



Dedicated to Excellence

Ox Close Primary School

Approved by Governing Body on 19th May 2016

Critical Incident Policy



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CRITICAL INCIDENTS PROCEDURES FOR SCHOOLS AND OTHER EDUCATIONAL ESTABLISHMENTS

A “critical incident” is an event which will disrupt the normal functioning of an education establishment and a return to normal routine cannot be achieved by the use of the establishment’s own resources.

Introduction

- 1.1 Critical incidents in schools are rare but when they occur they must be dealt with promptly and efficiently.
- 1.2 A number of County Council departments and other agencies will be called upon to help. Their assistance must be timely and co-ordinated.
- 1.3 Various individuals and organisations will be seeking information about the incident. There must be adequate arrangements to deal with their requests and to ensure that the information is accurate.
- 1.4 The infrequency of critical incidents means that individual schools have little experience or expertise in dealing with them. These procedures offer guidance and advice on the actions to be taken, based on the experience of others.
- 1.5 Head Teachers are to make themselves familiar with these procedures and will be responsible for initiating them in the event of a critical incident at their school.
- 1.6 The critical incident procedures detailed in this document are applicable to all educational establishments.
- 1.7 As a critical incident may restrict access to parts of buildings, it is recommended that a copy of this document (and the emergency contact telephone numbers) is retained out of school, (perhaps at home).

Exceptions

- 2.1 In the event of a major disaster this Critical Incident procedure would be over ridden by the Emergency Planning Procedure
- 2.2 The definition of a “critical incident” is intended to give schools complete discretion in deciding if an event is to be treated as a critical incident. It should not be considered to include routine repairs in so far as they disrupt the normal functioning of a school and require the assistance of an outside agency. This is not the intention and would amount to the misuse of these procedures.

2.3 **Other exceptions to this policy**

Death of pupil (-----expected) contact David Wall 0191 383 3284

Death of pupil (---out of hours)..... contact David Wall 0191 383 3284

Child Protectioncontact Jane Stout 0191 383 3277

An accident on an educational visit or off site activity..... 0191 384 3381

Major disaster involving DCC Emergency Planning Team..... 0191 384 3381

2.4 The following would **not**, by themselves, be considered a critical incident:

- ◆ Full or partial failure of heating plant
- ◆ Burglaries
- ◆ Acts of criminal damage

Aim

3.1 The aim of these procedures is to:

- ◆ Ensure the safety of staff, pupils and visitors
- ◆ Contain and minimize damage to buildings, facilities and equipment
- ◆ Return the school to normal operation as quickly as possible

Immediate Action

4.1 While each incident will be unique, the first steps to deal with one incident will be common to all. These first steps are known as “immediate actions” (**IAs**).

4.2 A critical incident can occur at any time. Those incidents which happen when the building is occupied are known as “in-hours” incidents and those when the building is secured and unoccupied are known as “out-of-hours” incidents.

4.3 It is more likely that an out-of-hours incident will be related to the building and the most probable incidents will involve fire or the failure of other building services. Almost certainly, the Headteacher will not be on site and the responsibility for taking the IAs will fall on the caretaker who must be aware of and understand these procedures.

Immediate Action: In Hours Incidents

4.4 The IAs to be taken in dealing with an in-hours critical incident are:

- ◆ Assess the situation: check the facts
- ◆ Evacuate the building (See Appendix A) *
- ◆ Ring the emergency services *
- ◆ Ring the Director of Children and Young People’s Services
- ◆ Open the log (See Appendix B)

Note

* It is expected that these actions would happen concurrently with one member of staff contacting the emergency services and the remainder supervising the evacuation.

Immediate Action: Out-of-Hours Incidents

4.5 The IAs to be taken in dealing with an out-of-hours critical incident are:

- ◆ Assess the situation : check the facts
- ◆ Ring the emergency services
- ◆ Ring the Headteacher
- ◆ Ring the Director of Children and Young People's Services
- ◆ Open the log (See Appendix B)

4.6 Assessing the Situation

The Headteacher must satisfy him/herself on the nature of the incident

- ◆ What has happened?
- ◆ Where has it happened?
- ◆ When did it happen?
- ◆ How did it happen?
- ◆ Who is involved? Staff? Pupils?
- ◆ How many involved? Staff? Pupils?
- ◆ What action has been taken so far?

This must be done quickly and if there is the slightest concern over the personal safety of staff, pupils and visitors then the building must be evacuated while the facts are confirmed.

4.7 Evacuating the Building

If there is the slightest concern over the personal safety of staff, pupils, students and visitors then the building must be evacuated immediately. The evacuation procedures are detailed in Annex A.

4.8 Ringing the Emergency Services

Always dial "999". Do not ring fire, police or ambulance stations directly. (See Annex A)

4.9 Ringing the Headteacher

The Headteacher must be informed immediately.

4.10 Ringing the Director of Children and Young People's Services

The Director of Children and Young People's Services must be informed immediately after the Headteacher. If assistance from the LA or other Council Departments is to be provided promptly then the Director of Children and Young People's Services must be informed immediately after the emergency services and the Headteacher. Schools should not normally contact other Departments direct, as this will create delay.

4.11 Keeping a Log (See Appendix B)

For any subsequent enquiry it is important that there is a clear account of the sequence and timing of events. These may be startlingly clear during the event but will be less so afterwards. One member of staff will be detailed to write this log. This is an action, (and factual) not a narrative log and Headteachers may choose to retain responsibility for writing the log.

Section 5: Medical Treatment

5.1 First Aid

If they can be moved casualties should be taken to the medical inspection room or other convenient, safe location for first aid. If the building has been evacuated then an aid station should be set up and the casualties treated there. Casualties who cannot be moved should be given first aid on the spot. A member of staff is to remain with them until the emergency services arrive to treat the casualty. If the building is evacuated then a decision will need to be made whether or not to evacuate such casualties immediately or wait for the arrival of the emergency services who will be better equipped for moving casualties.

5.2 Hospital Treatment

Should any casualties require hospital treatment, the ambulance service would be contacted by dialing 999.

5.3 Nominal Roll

A nominal roll of all casualties must be kept.

Section 6: Parents, Governors and Press

Parents

- 6.1 Parents will be concerned with the safety of their children and will wish to be re-assured that all is well. The parents and next of kin of any casualties taken to hospital must be informed as quickly as possible. One member of staff must be tasked to contact next of kin and parents by telephone. If this proves impossible (in some or all cases) then the LA Co-ordinator must be advised and alternative means of contacting next of kin (including home visits) will be considered.
- 6.2 Some parents may visit the school to re-assure themselves that their child is safe. Headteachers should be aware of this and make sure their staff are able to give parents positive re-assurance. If necessary the LA Co-ordinator will arrange for assistance to carry out this task but it is better that it is carried out by members of the school staff who will know both children and parents.
- 6.3 Depending on the numbers of parents turning up it may be necessary to set up an information center to handle these queries.
- 6.4 Parents who do not visit the school or who are not contacted directly by the school will nevertheless, wish to know what has happened and be re-assured all is well. A letter outlining events should be prepared and sent to all parents. If necessary the LA Co-ordinator will assist with the printing of this letter. It can be taken home by the pupils or posted as is appropriate.

Governors

- 7.1 The Headteacher should inform the Chairperson of Governors of the occurrence as soon as is convenient. In due course a report will be prepared by the Headteacher for the Governing Body and, at their discretion, this may be presented to an extraordinary meeting of the Governing body. The log will be of assistance in preparing this report.

Press

- 8.1 The presence of radio, TV and newspaper reporters at a critical incident is inevitable. If the emergency services are called out they will arrive sooner rather than later. The Press Office will be contacted by the LA Co-ordinator. **Do not speak to the press or media, refer them to Durham County Council's Press and Publicity Officer on 0191 383 3373**

- 8.2 It must be recognised and accepted that the press have a job to do and deadlines to meet. They are seeking facts and comments and in the first few minutes of a critical incident the facts may not be fully known. Bad news (or rumour) makes good headlines and in the absence of a clear, unambiguous description of events the press tend to seize upon any information and seek comment on it. This can lead to an exaggerated and distorted version of events being published.

Command and Control at the School

- 9.1 It is possible for both the Headteacher and the Deputy Headteacher to be absent when a serious in-hours occurrence happens. This may create uncertainty over who is in charge and who has authority to make decisions. This can delay taking crucial action. Schools must ensure whatever happens (in or out of hours) one individual is seen and acknowledged to be in charge of the school. If that individual has to leave the school for any reason (e.g. taken to hospital) then the command must be handed over by them to a named member of staff.

Other Departments

- 10.1 The assistance of other departments will be sought as necessary by the LA Co-ordinator.

The LA Co-ordinator

- 11.1 A LA Co-ordinator will be appointed by the Director of Children and Young People's Services.
- 11.2 The LA Co-ordinator will be responsible for ensuring that the activities of other departments and agencies are properly co-ordinated and for keeping the Director fully and accurately informed of events.
- 11.3 The usual LA Co-ordinator will be a Senior Officer from SGSS.

Communications

- 12.1 By its very nature a critical incident occurs without notice. Officers required to assist may be out, on holiday, or at meetings where they are difficult to reach.
- 12.2 For these reasons every officer with a responsibility under these procedures will have a nominated deputy and the term "critical incident" prefixing any message will ensure:
- ◆ Absolute priority over other traffic
 - ◆ The interruption of any meeting. Officers named in these procedures will make sure their staff are aware of this prefix and of its importance

Conclusion

- 13.1 It is impossible to detail the action to be taken in every emergency but use of standard procedures, checklists and the keeping of a log will ensure that:
- ◆ Written details are kept as the incident develops
 - ◆ No action is omitted simply because no-one thought of it at the time

DEFINITIONS

1.1 **School**

The term “school” is used throughout to include all educational establishments.

1.2 **Headteacher**

The term “Headteacher” is used throughout to include the manager, head or principal of an educational establishment and includes the member of staff in charge of the school when the incident occurs.

1.3 **Building**

The term “building” is used throughout to include all buildings at the establishment.

1.4 **Emergency Services**

This term includes fire, police and ambulance services.

1.5 **Casualty**

A “casualty” is defined as anyone requiring medical treatment as a result of the incident.

1.6 **Pupil**

The term pupil is taken to include student, a member of a youth club or any other group based at the establishment involved in the incident.

1.7 **Staff**

The term staff includes both teaching and non-teaching staff including full-time, part-time and voluntary staff.

1.8 **Visitor**

A visitor is anyone who is neither a pupil nor member of staff who is on site when the incident occurs. This includes parents, advisers and staff from council departments including Contract Services Department.

1.9 **In-Hours**

The term in-hours means that the building is occupied. This includes the evening use of schools and the morning and evening cleaning before and after lessons.

1.10 **Out-Of-Hours**

The term out-of-hours means that the building is unoccupied and secured. This includes overnight, weekend and holiday periods.

ANNEX A

EVACUATION PROCEDURES

- 1.0 The Headteacher, or senior person in charge of the school, needs to make a risk assessment as to whether the building should be evacuated or not. The school will be evacuated if there is any risk to life by remaining in the building. In some incidents it will be safer to stay inside the building
- 2.0 The evacuation may be either:
 - ◆ A full evacuation of all staff, pupils and visitors
 - or
 - ◆ A partial evacuation of staff, pupils and visitors from some parts of the building.
 - ◆ The sounding of the school fire alarm will always mean a full evacuation of the school.
- 3.0 The decision on a full, or partial evacuation, will be made by the Headteacher, or senior person in charge of the school. In any doubt, this decision must always be for a full evacuation.

Raising the Alarm

- 4.0 Once the decision to evacuate has been made the alarm will be given. For a full evacuation this will be by means of the fire alarm. For a partial evacuation it may be given by word of mouth.

Contacting the Emergency Services

- 5.0 The emergency services are contacted by dialing "999". do not attempt to ring the emergency services direct. This will cause delay in them responding. They will require the following information:
 - ◆ Services required**Fire, Police or Ambulance**
 - ◆ The name and address of the school
 - ◆ Brief details of the incident
 - ◆ The name of the member of staff making the call
 - ◆ The telephone number from which the call is being made.

One member of staff must be detailed to meet the emergency services at the main gate of the school and to direct them to the incident.

Contacting the Director of Children and Young People's Services

- 6.0 The Director of Children and Young People's Services must be contacted immediately after ringing the emergency services and the Headteacher, on 0191 383 3319 / 383 4420 or, if outside normal office hours, ring either :
Sheila Palmerley 07733 228480
Dave Wood 07930 604611

Leaving the Building

- 7.0 Staff, pupils and visitors will leave the building quickly and in an orderly fashion. Class teachers will be responsible for escorting their class out of the building and taking them to the designated assembly point by the safest, shortest route.

Disabled Pupils

- 8.0 Special schools or other establishments where there is a high percentage of pupils with severe learning difficulties or physical disabilities should make due allowance for this in their evacuation procedures and, if necessary, seek the advice of the fire officer in preparing such procedures.
- 8.1 Schools where pupils with mental or physical disabilities are occasional visitors, must include arrangements for their evacuation within their fire drill. The exact nature of these plans will depend upon the circumstances at each school but consideration might be given to making one (or more) members of staff responsible for these pupils during an evacuation.

- 8.2 If it proves impossible to evacuate such pupils for whatever reasons (e.g. from the top floor or a multi-storey building) then they should be moved to a location as far from the danger as possible and all doors between them and the danger closed.
- 8.3 The name and location of all such pupils be given to the emergency services immediately upon arrival.
- 8.4 Power may be lost as a result of the incident. Therefore lifts should not be used to evacuate anyone, disabled or otherwise.

Nominal Roll

- 9.0 Once at the assembly point classes should line up by form.
- 9.1 Provision must be made for the registers to be brought to the assembly point and given to form teachers who will call the register.
- 9.2 Schools should have arrangements for visitors to sign in and out so that they may be included in this check.
- 9.3 Youth clubs, community schools and other establishments, where class registers are not kept as a matter of course, may wish to consider introducing a system where:
- ◆ Visitors sign in and out as they enter and leave. This could be considered bureaucratic and not all visitors may sign in.
- or**
- ◆ Dividing the building into areas (or zones) and making a member of staff responsible for checking each zone has been evacuated. If this system is adopted and if there is a requirement for classes or group to be escorted from the building then there may not be sufficient staff to do it properly. It is also important each member of staff clearly understands which zone he is checking otherwise there is the risk of some zones being checked twice and others not at all.
- 9.4 It is important that everyone is accounted for as:
- ◆ Evacuated
 - ◆ Absent from school
 - ◆ Within the building
- 9.5 Anyone remaining within the building (for whatever reason) should be identified by name and their last known location within the building. This information be given to the emergency services immediately on their arrival.

First Aid

- 10.0 A first aid kit will be brought out of the school. This should be the responsibility of a nominated member of staff.
- 10.1 A first post will be set up and all casualties brought to it.

Command Post

- 11.0 One area should be used by the Headteacher as a command post. All staff should know where this is and it should be manned at all times. If the Headteacher leaves the command post, his/her whereabouts should be known by the staff remaining at the command post.

Re-entering the Building

- 12.0 Once the building has been evacuated **no-one** will re-enter the building until it has been declared safe. If the emergency services are on site then **no-one** is to re-enter the building until the emergency services declare it safe.

ANNEX B

ROLE OF THE LA CO-ORDINATOR

1. A Co-ordinator will be appointed by the Director of Children and Young People's Services
2. Once notified a Critical Incident e-mail will be sent to the following offices/departments. (Template Annex D)

Children and Young People's Services:

Relevant School Improvement Partner (Education Development Service)

Mandie Spence (Strategy and Staffing)

Sheila Palmerley (Business Support Service)

Simon Lipscombe (Health and Safety Manager)

Jane Jack (Access and Inclusion Services)

Marianne Taylor (Education Psychology Service)

Lynne Gregory (Learning Support Service)

Ann Rae (ITSS)

Wendy Watson (School & Governor Support Service)

Corporate Services:

Ron Harrison (Corporate Services HR)

Ken Pearson (Estates Management)

Chief Executive's Office:

Fraser Davie (Press Office)

For information only: Peter Keable (County Treasurers)

If appropriate, the Diocese should be invited to attend (RC or CE)

Simultaneously a telephone call will be made to all those officers on the list. If they are not available a deputy should be nominated to attend the meeting.

3. The LA Co-ordinator will call a meeting of all services within 2 hours of in-hours serious occurrence.
The ABC flashcard should not be sent out before this meeting
4. The purpose of the meeting will be to identify the relevant services and co-ordinate the response. Minutes plus agreed actions will need to be recorded and circulated.
5. The meetings should be held regularly until the incident is resolved.
6. Minutes of Co-ordination Meeting should also be circulated to the Director, plus all in 2 above who will update SMT.

Exceptions to this policy:

Death of pupil (-----expected) contact David Wall 0191 383 3284

Death of pupil (--out of hours)..... contact David Wall 0191 383 3284

Child Protection contact Jane Stout 0191 383 3277

An accident on an Educational Visit or Off Site Activity 0191 384 3381

Major disaster involving DCC Emergency Planning Team 0191 384 3381

ANNEX C SPECIMEN LOG

Date and time of Incident

Nature of Occurrence (brief description)

Name and Position of Person in charge of Premises at Time of Incident

Contact with Emergency Services

1. **Fire Brigade** Time Contacted
Time of Arrival
2. **Police** Time Contacted
Time of Arrival
3. **Ambulance** Time Contacted
Time of Arrival

Contact with Director of Children and Young People's Services

1. Name of Person contacted:
2. Time contact was made:

List of Casualties (if appropriate)

Additional Comments (as necessary)

Signature