

# Critical Incident / Business Continuity Policy

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## **Statement of intent**

The Sigma Trust Board of Trustees and Local Governance Committees recognise that, whilst the safety of pupils, staff members and visitors in the Trust's schools' premises is paramount, it is sometimes out of the control of the school.

In an emergency, staff members in the Trust will endeavour to take all reasonable actions in order to ensure the safety of its pupils.

The procedures outlined in this policy aim to minimise disruption to the learning environment whilst ensuring the safety of all pupils, staff members and visitors, by responding to critical incidents as quickly and efficiently as possible.



## 1. Legal framework

1.1. This policy has due regard to legislation and guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
- DfE (2015) 'Emergency planning and response'

1.2. This policy will be implemented in conjunction with the following policies, documents and procedures:

- Health and Safety Policy
- Lockdown Procedure
- Adverse Weather Policy
- Educational Trips and Visits Policy
- Media Relations Policy
- First Aid Policy
- Complaints Procedure Policy
- Fire Evacuation Procedure

## 2. Definition

2.1. For the purpose of this policy, a critical incident is an emergency which affects pupils, staff, visitors or property and requires immediate responsive action which is beyond that reasonably expected from the school's own management team.

2.2. Critical incidents include, but are not limited to, the following:

- The death of a pupil, staff member or governor
- A serious incident involving a pupil or staff member on, or off, the school premises
- A violent intrusion onto the premises, e.g. a bomb alert
- Extensive damage to school property
- A fire, flood or explosion
- The effects of disasters in the wider community



- Incidents whilst on educational visits
- Epidemics
- Exposure to hazardous substances near, or on, the school premises

### 3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1. The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for:

- Ensuring the Trust's headteachers are aware of their responsibilities in regards to the successful implementation of the Critical Incident Policy.
- Ensuring appropriate support and resources are made available from the Trust Officers and external agencies in the event of a critical incident.

3.2. The headteacher for each school is responsible for:

- Appointing designated staff members to the critical incident management team.
- Working alongside the critical incident management team to ensure that critical incidents are managed effectively.
- Ensuring that an appropriate ratio of first aiders to pupils is sustained at all times.
- Ensuring that a simple and straightforward, but effective, critical incident management plan is in place.
- Ensuring that all staff members are aware of their school's critical incident management plan and the associated procedures.
- Reviewing the critical incident plan at regular intervals, ensuring that it is kept up-to-date with developments at their school, such as changes to evacuation procedures.
- Keeping a duplicate copy of their critical incident management plan securely stored in a cloud based environment, as well as at the Trust offices in case of a fire, flood or explosion.
- Ensuring that vital information is not lost in the event of a fire, flood or explosion, by keeping a copy of up-to-date pupil and personnel records off the school premises.
- Liaising with the press, or appointing a designated member of staff to do so.
- Reviewing allocations of responsibilities in light of staff absence.

- Compiling an emergency contact list and ensuring that all members of staff hold a copy of this.
  - Informing parents and the school community about the critical incident.

### 3.3. All staff members are responsible for:

- Acting in accordance with this policy at all times.
- Effectively implementing the critical incident management plan, when necessary.
- Maintaining up-to-date records of critical incidents at the school.
- Maintaining their own records of events, as well as keeping copies of notes made by other colleagues.
- Ensuring that they effectively understand the Trust's critical incident management plan.
- Understanding how to effectively carry out their school's emergency evacuation procedures.
- Understanding their role in the execution of the school's emergency plans, including evacuation procedures and the critical incident management plan.
- Ensuring that pupils are aware of their school's emergency evacuation procedures.
- Ensuring that their own contact details are kept up-to-date on school records.
- Reporting and recording minor and critical incidents in line with their school's reporting procedures.

## 4. Critical incident management team

### 4.1. The headteacher will appoint the core members of staff to form the school's critical incident management team. (Appendix B).

This team will be responsible for:

- Identifying and providing support for the families of those hurt or bereaved, including siblings within the school.
- Ensuring that parents are kept informed about the situation.
- Ensuring the school effectively cooperates and liaises with the relevant bodies during investigations into critical incidents.
- Dealing with continued interest from the media.



- Maintaining the continued running of the school.
  - Deciding when and how to re-open the school.
  - Ensuring the appropriate post incident reintegration and/or memorials are acted on.
  - Recruiting any additional staff to support with the delivery of tasks above
- 4.2. In the event of a critical incident, the critical incident management team will work alongside the headteacher in order to effectively fulfil their role, as outlined above.
- 4.3. Where possible, suitable locations within each site will be allocated to the critical incident management team and any necessary equipment and information will be stored here. (appendix b)
- 4.4. Where required, a local Sigma Trust school will be used as a reserve off-site location for the critical incident management team when the on-site location is not usable.
- 4.5. The team will collate and retain any records regarding the planning of, and response to, critical incidents, including written records and any recordings made via CCTV.
- 4.6. The team will ensure that each member of staff involved in dealing with a critical incident has recorded all decisions that were made, any communication that was received and all tasks that were carried out.

## 5. Initial action

- 5.1. Immediate action will be taken in order to safeguard pupils and staff, using the relevant emergency procedure signal to alert staff members.
- 5.2. The alarm will be raised by the first adult at the scene of the incident.
- 5.3. The headteacher will ascertain the details of the incident and decide whether to convene the members of the critical incident management team.
- 5.4. All initial information regarding the incident will be logged using the Initial Action Form at Appendix A.
- 5.5. First aid will be administered by the first trained first aider at the scene of the incident.
- 5.6. All first aid and medical treatment will be administered and recorded in line with the school's First Aid Policy.

5.7. The emergency services will be contacted and the following information will be given:

- The emergency services required
- Exact location of incident
- Number of casualties
- Number of injuries
- Location and phone number of where the call is being made from
- Any hazards which the emergency services may encounter on site

5.8. Where possible, the school will remain open and normal routine will be maintained.

## **6. Emergency procedures**

- 6.1. All staff members and pupils are aware of their school's emergency procedures, including those outlined in the school's Fire and Lockdown procedures.
- 6.2. Each school's designated emergency assembly points are clearly indicated and known by all staff members and pupils.
- 6.3. All schools will carry out a practice drill of the school's evacuation procedure at least once a term, to ensure that pupils and staff members fully understand what is involved in the procedure, and that it is implemented effectively.
- 6.4. All schools have appropriately differentiated alarm systems or processes to notify staff members and students of a Fire Evacuation, and lockdown procedure.
- 6.5. All staff members are aware of the evacuation routes and assembly points in the case of a bomb threat.
- 6.6. In the event of severe weather, the procedures outlined in the Trust's Adverse Weather Policy will be followed.
- 6.7. All staff members are aware of their school's designated first aiders and the locations of first aid boxes within their school.
- 6.8. In the event that first aid or medical treatment is necessary, the procedures outlined in the school's First Aid Policy will be followed.
- 6.9. Staff members are aware of any Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans in place.



6.10. All staff members will receive training regarding the school's emergency evacuation procedures, and will be aware of:

- The appropriate route to take.
- What assembly point to use in the event of different scenarios.
- Security arrangements that are in place, such as the locking of the school gates.
- Access arrangements for the emergency services.

## **7. Emergencies during educational visits**

7.1. All staff members will act in accordance with the school's Educational Trips and Visits Policy, following the outlined procedures in the event of an emergency.

7.2. Critical incidents that occur on school trips will be managed in the same way as those that occur on the school premises.

7.3. The trip leader is responsible for maintaining written records of any critical incidents that occur whilst on a trip, as well as the action which was taken and by whom.

7.4. The trip leader is responsible for reporting the critical incident to the headteacher immediately.

7.5. Any critical incident that occurs on a school trip will be communicated to all staff members, ensuring that they are aware of any pupils who may suffer from shock.

## **8. Internal communications**

8.1. To aid communication within the Trust community, each school will collate an emergency contacts information sheet. This will include the following information:

- Pupils' emergency contact details
- Staff members' emergency contact details
- Contact details of members of the Trust and relevant local governors
- Emergency contact details for the Trust Officers
- Phone numbers for relevant travel companies
- Pupil and staff movement data, including class itinerary



- 8.2. The headteacher is responsible for ensuring that this information is reviewed on a regular basis and is updated to reflect changes in staffing details.
- 8.3. Each school's internal communication systems will be used to alert staff members to a critical incident in the first instance, without alarming pupils unnecessarily.
- 8.4. Staff members, pupils and parents will be informed of critical incidents in the most sensitive way possible.
- 8.5. The parents of pupils who are directly involved in the incident will be contacted immediately using the emergency contact details provided to the relevant school.
- 8.6. Pupils will be informed of a critical incident in groups as small as practicable.
- 8.7. Parents of pupils not directly involved in the incident will be contacted quickly and efficiently, via email or text, as soon as is reasonably practicable.
- 8.8. Members of the Trust and school's local governance committee will be informed about the critical incident as soon as possible, and will be briefed about speaking to the press.
- 8.9. During an emergency, staff members will use email and/or mobile phones to stay in contact with one another and communicate key messages.
- 8.10. Staff briefings will be conducted following the occurrence of a critical incident, in order to further investigate the event and provide staff members with any updates.

## **9. After a critical incident**

- 9.1. Following the occurrence of a critical incident, the Trust's short terms aims include the following:
  - Contacting those directly involved
  - Informing the Trustees and local governance committee
  - Appropriately debriefing the school community
  - Attempting to maintain normal school routines
  - Making appropriate plans for attendance at funerals and memorials
  - Monitoring the wellbeing of staff and pupils, particularly those directly involved in the incident



- Expressing sympathy to the families of those involved
- Identifying vulnerable staff and pupils, ensuring they are aware of the support available to them

9.2. In the medium term, the Trust's aims include the following:

- Making arrangements for pupils involved to return to school
- Arranging alternative teaching, where necessary
- Providing support to staff members and pupils affected
- Arranging consultations with educational psychologists, where necessary
- Clarifying support arrangements and referring pupils for individual help, if appropriate
- Keeping parents updated and informed

9.3. In the longer term, the Trust's aims include the following:

- Introducing support systems to continuously monitor vulnerable pupils and staff members
- Discussing how to mark anniversaries
- Ensuring all staff members, including new staff, are aware of pupils affected by the incident
- Acting sensitively to pupils' needs
- Ensuring pupils and staff members know how to obtain further help

## 10. Post-incident support

- 10.1. Staff members will strive to create a welcoming atmosphere in which pupils can openly discuss life events, including when critical incidents occur.
- 10.2. Following a critical incident, staff members will consult with the parents of pupils involved regarding how best to support the pupil, ensuring that their needs are taken into account.
- 10.3. Counselling will be offered to pupils who were involved in, or witnessed, a critical incident.
- 10.4. Topics including bereavement, stress and safety will be covered as part of the curriculum.
- 10.5. Absences must be authorised for pupils attending events following the incident, including funerals and counselling sessions.

- 10.6. The critical incident management team will lead debriefing meetings for staff members, pupils and parents, as well as for the wider community where appropriate.
- 10.7. The need for individual or group support will be assessed in the period following a critical incident.
- 10.8. Where necessary, the school will liaise with parents regarding a phased return to school for pupils involved in a critical incident.
- 10.9. Information regarding the support being accessed by staff members and pupils will be treated as personal data and processed in line with the school's Data Protection Policy, transferring information to external agencies where necessary.

## **11. Media relations**

- 11.1. All communication between the school and the media will be conducted in accordance with the Trust's Media Relations Policy.
- 11.2. Where possible, press interest will be managed by the Trusts PR advisors.
- 11.3. All information given to the media is done so through a single designated source.
- 11.4. All statements will be agreed by the headteacher and Chief Executive Officer before going to the press.
- 11.5. Pupils will not be named during communication with the press unless parental consent has been sought.
- 11.6. Personal information regarding staff members, pupils and visitors will be kept confidential and treated in accordance with the Trust's Data Protection Policy.
- 11.7. Details of the critical incident which may be harmful to investigations into the incident or which reveal personal information will be treated as confidential.
- 11.8. Staff members will not talk off the record to the media and will refer all enquiries to the headteacher, critical incident management team or designated staff member.
- 11.9. The school will strive to liaise and co-operate with the media by answering any queries, as appropriate.
- 11.10. All statements given to the press will be factual.

- 11.11. The school will aim to reassure the public and demonstrate control of the situation, as well as counter any dangerous rumours or gossip.
- 11.12. Child protection and safeguarding measures will be taken when reporting about pupils.
- 11.13. Parental permission will be sought prior to any press interviews with pupils.
- 11.14. Times of press releases will be pre-agreed in order to avoid continuous pressure.
- 11.15. Where appropriate, a pre-prepared statement containing basic information about the school and the school's procedures will be used.
- 11.16. The critical incident management team will ensure that any media access to the site, staff and pupils is controlled.

## **12. Handling complaints**

- 12.1. The Trust recognises that the occurrence of a critical incident is a sensitive subject.
- 12.2. Complaints or concerns regarding the school's critical incident arrangements should be made in accordance with the school's Complaints Procedure Policy.
- 12.3. The Trust will continuously work to address and resolve concerns, ensuring that critical incidents are dealt with in line with the law, as well as in a sensitive and supportive manner.

## **13. Monitoring and review**

- 13.1. This policy will be reviewed annually, with any changes made to the policy being communicated to the Trustees, local governance committee and all Trust staff.



# Ownership and Control

## History

Version	Author	Dated	Status	Details
1	BMa	March 2018	Approved	New Policy. Agreed at Board Mtg 21 Mar 2018
2	SSc	April 2021	Approved	Annual review – changes to terminology.
3	SSc	Oct 2024	Approved	Cyclical review – changes to Lockdown procedures terminology

## Appendix A - Incident Management Team

Name:	Role:
Miss R McCutcheon	Headteacher
Mr J Beerjeraz	Associate Headteacher
Mrs A Horsburgh	Deputy Headteacher
Miss J Pickard	Assistant Headteacher

## **APPENDIX B Initial Action Form**

In the event of a critical incident, this form should be completed by whoever receives the alert in order to gather as much information as possible.

School Name: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Name of the person informing about the incident:</b>	
<b>Emergency procedure carried out:</b>	
<b>Alert raised by:</b>	
<b>Details of the incident:</b>	
<b>Number of people involved:</b>	
<b>Details of staff members at the scene:</b>	
<b>People who have been informed:</b>	
<b>Exact location of the incident:</b>	
<b>Number of casualties and injuries:</b>	
<b>Details of any casualties and injuries:</b>	
<b>Action taken so far:</b>	
<b>Assistance needed:</b>	
<b>Form completed by:</b>	
<b>Job role:</b>	