



Thackley Primary School

Critical Incident Plan

1. BACKGROUND

“A critical incident may be defined as any sudden and unexpected incident or sequences of events which causes trauma within a school community and which overwhelms the normal coping capacity of that school.”

Such incidents will usually require the assistance of the emergency services and/or Bradford Local Authority and others. The incident or event may be unanticipated, imminent or in progress. It may occur on school property, in the local community or out of school.

A Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) will be convened consisting of the following key personnel:

Head Teacher – Annette Patterson

Deputy Head – Philippa Miller

Chair of Governors – Annmarie Malcolm

School Business Manager – Jayne Preston

School Bursar – Tina Denham

2. TYPES OF EMERGENCY

The word ‘emergency’ may often be used interchangeably with that of “incident” or “disaster”. It is important to consider the type of emergencies or incidents that may arise. Examples include:

A major incident may be defined as:

- Severe injury or death of a member of school community or within school vicinity
- 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
- A situation in which the national press or media might be involved

As such, major incidents include:

- The death of a student or member of staff through natural causes or accidents
- A transport-related accident involving students and/or members of staff
- A more widespread emergency in the community, for example, the release of hazardous substances, severe weather, etc.
- Death or serious injuries on school trips or excursions
- Fire or explosion
- Serious flood
- Serious vandalism
- Students or teachers being taken hostage
- Intruder on school premises with intent to harm
- Bomb threat or other threat to life
- Public health threats
- Civil disturbances and terrorism
- A local or national emergency whereby school has to be used as a designated place of refuge
- Cyber attack on school systems

This list is not exhaustive.

3. 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 emergencies (as detailed in this Policy).
- all staff and pupils should be familiar with the school’s security procedures, in particular that all visitors not

wearing a visitor's badge or wearing a red lanyard visitor badge and being unsupervised, should be questioned and escorted to reception.

- all staff organising school trips and visits follow the guidelines and write a risk assessment to be signed off by the Head Teacher.
- all staff organising residential trips or high risk trips should submit a risk assessment to Evolve three weeks before the event to be authorised by the Local Authority
- all staff are aware of pupils with medical needs or health problems including allergies.
- all staff are aware that they should assess associated risks to children before carrying out a curriculum or other activity.
- all staff are aware that they are responsible for assessing risks to themselves before undertaking an activity.

4. RESPONDING TO A CRITICAL INCIDENT

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

- i. Immediate action
- ii. Communication
- iii. After the close of the incident
- iv. Medium term action
- iiv. Longer term action

Immediate Action

This occurs within hours of the incident occurring:

- Open and continue to maintain a log of all factual information received, actions taken and the time of events.
- Make every attempt to clarify exactly what has happened
- Gather and brief the CIMT (Critical Incident Management Team) – brief the team, allocate roles and responsibilities;
- Contact Local Authority (LA) and agree whether the incident requires the involvement of the Local Authority Critical Incident Team.
- Inform the Chair of Governors about the situation/incident and the level of involvement from the LA (if appropriate).
- Delay any media comment until after the LA Press Office Team have been consulted.
- It is especially important that the names of those involved in any incident are not released or confirmed before the identities are formally agreed and parents/next of kin are informed.

If the incident is during term time

- Unless there is overwhelming pressure, avoid closing school and try to maintain normal routines. If school remains open a number of different facilities may need to be set up/accommodated e.g. a control point, a parents' meeting point, a media briefing point and staff/pupil welfare facilities.
- Set up arrangements to manage visitors and maintain the security of the school site. Record all names of visitors.

If the incident is outside of term time or school hours

- The Headteacher may arrange for parts of school to be opened as appropriate and the CIMT assemble there if required.

Communication

- 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. Give staff answering the phone calls a prepared statement and update regularly. Make staff aware that some of these calls may be bogus. Staff must maintain a record of all calls received.
- Divert media calls to the LA's Press Officer.
- Arrange for staff to be called in and briefed at an early stage with the agreed information. Some information may need to be kept confidential at this point – staff need to be cautioned about talking to the media or responding to questions from reporters. Update staff regularly. It is vital that all staff in contact with pupils are kept well informed and feel secure in handling comments or questions from pupils.
- Contact families affected – this must be done quickly and with sensitivity. Remember if it is a major incident then parents may already have heard on the media or from other parents. Consistency of information is vital. It

may be appropriate for families to come to school and immediate emotional support could be a possibility;

- Make arrangements to inform other parents – may need to take advice from LA, especially if there is the possibility of legal liability.
- Arrange for pupils to be told. The CIMT to coordinate what information is shared. Consideration given to age of children, which adults are best placed to communicate the information, and whether to speak to children individually or in groups. 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.
- Encourage people involved to talk – the incident may need to be discussed before children go home for the day, for both pupils and adults.
- Deal with the media – most important to seek advice from LA before agreeing to speak to or be interviewed by the media. If this is not an option then an agreed text for release should be prepared by the CIMT and a designated spokesperson briefed and prepared to respond on the school's behalf.
- Devise a plan for handling the reactions and feelings of people affected. The CIMT may need to consider outside professionals to support and debrief staff and pupils affected by the incident. Those providing support may also need support.
- 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 may need to visit the scene of the incident to understand how they deal with repercussions in terms of children's fears etc.

After the close of the incident

- 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, even members of the CIMT. If a crisis persists over many hours staff become tired, weary and upset and this affects their powers to make sensible decisions.
- 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 i.e. training in bereavement counselling for staff, provision of a range of books, PSHE discussions etc.
- 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, may lead this meeting.
- 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.
- 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

- Return to school for staff or pupils after 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.
- 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.
- Keeping parents informed – it may be appropriate to produce information for parents giving guidance on the possible delayed reactions of pupils to an incident and making suggestions to help them deal with these.
- Support for staff – ongoing monitoring and support for staff is a major consideration, including support for the CIMT.

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.
- Clarify procedures for pupils or staff who need individual further help and support.
- Marking anniversaries – these difficult times need to be treated with sensitivity.
- Legal processes – the length of time taken over some legal processes can prolong the recovery process following a critical incident. The 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.

5. SCHOOL CLOSURE AT SHORT NOTICE

In the event that the school has to close at short notice or as a result of unforeseen circumstances the following procedures will take place. The CIMT team will ensure they have online access to Arbor containing contact details of all staff and children.

The events covered by this policy:

Storms

Winds forecast in excess of 70mph or storm force 8 could represent a potential danger to some buildings, trees, other structures and people.

- The Meteorological Office provides a regional weather forecast
- Email: www.metoffice.gov.uk Phone No: 0845 300 0300

Safety Issues

- Safety of pupils, staff and visitors take priority. Lessons may need to be disrupted and school movement kept to a minimum
- Consideration needs to be given to movement outside of school buildings due to the risk of falling tiles, masonry, fencing, fallen branches and trees
- It is likely to be necessary to cancel outside play and other activities. Consideration must be given over the likelihood of pupils being blown off their feet

Floods

Sudden flooding may result in local problems within school, making some rooms uninhabitable. However, of greater significance in terms of health and safety is the potential impact on transport arrangements.

Cold Weather

- This may be a problem due to the low temperature in some buildings or may be complicated by heavy snowfalls making access difficult or dangerous.
- The Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 set a standard of 18C in teaching areas and 15C in the hall, corridors, cloakrooms and toilets where the external air temperature is 1C or above.
- Failure to reach these temperatures is a maintenance issue but if there is a breakdown which puts the heating system out of action for any length of time, consideration needs to be given as to whether the building can be heated with emergency heating and continue to be occupied.
- Adverse weather conditions may result in difficulties for some staff in reaching school resulting in pupil supervision issues. In such circumstances the overriding priority will be the safety of pupils.

Disruption to the School's Water Supply

Provided sufficient notice that the water supply is to be disconnected is received, it will be possible to make a decision on whether or not to keep the school open. This decision will be based upon

- the duration of the disruption;
- the capacity of the water storage tanks which will generally enable toilets to be flushed.

6. EMERGENCY CLOSURE PRIOR TO THE START OF THE SCHOOL DAY

It is the policy of the school to make every effort to remain open whenever possible; however in certain situations it may be appropriate in advance to decide that the school should not open. This will generally be as a result of a difficulty where there is advance notice. This could include a planned disruption to water or energy supplies. In such cases, parents will be given as much notice as possible and informed of either a confirmed date when the school will re-open or advised on how this will be communicated. This will be through the school website and school answer phone.

Severe weather closures

Severe weather conditions may also result in an emergency closure. In such circumstances it will be important that decisions over closure reflect:

- intelligence over the weather conditions in the school's catchment area;
- the likelihood of a sufficient number of staff being able to reach school to make it safe to operate;
- the timing of any decision, taking account of the travel arrangements of the school.

When the Headteacher decides that severe weather warrants school closure s/he should:

- Inform staff, using the Whole School Whats App group. A cascade system will be used to notify staff not in this group eg Lunchtime Supervisors, Cleaning Staff & Kitchen Staff
- Inform parents by:
 - Bradford Schools Online
 - School Facebook page
 - Text via Arbor
- Inform Chair of Governors
- Inform any planned visitors or contractors to school such as music teachers, sports coaches etc
- Inform anyone school were visiting such as swimming baths, trips
- Ensure that local staff are able to be at the school to inform any parents or children who may not have received the closure message

The school will make all practicable efforts to keep parents informed via text, email and in-app message as to the situation with the school during adverse weather conditions. However parents are expected to check the Bradford Schools Online website and School Facebook page when it is clear that a closure is a possibility.

The school appreciates that during bad weather children may arrive later than normal; parents should endeavour to contact the school to let them know they are on their way if likely to be delayed. It is important that if a parent feels it is unsafe to travel they should not attempt the journey but must inform the school of their decision.

The school recognises there will be isolated instances where families are cut off, even where the clear majority of children can get into school. In such instances parents should inform the school of the circumstances of this exceptional situation. Parents acting on the assumption that the school would be closed without gaining confirmation, risks their child being registered as an unauthorised absence.

Where the school is officially closed, all absence is counted as authorised.

Health and Safety

- In the event of snow some pathways will be cleared and salted but Staff, parents, children and visitors should be aware that pathways, even where cleared, remain slippery.
- In icy conditions staff will clear/ salt affected areas of the school site.
- Essential pathways will be maintained as clear as possible throughout the day.
- During adverse weather conditions, the playground may be out of bounds to children during the school day if the Headteacher decides it necessary.
- In the Headteacher's absence the senior SLT on site will assume responsibility for making all decisions relating to these procedures.

7. SENDING PUPILS HOME EARLY

In some exceptional circumstances, a review of the local situation may lead the Headteacher to decide that the school, or part of the school, should be closed early.

(Such temporary and emergency closures do not count against the requirement for a school in the maintained sector to meet the minimum number of sessions each year.)

A number of factors will be considered in making this decision including:

- It may often be safer to keep pupils in certain parts of the school rather than send them home early.
- Contacting a large number of parents/carers, especially during the day.
- Changing school meal arrangements at short notice
- Any decision over sending pupils home early must also include an informed assessment over their safety.

In the event of the school having to close during the day parents will be contacted by text and also by email to be asked to collect their child/children.

9. SCHOOL CLOSURE FOR ANY OTHER REASON

In the event of a school closure for any reason LA will be informed via BSO. The number of school sessions required is laid down in Regulation 3 of the Education (School Day and School Year) (England) Regulations 1999 and requires that every school day in a school maintained by the LEA in England is divided into two sessions. These must be separated by a break in the middle of the day unless exceptional circumstances make this undesirable. With the exception of nursery schools, each school must meet for 380 sessions a year. The DfE guidance on the teaching hours for schools applies on all days when schools are open. Parents can reasonably expect schools to maintain their normal hours on each of the 190 days that schools are open, unless adverse weather or other emergency makes this impracticable for one or more sessions. Under any such exceptional circumstances the Headteacher of a maintained school will need to liaise with the Education Adviser for the school.

10. BOMB THREATS/SUSPECT PACKAGES

If the school receives a bomb threat:

- It is anticipated that in most cases this will be by telephone.
- The person receiving the call should try to obtain as much information as possible and then report the details to the Headteacher or Deputy Head Teacher immediately.
- Do not sound the alarm bell.
- School will be evacuated and the Headteacher may decide, or be instructed by the Police, to evacuate to our off-site location

Off-Site Evacuation Procedure

In the event that the school building needs to be evacuated off site:

- All children and staff will gather on the playground at the fire assembly points.
- All classes will be registered and staff will be accounted for, following the standard fire alarm procedure.
- Once this is complete, the Deputy Headteacher will lead the school, to **Idle Primary School**
- SLT will accompany their Key Stage
- The Headteacher will be the last to leave the school grounds, ensuring all have exited the site safely.
- On arrival at Idle Primary School, all classes will be registered again and staff will be accounted for.

11. REVIEW

This policy is reviewed every two years by the governing board and headteacher.

The scheduled review date for this policy is October 2027.