Hillside Primary School

Critical Incident Policy

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Introduction
The handling of a crisis is a normal part of school life, but some incidents are of a critical, more overwhelming nature, and sadly in recent year's incidents previously deemed unthinkable, have occurred in schools in the UK. A critical incident is defined as a serious disruption arising with little or no warning on a scale beyond the coping capacity of the school operating under normal conditions and requiring the assistance of the emergency services and or Norfolk County Council or others.

This policy summarises the key points from our Business Continuity/Incident Management Plan which is a confidential and highly detailed plan, describing the exact roles, responsibilities and procedures to follow in a wide range of crisis situations.

This policy is complementary to, and is not a replacement for, either the Critical Incident 'Red Book' or 'Green Book' procedures.

Each critical incident is unique, and it is not possible to plan for every eventuality, but similarly each critical incident can be shocking and disorientating so a prepared procedure is essential to ensure that the school's reaction is effective and efficient.

Co-ordinated support will be available to the school from the LA, and it will be practical to contact the LA immediately (Critical Incidents Support Line 07623 912974).

Potential critical incidents
Incidents which could affect Hillside Primary School are considered to be:-

- Fire/flood building collapse
- Health risk – outbreak of contagious illness/disease such as Covid-19
- Major arson attack
- Fatal road, rail or aircraft accident
- Serious injury on an out-of-school visit
- Cyber attack – e.g. risk of virus/hacker from internet with additional implications for data protection
- Death of a pupil or member of staff
- Natural disaster within the community
- Consequences of terrorist or criminal activity
- Abduction
- Riot/Civil Unrest
- Missing person

Senior Emergency Management Team
Unless the incident is minor, it will be impossible for the Head Teacher (or their deputy) to implement all the actions required on behalf of the school.

A Senior Emergency Management Team (SEMT) with specific roles and responsibilities will therefore be established at the onset of a critical incident, to assist the Head Teacher in managing the response (see below)

Senior Emergency Management Team (SEMT)		
Name	**Position**	**Role in an Incident**
Simon Minter	Head Teacher	Co-ordination + Media
Deborah Oldham/James Loome	Deputy Head Teacher	Resources + Co-ordination
Trevor Wainwright	Chair of Governors	Media + Community Cohesion
Harry Hamilton	Governor for Safeguarding	Safeguarding
Michala Whittaker	Finance Officer and Office Manager	Business continuity and log keeping
Sue Stinton	Governor for Health & Safety	Health & Safety + Staff Welfare
Katie Foster	SENCO, SRB Lead & Senior Mental Health Lead	Pupil Wefare/Safeguarding

The Senior Emergency Management Team is responsible for:

- Long term strategy
- Funding issues
- Providing adequate resources
- Press and media liaison
- Communicating with relevant bodies
- Pupil/staff welfare
- Health & Safety (short and long-term)

If the incident involves the police, they will take control of certain management issues.

Actions following a critical incident

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

a) Immediate actions
b) Short term actions
c) Medium term actions
d) Longer term actions

Immediate actions – i.e. within hours of the incident occurring

- Obtain and collate information relating to the incident – uncertainty breeds rumour and accurate information is essential;
- Gather and brief the SEMT (Senior Emergency Management Team) – brief the team, allocate roles and responsibilities;
- Trigger support from the LA and other contacts on emergency list – establish clearly who is going to contact whom;

- Assign someone to specifically deal with calls (office) – from anxious parents etc. SEMT should agree a factual statement and avoid speculation;
- 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 possibility;
- Make arrangements to inform other parents – may need to take advice from LA, especially if there is the possibility of legal liability. SEMT may wish to send a letter to parents, or prepare a leaflet.
- 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.
- Inform pupils – can be done in small or large groups depending on which are 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.
- 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 County Office 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 SEMT 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 most common reactions will include denial, distress, guilt, anger and helplessness. SEMT need to consider outside professionals to support and debrief staff and pupils affected by the incident. Those providing support also need support. At this point the
- SEMT will need to plan their short term reaction to the incident.

Short Term Actions – the next stage

- 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 to deal with repercussions in terms of children's fears etc.
- 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 SEMT. If a crisis persists over many hours staff may 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
- 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 Actions

- Return to school for staff or children 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.
- Consulting professionals – consideration should be given to consulting the Educational Psychology Service (CEPP) 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 a leaflet for parents giving guidance on the possible delayed reactions of children 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. SEMT especially will not be immune to reaction from their ordeal.

Long Term Actions

- Monitoring the vulnerable – the effects of a crisis can reverberate for years, and it is especially important that new staff and children 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. SEMT 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.

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. School's that have made effective contingency plans for responding to a critical incident (e.g. Business Continuity/Incident Management Plan) are likely to cope better and recover more fully.

Monitoring & review, policy into practice

This policy will be updated accordingly and reviewed on an annual basis in conjunction with the Business Continuity/Incident Management Plan, the Critical Incident 'Red Book' and the Critical Incident 'Green Book'.

Designated Governor: Sue Stinton

Name/Signature of Headteacher: Simon Minter

Date: Nov 24

Review date: Nov 26