

**Toynton All Saints Primary School**

**CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT POLICY**

March 2016



## **Introduction**

This document outlines the purpose, nature and operational management of the Critical Incident Plan for Toynton All Saints Primary School.

## **Linked Policies**

The following policies may be relevant (but guidance from LCC and the full LCC Schools Critical Incident Plan take priority):

- Accidents / Illness
- Health and Safety
- Complaints
- Confidentiality / Data Protection
- Staff and Governors code of Conduct
- Whistle Blowing

## **Aims**

The critical incident policy is designed to:

- Adopt the full Lincolnshire County Council Schools Critical Incident Plan without omission or addition.
- Provide a short version of the full plan as a quick reference guide for staff and governors.

## **Note**

This policy is based on the full LCC Schools Critical Incident Plan. In the event of any conflict between the LCC plan and this policy the LCC plan shall always take precedent.

## **Legal Framework**

The full schools critical incident plan is a controlled document of Lincolnshire County Council - meaning its contents should not be normally disclosed to anyone who does not require the plan for the normal performance of their duties.

In the event of a critical incident affecting Toynton All Saints Primary School it is possible there may be legal ramifications. Whilst these should be considered the prompt implementation of the plan should take priority.

# Toynton All Saints Primary School

## CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT POLICY

### Introduction

The handling of occasional crises is a normal part of school life, but some incidents are of a critical, more overwhelming nature and sadly in recent years incidents, previously deemed unthinkable, have occurred in education in the UK.

This policy is our school's contingency plan designed to provide a framework for handling a critical incident. The formulation of this policy is intended to clearly define the roles, responsibilities and procedures to follow, for school staff dealing with such an incident. Each critical incident is unique, and it is not possible to plan for every eventuality, but equally, every critical incident could be shocking and disorientating so a prepared procedure is essential to ensure that the school's reaction is effective and efficient.

The details contained within this document will form the basis of the school's approach to such a crisis.

Co-ordinated support will be available to the school from the LEA, and it will be practical to contact them immediately.

If the incident involves the police, they will take control of certain management issues.

**A Critical Incident Management Team** will comprise the following staff:-

Head teacher

Senior teacher

Chairman of the Governors

Governors

School Business Manager

Potential incidents which could affect Toynton All Saints Primary School are considered to be:-

- i) Fire/flood
- ii) Health risk - outbreak of contagious illness/disease like meningitis
- iii) Major arson attack
- iv) Fatal road traffic accident
- v) Computer failure - e.g. risk of virus/hacker/parasite invasion from internet with additional implications for data protection
- vi) Serious Injury or Death of a child or member of staff either at school or elsewhere
- vii) Natural disaster within the community
- viii) Consequences of terrorist or criminal activity
- ix) Air traffic emergency/crash

Appendix 1 contains an emergency contacts list - this will be held in the school office, reviewed annually and updated where necessary.

The School's reaction to a critical incident can be divided into the following categories:

- a) Immediate action
- b) Short term action
- c) Medium term action
- d) Longer term action

### **IMMEDIATE ACTION**

1. **Obtain and collate information relating to the incident** - uncertainty breeds rumour and accurate information is essential;
2. **Gather and brief the CIMT (Critical Incident Management Team)** - the Head teacher will brief the team, allocate roles and responsibilities;
3. **Trigger support from the LEA and other contacts on emergency list** - establish clearly who is going to contact whom;
4. **Set up an incident management room and dedicated phone line** - to deal with calls from anxious parents etc. CIMT should agree a factual statement and avoid speculation
5. **Contact families affected** - must be done quickly and with sensitivity. Consistency of information is vital. It may be appropriate for families to come to the school and immediate emotional support could be a possibility
6. **Make arrangements to inform other parents** - may need to take advice from the LEA, especially if there is the possibility of legal liability. CIMT may wish to send a letter to parents, or prepare a leaflet.
7. **Inform school staff** - staff need to be cautioned about talking to the media or responding to questions from reporters. It is vital that all staff in contact with children are kept well informed and feel secure in handling comments or questions them.
8. **Inform children** - can be done in small or large groups depending on which are most appropriate. Care needs to be exercised to protect both children and adults closely involved in the incident. It is important that children receive a consistent account of the incident allowing for differences in their ability to understand.
9. **Encourage people involved to talk** - the incident may need to be discussed before children go home for the day, for both children and adults.
10. **Deal with the media** - an agreed text for release should be prepared by the CIMT and a designated spokesperson briefed and prepared to respond on the school's behalf.
11. **Devise a plan for handling the reactions and feelings of people affected** - the most common reactions will include denial, distress, guilt, anger and helplessness. CIMT need to consider outside professionals to support and debrief staff and children affected by the incident. Those providing support also need support. At this point the CIMT will need to plan their short term reaction to the incident.

## **SHORT TERM ACTION - the next stage**

1. **Reunion of children with their families** - especially where the incident occurs outside school. Mostly children will need to be brought home, but sometimes parents and families need to visit the scene of the incident to understand how to deal with repercussions in terms of children's fears etc.
2. **Managing staff** - support needs organising for all staff, preferably from within the school, but using outside agencies if appropriate. Staff monitoring should be a priority, even members of the CIMT. If a crisis persists over many hours staff become tired, weary and upset and this affects their powers to make sensible decisions.
3. **Encourage children to talk** - activate strategies for enabling young people to talk about the incident, and their feelings, using outside agencies if appropriate. Staff will need briefing about ways to help the children affected by the incident, and how to identify patterns of behaviour etc. This may have implications for the wider curriculum i.e. training in bereavement counselling for staff, provision of a range of books, PSHE discussions etc...
4. **Debriefing meeting** - it may be appropriate to hold a debriefing meeting for staff, children and parents to:
  - I) clarify what has happened
  - II) allow for sharing reactions
  - III) reassure people that reactions are normal
  - IV) mobilise resources e.g. parental support groups

An experienced person, possibly someone from outside the school community, should lead this meeting.

5. **Formal and informal recognition of rituals** - it is important to remember to express sympathy to families of the hurt or bereaved. Children may wish to send cards and letters. The school may also need to consider attendance at funerals, and/or the desirability of holding memorial services. Anniversaries are also key times when support and sensitivity are required.
6. **Re-establishing routines** - every attempt should be made to provide continuity for the children. The return to school of staff or children directly affected by the crisis will need to be managed carefully and with sensitivity but the re-establishment of routine is an important stage in emotional recovery.

## **MEDIUM TERM ACTION**

1. **Return to school for staff or children after long absence** - reintegration will need to be planned carefully, and may involve home visits prior to return, part time attendance initially, reducing workloads, putting in place mentoring process etc.
2. **Consulting professionals** - consideration should be given to consulting the Educational Psychology Service for support and guidance, especially to help those showing unusual or prolonged reaction to the incident.

3. **Keeping parents informed** - it may be appropriate to produce a leaflet for parents giving guidance on the possible delayed reactions of children to an incident and making suggestions to help them deal with these.
4. **Support for staff** - ongoing monitoring and support for staff is a major consideration. CIMT especially will not be immune to reaction from their ordeal.

## LONG TERM ACTION

**Monitoring the vulnerable** - the effects of a crisis can reverberate for years, and it is especially important that new staff and children are briefed in the school's history to help them understand and deal with potential repercussions especially at anniversary times.

**Marking anniversaries** - these difficult times need to be treated with sensitivity. Some suggestions for the school to mark anniversaries are by annual concerts, memorial services, memorial gardens etc.

**Legal processes** - the length of time taken over some legal processes can prolong the recovery process following a critical incident. CIMT may need to plan for this especially where staff may be involved attending legal processes, and facing extended emotional trauma.

**Curriculum implications** - it may be appropriate to schedule INSET training for staff in loss counselling, bereavement etc.

## CONCLUSION

The prime objective of Toynton School Governors is to serve the best interests of children and staff in coping with an incident, collectively and individually. Schools which have made contingency plans for responding to a critical incident are likely to cope better and recover more fully.

It is impossible to plan for every eventuality and by their nature critical incidents will disorientate and overwhelm those involved. A format for a whole school response to such an incident will provide focus for those with whom the responsibility will rest.

### *Useful Additional Reading*

'Wise before the Event'	by William Yule and Anne Gould
'Grief in Children'	by A Dyregrov
'On the Death of a Child'	by C Hindmarch
'The Forgotten Mourners'	by M Pennells and S Smith
'Helping Children cope with grief'	by R Wells
Video - 'The morning I went to school'	available from Sue Smith, Social Work Dept, Northampton Gen Hospital
'Death and Loss - compassionate approaches in the classroom'	by O Leaman
'Good Grief 1 - exploring feelings, loss and death for under 11's'	by B Ward and Associates

## Appendix 1 - EMERGENCY CONTACT LIST

<b>Name</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Phone Number</b>	<b>Back Up</b>	<b>Phone Number</b>
Lesley Coulthurst	Head Teacher	07799881402		
Deborah Johnson	School Business Manager	07771 274647	Julia Greenfield	07557 040314
Justine Whitehill	Senior Teacher	07984 292159		
Chris Powell	Chair of Governors	01790 763310		

### Emergency Planning Unit

During Office Hours : 01522 582220

Out of Hours : 01522 888111

The Property Service Centre - 24hr Helpdesk 01522 836222