of Risk, Health & Safety	Nick Gill	07710091569
ADMINISTRATION:		
Site Manager/Caretaker	Stewart Morris	07979 240 785
OTHER CONTACTS:		
Assistant Director Salford	Cathy Starbuck	07793 036 147

Critical Incident Management Team

LEAD ROLE	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	MOBILE NUMBER
Establish central information point- Head Teacher	Almut Bever-Warren	07906610782
Deputy Head Teacher	Laura Clegg	07545444083
Deputy Head Teacher	Phillipa Peploe	07815895419
Set up dedicated phone line	Ruth Shields	07563815987
Arrange staff briefing and debriefing (set regular times)	Almut Bever-Warren <i>(will delegate as appropriate)</i>	07906610782 07752664094
Inform pupils	As above	
Inform parents	As above	
Manage Media <i>(The Trust/Salford LA will be consulted parallel as local communities might be affected. Prepared statement)</i>	As above	
Arrange staff support	As above	
Set up recovery room	As above	

Day 1

Task	Completed
1. Establish a central information point	
2. Set up dedicated phone line	
3. Inform key people and seek support as appropriate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency Services- Police, Fire Brigade, Hospital • LA Communications Officer • Educational Psychologist • Educational Welfare Officer • Counselling Services • Chair of Advisory Board 	
4. Brief all staff. Remember: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear factual information • Advice on how to inform & support pupils • Team working and practical arrangements (eg cover, Flexible timetable, recovery room) • Support for staff • Identify vulnerable staff • Inform absent staff • Set time for debrief session 	
5. Inform all pupils. Remember: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear language (no euphemisms) • Dispel rumour • Offer support • Age-appropriate factual information • Assurances regarding updated information • Identify vulnerable pupils • Inform absent pupils 	
6. Inform all parents	
7. Contact with Media (if appropriate). Remember: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consult with Communications Officer • Return media calls • Use prepared statement • Use measured tone • Emphasise school pastoral care support as appropriate 	
8. Debrief staff (End of day session). Remember: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thank staff • Advise about self-care • Information about next day • Time to chat/reflect, tea and buns • Next day arrangements 	
9. Meeting of Critical Incident Management Team (End of day session). Remember: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support and debrief team • Plan Day 2 – morning briefing for staff • Arrange next meeting of Team 	

Day 2

Task	Completed
1. Record any further information/details since previous day	
2. Maintain central information point	
3. Maintain dedicated phone line	
4. Deal with staff cover/flexible timetable/allocate appropriate rooms	
5. Briefing staff-Morning session. Think: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practical arrangements • Support for pupils • Self-care • Time of debriefing session 	
6. Pupils <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing further information (as appropriate) • Showing care and support • Providing comforting routine and predictability • Allowing pupils some involvement/outlet eg cards/drawings/poems/ceremonies • Recovery room • Refer vulnerable pupils for further action <p>Details of action taken, or any follow up action required should be recorded separately.</p>	
7. Parents- Provide further information (as appropriate). Record list of actions taken	
8. Considerations of memorial services Remember: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Times/dates • Staff involved • Information to parents 	
9. Debriefing staff- end of Day 2 session. Remember: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing practical arrangements • Longer term monitoring of pupils who may be at risk more • Detailed self-care advice • Time to reflect, chat, tea and buns 	
10. Meeting of Critical Incident Management Team- end of Day 2 Remember: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan Day 3 • Discuss need for longer term actions these will include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Memorials, services and ceremonies (eg memory books, art work, school event, planting tree) ➤ Re-establishment of feelings of safety and predictability among school community ➤ Ongoing support of pupils' emotional coping (eg circle time, Personal Development and Mutual Understanding) ➤ School support for contact with families affected by the incident ➤ Ongoing monitoring of children who may be having difficulties- providing support and referring on as necessary ➤ Ongoing support for staff directly involved and those most affected 	

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S UNDERSTANDING OF DEATH

INFORMATION FOR STAFF

Children and young people's understanding of death will depend on their cognitive and developmental stage. They will revisit the loss as they mature, reach significant milestones and become more able to talk about their experiences and questions in relation to death. Children and young people with learning difficulties will progress through the developmental stages at a slower pace or indeed may remain at an early stage in their understanding of death.

Children and young people do experience similar feelings to adults following a death but often express their feelings differently depending on their development age.

AGE	CONCEPT OF DEATH	POSSIBLE REACTION
2 to 5 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Death seen as reversible • May feel they have caused the death • Magical thinking - make up • Fantasies to fill gaps in knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fears abandonment and separation • Loud protest • Despair • Indignant at changes in patterns or routine • Sleep problems • May revert to "baby"
5 to 11 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More exposure to death and understanding of death as permanent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Withdrawal, sadness, loneliness, depression • Anger, guilt, temper tantrums, nightmares • Behaviour, learning or school problems • Perfect child, brave and in control • May become preoccupied with death
Over 11 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Death permanent • Denial - it can't happen 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Withdrawal, sadness, depression, loneliness • Anger, rejection, guilt • Joking, sarcasm • Dependence or regressing to younger age • Insecurity, low self-esteem