



PAPILLON HOUSE SCHOOL

CRITICAL INCIDENTS POLICY

Definition

Whilst handling crises is a normal part of school life, some incidents are of a more critical and overwhelming character in which staff, pupils and parents may experience acute, even prolonged, distress.

Some examples are as follows: the murder of a pupil, serious and fatal accidents during school trips, student suicide, major fire or other building damage, meningitis or death.

Emergency Contact list

Contact	Name	Telephone
Emergency Services		999
Police (non urgent enquiries)	Surrey Police	101
Business Manager & Critical Incident Manager	Alex Labbett	01372 363663 07861 297895
Director	Gillian Hutton	01372 363663 07760 771114
Head Teacher	Alicia Rickman	01372 363663 07801 627096
Insurers	Townsend McCormack	0207 033 4898
Solicitors	Natalie Wargent Veale Wasbrough Vizards	Direct dial 0117 3145433 Switchboard 0117 9252020
Landlord	Caran Developments	0207 722 8225

Critical Incident Response Team

At Papillon House School the Management Team also forms the School's Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT).

Whilst each critical incident is unique all schools can pre-plan to cope with a critical incident.

This Policy has made the assumption that the Business Manager will be available/contactable should a critical incident occur. If this were not the case then the Director or Head Teacher will assume responsibility.

The CIRT will obtain accurate information about the Critical Incident as soon as possible and will seek to establish:

- the nature of the incident;
- when, where and how the incident occurred;
- who has been affected and who might be affected;
- the extent of casualties or damage caused;
- the involvement of third parties including emergency services, regulators etc.

The CIRT will:

- assess ongoing risks and take immediate steps to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of pupils, staff or anyone else affected by the critical incident;
- make adequate arrangements to liaise with the emergency services, regulators, investigators and outside agencies, as required;
- ensure that proper consideration is given to the disclosure of School documents to external sources and, if so authorised, ensure that copies of the latest versions of any such documents are provided and that separate copies of any disclosed documents are retained;
- ensure that the emergency services are provided with up to date information including site plans, asbestos registers, chemical storage areas etc;
- take immediate steps to minimise disruption, in so far as is possible, to the School, pupils, staff members, parents or anyone else affected by the critical incident;
- provide information to and arrange support for and welfare assistance to pupils, staff, or anyone affected by the critical incident, to include follow up support as appropriate;
- make adequate arrangements to liaise with parents, relatives or anyone else affected by the critical incident;
- ensure that the School acts in a lawful manner and take steps to protect and preserve its legal position and where necessary seek legal advice from the School's solicitors;
- contact the School's insurers where necessary, obtain confirmation of cover and obtain their approval / agreement to proposed actions;
- ensure that adverse publicity is minimised and that all external enquiries are handled by the Director or other nominated personnel;
- make adequate arrangements to communicate with and where necessary provide a controlled response to the press and media;
- ensure that all site-evacuation and health and safety procedures have been followed, if appropriate;
- ensure that the School premises and property are secure following the critical incident;
- activate contingency plans and / or interim measures in order to safeguard continuity of educational provision, where possible.

School Access

Access to the school may be required if an incident happens outside the school day. This can be obtained via one of the following school key holders:

- Alex Labbett Business Manager
- Gillian Hutton Director
- Alicia Rickman Head Teacher

Incident Room and Dedicated Telephone Line

The School office will act as the base for the CIRT as up to date records are available. There is the possibility of the school telephone line being inundated with incoming calls from anxious parents. The CIRT or possibly members of the teaching staff dealing with these calls will provide a factual statement previously agreed by the Director, along with reassurance of action being taken at the incident site.

It will be important to avoid speculation and not to make statements about further information or developments. A separate dedicated line will be needed for outgoing calls. The school telephone will be used for this purpose.

Critical Incident Log

As much information will be gathered on the incident as possible.

This is particularly important for an incident off the school premises where information is more difficult to obtain and may be subject to unhelpful rumour.

Some examples of information required:

- exactly what has happened, where and when
- if off the school premises, names and contact number of an adult at the incident site
- whether or not help is required from the school
- extent of injuries, number and names
- location of injured, name and contact number of adult present

To brief the CIRT it is also important to know:

- who has been informed
- what has been said

If the critical incident takes place away from the School site all communication will be between the teacher in charge and the Business Manager or Head Teacher.

It is expected that no child will have a mobile phone with them however the teacher in charge will need to check this and ensure that all communication with the school, police etc., are dealt with by the teacher in charge.

Where an incident involves the Police they may take control of some management issues including the management of the media and provision of incident information. In the event of a major critical incident the police would normally inform victims' families and provide liaison officers.

The Business Manager to co-ordinate a log of events throughout the incident.

Liability/Negligence Issues

Where possible issues of liability/negligence exist the relevant insurers will be consulted immediately and reports will be made to the appropriate insurer in accordance with the policy conditions.

Contact with Families Directly Affected

This has to be implemented quickly and with sensitivity. Consistency of information is vital so it is best to avoid using a chain of communication. Any message should relay assurances of appropriate action being taken and should indicate when and if further information will be available.

It is possible that we will have a situation where parents are awaiting information (i.e. if the minibus has crashed and no one knows the extent of injuries and who is injured). In such situations we will arrange for parents/family to wait at the school for information. Staff will take on an important role should this happen by providing refreshments and as much comfort as possible to those waiting for news.

Informing Parents Not Directly Affected

The timing of a communications to 'non-involved' parents will need to be flexible. In some cases it might need to be immediate (e.g. meningitis) whilst in others (such as a road traffic accident) it may be preferable to wait until full information is available. The Business Manager will use her judgement on the content and timing of any communications and may consult with the School's solicitors before doing so.

Informing Teaching and Support Staff

It is vital that all adults who are in contact with pupils are kept well informed and feel secure in handling questions and comments. A schedule for updating may need to be arranged) e.g. during breaks, at the end of the day or first thing in the morning). Such meetings can be vital in ensuring that knowledge is shared and questions are answered in an informed manner.

Staff must not to talk to the media or respond to questions from reporters under any circumstances

Informing Pupils

At Papillon House School we acknowledge that this is best done in classes with particular care being taken to protect and support children close to someone involved with the incident. We acknowledge that there may be some staff who are unable to handle the emotions or distress confidently, in such instances the Head Teacher will inform those children. The children should receive a consistent account of the incident while allowing for differences in their ability to understand.

Encouraging People Involved to Talk

In some instances people involved (both children and staff) should be able to talk about the incident and its effects before going home.

Media

We are aware that effective, direct communication with the school community can limit the impact of sensational media coverage.

Teaching, non-teaching staff and parents will receive accurate, up to date release of information as appropriate and will be strongly encouraged not to speculate or to give currency to rumour.

The media must be dealt with correctly and the Business Manager will deal with them. The Business Manager will seek appropriate legal and/or PR advice with regards to communications with the media.

Staff are **not** permitted to speak to or contact the media and any media enquiries should be referred to the Business Manager.

The Next Stage – handling the Reactions of People Affected

We are aware that people can react very differently; some will readily give vent to their feelings whilst others will find it more difficult. Pupils' ages and development will affect their understanding and feelings. The nature of the incident itself has a major bearing on the feelings generated. The most common reactions include denial, distress, guilt, anger and helplessness. All these factors will be taken into consideration when deciding on the appropriate level and type of support to give.

Information about the Incident

We will endeavour to:

- inform all staff and give guidance on how to support and talk to the children affected.
- confront the 'truth' and take care with the form of words used in announcements.
- outline the measures or arrangements in place that will provide further help for distressed children.
- provide information to families on the types of help and support available to them and their children

Explicit Knowledge of the Incident

We are aware that the management of a critical incident can result in high levels of stress for those involved:

- we acknowledge the emotional state of staff and children and allow time and space where needed
- some staff may not wish to be able to be directly involved in supporting children
- the burden of support may fall disproportionately on a small number of staff
- we acknowledge that the incident may act as a trigger to children that are emotionally vulnerable, even if they are not directly involved. This may result in difficulties in behaviour and relationships.
- be sensitive to the effects on staff or children's concentration and performance
- be sensitive to the effect on home and social life for families and peers.

Opportunities to Talk Through or Otherwise Express Personal Reactions

Whilst attempting to ensure continuity and normality, staff should encourage children to talk about their feelings and be prepared to listen to them. Circle time could be used to this purpose.

Groups of children may be offered support from external professional organisations or individuals who can 'debrief' them, to help them understand their reactions and develop coping strategies. Parental permission will be sought in this instance. It may be appropriate to resist expectations of immediate counselling – if appropriate, counselling is recommended 1 to 4 weeks after an incident.

Staff closely associated with children involved will also be offered opportunities for debriefing and counselling.

Therapeutic help will be made available to children and staff for however long it is deemed necessary.

Support for Those Providing Support

We are aware that there may be delayed reactions from those actively involved in responding to a critical incident. Staff who are co-ordinating the school response will be supported and properly scheduled for relief periods.

Teachers are vital in supporting pupils through a critical incident, but teachers involved in delivering this need also deserve informed guidance and emotional support themselves. This will be made available to them.

The needs of the Director and senior staff have not always been fully acknowledged. The strain of leading a school through a critical incident can obscure the Director's personal feelings. It is vital they also benefit from informed guidance and emotional support themselves.

Formal and Informal Recognition and Rituals

The following arrangements will be made as appropriate:

- to express sympathy to the families directly affected by the incident
- for injured children to be visited in hospital
- children to send cards and letters
- attendance at a funeral
- special assemblies, memorial services and a remembrance book

Anniversaries are key times and the school will ensure such occasions are planned for and handled with sensitivity and support

Continuing or Quickly Re-establishing Normal Routines

Every attempt will be made to provide as much continuity as possible for children. Wherever possible we will maintain the normal school day so children will be less likely to feel unsettled.

Return to School by Pupils or Staff Directly Affected

We acknowledge that some staff or pupils may not return to school immediately after an incident and will therefore need special assistance when they do return. Such support will be put in place to enable their reintegration back into school life.

Implications for the Wider Curriculum

Where possible, the School will make all necessary arrangements to ensure the continuing provision of education for pupils.

We recognise that any critical incident may have implications for the wider curriculum. We will therefore consider:

- the inclusion of training for staff in areas such as loss, change or bereavement as part of the school's development plan
- discussions with pupils about what are normal reaction to stress of crises and give them guidance about practical measures to alleviate the stress responses e.g. relaxation techniques or positive imagery
- the inclusion of skills or projects concerned with the cycle of life and death

Internal investigations

An appropriate member of the CIRT will be nominated to investigate the critical incident if the CIRT consider that an investigation is necessary.

Such investigations may be required in order to discover the immediate and / or root causes of a critical incident to prevent a recurrence, to discipline employees or pupils or to brief lawyers for the purpose of obtaining legal advice or to aid litigation.

Where appropriate, the CIRT will seek legal advice from the School's solicitors before commencing an internal investigation.

The scope of an internal investigation may be restricted to fact-finding and may not make any finding of fault or allocation of blame.

The CIRT will not sanction any internal investigation which may prejudice the investigations of outside agencies.

No admission of liability on the School's behalf should be made without legal advice and / or prior agreement from the School's insurers.

Review and monitoring

- Following a critical incident, this policy, and other triggered policies and procedures and / or relevant risk assessments will be reviewed.
- In any event, this policy will be reviewed at regularly and records of relevant risk assessments and accidents will be regularly monitored by the Director and Head Teacher.

This policy is to be read in conjunction with all other relevant policies

**The Management Team
July 2007**

**Reviewed and revised in October 2014: VWV Solicitors
Reviewed and Revised Oct 2017: VWV Solicitors
Agreed; Gillian Hutton, Director, November 2017**