

 Kingsmead	POLICY TITLE:	Critical Incidents
Kingsmead Academy T/A Kingsmead School		
Committee/Person Responsible for Policy:	Headteacher Personnel & Teaching for Learning	
Date Approved by Governing Body:	February 2015	
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Next Review Due:	Summer 2017	

1 INTRODUCTION - What is a **Critical Incident**?

Traumatic incidents affecting schools and local communities seem to be on the increase.

- 1.1 Such incidents come in many forms from major disasters such as Lockerbie, Hungerford, Herald of Free Enterprise, and Dunblane, to smaller scale incidents involving the death or serious injury of students, staff or parents, such as Ann Maguire, the teacher in Leeds. Whatever the scale of the incident, the effect on the individuals involved can be equally devastating.
- 1.2 It is now recognised that children are no more or less resilient than adults to traumatic events and their reactions are basically the same. Kingsmead, therefore, has an important role to play in helping children to understand and cope with the impact of such events. School is a normal place for a child to be and offers security at a time of insecurity. Teachers have many skills and techniques which they use routinely to help troubled children and, with some further training and confidence building, these skills can be adapted to help children cope with a range of traumatic incidents.
- 1.3 A **Critical Incident** may be defined as a single incident or sequence of incidents which
 - are sudden and unexpected
 - contain real or imagined threats to a person
 - overwhelm usual coping mechanisms
 - cause severe disruption
 - are traumatic to anyone
- 1.4 **Critical Incidents affecting Kingsmead may include:-**
 - The death of a student(s) or member(s) of staff through sudden accident, murder, terminal illness or suicide.

- A serious accident involving students and School personnel on or off School premises.
- A violent attack or violent intrusion onto School premises, e.g. involving an armed intruder or a bomb alert.
- Fire, flood, building collapse or major vandalism in the School.
- A hostage situation.
- A disaster in the community, e.g. transport accident, terrorism.

The TRAUMA caused by critical incidents challenges individuals mentally, physically, emotionally and spiritually.

2 Developing a Critical Incident Contingency Plan

- 2.1 Although it is not possible to predict when and where a disaster will strike, there is much that Kingsmead can do to be prepared should the "worst" happen. Foremost in this is the development of a **Critical Incident Contingency Plan** so that in the event of a disaster, on whatever scale, staff can act quickly to cope with the distress and confusion and begin to regain a sense of control.
- 2.2 The experience of schools which have been involved in a critical incident shows that those which have made some preliminary plans are able to act promptly and cope most effectively with the traumatic consequences of a critical incident. These plans would include suggested actions, roles and responsibilities which can be initiated promptly in the event of a critical incident.
- 2.3 Foremost in this planning is the creation of a **Critical Incident Leadership Team**, based on the Senior Leadership Team but also including staff who are most suited in terms of their personal and practical skills and their availability and reliability. This team should aim to meet annually to review and update the Critical Incident Contingency Plan. The Team will have at least one member whose role it is to co-ordinate and liaise with the media. This needs to be someone other than the Headteacher as he/she may well be deployed elsewhere.
- 2.4 Kingsmead's Critical Incident Contingency Plan will have prepared procedures and responses that can be put into action in the immediate aftermath of a critical incident. It will need to be flexible enough to cope with a wide range of possible incidents which may occur either on or off site.

3 Somerset LA has the following co-ordinated support strategy for schools in the event of a Critical Incident, which will still apply to Kingsmead.

- 3.1 **Advice and support for school staff** - this is provided primarily by the Educational Psychology Service. A telephone call direct to the Educational Psychology Service at the local area base for Somerset Support Services will initiate the **Educational Psychology Services' Critical Incident Response to Schools**.

This service offers:

- Prompt telephone contact from the Senior Educational Psychologist to discuss the nature and scale of the incident.
- In agreement with the Headteacher, a team of Educational Psychologists experienced in Critical Incident work can visit the school immediately to advise and support staff and to plan further action as appropriate.

- Psychological support can be provided for staff and students who are particularly affected. There is often not time to contact the parents of all children who request this type of support. Kingsmead will:
 - include a section in their handbook to explain that this type of professional support will be available to all students who request it in the event of a Critical Incident.
 - prepare, as part of their contingency planning, a proforma letter to parents about the involvement of the Psychological Service in supporting the school following a Critical Incident. See Appendix 1.
- Advice can be given about individuals who may need longer term therapeutic help.

3.2 **Support from other LA Officers and Services** - The involvement and expertise of other LA personnel is also available to Kingsmead:-

3.3 **Education Social Workers** are familiar faces in schools and can offer listening time and advice to students and staff.

3.4 **Youth Service:** This may be a useful contact for secondary schools to help support young people both in and out of school. This support can be accessed by contacting the local senior or area youth worker or County Youth Service Manager.

4 **Critical Incident Leadership Team**

4.1 In the event of a Critical Incident Kingsmead's Critical Incident Leadership Team will convene. This team will be made up of:

- Headteacher
- Senior Deputy Headteacher – Chair
- Business Manager – Media liaison
- Site Manager (as appropriate)
- Assistant Headteachers (As appropriate):
 - Ey – emergency services
 - Dn/ Wm – gathering information
- Assisted by the following personnel:
 - KM/ CDS – emergency services
 - PB/ GB/ NS – gathering information
 - SENCO – EP support

They will need to act promptly and be responsible for dealing with the following issues:

- Emergency Services – Ey
- Check that these have been contacted as necessary. – Ey
- Gathering Information – Dn/ Wm and support
- Media interest and involvement – ECP

4.2 A vital first task is to obtain accurate information about the incident. Rumours spread quickly and can add to the distress of those involved. Dn/ Wm and support to find out:-

- What has happened
- Where and When
- Extent of injuries, numbers and names
- Location of injured and uninjured

4.3 Accessing Support – SENCO

The School should contact the Senior Educational Psychologist who will initiate the Critical Incident Response Procedure.

Taunton: Tel: 01823 334475
 Fax: 01823 323656

4.4 Informing Staff – Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher

- Ensure all staff are informed promptly of the incident - it may be necessary to convene a short staff meeting.
- Establish procedures for keeping staff up to date with incoming information.
- Agree how and when students will be informed.
- Be sensitive to the feelings of staff, particularly those who are closest to the students and adults involved in the incident and to those who have had recent personal traumas.

4.5 Informing Governors (and LA if appropriate) – Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher

The Chair of Governors (and the Head of Service for Education and Individual Services should be informed as soon as possible after a major incident, if appropriate).

Informing parents - of children directly involved

- Parents of children directly involved should be contacted quickly and with sensitivity.
- Consistency and reliability of information is essential. Avoid relying on a chain of communication.
- The Academy may need to set a room aside for meetings with parents.
- In the event of an incident involving death or serious injury, particularly off site, the police will often make the first contact with families.

If using the telephone:

- Fully brief the member of staff making the contact, recognising that this can be a very stressful task.
- Take careful note of those parents who have been contacted and those who still need to be informed so that duplicate messages are not given.
- Where appropriate offer help with transport arrangements.
- Check that the parents are not on their own. Make suggestions for contacting relatives or neighbours as appropriate.
- Inform parents of the telephone number in the School that has been dedicated to receiving enquiries.
- Inform parents how to obtain more information and when they can expect this to be available.
- Where appropriate and with permission, give the contact numbers of other families involved in the crisis.

4.6 Informing parents - of children not directly involved – Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher

Wherever possible, parents of all other children in the School should be informed that the School has experienced an incident and that their child may be upset.

Prepare a letter to parents:

- Prepare a letter to parents for distribution as soon as possible which gives:
 - * brief details of the incident without names;
 - * an explanation about the involvement of the Educational Psychology Service or other services supporting staff and students at the Academy;
 - * how parents can get more information.

(See Appendix 1 for example letter).

4.7 Informing students – Headteacher/ Deputy Headteacher/ LoSS/ Tutors

- Some staff may find it difficult to be involved in the dissemination of information to students and the Critical Incident Leadership Team should be sensitive to this.
- Students should be told simply and honestly what has happened. This is probably best done in the smallest groups possible - classes, tutor groups or year groups. Whole year groups – Year 7 – Drama Studio, Year 8 – Hall, Year 9 – Gym, Year 10 and 11 – Sports Hall.
- Questions should be answered in a straightforward way, passing on only facts and avoiding speculation.
- Some classes, tutor groups or year groups may be more directly affected by the incident and will benefit from extra consideration, support and sensitive handling of information.
- Siblings and other close relatives of victims should be informed separately and, where possible, in liaison with parents.

4.8 Dealing with enquiries

The School may be inundated with telephone calls. People will need to staff the telephone which can be a stressful task. All remaining admin staff briefed by ECP.

- The confidential nature of the task should be emphasised to all telephone operators and clear guidance given on what it is appropriate to say.
- An agreed factual statement prepared by Headteacher/ Deputy Headteacher/ ECP, should be available for the telephone operators, which includes reassurance about the action being taken at the School/ incident site.
- Those answering the telephones should keep notes and have them checked against School records so that there is certainty about who has telephoned in and who should still be contacted. This should include media, governors, etc.

4.9 Dealing with the media

- Identify a senior member of staff to liaise with the media - ECP

- Prepare a brief written statement which can be read out or handed to reporters. Stick to the facts - do not be tempted into speculative comments.
- Tell reporters when they can expect further information and aim to work co-operatively with the press.
- In the event of a death prepare some positive comments about the student(s)/ staff who have died and expressions of sympathy for the bereaved family.

5 SUPPORTING STUDENTS IN THE EVENT OF A CRITICAL INCIDENT

5.1 Students need access to clear and concise information

- Teachers should stick to the facts and not be tempted to give speculative comments.
- Act promptly to dispel rumours and misinformation which can cause unnecessary distress.
- Be explicit in acknowledgement of the event.

5.2 Give opportunities for students to talk through personal reactions

- It is helpful to provide a quiet, private place for students to go to.
- Allow students to express feelings.
- Anticipate and understand students' reactions.
- It is important to help students realise that grief is a *natural* and *normal* reaction to loss.
- Children with previous bereavement/ loss/ separation experiences and those with special educational needs may need extra support.
- Be alert to the possible occurrence of unhelpful grief responses such as anger, bullying and scapegoating - act promptly and positively to defuse and deflect such behaviours.

5.3 Formal grieving

- Give opportunities for students to write and draw, send cards or flowers, letters of condolence, attend funerals, plant a tree, etc. A special assembly or memorial service may be appropriate.
- Be aware of differences in cultural, spiritual, religious values.

5.4 Establish normal routines

- The School is the normal place for a child to be and offers security at a time of insecurity.
- Children will look to teachers for role models of how to deal with death and crisis.
- Trauma reactions are normal reactions and are best helped in a normal and familiar environment.
- Returning to the normal routine of academy life also reinforces a feeling of security.
- Encourage and support the return to School of students and staff most affected.

- Recognise that emotions and feelings may differ from student to student.
- Strong feelings and emotions are perfectly normal reactions in the immediate aftermath.

6 SUPPORTING STAFF

- There should be recognition of the differing needs of each affected individual.
- All staff need to be familiar with the School's Critical Incident Contingency Plan.
- Teachers need to consider their own feelings related to either the present incident or past experiences, so they can feel comfortable in dealing with children's distress.
- Some teachers may wish to take a less active role in supporting others.
- School staff need to be supportive of each other at this time, eg staff may wish to schedule staff meetings in order to receive further advice on how to support bereaved children.
- All staff need to be aware of possible delayed reactions, particularly of those actively involved.
- Staff who are co-ordinating the school's response should be supported and scheduled for relief periods.
- Arrangements may need to be made for staff to see a counsellor or talk with an outside agency/support worker, either singly or as a group.
- Some staff may find it helpful to make a personal gesture, such as by sending cards/flowers, letter of condolence, attending the funeral.

7 SUPPORTING PARENTS

- Whether the incident has occurred at the school or off site, parents are likely to look to the School for information, advice and support.
- Prepare a room with tea/coffee making facilities where parents can congregate.
- Allocate a member of staff to be available to talk to parents and keep them up-to-date with information as it becomes available.
- Provide information leaflets about the impact of trauma and sudden death and likely reactions - these can be prepared and collected in advance by the School as part of the Contingency planning process.
- Provide information about the types of support that are available to them and their children both in school and within their local community (this information can also form part of the Contingency planning process).

8 SUPPORT FROM THE EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY SERVICE

The team of Educational Psychologists who respond to the School's request for help in dealing with a Critical Incident work alongside the Headteacher and Senior Leadership Team. This support is aimed at helping school staff manage and cope, both professionally and personally, with the impact of the incident on the School and local community. It is designed to be flexible and responsive to the School's needs at all times.

8.1 The team will be able to offer a range of support including:

- Advice and help for staff in dealing with distressed students, parents and colleagues.
- Psychological support for those students and adults most closely affected by the incident.
- Advice on dealing with the media and other demands made on School staff at this time.
- Advice on issues such as "marking the event" and "getting back to normal".
- Advice on ways to manage the likely short term and long term effects of the incident on individuals, the School and the local community.

9 PREPARING A CRITICAL INCIDENT CONTINGENCY PLAN

9.1 Assigning Roles and Responsibilities

When preparing a Critical Incident Contingency Plan staff should identify the key tasks which will need to be carried out in the event of an incident and agree which members of staff would be best suited for each task. It is likely that the Headteacher and Senior Leadership will be responsible for many, but not necessarily all of these tasks which may include for example:

- Contacting and liaising with support services, including the emergency services, the Educational Psychology Service, and other local support agencies as appropriate – Ey/ SENCO
- Organising and supporting the School office staff – ECP .
- Dealing with the media – ECP .
- Managing those aspects of the School that continue to function normally – KM.
- Allocating and staffing rooms for counselling/debriefing/support work, and a meeting room for parents – GB/ NS.

This Critical Incident Leadership Team should meet annually to review and update the School's Critical Incident Contingency Plan.

9.2 Prepare and maintain up-to-date lists of contact telephone numbers for:

Students' parents/guardians
 Staff (including part time/supply teachers and assistants)
 Governors
 Support Agencies

9.3 Consider the following points:

- who needs to be on the lists?
- where are they to be kept?
- when will they be updated and who will be responsible for this?
- do office staff always have a contact number when the Headteacher is off site?
- is there a hard copy of information stored on a computer database?
- is a copy stored out of the School?

- is there a list of staff who can provide additional help/back-up support both during and after School hours and at weekends - where is this list kept, are the contact numbers up to date?
- make sure all the information in the Critical Incident Contingency Plan is kept together (e.g. lists, this policy) and that all staff know where to find it. Review its contents regularly and remind everyone about it - don't forget to include it as part of the induction process for new staff.
- List of staff with First Aid qualification

9.4 Telephone Lines

- Is there a line that can be kept free for outgoing calls and important incoming calls?
- Should staff on off-site trips have a mobile phone?
- Who needs to be know these telephone numbers?
- Who will have responsibility for keeping the mobile phone fully charged?

9.5 Roles for office staff

These may include:

- making and/or receiving telephone calls
- dealing with distressed visitors to the school
- sorting and collating information
- organising a parents room
- dealing with "normal" School business

Other points to consider:

- Office staff need to be clear about the facts - who they should tell and what they should tell - always maintain appropriate standards of confidentiality.
- Keep records of telephone calls made and received/people contacted, etc. – consider preparing a proforma for this.
- Consider training for staff in how to deal with difficult/distressed people both in person and on the telephone. Is there a procedure for summoning help to the office in the event of any angry/violent visitor?
- This work will be very stressful for office staff, ensure that:-
 - time on task is carefully monitored
 - staff take regular breaks
 - they have reserve staff on call to lend a hand

9.6 School Trips offsite (see policy):

- keep an accurate list of all staff and students involved
- teacher in charge should also have a copy of this list
- keep list of contact telephone numbers
- consider use of mobile phone

- teacher in charge should have up-to-date medical information about students (re allergies, epilepsy, etc).

9.7 **Planning for an Evacuation:**

- how will staff and students know where to go?
- what should you /could you take with you?
- can you set up an incident room elsewhere?
- how will people be able to contact you?
- an up-to-date plan of the School site, showing access points, would be helpful for the emergency services.

9.8 **Further Issues to consider:**

- Dealing with the media
 - have a clear and agreed response for the media
 - office staff should not be expected to deal with the media
- Prepare proforma letter to parents - to give some brief facts and information about the incident and availability of support, etc. (see Appendix 1).
- Handouts for staff/students/parents about "normal" reactions to trauma/shock - these can be collated in advance but make sure everyone knows where to find them.
- How will the Critical Incident Contingency Plan be disseminated to all staff, where will copies of the plan be kept?
- Consider procedures for informing new and temporary staff about the plan.

9.9 **Finally:** In the event of a major incident or disaster the emergency services (police, fire, ambulance) will take the Lead role and the Social Services Department have a statutory duty to manage and co-ordinate the situation in line with Somerset County Council's Emergency Planning Procedures.

LOCK DOWN

In the event for the need to lock down classrooms an intermittent bell will be rung. This will alert teachers to lock classroom doors and move students away from windows etc.

EVACUATION

In the event of the need to evacuate the site beyond the normal fire drill, students will leave in a single line in the following order:

- Year 7
- Year 8
- Year 9
- Year 10
- Year 11

They will walk with tutor past the back of South block, the gym and Sports Hall onto Kingsmead Close. The LoSS will supervise the crossing of the road by staffing traffic if necessary.

Proceed up South Street to traffic lights and on to the Rec. From here it may be necessary to remove students to:

- The Children's' Centre
- The Primary School
- The Rugby Club
- The Community Centre

Paper registers will have been taken at the fire drill and should be taken at all points when students are gathered.

If it is necessary to inform parents to collect their children they will be checked off the register as they are picked up.

POINTS TO REMEMBER

- You may do no more than your best.
- Expect to feel a range of emotions, eg anxious, guilty, frightened, upset.
- Mistakes may happen - we are only human.
- Do not expect instant results.
- Do not expect to please everyone.
- Learn from what has happened.

NB: *You will be affected - remember to ask for help if needed.*

BIBLIOGRAPHY

FOR YOUNG PEOPLE 11 YEARS+

Non-Fiction

"My Father Died" and "My Mother Died" by S Wallbank. Cruse - Bereavement Care

"Your Parent Has Died" written and published by the Department of Social Work, St Christopher's Hospice, 1991

"Facing Grief: Bereavement and the Young Adult" by S Wallbank. Pub: The Lutterworth Press, 1991

Fiction

"To Hell With Dying" by A Walker. Pub: Hodder & Stoughton, 1989

"Fox in Winter" by J Branfield. Pub: Collins, 1981

"The Friends" by R Guy. Pub: Puffin Plus, 1977

"The Charlie Barber Treatment" by C Lloyd. Pub: Walker, 1989

"Comfort Herself" by G Kaye. Pub: Mammoth, 1984

"Alex" and "Alex in Winter" by T Duder. Pub: Puffin Plus, 1990 and 1991

"In the Springterm Of The Year" by Susan Hill. Pub: Penguin, 1974

"Perfect Happiness" by Penelope Lively. Pub: Penguin, 1985

BOOKS FOR ADULTS DEALING WITH CHILDREN'S GRIEF

"Helping Younger Bereaved Brothers and Sisters" by The Compassionate Friends, 1991

"Caring For Bereaved Children" by Mary Bending. Pub: Cruse - Bereavement Care, 1993

"The Motherless Child" by Dr Dora Black. Pub: Cruse - Bereavement Care

"On Loving Your Child" by D A Torrie. Pub: Cruse - Bereavement Care

"So Will I Comfort You" by J Kander. Pub: Lux Verbi, 1990

"Beyond Grief: A Guide for Recovering from The Death of a Loved One" by C Staudacher. Pub: Souvenir Press, 1987

Further advice regarding these and other publications can be obtained from Cruse - Bereavement Care, 126 Sheen Road, Richmond, Surrey, TW9 1UR. Tel: 0181 940 4818

Key Source: "Wise Before the Event. Coping with crises in Schools" by William Yule and Anne Gold. Pub: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation.

SOURCES OF FURTHER INFORMATION

CRUSE

Cruse House
126 Sheen Road
RICHMOND
Surrey TW9 1UR

ACT

(Association for Children with Terminal and Life-threatening conditions and their families)
Institute of Child Health
Royal Hospital for Sick Children
St Michael's Hill
BRISTOL BS2 8BJ

ChildLine provides a free and confidential service for children.

ChildLine

Freepost 1111
London
N1 OBR
Telephone 0800 1111

Website <http://www.ChildLine.org.uk>.

Child Death Helpline

Freephone 0800 282986

Compassionate Friends

(Nationwide self-help organisation for bereaved parents)
53 North Street
BRISTOL BS3 1EB

TACT (Trauma After Care Trust)

Headquarters
Buttfields
The Farthings
WITHINGTON
Glos GL54 4DF
Helpline: 01242 890306

The Samaritans provide a 24-hour service offering confidential emotional support to anyone who is in crisis.

Telephone helpline 0345 90 90 90

The Young Minds Parent Information Service provides information and advice on child mental health issues.

102-108 Clerkenwell Road
LONDON
EC1M 5SA
Telephone 0800 018 2138

Winston's Wish for anyone caring for a child who has been bereaved:

Winston's Wish
Clara Burgess Centre
Bayshill Road
CHELTENHAM GL50 3AW
Helpline Telephone 0845 20 30 40 5
Email info@winstonswish.org.uk

EXAMPLE LETTER

Dear Parents

You may have heard/ It is with sadness and regret that I have to inform you (*brief details of the incident, perhaps some positive remembrances of the person(s) lost, and the sense of loss*).

Explain that the students in School have been told this sad news today by their teachers. And that we will/have remembered in a service/assembly.

Our thoughts are with’s parents at this sad time.

[In the event of a sudden/traumatic death in the School or local community – “During the day we have been supported by the Educational Psychology Service and this help will continue as necessary during the coming days”.]

I hope this information is helpful.

Yours faithfully