

# The Minster Junior School

## CRITICAL INCIDENTS APPENDIX to Business Continuity Plan

**CRITICAL INCIDENTS DEFINED :** occasions when our school may experience incidents of a significantly extreme nature and scale. They are '**Unexpected occurrences, which may suddenly have a major impact on school**'.

### **Preventative and precautionary measures**

- all staff and pupils familiar with school routines for fire and evacuation of the building on hearing the fire alarm.
- all staff familiar with the routines and procedures for dealing with emergencies in this document
- all staff and pupils familiar with school security procedures, in particular that all visitors not wearing a visitor's lanyard should be questioned and escorted to reception.
- all staff organising school trips and visits follow the guidelines as in the Staff Handbook / School Visits Policy and write a risk assessment to be signed off by the Headteacher
- all staff sign in and out of the premises
- all staff aware of pupils with medical needs / health problems (pictures, names, condition on staffroom board)
- all staff aware of procedures to deal with violence at work (two members of staff to be available )
- all staff aware that associated risks to children are assessed before carrying out a curriculum or other activity
- all staff aware of their responsibilities for assessing risks to themselves before undertaking an activity

### **A major incident is defined as:**

An accident leading to a serious injury or fatality;

Severe injury or severe stress;

Circumstances in which a person or persons might be at serious risk of illness;

Circumstances in which any part, or whole of the school is unable to function as normal due to external influences

Any situation in which the national press or media might be involved

### **As such, major incidents include:**

- Death of a pupil or member of staff;
- Death or serious injury on a school trip;
- Epidemic in school or community;
- Violent incident in school;
- A pupil missing from home;
- Destruction or major vandalism in school;
- Perpetrators in school;
- A hostage taking;
- A transport accident involving school members;
- A disaster in the community;
- A civil disturbance or terrorism
- Arson attacks on schools
- Major fires at a school
- Significant vandalism
- Pupil suicides and sudden deaths
- Violent attacks on pupils and staff members
- The sudden death, in tragic circumstances of members of staff
- Incident involving an intruder, believed to be armed, on school premises
- Road traffic accidents, involving fatalities within a school community
- Abductions / disappearances
- Allegations or actual incidents of abuse against pupils by staff and staff against pupils
- Incidents involving the murder of schoolchildren that attract the attention of national and international media over prolonged periods
- Floods
- School used in an emergency

### **In the event of such an incident the priorities of those adults in charge of the school or trip at the time must be able to:**

- Save life
- Minimise personal injury
- Safeguard the interests of pupils and staff
- Minimise loss and to return to normal working quickly

**Critical Incident Management Team ( CIMT )** will comprise of the school leadership team, head governor and the health and safety governor.

**The school's reaction to a critical incident is divided into the following categories:**

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

### **IMMEDIATE ACTION – i.e. within hours of the incident occurring**

1. Obtain and collate accurate information relating to the incident;
2. Gather and brief the CIMT – brief the whole staff team, allocate roles and responsibilities;
3. Trigger support from the LA / SDBE 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 sensitively. Consistency of information is vital. It may be appropriate for families to come to school and immediate emotional support could be a possibility;
6. Make arrangements to inform other parents – may need to take advice from LA / SDBE, especially if there is the possibility of legal liability. CIMT may wish to send a letter to parents, or prepare a leaflet.
7. Inform teaching and other school staff (+ Infant School and After School & Breakfast Club) – 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 pupils are kept well informed and feel secure in handling comments or questions from pupils.
8. Inform pupils – in small or large groups, whatever is appropriate. Care needs to be taken to protect both children or 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 pupils and adults.
10. Deal with the media – most important to seek advice from LA / SDBE before agreeing to speak to or be interviewed by the media. If this is not an option then 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 reactions and feelings of people affected – ie denial, distress, guilt, anger and helplessness. CIMT considers need for outside professionals to support and debrief staff and pupils affected by the incident. The CIMT will need to plan their short term reaction to the incident.
12. Put in place Lock Down procedures should an intruder enter school (ensure class telephones are answered)

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

1. Reunion of children with their families – especially if the incident occurs outside the 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 they deal with repercussions in terms of children's fears etc.
2. Managing staff – any support needs organising for all staff, preferably from within the school, but using outside agencies if appropriate. If a crisis persists over many hours staff may become tired, weary and upset and this affects their powers to make sensible decisions.
3. Encourage pupils to talk –using outside agencies if appropriate. Brief staff about ways to help the children affected by the incident, and how to identify patterns of behaviour etc.
4. Debriefing meeting, if appropriate, with possibly an experienced person from outside the school community to lead the meeting, for staff, children and parents to:
  - clarify what has happened
  - allow for sharing reactions
  - reassure people that reactions are normal
  - mobilise resources e.g. parental support groups

### **MEDIUM TERM ACTION**

1. Return to school for staff or pupils after long absence – reintegration is 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 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 pupils 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.

## **LONG TERM ACTION**

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

Marking anniversaries – these difficult times need to be treated with sensitivity and could be annual concerts, memorial services, memorial prize giving ceremonies, memorial gardens etc ...

Legal processes – the length of time taken over some legal processes can prolong the recovery process following a critical incident. CIMT will 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

### **Action Cards**

The Action Cards give responsibilities for specified staff in the event of a critical incident

(a) away from the school                      (b) in the school environs

These are used in the event of a major incident and be carried by staff on school visits.

### **ACTION CARD 1.**

#### **GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOL STAFF IN EVENT OF A MAJOR INCIDENT IN SCHOOL**

- Obtain facts and information
- Administer first aid as appropriate
- Call the emergency services using 999
- Retain any relevant equipment
- Ensure register of all children is maintained
- Contact local authority / SDBE for advice
- Contact chair of governors
- Contact health and safety reps (Pat Cullen / Julie Wattam)
- Prepare to deal with the media

### **ACTION CARD 2**

#### **GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOL STAFF IN EVENT OF A MAJOR INCIDENT OFF SITE**

- Administer first aid as appropriate
- Establish a contact point with the emergency services
- Allocate responsibility to ensure other pupils are safe including registering
- Inform school
- Travel with casualties to hospital
- Complete accident forms

### **ACTION CARD 3**

#### **GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOL STAFF IN EVENT OF A MAJOR INCIDENT ON SITE – E.g. Fire/Flood**

- Administer first aid as appropriate
- Keep a record of witnesses
- Keep others informed of situation
- Ensure register of all children is maintained
- Arrange for non-casualties to evacuate school and relocate to other premises
- CIMT to contact parents as appropriate
- Manage traffic onto the site to ensure that emergency access vehicles can arrive
- Care for relatives arriving at school
- Remain available to emergency

**ACTION CARDS** have all appropriate contact details.