



Critical Incident Policy 2024-25

Introduction

All schools should consider the need for a robust and tested school critical incident procedures. Critical incident procedures should be seen as a sensible and proportionate response to any external or internal incident which has the potential to pose a threat to the safety of staff and students in the school. Procedures should aim to minimise disruption to the learning environment whilst ensuring the safety of all students and staff.

Critical incident procedures may be activated in response to any number of situations, but some of the more typical might be:

- A reported incident/civil disturbance in the local community (with the potential to pose a risk to staff and students in the school);
- An intruder on the school site (with the potential to pose a risk to staff and students);
- A warning being received regarding a risk locally, of air pollution (smoke plume, gas cloud etc);
- A major fire in the vicinity of the school;
- The proximity of a dangerous dog roaming loose.

This policy will detail –

- Access to the school bell controls to raise an alarm in an emergency;
- Other means of internal communications - messenger, mobile phone, internal email, texts etc.

Procedure

- Staff are alerted to the activation of the critical incident procedure by receipt of text via a school WhatsApp group on their mobile telephones or through the school email system.
- Students who are outside or in one of the outside school buildings are to be brought inside as quickly as possible into the main school, if it is safe to do so, otherwise they will remain in the outside school building(s), the staff to secure the outside school building(s);
- Those inside the school should remain in their classrooms and, if appropriate, take cover underneath desks;
- All external doors and, as necessary, windows are locked (depending on the circumstances, internal classroom doors may also need to be locked or secured).
- Staff to communicate with the school office via mobile telephones if in critical incident mode in the outside school building(s).

Once in critical incident mode, staff should notify the office immediately of any student not accounted for (and instigate an immediate search for any missing)

- Staff should encourage the students to keep calm;
- As appropriate, the school should establish communication with the Emergency Services as soon as possible;
- If necessary, parents should be notified as soon as it is practicable to do so via the school's established communications system;
- Students will not be released to parents during a lockdown;
- If it is necessary to evacuate the building, the fire alarm will be sounded;
- Staff should await further instructions.

It is of vital importance that the school's critical incident procedures are familiar to members of the senior management team, school administrators, teaching staff and non-teaching staff.

Critical Incident Arrangements

1. A Partial Critical Incident Alert to staff: 'Partial Critical Incident'. This may be because of a reported incident /civil disturbance in the local community with the potential to pose a risk to staff and students in the school. It may also be because of a warning being received regarding the risk of air pollution, etc.

Immediate action:

- All outside activity to cease immediately, students and staff return to building; (There need to be a means of communicating the alert to duty staff at break times)
- All staff and students remain in building and external doors and windows locked;
- Free movement may be permitted within the building dependent upon circumstances.

All situations are different. Once all staff and students are safely inside, senior staff will conduct an ongoing and dynamic risk assessment. This can then be communicated to staff and students. 'Partial Critical Incident' is a precautionary measure but puts the school in a state of readiness (whilst retaining a degree of normality) should the situation escalate.

2. A Full Critical Incident Alert to staff: 'Full Critical Incident'. This signifies an immediate threat to the school and may be an escalation of a partial critical incident.

Immediate action:

- All students return to base (classroom, tutor room or other agreed location e.g. sports/assembly/dining hall);
- External doors locked. Classroom doors locked (where a member of staff with key is present); Windows locked, blinds drawn, students sit quietly out of sight (e.g. under desk or around a corner);
- Register taken - the office will contact each class in turn for an attendance report;
- Staff and students remain in lock down until it has been lifted by a senior member of staff /emergency services. At any point during the lockdown, the fire alarm may sound which is a cue to evacuate the building.

During the critical incident, staff will keep agreed lines of communication open but not make unnecessary calls to the central office as this could delay more important communication.

Communication:

The school critical incident procedure, especially arrangements for communicating with parents, should be routinely shared with parents either by newsletter or via the school website.

In the event of an actual critical incident, it is strongly advised that any incident or development is communicated to parents as soon as is practicable. It is obvious that parents will be concerned but regular communication of accurate information will help to alleviate undue anxiety.

Parents should be given enough information about what will happen so that they:

- Are reassured that the school understands their concern for their child's welfare, and that it is doing everything possible to ensure his/her safety;
- Do not need to contact the school. Calling the school could tie up telephone lines that are needed for contacting emergency providers;
- Do not come to the school. They could interfere with emergency provider's access to the school and may even put themselves and others in danger;
- Wait for the school to contact them about when it is safe for them to come and collect their children, and where this will be from.

The communication with parents' part of the plan needs to reassure parents that the school understands their concern for their children's welfare and that everything that can possibly be done to ensure children's safety will be done. However, it may also be prudent to reinforce the message 'the school is in a full critical incident situation'. During this period the switchboard and entrances will be un-manned, external doors locked and nobody allowed in or out'.

Emergency Services - It is important to keep lines of communication open with Emergency Services as they are best placed to offer advice as a situation unfolds. The school site may or may not be cordoned off by Emergency Services depending on the severity of the incident that has triggered the Critical Incident.

Review Date: September 2025