



PRENTON HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

CRITICAL INCIDENT PLAN

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1 INTRODUCTION

Schools, under normal circumstances, provide a safe and secure environment for all children to learn, develop and grow in. Unfortunately, crises or tragedies can occur and can result in significant distress for all individuals involved as well as for the school as a whole. A school can be affected in a number of ways, for instance, if a student or member of staff dies the whole school may feel the loss; or, when students who have suffered shock or injury return to school they may need to be treated with particular sensitivity. There are any number of possibilities requiring any number of responses and this policy outlines some of the procedures the school will take if such an incident presents itself.

2 DEFINITION OF A CRITICAL INCIDENT

An incident becomes a critical incident when it constitutes a serious disruption arising with little or no warning on a scale beyond the coping capacity of the school operating under normal conditions, and requiring the assistance of the Emergency Services and/or Local Authority and others. Where there has been a death or serious injury arising through interpersonal violence, this will constitute a Critical Incident, regardless of the perceived capacity of the school to cope. The incident or event may be unanticipated, imminent or in progress. It may occur on the school property, in the local community or out of the school area (eg a school trip).

3 WHAT COUNTS AS A CRITICAL INCIDENT

There are three levels of incident. These are:

- Level 1 – Major incident involving a large number of children/adults e.g. bus/train crash, major violence
- Level 2 – Incident involving death or serious assault or other traumatic incident witnessed by children or staff
- Level 3 – Distress/trauma resulting from an incident such as the sudden death of a teacher or classmate through a road traffic accident for example, but not witnessed by the students.

4 TYPES OF EMERGENCY / CRITICAL INCIDENT

Students may be affected by crises that occur either in or out of school. Here are some examples:

In-school

- the death of a student or member of staff through natural causes, such as illness;
 - the suicide of a student or member of staff
- a traffic accident involving a student or staff member;
- a deliberate act of violence, such as a knifing or the use of a firearm;
- a school fire or flood;
- allegations or actual incidents of abuse against students by staff and staff against students;
- an arson attack on the school.

Out-of-school

- deaths or injuries on school journeys, trips or residential trips;
- tragedies involving children from many schools at public events such as football matches;

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- civil disturbances;
- refugee children joining a school, uprooted from their countries and perhaps shocked by wars or atrocities;
- abductions / disappearances;
- Incidents involving the murder of school children that attract the attention of national and international media over prolonged periods;
- a civil disturbance or terrorism;
- a disaster in the community;
- a transport accident involving school members.

The emotional effects of disasters on children are not always immediately obvious to parents or school staff. Indeed, at times children find it difficult to confide their distress to adults as they know that it will upset them. In some children the distress can last for months, even years, and may additionally affect their academic attainment. Some young people may not feel comfortable enough or be able to share their feelings and thoughts in public or with staff either because they are unable to do so or because they fear their confidence may be abused. Similarly, because many adults are not able to talk about death, bereavement and tragedy, they may unwittingly stop children talking about similar emotional experiences.

At Prenton High School we take all children’s needs seriously, including emotional and psychological needs and are committed to ensuring all children receive the help they require to explore such matters as death and significant harm or injury in an environment of trust, care and safety. We also recognise the impact such incidents can have on the well-being of staff and parents/ carers and will do our utmost to support any recovery needed and to work with any agencies.

5 PREVENTATIVE AND PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES

Whilst no amount of planning can totally prevent accidents and problems occurring, it is hoped that some can be prevented and the effects of others minimised by taking sensible precautionary measures. At Prenton High School we expect that:

- Staff and students will be familiar with the schools routines for fire and the evacuation of the school building on hearing the fire alarm;
- Staff will be familiar with the routines and procedures for dealing with emergencies (as detailed in this policy);
- Staff and students will be familiar with the school’s security procedures, in particular that all visitors without a visitors badge should be questioned and escorted to the school reception;
- Staff will sign in and out of the premises outside of their normal working pattern;
- Staff are aware of students with medical needs or health problems;
- Staff are aware of school health & safety policy in dealing with violence at work;
- Staff are aware that they should assess associated risks to children before carrying out a curriculum or other activity, including the completion of a written risk assessment where necessary;
- Staff are aware that they are responsible for assessing risks to themselves before undertaking an activity.

Additionally, in the event of a critical incident the priorities of those adults in charge of the school or trip will be to:

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- Save life
- Minimise personal injury
- Safeguard the interests of all students and staff
- Minimise loss and to return to normal working as quickly as possible

6 PLAN TO MINIMISE THE IMPACT OF A CRISIS

At Prenton High School we will follow any guidance given by the Local Authority as well as any advice given by the Emergency Services. The school's reaction to a critical incident can be divided into the following categories:

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

7 IMMEDIATE ACTION (WHEN A CRISIS OCCURS)

1. Obtain accurate information relating to the incident and relay this to the Headteacher (or Deputy Headteacher in their absence)
2. Ensure staff have an emergency number (mobile) to contact the Headteacher as outside lines may be jammed as a response to any incident outside of the school.
3. The Headteacher should contact the parent/ carer of the child caught in the tragedy and ask them to come into school for a full briefing if this is appropriate. (This may not be appropriate if the parent/ carer needs to go to a hospital if the child has been seriously injured.) Parents/carers need to be informed of all available facts as early as possible.
4. The Chair of Governors, Members of the Senior Leadership Team and appropriate officers in the Local Authority will be contacted and notified of the incident so that appropriate assistance can be given.
5. Staff will be informed as early as possible. It may be necessary to relieve the Headteacher from their duties if they are required to support the careful management of the crisis.
6. Ensure any incoming calls by other parents or agencies are answered. A record of who has telephoned should be kept so the school knows who else needs to be contacted.
7. All other parents/ carers should be informed that a significant accident has occurred and the result of this may be that their child will be upset. Any parent who is distressed will be offered support and telephone numbers given of agencies which can help.
8. A telephone call will be made to inform our neighbouring schools that an incident of significance has occurred.
9. The school will contact the Local Authority press officer for advice regarding dealing with the media. All guidance will be adhered to. No member of staff or member of the Governing Body will talk to the media unless previously arranged. Additionally, all parents/ carers and children will be asked not to talk to the media in the best interests of the children, staff and school as a whole. It is expected that the LA press officer will deal with any request for television, radio or newspaper interviews. All enquiries will be directed to and through the press officer who will (if required) arrange to have a briefing session with the press.
10. Students will be informed of what has happened in a factual but sensitive way so to avoid any misunderstanding. It is preferable to do this as classes so that children can ask any questions they may have. Facts only will be shared and staff will not share any personal

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comments or speculations. They will be told as close to the time that parents/ carers are informed.

11. School routines will continue (as far as possible). This is to ensure the children feel secure and know there is stability in school.
12. If the incident has resulted in a death, a member of the school team will enquire as to the burial customs of the family (some religions hold their funeral services within 24 hours of death). This will include whether sending flowers, for instance, is appropriate.

8 SHORT TERM ACTION

Once it is confirmed that Prenton High School is facing a major crisis the following will be followed:

1. Ensure children receive any medical or first aid support they require and that they are physically safe from any further harm.
2. Ensure children are re-united with their families as soon as practicable. If necessary, organise for families to be taken to their children.
3. Ensure all staff, teaching and non- teaching, have an opportunity to express their emotional reactions to the crisis.
4. Make contacts with other professionals and organised support for any member of staff or child who requires professional help. The Headteacher has responsibility for ensuring that the right professional support is in place for the children. If appropriate, set up a regular support group, counselling sessions and someone who will monitor and access the children's and/ or staff's needs and their well-being.
5. Organise for appropriate agencies to come into school to talk to all the children in assemblies if this is required and will be helpful.
6. After a few days or when deemed appropriate, organise for a designated person in school to be available to listen to any of the children's reflections, thoughts and feelings on the prior events. If a child feels more comfortable talking to another member of staff, this will be acknowledged and organised.
7. If a child or a group of children have been personally affected by the incident, all other children need to be given time to make cards and send messages as appropriate.
8. Organise a debriefing session for children and staff by an experienced person from outside the school. This is to ensure:
 - there is clarification about what has happened
 - there is an opportunity for everyone to share and talk about their reaction to what has happened
 - give reassurance
 - deploy resources appropriately
9. The Headteacher must contact the families of those who have been hurt or bereaved, express sympathy and give support.

9 MEDIUM TERM ACTION

Careful and sensitive planning is required to ensure students, staff and the whole school community recover as quickly as possible and that stability is recreated. At Prenton High School we will:

1. Make sensitive arrangements for the return to school which may include:

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- the possibility of part time or flexible attendance
 - preparing re-entry into lessons
 - ensuring the curriculum is well thought through and sensitive to the situation
 - planning a catch up package
 - organising visits by the class teacher and friends to give confidence and a clear message of a support network at school
 - set up 'sanctuary' arrangements for any student if they feel upset or become overwhelmed by the recent events
2. Arrange alternative teaching if necessary (the students may have difficulties concentrating or writing and this will need to be considered by staff)
 3. Arrange support for affected staff. Staff may need to have their own needs met and the Headteacher will contact any appropriate outside consultants or agencies to assist with this. Advice will always be sought from Health or Local Authority personnel.
 4. Liaise with parents which will include the sending of bulletins. These may include what help has been put in place, a list of people who can offer further support and who to contact if parents have any further concerns about their child.
 5. Decide about attendance at funerals. This will usually be the Headteacher, the Chair of Governors and other members of the staff if available.
 6. A special assembly or memorial service will be planned to allow the whole school community to acknowledge the events and to ensure there is a moving on from these.
 7. Ensure staff and parents/ carers are aware of how they will be kept up to date with their child's progress in school. The Headteacher will contact any parent/ carer personally and establish a plan of communication.

10 LONGER TERM ACTION

At Prenton High School we recognise that the effect of any crisis can last for many years. The following will be considered:

1. Introduce strategies to continue monitoring the most vulnerable students and staff. All new members of staff will be informed of the events that took place and additionally, have access to any monitoring notes made. New staff will additionally know how to obtain further help if this is necessary.
2. Consult and decide on whether and how to mark the anniversary of the event.
3. Plan how to deal with any legal processes, enquiries and even news stories that may bring back distressing memories and cause temporary upset within the school.

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APPENDIX 1

TIMEFRAME FOR ACTION

	TASK	TIME SCALE	LEAD
1	Obtain factual information at start of crisis	Within hours	Headteacher
2	Senior Leadership Team meet with support personnel	Within hours	SLT
3	Establish a Critical Incident Management Team	Within hours	SLT
4	Contact families	Within hours	Support Staff
5	Hold a staff briefing	Same day	Headteacher
6	Inform students in small groups	Same day	Student Services
7	Arrange a meeting for staff involved in incident	ASAP	SLT
8	Arrange a meeting for students involved in incident	ASAP	SLT/Student Services
9	Identify high risk students and staff	ASAP	HR/Student Services
10	Discuss with students in form	ASAP	Student Services
11	Identify need for counselling/specialist support	As required	Student Services/HR
12	Arrange additional support where required	As required	Student Services/HR

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APPENDIX 2

USEFUL CONTACTS

Public Health Wirral	0151 6062005
	healthprotectionservice@wirral.gov.uk
Wirral Council Press Office	pressoffice@wirral.gov.uk
Arrowe Park Hospital	0151 6785111
CRUSE - Bereavement Care Telephone counselling service for those who are bereaved and those who care for bereaved people. Can offer referrals to local Cruse branches and other bereavement and counselling services throughout the UK	Phone: 0844 477 9400 (national rate)
	Website: www.cruse.org.uk
The Compassionate Friends Support for bereaved parents who have lost a child of any age from any circumstances	Phone: 0345 123 2304 (local rates)
Winston's Wish Family Line Information and guidance for families of bereaved children. Can provide contact details for local groups which support bereaved children	Phone: 0845 2030 405
	Website: www.winstonwish.org.uk
The Samaritans Confidential emotional support for anyone in a crisis Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide Phone: 0300 111 5065 (national rate) Can provide details of local self help groups for those bereaved by suicide	Phone: 116 123 (free)
	Website: www.samaritans.org
Childline National help line for children	Phone: 0800 1111 (free phone)
British Red Cross Advice on memorials and donation	Tel. 0344 871 11 11
	National Office 44 Moorfields London EC2Y 9AL

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