

Critical Incident Policy

Purpose

The purpose of this policy document is to outline guidelines for dealing with a major incident, emergency or crisis that involves The Villa Community. Health & Safety procedures and risk assessments are in place to reduce, as far as possible, the likelihood of a major incident occurring. Whilst large-scale disasters are rare, there are many other small-scale traumas, that may be distressing to the individuals concerned and can be equally devastating. No-one can predict when a disaster will occur but thinking and planning ahead will help us to cope better during and after an incident and will help reduce the distress of pupils, staff and parents. The following are examples of the crises that might arise:

Types of Incidents

- A serious accident involving staff/ pupils/ public occurring at The Villa
- A serious accident involving staff/ pupils/ public at an off-site venue/school trip
- A transport accident involving a school or nursery party
- A serious breach of security, on or off school premises, involving staff or pupils (refer also to Lockdown Procedures)
- A major incident at The Villa (e.g. fire, explosion, terrorist incident) leading to injury and/or loss of life and/ or substantial damage to the premises (refer also to Lockdown Procedures)
- Death of a pupil or a member of staff
- A serious contagious disease outbreak
- An incident of violence or assault at The Villa (refer also to Lockdown Procedures)
- A hostage situation at The Villa (refer also to Lockdown Procedures)
- A natural disaster in the local community

Tasks when a crisis occurs:

- First Aid should be given as appropriate
- Where necessary staff, pupils and visitors should be evacuated to safety as soon as possible. This may involve (e.g. in the case of a major fire on the premises) temporarily re-locating to Warwick Gardens or Harris Academy Peckham until parents can be contacted to come and collect
- The emergency services should be called by the senior person who is present at the scene
- The Head Teacher and Nursery Managers should be contacted, if offsite
- Pupils (injured or otherwise) should be closely supervised and comforted by all available staff
- Parents should be contacted as soon as is practical
- Use an appropriate fire extinguisher to tackle a blaze prior to the arrival of the emergency services (optional)

- Provide accurate information - all factual information should be relayed as and when it is known. Delay and uncertainty breeds rumour and distress. The main phone line must be kept clear.
- Deal with enquiries by bringing into school those families of the individuals involved.
- Those answering the phone should keep notes.
- Refer to the up-to date list of pupils' next of kin in the office.
- Informing parents is a very important issue made more complex in case of a large scale crisis.
- All staff should be informed as quickly as possible. The Head Teacher and Nursery Managers should manage the crisis. Information is best done in class groups so that questions can be easily asked and dealt with.
- Use only facts and do not speculate. Do not try to answer questions to which at the time factual answers cannot be given.
- No staff involved directly in the crisis should deal with the families involved. The Head Teacher and/or Nursery Managers will do this.
- Closure of the school and nursery should be avoided and as far as possible the daily routine should be adhered to.

In the event of a major incident the first priority is:

To care for the injured and to minimise any further risk to safety for all those involved. All staff are required to be familiar with these procedures, particularly if they are leading a party in an off-site fixture or activity.

Minimising further risk to persons and property

In the second phase following an incident, once the injured are fully taken care of, then any available staff should seek to ensure the continued safety of others in the party and minimise further damage to the premises and property and to the property of individuals.

- Remove valuable or irreplaceable items from school premises (e.g. documents)
- Any action taken to preserve property should not be carried out if to do so would place the individual(s) in further danger.
- In certain circumstances the whole Villa community will need to be informed as quickly as possible by letter/ email.
- Messages must be passed on sensitively and may need to be rehearsed.
- A record needs to be kept of those who have been informed by The Villa.
- Suggest to distressed parents that friends, neighbours or relatives should be contacted.
- Deal with the media by protecting children, parents and staff involved in the crisis.
- The Director is the only person who should communicate with the media. Ensure therefore that the media are directed towards them.

Keeping families informed. Information sheets for families can be useful. The information could include:

- Who has been called in to advise and support staff and pupils?
- How parents can have access to help.
- With whom to make contact if they are worried about their child's progress.

Medium term action

Other tasks arise after the initial problems have been dealt with.

- Helping pupils back into school and nursery life
- The form teacher visiting at home or hospital.
- Considering part-time attendance and deciding on a suitable curriculum within a realistic time span.
- Checking on worries about being away for a long time and meeting other pupils again.
- Setting up a sanctuary arrangement if the child gets upset.
- Talking about what is happening at The Villa including reactions to the crisis.
- Ensuring appropriate support in teaching methods and staff support (in the case of serious injury).
- Liaise with other professionals to support The Villa Community.

Handling the media competently and sensitively:

- Know all the facts or find them out as fast as possible
- Only the Director should talk to reporters.
- Keep the Director fully informed. Keep staff fully briefed. Keep pupils informed.
- Prepare a statement which is brief, factual and correct. Include positive information relevant to the incident. Emphasise appropriate action being taken.
- If illegal activity has taken place, police must be informed and their cooperation sought in handling press inquiries.
- Keep parents fully informed by letter/email at the earliest opportunity and preferably before any publicity appears in the press or on TV. Provide parents with updates as appropriate.
- Parents should also be advised not to talk to the press.
- Solicitors should be engaged where necessary.

Debriefing Meeting(s)

Can be arranged and led by an experienced and skilled person from outside The Villa.

These meetings can –

- Clarify what happened.
- Allow for a sharing of reactions.
- Reassure the participants that such reactions are not abnormal.
- Mobilise resources.

- After the initial feelings of numbness and shock caused by a crisis it is important to make sense of what happened.
- Sharing what happened is important in the healing process.
- Separate debriefings can be given for staff directly involved.
- Expressing sympathy to those who have been hurt or bereaved is vital.
- A SLT representative should visit home or hospital or represent The Villa at funerals.
- Others members of the school community will want to express their sympathy in a number of ways.

Minimising risk to medium/ long-term mental and emotional welfare of staff and/ or pupils

Following any major incident, it is important to be aware that both the people directly involved as well as the wider Villa Community are likely to be affected in a variety of ways, possibly over a considerable period of time. In the case of major injury or death, there will almost certainly be differing degrees of shock, emotional trauma and grief. The effects of this could well be more deeply felt and widespread than would at first be apparent. All members of The Villa Community should be made aware of this. Staff in particular should be sensitive to the needs of their pupils but also to their own needs.

- The Villa would seek the support of professional counsellors.
- Allow staff and pupils to talk about the incident, initially in an open kind of way and then, if necessary on a 1:1 basis, either with a member of staff who feels able to help or with a professional counsellor.
- Seek to identify those individuals most likely to be at risk following a major incident and be ready to offer further support. Be sensitive to those most closely affected by the incident and to those carrying the main burden of dealing with the crisis. Watch out for each other and make sure that key people are getting adequate support and rest.
- Help the rest of the school and nursery to create a supportive environment by educating them about the possible reactions which people might have to stress, trauma and grief.
- Be alert to signs of distress in individuals and, in the case of children, maintain close communication with parents to see if patterns of behaviour are emerging which give cause for concern.
- Express sympathy to pupils, parents and staff who have been injured or bereaved, through letters, cards, flowers, visits or attendance at funerals. Handle carefully the process of helping people to return to school and nursery following a traumatic incident and/ or a prolonged absence.
- Work closely with any consultants/ therapists coming into The Villa to support pupils or staff.
- Keep parents fully informed of any help being given to individuals and to the school and nursery as a whole. Keep records of help given and ensure that parents and appropriate staff have access to these.

- Be prepared, if deemed appropriate, to hold a special assembly or memorial service or to create a memorial

Attendance at funerals

- There are many different religious and cultural views about the participation of young people in funeral rites. The school will want to respect these views and customs as well as the wishes of parents and the children themselves.
- The current consensus among mental health professionals is that most children (and adults) come to terms with their grief more quickly if they say farewell formally. Whenever possible, survivors should be encouraged and enabled to attend funerals of those who died, and the parents of those who died should be encouraged to allow it.

Special assemblies and memorial services

- In addition to funerals that families may choose to be private, schools may wish to mark the event with a special assembly or a memorial service. Discussion could be held with staff, governors, parents, pupils and the local community on what form this should take and who should be involved.
- Planning the ceremony often becomes an important therapeutic act in itself. For many who have been affected by a major incident, a memorial service acts as a way of acknowledging that it is now over.

Longer term planning:

- Any crisis experience should be recorded in the individual pupil records so that new staff are aware and briefed on the methods being used for continuous support. Anniversaries should be marked by commemoration of some kind taking into consideration the views of the families of those being commemorated.
- Members of the school may be involved in legal processes as a result of a crisis - the school must be aware and keep records.
- As time passes the story of a crisis can change - the school should be aware of this and be ready if necessary with the original emotional support.
- Records should be kept and children referred as necessary. It should be made clear that records held in the schools are open to inspection by parents and older pupils.
- Guidelines should be established on how to maintain contact with parents: for example, a short letter home might draw attention to the progress made by pupils in their return to 'normality'.
- The parents of children in any of the high risk groups described earlier should be given the option of receiving specialist help. If the children's distress remains high six to eight weeks after the incident, they should be referred to a specialist with skills in treating PTSD.
- Staff and parents need to be clear about the procedures for ensuring appropriate help quickly.

Appendix 1: Checklist for Critical Incident Management Plan

Initial Actions: Day 1

Action	Information, Notes & By Whom
<u>Gather and record accurate information</u> What has happened? Who was involved? When did it happen? How did it happen?	It is important to establish the facts otherwise rumours may take over and add to the distress of those involved. Specific details should include the names of everyone involved. Head Teacher / Nursery Managers
Contact the affected family Find out their wishes Establish clear line of communication Plan further contact.	Contact should be made with family or families within The Villa community who are directly affected by the incident within 24 hours if possible. The nature of the contact should be guided by the wishes of the family although it may involve a home visit by staff representatives to extend sympathy. In some cases it may involve planning for return to school and/or nursery of bereaved children. Head Teacher / Nursery Managers/ Delegated member of staff (following plan)
Assess the situation and provide immediate <u>emergency response</u>	When an incident takes place on the premises an emergency response may involve: ensuring immediate safety of all pupils and adults; contacting emergency services; administering first aid. Head Teacher / Nursery Managers
Ensure a dedicated <u>emergency telephone line</u> is operational 020 7703 6216	During major incidents phone lines may become jammed. Agree on which phone line is to be kept open for outgoing and incoming emergency calls. Swap mobile phone numbers with key agencies. Office Manager
Contact Director and Outside Agencies	An Emergency Contact List should be collated in advance and kept in an accessible location. Office Manager

<p>Convene a meeting to brief the Critical Incident Management Team to: Brief the team Make specific plans Delegate roles and responsibilities</p>	<p>Depending on the incident it may be advisable to meet the evening before or early in the morning to ensure a plan is in place for the school and nursery day. At this meeting determine what information is to be shared beyond the group and with whom (in sensitive cases this may involve liaison with the family).</p> <p>Head Teacher / Nursery Managers</p>
<p>Establish procedure for informing/ briefing staff to:</p> <p>Inform about the incident Discuss plans for the day Discuss how to support pupils (and each other)</p>	<p>It is important that staff receive accurate facts and are kept updated. This may require two separate groups to allow supervision of pupils. The meeting would normally be led by the head teacher, nursery manager or senior member of staff. Staff should be given advice and share ideas on how best to support pupils during this time</p> <p>Head Teacher / Nursery Managers/ Senior member of staff</p>
<p>Establish procedure for informing pupils</p> <p>In groups In a familiar environment From people they know and trust</p>	<p>Whole setting announcements should be avoided. Pupils should be informed in class groups by people they know and trust. Outside professionals can provide advice and support to staff where needed. Pupils who are likely to be particularly affected (e.g. close friends of a deceased pupil) should be told separately first.</p> <p>Form Teacher with SLT if necessary</p>
<p>Compile a list of vulnerable pupils and adults</p>	<p>Vulnerable individuals (pupils and staff) need to be identified and monitored. Additional support may be put in place either from adults or peers. Staff can be reminded that their colleagues may need some additional support such as a phone call later that evening</p> <p>SENDCos with Form Teachers</p>
<p>Plan adjustments to the day and in school support including:</p> <p>Whole school/ nursery activities Class/ group activities Quiet room with support</p>	<p>General principles include keeping routines as normal as possible; adapting the tasks to reduce stress and providing opportunities to express feelings in a safe, supportive environment.</p> <p>Form Teachers and SENDCos Head Teacher / Nursery Managers (depending on activities)</p>

<p>Establish a procedure for informing parents</p> <p>By letter / email In a meeting</p>	<p>Depending on the nature and timing of events, parents may already be aware of the incident. An appropriate letter/ email should be compiled to be sent home with pupils.</p> <p>Head Teacher / Nursery Managers</p>
<p>Arrange for staff to meet at the end of the day to debrief and plan for following day</p>	<p>Although already an emotionally exhausting day it is important for staff to meet for a short session at the end. This gives an opportunity for an update on any developments (including any specific concerns that have arisen), allows planning for next day and provides an opportunity to talk things through with others, offering emotional support, after a difficult day.</p> <p>Head Teacher / Nursery Managers</p>

Further Actions: Day 2 onwards

Action	By Whom Information & Notes
<p>Convene a meeting of Critical Incident Management Team to</p> <p>Consider any new developments Arrange actions and events to date Plan for the day Identify tasks/ assign roles</p>	<p>Sometimes the first day appears quite calm as people may be in shock. Day 2 can present more issues as events begin to sink in so it is important to meet each day until The Villa returns to normal functioning.</p> <p>Head Teacher / Nursery Managers</p>
<p>Convene a meeting for staff to</p> <p>Update staff on any new developments inform staff of plans for day Give staff an opportunity to ask questions / raise concerns</p>	<p>In major critical incidents staff should be brought together at the start of the following day. As well as practical purposes this gives emotional support in difficult circumstances and allows a reminder that both staff and pupils may need some nurturing and time to talk. Plans should be made for subsequent meetings as required.</p> <p>Head Teacher / Nursery Managers</p>

<p>Continue to monitor and provide additional support to</p> <p>Vulnerable individuals previously identified Other pupils (or staff) causing concern</p>	<p>Following a Critical Incident a level of shock, anxiety and distress is normal, especially amongst those closest to the incident. Most people will have returned to normal functioning within six weeks. Further support may be required for individuals continuing to show significant signs of distress many weeks beyond this.</p> <p>Head Teacher / Nursery Managers / SENDCos</p>
<p>Liaise with affected family/families including</p> <p>Visits by staff or pupils to injured or bereaved Family's wishes and plans regarding funeral arrangements Return to school of bereaved</p>	<p>Contacts/visits should be planned/ made to anyone injured, either at home or in hospital, with cards and get well messages from staff and pupils. There may be possessions to be returned to the family and timing of this should be considered.</p> <p>Head Teacher / Nursery Managers</p>
<p>Begin to plan school response to memorial to include</p> <p>The wishes of the family Active involvement of the peers and friends of the deceased</p>	<p>A lasting memorial and/or a ceremony give an important message about the value of the deceased; offers comfort to friends and family and may provide a sense of closure.</p> <p>Head Teacher / Nursery Managers / SENDCos</p>
<p>Make a note in The Villa calendar of important dates</p> <p>Anniversary of incident Birthday of deceased Inquests or court cases Events where the deceased would have a part</p>	<p>The anniversary of a Critical Incident can trigger emotional responses and the Villa Community may wish, in consultation with the family, to acknowledge and commemorate the date.</p> <p>Office Manager</p>
<p>Review Critical Incident response and amend plan</p>	<p>Once the school and nursery has returned to normal functioning it is important to reflect on the response to the incident including what went well and what lessons can be learned. This can be used to evaluate and amend the Critical Incident Management Plan.</p> <p>Head Teacher / Nursery Managers</p>

Policy Administration

Linked Policies

This policy also needs to be in line with other school policies and therefore should be read in conjunction with the following school and nursery policies:

- Health and Safety Policy
- Fire Safety Policy and Procedures
- First Aid Policy
- Lockdown Policy