



Critical Incident Policy

At Queen Elizabeth's Grammar, Alford the named persons with responsibility for this Policy are:

Author	Mr G Thompson
Governor	Full Governing Body
Nominated Press Officer	Headteacher



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AIM

To be prepared to enable the academy to cope more effectively after a disaster or major incident and thereby to reduce the distress of young people, staff and families and to be able to deal with media attention.

Each incident will demand a slightly different response, but it is important that we have support structures in place and senior staff are allocated clear roles. It is also essential that emergency contact numbers are accurate and that alarms, lighting and security arrangements are regularly checked.

A school must be able to promote an atmosphere of support, trust and confidence among its staff and pupils to be better able to cope with a disaster". If a strong pastoral structure is not already in place for pupils and staff, you cannot expect suddenly to create such relationships in the event of a trauma.

Serious or major incidents are, fortunately, extremely rare, but if one does occur it will make great physical and emotional demands.

POSSIBLE SCENARIOS

- the death of a pupil or member of staff;
- a traffic accident involving a pupil or staff member;
- a deliberate act of violence, such as a knifing or the use of a firearm;
- a school fire or an explosion in a laboratory;
- deaths or injuries on school journeys;
- tragedies involving children from many schools, eg at a sports event;
- refugee children, who may have experienced trauma, joining a school;
- epidemic in school or community;
- any situation in which the national press or media might be involved.

PRIORITIES

In the event of such an incident, the priorities of those in charge of the school or party must be:

- to save life
- to minimise personal injury
- to safeguard the interests of pupils, students and staff
- to minimise loss
- to return to normal working quickly.

SUPPORT THROUGH THE CURRICULUM

Ideally, pupils should be able to feel that they can explore difficult feelings and private thoughts in public or with staff. The school can prepare by identifying points in the curriculum where matters of birth, death, bereavement and other rites of passage can be explored through a multi-cultural and

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multi-faith framework. These issues can, for instance, arise through the tutorial programme, English Literature, History and Religious Studies.

Reactions to major stress:

Post traumatic stress disorder manifests itself by:

- re-experiencing the trauma
- not talking with parents
- not talking with peers
- losing faith in their future and changing their personal priorities
- feeling guilt as a survivor
- heightened anxiety and arousal appearing through concentration difficulties; sleep disturbance; separation problems (eg clinging to parents); memory problems (affecting school work); heightened alertness to dangers; developing fears; irritability; depression; bereavement reactions (which complicate other symptoms); anxiety and panic

Those who are likely to be most affected:

- those whose lives were at greatest risk
- those who have witnessed death and carnage
- children who come from unstable family relationships
- children who are less able intellectually

SUPPORT AGENCIES:

Police (PCSO Simpson 07810 057131 / PCSO Prince)	999 / 462222 / 01754 762222
Fire	999
School doctor/s	463262
Louth Hospital	600100
Boston Pilgrim Hospital	01205 364801
Lincoln County Hospital	01522 512512
Grimsby Diana Princess of Wales Hospital	01472 874111
Educational Psychologist	01522 554673
LCC Employee Support Counsellor (staff)	01522 555440
The School Liaison Officer	01522 554884
Social Services Lincolnshire	01507 554701
Samaritans	01522 528282 01205 311311 / 116 123

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Press and Media

Louth Leader	01507 353200
Skegness Standard	01205 311433
Target	01507 600200
Grimsby Evening Telegraph (News Desk)	01472 808444
Lincs FM	01522 549900
Radio Lincolnshire	01522 511411
Emergency Planning Unit 24/7 cover	01522 582229 office hours
Critical incidents not tragic	01522 888111 out of office hours

CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT PLAN

1. Procedures for Party Leaders

Leaders of school trips should leave a list of all participants on the staff board and in the office and have emergency numbers to make contact with senior leadership team at school and at home.

2. Collecting and disseminating information

The Senior Leadership Team should make every effort to get full and accurate information. It may be necessary to bring parents into school.

It is essential to keep a record of actions taken.

The family of a child or adult involved in a major incident needs to be contacted quickly and offered help and information updated regularly. Consideration will need to be given to whether this information should be relayed on the telephone, by visit to the home or at an incident room. Remember mobile phones are not secure and should never be used to relay information about casualties. In the event of a fatality, the police will be prepared to visit the family.

3. Enquiries

The main switchboard must be staffed to deal with a possible inundation of worried enquirers. This can be stressful when there is uncertainty or bad news. Those answering the telephones must be briefed and rehearse one clear message to all callers. They should keep notes and check them against school records so that there is certainty about who has telephoned and who should still be contacted. Up-to-date information on next-of-kin and contact numbers should be available on Integris. They should inform parents and guardians of how further information will be conveyed and by whom, and try to ensure that no parent is left alone in distress by making suggestions to contact relatives or neighbours. Other relevant telephone numbers may be given, such as a hospital or an emergency disaster number, if it has been necessary to set one up. Sometimes it may be appropriate to give contact numbers of other families involved in the crisis.

4. Inform Chair of Governors and others who have previously agreed to offer assistance

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5. Informing staff

As soon as an incident is confirmed, the Senior Leadership Team must meet to decide strategies and to form a small team, which is relieved of its other duties, to deal with the crisis over the next few hours.

The rest of the staff, including support staff, should be informed as soon as possible, preferably at a specially convened staff meeting. This avoids the circulation of untrue rumours.

6. Informing pupils and parents

Pupils should be told the facts simply and without fabrication. Staff undertaking this task should not speculate on the causes of the crisis or its consequences. Where questions cannot be answered, this should be acknowledged.

This should generally be done in the smallest groups possible, preferably by form; but it may be necessary to have a clear statement to read out or for the whole school to meet together to avoid a variety of messages.

Wherever possible, parents of all the other children in the school should be warned that the school has experienced a crisis and that their child may be upset.

7. School Closure is to be avoided wherever possible as normal routines ensure some security in the pupils' lives.

If closure is necessary, it is best announced concurrently with informing the parents of the incident.

8. Dealing with the media

Children, parents and staff must be protected from the glare of publicity. The press and media should *not be permitted onto the site or given access to children*. NB The press are not allowed to speak to children under 16 without parental/staff permission.

A senior member of staff, not dealing directly with families involved, should be the nominated press officer to whom all media enquiries should be directed. They may give factual information, but the privacy of staff, pupils and families must be maintained.

NB Other staff should not talk to the media. A press briefing session may be arranged in a particular part of the school at a set time.

9. Short term action

Children away from school should be re-united with their families as soon as possible. Sometimes parents may need to be taken to their children.

Staff need an opportunity to express their emotional reactions and a senior member of staff should be available to them. Arrangements should be made for additional outside help (see list of support agencies).

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Before accepting offers of outside help, the Headteacher should vet volunteers. What happens to pupils in the school is the Headteacher's responsibility. The Headteacher retains this responsibility when referring children to other agencies.

In the first days, every adult should be prepared to **listen** to children. After this there should be designated members of staff available to offer support. Staff should give strong signals to children that it is safe for them to talk. Other pupils may need some education about 'normal' stress reactions and longer-term understanding of how those concerned will feel. They may wish to correspond with those injured and, if necessary, focus on memorials. Expressions of sympathy are appropriate.

Staff should be alert to monitor those who return for signs of lack of concentration, deteriorating work, tiredness or distress, and there should be liaison with the parents.

A debriefing meeting, usually led by an experienced person from outside, is recommended for staff and children involved in the incident.

10. Medium term action

As the academy settles back to normal routine, strategies for easing pupils' re-entry into school can include:

- form teacher visits to children in hospital/at home;
- keeping contacts with the academy and discussing what is happening in school in relation to the incident;
- checking if any work or books have been lost;
- checking out worries about public examinations and rescheduling work deadlines;
- deciding on part-time attendance;
- checking on worries about meeting other pupils and discussing how to react to them;
- setting up 'sanctuary' arrangements in school, if pupils become distraught.

Affected staff may need specialist support and this should be offered and arranged where appropriate.

When the children are in school they may need to be taught coping strategies, both for their emotions and for their work.

If outside consultants are used, the ground rules must be very clear, including those on confidentiality. Responsibility lies with the Headteacher. The academy must consult parents about help (Children Act 1989).

Survivors should be encouraged to attend the funerals of those who died; they should be accompanied by parents wherever possible. Planning a special assembly or memorial service can be therapeutic. A memorial service acts as an acknowledgement that the incident is now over and that the healing process can begin. Some lasting memorial may be planned.

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Families should be informed of:

- who has been called in to advise pupils
- how parents can have access to help
- whom to contact if worried about their child's progress

Children affected should be kept under review. If a child's distress remains high six to eight weeks after the incident, s/he should be referred to a specialist in Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

11. Longer term planning

The vulnerable need to be kept in mind, especially to new staff and to staff new to vulnerable children and who may need training.

Anniversaries should be anticipated; there could be a memorial prize, assembly or concert. The wishes of victims' families need to be considered.

Legal processes and enquiries may bring back distressing memories and cause temporary upset within the school. The academy needs to be aware of these events and to assist again with emotional support.

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DEALING WITH BEREAVEMENT

This section of the policy aims to:

- Set out a guideline for how the school will respond to a death in our school community.
- Set out a plan for communicating deaths in a timely manner that balances our school community's interests and transparency with the wishes of the family of the deceased.
- Identify best practices for supporting pupils and/or members of staff experiencing bereavement.
- Define the roles and responsibilities of key staff members and the governing board.
- Provide a roadmap and framework for pupils or staff returning to school following bereavement.

2. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

2.1 THE HEADTEACHER

The headteacher has overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy and for delegating any responsibilities under this policy to other members of staff.

The headteacher will:

- Liaise with the family of the deceased.
- Where appropriate, communicate details of a death to pupils and staff as set out in this policy, or activate communication teams.
- Respond to media requests for information in the case of a publicised death.
- Participate in any multi-agency reviews as requested.
- Lead reintegration meetings, as necessary, for pupils or staff returning to school after a bereavement.
- Arrange for monitoring and support of the pastoral support team or any individual staff members who are supporting bereaved pupils or staff.

2.2 PASTORAL SUPPORT STAFF

The pastoral support team has responsibility for monitoring and supporting bereaved pupils and staff members (including before their bereavement, where relevant – for example, in the case of terminal illness).

The pastoral support team will:

- Provide direct support to bereaved pupils and staff.
- Signpost to external support available to bereaved pupils and staff.

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- Organise safe spaces for bereaved members of the school community to take a time out.
- Organise memorials, e.g. temporary tributes, books of condolences, memorial web pages.
- Arrange for the attendance and supervision of pupils at funerals (where permitted).
- Maintain a calendar of dates and holidays that may be particularly difficult for bereaved pupils or staff and ensure they're supported on those days.
- Provide additional support during significant transitions e.g. when moving up to the next year group or transitioning to a new school.

2.3 GOVERNING BOARD

The governing board is responsible for monitoring the implementation of this policy and supporting the headteacher.

The governing board will:

- Undertake regular monitoring of how the school is supporting the bereaved, and the staff who support them.
- Monitor the headteacher's emotional wellbeing.
- Assist the headteacher, where required, in responding to media requests for information in the case of a publicised death.
- Where necessary, arrange for another staff member to take the lead if the headteacher is not available to respond to a death immediately.

3. PROVISION FOR SUPPORTING STAFF WHO SUPPORT THE BEREAVED

Supporting pupils and staff who are grieving can be painful. Those staff members who carry out this essential work will be monitored and supported.

4. IMMEDIATE ACTIONS FOLLOWING A DEATH

4.1 CLARIFYING INFORMATION AND THE WISHES OF THE FAMILY

The headteacher will contact families, as and when required, taking in account their wishes and privacy. It is paramount that each case is treated on an individual basis and the family's wishes and requests take precedent.

4.2 SHARING THE NEWS WITH STAFF

The headteacher, supported by SLT, will be responsible for the co-ordination of sharing the news with staff and explaining what support will be available to those who need it.

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4.3 SHARING THE NEWS WITH PUPILS

The headteacher, supported by SLT, will be responsible for the co-ordination of sharing the news with pupils and explaining what support will be available to those who need it.

4.4 INFORMING PARENTS/CARERS

Parents and carers will be notified of a death through a letter explaining the steps that have been undertaken during the day to inform pupils of the death and the additional support that has been made available and where to go for more help and information.

4.5 RESPONDING TO SPECIFIC CAUSES OF DEATH

Some deaths need to be handled more sensitively due to their potential to cause fear, anger or imitation, for example:.

- The death is the result of suicide.
- The death is due to homicide or family violence.
- In the event, the death is due to contagious disease, we will follow procedures as determined by our local health protection team.

4.6 RESPONDING TO THE MEDIA

In the event that a death that affects the school raises media interest, we will respond in the following manner:

- The headteacher will be responsible for responding to requests from the media.

5. FOLLOW-UP ACTIONS AND SUPPORT FOLLOWING A DEATH

5.1 SUPPORT FOR PUPILS AND STAFF

Pupils and staff may require support to grieve in the initial days and weeks following a death.

- Support in school will be in the form of the pastoral care team and peer-to-peer support.
- Students will be offered support through the pastoral team, form tutors and school counsellor.

5.2 TRIBUTES AND CONDOLENCES

The approach for tributes and condolences will be decided with consultation with the affected families where possible. The school will aim to balance the need for respect for the family's wishes, as time and circumstance permit, with the need of the community to grieve and mutually support each other.

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5.3 FUNERALS

We will consult the family as appropriate, to confirm:

- Whether members of staff and/or pupils are welcome to attend the funeral or memorial service
- How condolences should be made and how staff and pupils can contribute

If staff are welcome to attend the funeral and wish to do so they should seek permission through the assistant headteacher. Where pupils are attending they should request permission via reception@qegs.co.uk

6. SUPPORT FOR PUPILS RETURNING TO SCHOOL AFTER BEREAVEMENT

Whether a pupil has been away from school following a personal bereavement or after a death affecting the whole school community, the school will support them in their return to school and for as long as necessary afterwards.

6.1 REINTEGRATION MEETING

The Head of School, support by the Pastoral Lead, will meet with the bereaved pupil and their parents/carers to discuss how best to manage a return to school.

The purpose of the meeting will be to:

- Determine whether the pupil is emotionally ready to return to the classroom either full-time or with adjustments to the timetable to allow for a phased return.
- Address any concerns the pupil and their parents/carers have about the return to school.
- Consult with the pupil about how or even if they want their classmates to know of the death (where relevant).
- Open lines of communication between the pupil and relevant staff to ensure support should the pupil feel overwhelmed.
- Open lines of communication between the school and the pupil's parents/carers to coordinate support.
- Consider any additional support needed for a pupil who is vulnerable or has special educational needs (SEN) or a disability.



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6.2 ONGOING SUPPORT

- We will maintain regular contact with the pupil's parents/carers to monitor how the pupil is coping.
- We acknowledge significant dates or holidays may be especially difficult.
- We know that grief may impact a pupil's progress and affect their behaviour. To manage this, we will monitor progress of individuals and support as necessary and appropriate.
- We will take care to manage changes for bereaved pupils by preparing them in advance (where possible) and taking extra steps to support necessary transitions.

7. SUPPORT FOR STAFF RETURNING TO SCHOOL AFTER BEREAVEMENT

Whether a staff member has been away from school following a personal bereavement or after a death affecting the whole school community, the school will support them in their return to school and for as long as necessary afterwards.

7.1 REINTEGRATION MEETING

The headteacher will meet with the bereaved staff member to discuss how best to manage a return to school.

The purpose of the meeting will be to:

- Determine whether the staff member is ready to return to work and the best way to make that return (e.g. a phased return to work or a temporary change in duties).
- Address any concerns the staff member may have about the return to school.
- Consult with the staff member about how or even if they want their pupils and colleagues to know of the death (where relevant).
- Set guidelines for communication between the staff member and their line manager to monitor and support the staff member.

7.2 ONGOING SUPPORT

We acknowledge that grief can have an impact on a staff member's physical and mental health, which can then go on to impact their performance.

We also recognise that grieving is highly personal and that there can't be a one-size-fits-all solution for monitoring and supporting a bereaved person.

We will work with each individual to create a system of monitoring and support that works for that person.

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USEFUL CONTACTS

ORGANISATION	CONTACT DETAILS
Child Bereavement UK	Helpline: 0800 02 888 40 https://www.childbereavementuk.org/contact-us
Winston's Wish	Helpline: 08088 020 021 https://www.winstonswish.org/about-us/contact-page/
Cruse Bereavement Care	Helpline: 0808 808 1677 https://www.cruse.org.uk/about-cruse/contact-us
Mind	Infoline (information and signposting to further help): 0300 123 3393 Further contacts: https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/guides-to-support-and-services/bereavement/useful-contacts/

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