



## Hindhayes Infant School

### Critical Incident

### Management Plan

October 2025

At Hindhayes, we believe success is based on the partnerships between pupils, staff and the parent community. We endeavour to enrich and develop each child to be a successful individual that will become an active community citizen of the future.

Approved on: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Role: \_\_\_\_\_

#### **What is a critical Incident?**

A **critical Incident** may be defined as a single incident or sequence of incidents which:

- Are sudden and unexpected
- Contain real or imagined threats to a person
- Overwhelm usual coping mechanisms
- Cause severe disruption
- Are traumatic to everyone

#### **Critical incidents affecting schools may include:**

- The death of a pupil(s) or member(s) of staff through sudden accident, murder, terminal illness or suicide
- A serious accident involving pupils and school personnel on or off the school premises
- A violent attack or violent intrusion onto school premises, e.g. involving an armed intruder or a bomb alert
- Fire, flood, building collapse or major vandalism in school
- A hostage situation
- A significant event in the community, e.g. transport, terrorism

#### **Communication**

##### **Critical Incident Management Team and the Contingency Plan**

In the event of a Critical Incident the schools Critical Incident Management Team will need to act promptly and be responsible for dealing with the following issues:

- Implement the schools Critical Incident Contingency Plan.
- Ensure that the emergency Services have been contacted as necessary.

The Critical Incident Management Team are **Kate Nester, Mike Sales, Lucy Shakesby, Sarah Simmonds, Scott Carpenter**

##### **Gathering Information**

The Critical Incident Management Team will obtain accurate information about the incident:

- What has happened? • Where and when? • Extent of injuries, numbers and names
- Location of injured and uninjured

##### **Accessing Support – Informing the Local Authority**

The school will contact the Senior Educational Psychologist at the Area Base who will initiate the Critical Incident Response Procedure. 01823 357000

#### **Informing Staff**

- All staff will be promptly informed of the incident.
- A procedure for keeping staff up to date with incoming information will be established.

#### **Informing Governor's**

- The chair of governors and should be informed as soon as possible after the incident.

#### **Informing Parents – of Children Directly Involved**

- Parents of children directly involved will be contacted quickly and with sensitivity.
  - Consistency and reliability of information given will be paramount.
  - The school has an up to-date list of pupils next of kin and where to make contact with them. We will ensure that all parents with parental responsibility are informed.
- In the event of an incident involving death or serious injury, particularly off site, the police may make the first contact with families.

#### **Informing Parents – of Children not Directly Involved**

Wherever possible, parents of all other children in the school will be informed that the school has experienced an incident and that their child may be upset.

The school will prepare a letter to parents for distribution as soon as possible which gives:

- brief details of the incident without names.
- An explanation about how other services may be supporting staff and pupils.
- How parents can get more information

#### **Informing Pupils**

The Critical Incident Management Team will be sensitive to staff who may find disseminating information to pupils difficult.

Pupils will be told by class teachers where possible and any questions answered in a straightforward way, avoiding speculation.

#### **Dealing with Enquiries**

The school may be inundated with telephone calls. Office staff will manage the calls, which can be a stressful task. We will ensure that they:

- Are clear about the confidential nature of the task and have clear guidance given on what is appropriate to say.
- Have an agreed factual statement which includes reassurances about the action being taken.

### **Dealing with the media**

- A senior member of staff will liaise with the media
- A brief written statement will be given or read out to the reporters.
- The school will liaise with the LA Communications Team who will advise on the content and presentation of the statement.

**The Communications Team (Press Office)** can advise and give practical help – tel **01823 355020**

- In the event of a death, some positive comments about the pupils/staff who have died and expressions of sympathy for the bereaved family.

### **Dealing with Social media**

**When dealing with a critical incident and social media it is important that the school acts quickly because others may post information.**

- A member of staff will take responsibility for dealing with social media (Mike Sales)
- Staff are aware that they should not make any comment on social media without the permission of the senior management team (Teaching Standards and E-Safety Policy, Appropriate ICT Usage Policy)

### **Providing Support**

The Educational Psychologists who respond to the school's request for help in dealing with a Critical Incident will work alongside the Headteacher and Senior Management. This support will be aimed at helping school staff manage and cope, both professionally and personally with the impact of the incident. It will be flexible and responsive to the school's needs at all times. It may include psychological support for those pupils and adults most closely affected by the incident.

Support may include advice for:

- Staff in dealing with distressed pupils, parents and colleagues.
- Dealing with the media / social media and other demands made on school staff at the time.
- Ways to manage the likely short and long term effects of the incident in individuals, the school and local community.

### **Supporting Staff in the Event of a Critical Incident**

- There will be recognition of the differing needs of each individual.
- All staff will be familiar with the school's Critical Incident Contingency Plan.
- Teachers will need to consider their own feelings related to either the present incident or past experiences, so that they can feel comfortable in dealing with children's distress.
- All staff will be aware of possible delayed reactions
- Staff who are coordinating the school's response will be supported and scheduled for relief periods.
- Some teachers may choose to take a less active role in supporting others.
- Arrangements may need to be made for staff to see a counsellor or talk with outside agencies, either singly or as a group.

### **Supporting Pupils in the Event of a Critical Incident**

- Teachers will stick to facts, not give speculative comments and act promptly to dispel rumours and mis-information.
- Teachers will give pupils opportunities to talk through personal reactions whilst wherever possible maintaining school routines and timetables.
- Teachers will allow pupils to express feelings and anticipate and understand pupil's reactions – it will be important to help pupils realise the grief is a natural and normal reaction to loss. Some unhelpful grief responses such as anger, bullying and scapegoating may be seen. Teachers will act quickly and positively to defuse these behaviours.
- Teachers will be aware of those children who may need extra support due to own personal experiences or learning needs.

### **Formal grieving**

- Opportunities for pupils to write, draw, send cards or flowers, plant a tree etc will be provided. A special assembly may be appropriate.
- Teachers will be aware of differences in cultural, spiritual and religious values.

### **Establish normal routines – Teachers understand that:**

- School is the normal place for a child to be and can offer security at a time of insecurity.
- Children will look to teachers for role model of how to deal with death or crisis.
- Trauma reactions are normal reactions and are best helped in a familiar environment.

### **Supporting Parents in the Event of a Critical Incident**

- Parents will most likely look to the school for information, advice and support.
- Staff members will be available to talk to parents and keep them updated with information. This may be a member of the Senior Team or Well Bring team.
- Staff will signpost wherever possible to the types of support available to them in the school and local community.

**See separate section for advice on Responding to Suicide and Responding to Terrorism**

### **Reflecting**

Considerations after the Critical Incident

- Staff will be aware of delayed responses and provide opportunities to reflect.
- Significant dates may take on new meaning to individuals and the community.
- Revisit knowledge and understanding of the nature of grief: recognise this in the school community and notice signs that individuals may be struggling.
- Reflect on what the school has learnt from the Critical Incident and what would be done differently if there was another. - what needs to be developed in staff or students?

## Responding to Suicide

It is particularly important that the school responds to a suicide within 48 hours. This is necessary to maintain the structure and order of the school routine, while facilitating the expression of grief, and reducing the risk of imitative suicide.

### Sources of support for schools following suicide through:

- The Educational Psychology Service will be able to provide a first response to support Senior Leadership Teams. Advice and support can also be provided on the development of a protocol.
- The Suicide Prevention Strategy (Public Health) currently offers support direct to schools following a suicide. Contact Simon See by email at [simon.see@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:simon.see@somerset.gov.uk)
- The Samaritans currently offer practical advice and support service for a school community following a suicide. In the time immediately following an incident the local Samaritans branch can offer emotional support for staff and parents on the phone Freephone **116 123**, by email at [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org).
- Somerset Suicide Bereavement Service for anyone bereaved by Suicide. Tel 0300 330 5463 [bereaved@mindtws.org.uk](mailto:bereaved@mindtws.org.uk)
- PAPYRUS – Prevention of Young Suicide. Tel 0800 068 4141 email: [pat@papyrus-uk.org](mailto:pat@papyrus-uk.org)

## Responding to Terrorism

### Talking to Children About Terrorism and War

Although difficult, these conversations are extremely important. They give adults an opportunity to help children feel more secure and understand the world in which they live.

#### Listen to Children:

- Create a time and place for children to ask their questions. Don't force children to talk about things until they're ready.
- Remember that children tend to personalise situations. For example, they may worry about friends or relatives who live in a city or county associated with incidents or events.
- Help children find ways to express themselves. Some children may not be able to talk about their thoughts, feelings or fears. They may be more comfortable drawing pictures or playing with toys.

#### Answer Children's Questions:

- Use words and concepts that the children can understand. Make the explanation appropriate to the age of the child/ren.
- Give children honest answers and information.
- Be prepared to repeat explanations or have several conversations. Asking the same questions over and over again may be the child's way of asking for reassurance.
- Acknowledge and support the child's thoughts, feelings and reactions. Let the children know that you think their questions and concerns are important.
- Be consistent and reassuring but don't make unrealistic promises.
- Avoid stereotyping groups of people by race, nationally or religion. Use the opportunity to teach tolerance and explain prejudice.
- Remember that children learn from watching their parents and teachers. They are interested in how you respond to events. They learn from listening to your conversations with other adults.
- Let children know how you are feeling. It is Okay for them to know if you are anxious or worried about events. However, don't over burden them with your concerns.

#### Provide Support

- Coordinate information between school and home. Parents should know about activities and discussions at school. Teachers should know about the child's specific fears or concerns.
- Watch for physical symptoms related to stress. Many children show anxiety and stress through complaints of physical aches and pains.
- Watch for possible preoccupation with violent movies or war themed computer games.
- Help children to communicate with others and express themselves at home. Some children may like to write letters.
- Let children be children. They may not want to think or talk about a lot about stressful events. It is okay if they would rather play.
- War and terrorism are not easy for anyone to comprehend or accept. Understandably, many young children feel confused, upset and anxious. Parents, teachers and caring adults can help by listening and responding in an honest, consistent and supportive manner.