

COPPULL ST. JOHN'S C.E. PRIMARY SCHOOL

POLICY DOCUMENT

CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY

Mission Statement

'We are growing and learning together in God's Love'

Coppull, St John's, School provides for all pupils and staff a caring, loving and happy environment where everyone is valued as a unique individual.

We aim to promote a love of learning, individual responsibility and a respect of others in a family atmosphere.

Christian values provide the key to the school ethos and the spiritual development of all in the life of the community, nurturing an understanding of the Christian faith.

We seek to create a partnership between home, parish and school, as together we lay the foundations which will prepare our pupils for entry into the wider community.

The aim of this policy is to lessen the effect of a critical incident on the staff, children and parents at our school. It is anticipated that by adopting the procedures outlined in this policy we will provide a more secure environment for everyone associated with our school.

What is a critical incident?

A critical incident is one which arises suddenly. Critical incidents may occur in school or out of school, but both types will have a major impact on staff and children. An incident may be designated as critical where the result is likely to be serious disruption to the running of school, or where there is likely to be significant public and/or media attention on school.

Examples of in-school critical incidents

- ◆ A serious accident to a child or adult
- ◆ The death of a pupil or member of staff through natural causes, such as an illness
- ◆ A traffic accident involving a pupil or staff member
- ◆ Violence or assault within school
- ◆ A school fire or explosion
- ◆ Destruction of part of the school building
- ◆ Abduction of a pupil
- ◆ A pupil or pupils absconding

- ♦ An illness such as meningitis within the school or the local community

Examples of out-of-school critical incidents

- ♦ An accident to a pupil or staff while out of school on a visit or swimming etc.
- ♦ Death or injuries on a school journey
- ♦ Tragedies involving children from many schools e.g. the tragedy at Hillsborough Football Ground
- ♦ Civil disturbances

Support Agencies and Personnel

A list of significant contacts and telephone numbers is included near the end of this document.

This Critical Incident Procedure will be updated annually, or when any changes occur e.g. alterations are made to the existing building. Copies of the plan will be kept {School Office, Head Teacher office and copy at home}

Planning for an Emergency

A central component of this policy is the identification of the composition, roles and responsibilities of the Critical Incident Management Team.

The role of the team is to review and direct the handling of the incident and the response and recovery process in order to:

- Ensure the safety and security of pupils, staff and other users of the premises and visitors
- Minimise the loss to the school in physical, human and financial terms
- Manage an incident to minimise disruption to regular operations
- Liaise with appropriate agencies, including the Media.

In the event of a Critical Incident or Emergency occurring, the following staff will form a Critical Incident Management Team.

- Head Teacher
- Chair of Governors
- Deputy Head Teacher
- Health & Safety Representative
- Premises Manager

The Critical Incident Management Team will, dependent upon the nature of the incident, be concerned with any of the following issues:

- Adequate assessment of hazards and situations which may require emergency action
- Analysis of requirements to address these hazards; establishment of liaison with all relevant emergency services; development of an effective management plan
- Dissemination of planned procedures
- Organisation of practice drills to test the plan
- Regular review of this plan
- Assisting the Head teacher with all aspects of implementation of the plan
- Arranging staff development activities, where necessary.

Procedures during an Incident

1. The head teacher or senior deputy must be informed of any critical incident as soon as possible.
2. As soon as an incident is confirmed, the Critical Incident Management Team will meet to decide strategies.
3. The rest of the staff will be informed as soon as possible, preferably at a specially convened staff meeting.
4. All staff should share the same information.
5. Pupils will be told information simply and sensitively, without fabrication, preferably in small group situations.
6. The school will try, as far as possible, to keep to the normal routine.

Action Plan

Major incidents require the following procedures:-

1. Set up a communication network.
2. Inform immediately the Chair of Governors, Chief Education Officer and any other appropriate Officers.
3. Collect record and convey as much accurate information as possible.
4. Identify two people to answer and use:
 - a) School phone for incoming calls
 - b) Mobile phone for outgoing information/staff use.
5. Reception area to be used for enquiries
6. Use the up to date list of pupils' next of kin (record files) and contact parents of affected children
7. Record all actions
8. Head teacher to act as 'press officer'
9. Do not allow press/television on school premises

Action Plan Timing

ACTION	TIMETABLE
Obtain factual information at the start	Within hours
Senior staff meeting with support personnel	Within hours
Advise Director of Education	Within hours

Convene Critical Incident Management Team	Within hours
Contact families	Immediately
Call a staff meeting to give information	Same day if possible
Inform pupils in small groups	Same day if possible
Arrange a debriefing meeting for staff involved	Same day if possible
Arrange debriefing for pupils directly involved	Same day if possible
Identify high risk pupils and staff	Following day
Promote discussion in classes	Following days and weeks
Identify the need for group or individual treatment	Over days and weeks
Organise counselling	As required
Mark anniversary (discreetly)	Annually

It is expected that {LEA/The Director of Education} will: -

- a. Advise Public Relations Unit so that appropriate assistance is made to the school.
- b. Ensure that the appropriate Officers, including Health & Safety, are advised of the crisis so that the best possible level of support can be made immediately available, as appropriate.
- c. Ensure that those agencies or services who are skilled in offering counselling are alerted to the crisis so that support is available as soon as seen to be appropriate.

In determining the timing of the above response by the Local Education Authority, the Director of Education will be guided by the Head teacher, making certain that the support offered is timed to acknowledge the school's own response to the tragedy.

Procedure:

Communications

Those dealing with incoming calls should provide an agreed factual statement together with re-assurance of action being taken at the incident site.

A separate dedicated line will be needed for outgoing calls; this may be a mobile phone or line that cannot take in-coming calls e.g. the fax line. It is important to remember that mobile phones are not necessarily secure and that caution about what is said should, therefore be exercised at all times.

Contacting families directly affected.

This should be done quickly and sensitively. Consistency of information is vital, so it is best to avoid a chain of communication in this instance.

If parents cannot be contacted leave a message with a relative, friend or neighbour. Alternatively drop a note through the door of the house, asking the parent to call the school as soon as possible.

If parents are to be invited to a venue to meet school or LEA staff, the venue should be secure and the location not made known to the media.

Schools should be prepared to suggest individuals, groups or organisations that can offer suitable relevant support.

Responding to calls from relatives

Agree which members of staff will be delegated/permitted to talk to relatives. These members of staff should:

Use language and tone that alleviates anxiety

Anticipate questions relevant to the incident e.g. 'did my child witness the incident?' and be prepared to answer them.

Information for Teaching and Support staff

It is vital that all adults in contact with children and young people are kept well informed and feel secure in handling questions and comments. A schedule for updating them will be arranged e.g. breaks, at the end of the school day or first thing in the morning. This ensures that knowledge is common and questions are answered.

Staff will be cautioned against talking to the media or responding to questions from reporters.

Informing Pupils about the incident

Staff may need to be given advice and guidance on what the pupils should be told and how.

Some information may be given in whole school assemblies and then discussed in class. Other types of information may best be disseminated in small groups by the staff closest to the pupils.

Our pupils may not understand the full implications of any incident, so information given should be tailored to cognitive and emotional levels of children.

Pupils must be given all the time they need to ask questions or talk about the incident to have their worries allayed.

Families should be informed about the amount of information their children have been given as they will not be able to relay this information themselves.

Contacting Families and others not directly affected.

It may be sufficient to inform other parents by letter. In other cases, it may be more appropriate to call an early meeting at the school, especially if the incident is one which could call into question aspects of the school's organisation that could affect all pupils.

A prepared verbal or written statement can provide necessary facts, expressions of sympathy and concern and possibly a message for the community. It is essential to remember that a letter can be passed on to the media. Seek guidance from the {LEA} before issuing any form of written statements.

The school will need to make a decision based on the nature of the incident whether a letter is sent immediately or if it would be better to be delayed until all facts are known.

The Media

Once an incident has been reported to the {LEA}, the LEA will contact the school as a matter of high priority to make communication arrangements.

If media contact a member of staff before the {LEA} has arrived, staff should:

- Buy time e.g. by saying the Head teacher is unavailable but will call back
- Be clear about who is and is not permitted to speak to the media on behalf of the school
- Accept that in certain circumstances the delegated person may not be the most appropriate person to talk to the press and a substitute needs to be available
- Anyone talking to the press should have a colleague present to take notes of what is said
- Provide nothing but the facts
- Give a prepared statement rather than an interview and anticipate the worst possible questions
- Immediately correct any incorrect or misleading information - by interrupting if necessary
- Be sensitive about personal information

- Do not apportion blame or liability to anyone even in "off the record" conversations
- Remember to praise and thank any person or service that have helped during the incident
- Remember that there are no "off the record" conversations and that all contact with the press should be treated with caution

Support for people

Particularly in the event of a critical incident, it is easy for the emotions and stresses experienced by the person managing the incident to be overlooked. It is important that those managing the incident also take care of themselves and that someone takes on responsibility for ensuring this element is not forgotten.

The {LEA} will have the responsibility of ensuring the Head teacher and members of the Critical Incident Management Team are provided with personal advice and support.

It is important to acknowledge the emotional state of all the people involved - staff, pupils and parents.

It must be recognised that, depending on the nature of the emergency, not all staff may feel able to support others or the pupils and that a burden of support may, therefore, fall on a disproportionately small number of staff. It is important that this is openly acknowledged and recognised as an acceptable and possible inevitable position to adopt.

Recognise that a critical incident could have an impact on emotionally vulnerable children and affect their behaviour or emotional state and be prepared to offer them support from appropriate professionals within or outside school.

Staff closely involved in the incident in any way should be offered opportunities for debriefing and counselling, informally or through a more formal structure.

Be aware that there may be long term effects on some people and staff or pupils may need to be offered professional therapeutic help.

Consider designating areas for parents and others to meet so that support can be given but privacy maintained.

Formal and informal recognition and rituals

Arrangements may be made to express sympathy to the families directly affected

Injured children can be visited in hospital and pupils can be encouraged to send cards and letters.

Staff and pupils may attend funerals if they are sure of being welcome. The school may close in recognition of funerals.

Special assemblies and in-school memorial services may be held

Implications for the wider curriculum

Ensure that staff receive training in areas such as loss, change or bereavement as part of the school training plans.

Consider the provision of relevant fiction and non-fiction books in the school library and discussions about normal reactions to bereavement, stress or crisis

Date of review June 2017

Next review June 2018