

Managing Critical Incidents

This guidance note has been produced to support schools and settings in the management of a critical incident.

A critical incident may involve a number of issues including death of a pupil, death of a member of staff, a child going missing off site or a serious incident or accident happening on site. Critical incidents may also pertain to issues with premises, e.g. being targeted by known individuals, a flood, premises damage etc. This list is not exhaustive but the guidance note is here to support all schools and settings in the management of such incident.

Leadership and Management

The key to successful leadership and management is to prepare for how critical incidents will be managed. Staff, parents and children need to feel secure and in ‘safe hands’ and this needs to be led and directed from senior leadership.

Managing a Critical Incident

When there is any critical incident, it is important not to panic. Senior leaders need to remain in charge and initially seek out all of the facts to formulate the information which can be shared. This may mean liaising with the police or social care, or parents or family members of the person who may have been harmed or died. It is necessary to establish the minimum facts and fully confirm what can be shared. In the event of a critical incident, advice can be sought from the Local Authority as well as consultancy advice from Safeguarding First.

The next step is to brief the senior leadership team of the information to ensure that there is full agreement and understanding on how to manage the incident. This includes the full facts and the language to be used in a consistent manner with staff, pupils and parents. In situations like this scripts are often helpful for staff so that the message shared is consistent amongst all.

Following the briefing with the SLT, a staff meeting will be required to inform all staff of the incident and how it will be managed. Again scripts on language to be used may be helpful for all staff.

Children and parents will also need to be informed using the agreed facts and language. It is necessary, particularly in sharing with pupils that staff monitor vulnerable pupils and ensure any additional support is provided. It is helpful when such an incident has occurred that regular routines are kept to as much as possible to ensure normality for all pupils.

You may choose to inform parents via letter, in which case only factual information should be shared with the same consistency of language. Parents and pupils should be offered contact details of who to get in touch with if there are any further questions or issues e.g. distress to a particular child or family. Parents and pupils need to be reminded of being respectful as well as confidential for example not sharing information on social networks.

Follow up

If there is going to be any follow up to the incident e.g. press interest, or media attention then staff, parents and pupils should be prepared and the ‘status quo’ of keeping to the facts about the incident will be necessary (see guidance note on managing the media).

If there is going to be any intervention provided to staff and pupils then this information should be shared with staff, pupils and parents also e.g. Educational Psychology or individual services provided to support those in need e.g. counselling.