



COOMBE
WOOD
SCHOOL

Critical Incident Policy

Policy Area

Key Document

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Statement of intent

Coombe Wood School recognises that whilst the safety of students, staff members and visitors on the school's premises is paramount, it is sometimes out of the control of the school.

In an emergency, staff members at Coombe Wood School will endeavour to take all reasonable actions in order to ensure the safety of its students.

The procedures outlined in this policy aim to minimise disruption to the learning environment whilst ensuring the safety of all students, staff members and visitors, by responding to critical incidents as quickly and efficiently as possible.

1. Legal framework

1.1. This policy has due regard to legislation and guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992

Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999

Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974

Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005

DfE (2015) 'Emergency planning and response'

1.2. This policy will be implemented in conjunction with the following school policies, documents and procedures:

Health and Safety Policy

Fire safety and evacuation Policy

Lockdown Policy

Educational Trips and Visits Policy

First Aid and Medical Policy

Complaints Procedure Policy

Child Protection policy

2. Definition

2.1. For the purpose of this policy, a critical incident is an emergency which affects students, staff, visitors or property and requires immediate responsive action which is beyond that reasonably expected from the school's own management team.

2.2. Critical incidents include, but are not limited to, the following:

The death of a student, staff member or governor

A serious incident involving a student or staff member on, or off, the school premises

A violent intrusion onto the premises, e.g. a bomb alert

Extensive damage to school property

A fire, flood or explosion

The effects of disasters in the wider community

Incidents whilst on educational visits

Epidemics

Exposure to hazardous substances near, or on, the school premises

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1. The **headteacher** is responsible for:

- Appointing designated staff members to the critical incident management team.
- Working alongside the critical incident management team to ensure that critical incidents are managed effectively.
- Ensuring that an appropriate ratio of first aiders to students is sustained at all times.
- Ensuring that a simple and straightforward, but effective, critical incident management plan is in place.
- Ensuring that all staff members are aware of the school's critical incident management plan and the associated procedures.
- Reviewing the critical incident plan at regular intervals, ensuring that it is kept up-to-date with developments at the school, such as changes to evacuation procedures.
- Keeping a duplicate copy of the critical incident management plan off the school premises in case of a fire, flood or explosion.
- Ensuring that vital information is not lost in the event of a fire, flood or explosion, by keeping a copy of up-to-date student and personnel records off the school premises.
- Liaising with the press, or appointing a designated member of staff to do so.
- Reviewing allocations of responsibilities in light of staff absence.
- Compiling an emergency contact list in the Team Drive that all staff have access to.
- Informing parents and the school community about the critical incident.

3.2. All staff members are responsible for:

- Acting in accordance with this policy at all times.
- Effectively implementing the critical incident management plan, when necessary.
- Maintaining up-to-date records of critical incidents at the school.
- Maintaining their own records of events, as well as keeping copies of notes made by other colleagues.
- Ensuring that they effectively understand the school's critical incident management plan.
- Understanding how to effectively carry out the school's emergency evacuation procedures.
- Understanding their role in the execution of the school's emergency plans, including evacuation procedures and the critical incident management plan.

Ensuring that students are aware of the school's emergency evacuation procedures.

Ensuring that their own contact details are kept up-to-date on school records.

4. Critical incident management team

4.1. The headteacher and DHO NLA WSM VSI form the school's critical incident management team. This team will be responsible for:

Ensuring that parents are kept informed about the situation.

Deciding when and how to re-open the school.

Providing support for the families of those hurt or bereaved.

Ensuring the school effectively cooperates and liaises with the relevant bodies during investigations into critical incidents.

Dealing with continued interest from the media.

Ensuring the appropriate attendance of school members at funerals.

Organising memorial services, including the sending of flowers.

4.2. In the event of a critical incident, the critical incident management team will work alongside the headteacher in order to effectively fulfil their role, as outlined above.

4.3. **The headteacher's office will be allocated to the critical incident management team** and any necessary equipment and information will be stored here.

4.4. **Folio House, Park Hill Junior School, will be used as a reserve off-site location** for the critical incident management team when the on-site location is not usable.

4.5. The team will collate and retain any records regarding the planning of, and response to, critical incidents, including written records and any recordings made via CCTV.

4.6. The team will ensure that each member of staff involved in dealing with a critical incident has recorded all decisions that were made, any communication that was received and all tasks that were carried out.

5. Initial action

5.1. Immediate action will be taken in order to safeguard students and staff, using the school's emergency evacuation and lock down procedures where appropriate.

5.2. The alarm will be raised by the first adult at the scene of the incident.

5.3. Members of the critical incident management team will ascertain the details of the incident.

5.4. All initial information regarding the incident will be logged on school incident forms

5.5. First aid will be administered by the first trained first aider at the scene of the incident.

5.6. All first aid and medical treatment will be administered and recorded in line with the school's First Aid Policy.

5.7. The emergency services will be contacted and the following information will be given:

The emergency services required

Exact location of incident

Number of casualties

Number of injuries

Location and phone number of where the call is being made from

Any hazards which the emergency services may encounter on site

5.8. Where possible, the school will remain open and normal routine will be maintained.

6. Emergency procedures

6.1. All staff members and students are aware of the school's emergency procedures, including those outlined in the school's Lockdown and Evacuation Policies.

6.2. The school's designated emergency assembly points are clearly indicated and known by all staff members and students.

6.3. CWS will carry out a practice drill of the school's evacuation procedure at least once a term, to ensure that students and staff members fully understand what is involved in the procedure, and that it is implemented effectively.

6.4. In the event of an evacuation, staff members and students will be alerted by the fire bell if it is a fire evacuation. For any other evacuation the headteacher or most senior member of staff will loop the building blowing a whistle and informing staff and students to follow the normal fire evacuation procedure.

6.5. In the event of an intruder or external hazard, staff members will be signalled of the need for shelter by the blowing of a whistle 6 times, indicating to staff that the school's lock down procedure should be followed.

6.6. All staff members are aware of the school's designated first aiders and the locations of first aid boxes within the school.

6.7. In the event that first aid or medical treatment is necessary, the procedures outlined in the school's First Aid Policy will be followed.

6.8. All staff members will receive training regarding the school's emergency evacuation procedures, and will be aware of:

The appropriate route to take.

What assembly point to use in the event of different scenarios.

Security arrangements that are in place, such as the locking of the school gates.

Access arrangements for the emergency services.

7. Emergencies during educational visits

- 7.1. All staff members will act in accordance with the school's Educational Trips and Visits Policy, following the outlined procedures in the event of an emergency.
- 7.2. Critical incidents that occur on school trips will be managed in the same way as those that occur on the school premises.
- 7.3. The trip leader is responsible for maintaining written records of any critical incidents that occur whilst on a trip, as well as the action which was taken and by whom.
- 7.4. The trip leader is responsible for reporting the critical incident to the headteacher immediately.
- 7.5. Any critical incident that occurs on a school trip will be communicated to all staff members, ensuring that they are aware of any students who may suffer from shock.

8. Internal communications

- 8.1. The school's internal communication systems will be used to alert staff members to a critical incident in the first instance, without alarming students unnecessarily.
- 8.2. Staff members, students and parents will be informed of critical incidents in the most sensitive way possible.
- 8.3. The parents of students who are directly involved in the incident will be contacted immediately using the emergency contact details provided to the school.
- 8.4. Students will be informed of a critical incident in groups as small as practicable.
- 8.5. Parents of students not directly involved in the incident will be contacted quickly and efficiently, via email, as soon as is reasonably practicable.
- 8.6. Members of the school's governing board will be informed about the critical incident as soon as possible, and will be briefed about speaking to the press.
- 8.7. During an emergency, staff members will use mobile phones to stay in contact with one another and communicate key messages.
- 8.8. Staff briefings will be conducted following the occurrence of a critical incident, in order to further investigate the event and provide staff members with any updates.
- 8.9. Weekly staff meetings will provide an opportunity for staff members to raise any concerns about the school, including those in relation to emergency procedures and critical incidents.

9. After a critical incident

- 9.1. Following the occurrence of a critical incident, the school's short term aims include the following:

Contacting those directly involved

Inform the governing board and the LA

Appropriately debriefing the school community

Attempting to maintain normal school routines

Making appropriate plans for attendance at funerals and memorials

Monitoring the wellbeing of staff and students, particularly those directly involved in the incident

Expressing sympathy to the families of those involved

Identifying vulnerable staff and students, ensuring they are aware of the support available to them

9.2. In the medium term, the school's aims include the following:

Making arrangements for students involved to return to school

Arranging alternative teaching, where necessary

Providing support to staff members and students affected

Arranging consultations with educational psychologists, where necessary

Clarifying support arrangements and referring students for individual help, if appropriate

Keeping parents updated and informed

9.3. In the longer term, the school's aims include the following:

Introducing support systems to continuously monitor vulnerable students and staff members

Discussing how to mark anniversaries

Ensuring all staff members, including new staff, are aware of students affected by the incident

Acting sensitively to students' needs

Ensuring students and staff members know how to obtain further help

10. Post-incident support

- 10.1. Staff members will strive to create a welcoming atmosphere in which students can openly discuss life events, including when critical incidents occur.
- 10.2. Following a critical incident, staff members will consult with the parents of students involved regarding how best to support the student, ensuring that their needs are taken into account.
- 10.3. Counselling will be offered to students who were involved in, or witnessed, a critical incident.
- 10.4. Topics including bereavement, stress and safety will be covered as part of the curriculum.
- 10.5. Absences must be authorised by the headteacher for students attending events following the incident, including funerals and counselling sessions.

- 10.6. The critical incident management team will lead debriefing meetings for staff members, students and parents, as well as for the wider community where appropriate.
- 10.7. The need for individual or group support will be assessed by class teachers in the period following a critical incident.
- 10.8. Where necessary, the school will liaise with parents regarding a phased return to school for students involved in a critical incident.
- 10.9. Information regarding the support being accessed by staff members and students will be treated as personal data and processed in line with the school's Data Protection Policy, transferring information to external agencies where necessary.

11. Media relations

- 11.1. All information given to the media is done so through the headteacher.
- 11.2. All statements will be agreed by the headteacher and critical incident management team before going to the press.
- 11.3. Students will not be named during communication with the press unless parental consent has been sought.
- 11.4. Personal information regarding staff members, students and visitors will be kept confidential and treated in accordance with the school's Data Protection Policy.
- 11.5. Details of the critical incident which may be harmful to investigations into the incident or which reveal personal information will be treated as confidential.
- 11.6. Staff members will not talk off the record to the media and will refer all enquiries to the headteacher, critical incident management team or designated staff member.
- 11.7. The school will strive to liaise and co-operate with the media by answering any queries, as appropriate.
- 11.8. All statements given to the press will be factual.
- 11.9. The school will aim to reassure the public and demonstrate control of the situation, as well as counter any dangerous rumours or gossip.
- 11.10. Child protection and safeguarding measures will be taken when reporting about students.
- 11.11. Parental permission will be sought prior to any press interviews with students.
- 11.12. Times of press releases will be pre-agreed in order to avoid continuous pressure.
- 11.13. Where appropriate, a pre-prepared statement containing basic information about the school and the school's procedures will be used.
- 11.14. The critical incident management team will ensure that any media access to the site, staff and students is controlled.

12. Handling complaints

- 12.1. CWS recognises that the occurrence of a critical incident is a sensitive subject.
- 12.2. Complaints or concerns regarding the school's critical incident arrangements should be made in accordance with the school's Complaints Procedure Policy.
- 12.3. The school will continuously work to address and resolve concerns, ensuring that critical incidents are dealt with in line with the law, as well as in a sensitive and supportive manner.

13. Monitoring and review

- 13.1. This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis by the headteacher, with any changes made to the policy being communicated to all teaching staff and the governing board.