

Hampton Vale Primary Academy

Critical Incident Policy

Date approved:	January 2023
Date reviewed:	September 2025
Date of next review:	September 2026

Purpose:

Handling crises and dealing with incidents is part of academy life. However, on occasion schools will experience incidents which by their nature and scale could be referred to as “critical incidents”. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that if such an incident occurs then the disruption to the pupil’s learning will be minimal and staff will have the confidence to act quickly and effectively to respond to the emergency. Hampton Vale Primary Academy wishes to put in place a policy that has prepared procedures and responses that can be put into action in the immediate aftermath of a critical incident. However, it will need to be flexible enough to cope with a wide range of possible incidents which may occur either on or off site.

1.0 Definition of a Critical Incident

An incident could be described in critical terms when it occurs with little or no warning, overwhelms or overcomes the normal coping strategies and strengths of those involved and will require the assistance of the Emergency Services, Members of the Trust Executive Board and/or Local Authority and others. In recent times within Peterborough, the LA has worked with schools and academies in response to several critical incidents such as:

- A number of arson attacks on schools across the city
- A major fire or flood at a school
- A violent attack on a fellow pupil and/or a member of staff
- The sudden death, in tragic circumstances, of stakeholders within the school community
- An incident involving an intruder, armed or unarmed, on school premises
- Abduction or disappearance
- Allegations or actual incidents of abuse against pupils by staff against pupils
- Incidents involving the murder of a school child that attracted the attention of national and/or international media over a prolonged period, with a sustained impact on school life
- Road traffic accidents, involving fatalities within a school community
- Bomb/Cyber attack

Important factors that may constitute a critical incident:

- The suddenness of the occurrence
- The shock effect
- The apparent uniqueness of the occurrence
- The need for any support to be available very rapidly
- The publicity and attention which sometimes follow
- The need to communicate with a number of people quickly
- The need for support for those directly affected
- Number who might be indirectly affected (pupils, teachers and parents).

These guidelines are intended to assist us, as an academy, to respond to a critical incident.

2.0 Preventive 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.

In order to do this we expect:

- Staff and pupils will be familiar with the schools routines for fire and the evacuation of the school building on hearing the fire alarm;
- Staff and pupils will be familiar with the school's security procedures, in particular the MAT's lanyard policy and anyone unescorted wearing a red lanyard should be questioned and escorted to the school entrance area;
- Staff organising school trips and visits follow the Trips and Visits policy and write a risk assessment to be signed off by the Headteacher;
- Staff will sign in and out of the premises;
- Staff will take the class register twice a day. This will be at the start of the school day and after lunch.
- Staff are aware of pupils with medical needs or health problems and know how to support the pupil.
- Staff are aware that they should assess associated risks to children before carrying out a curriculum or other activity;
- Staff are aware that they are responsible for assessing risks to themselves before undertaking an activity.

3.0 Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)

Should an incident occur that is deemed a critical incident, Hampton Vale Primary Academy has appointed a Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT). This team will then take the lead in an emergency. The structure of the team is as follows:

- Headteacher - Paula Chamberlain
- Deputy Headteacher - Louise Chatterton, Candyce Thomas
- Assistant Headteacher - Katie Murdoch
- Site Manager - Ian Taylor
- Assistant Site Officer - Mark Reveley
- Chair of Governors - David Whiles
- Vice Chair of Governors - Adam Powell, Jemma Finch

4.0 Managing an Identified incident

4.1 Gathering information

On the school site:

When an incident is first identified, it is important to collect as much information as possible about it. This information should be documented and kept as a written log. The following should be noted: What happened, Where and When the incident took place. Consideration should also be made about whether there is still a continuing danger. This information will then be relayed to the Headteacher

Off the school site:

If the incident happened off-site consideration needs to be about what help is required from the Academy. It is important to collect the following information: the number and names of those injured and the extent of their injuries, the current location of those injured, and the name and contact number of a staff member present with them, the location of pupils who were involved but not injured, plus the name and contact number of a staff member present with, the name and contact number of a staff member at the incident site and the name and contact number of local police.

4.2 Procedure to manage an incident:

- On receiving information of a critical incident, the CIMT will communicate using their mobile devices. If out of hours, a Zoom meeting will be arranged as soon as possible. The CIMT will discuss the incident and decide on the best form of action.
- A copy of this policy, the critical incident checklists (Appendices A and B) and a site map (Appendix D) will be in the front office to collect when an incident occurs.
- The Headteacher will work through the checklist with the CIMT, delegating jobs that may include admin duties like notifying staff of the incident/the emergency services/the MAT or be deployed to areas of the academy to safely monitor developments.
- In the event of a fire/flood/explosion/natural disaster, the fire evacuation process will be deployed: staff, children and visitors will congregate at either the designated fire assembly point or if necessary, the specified hall at Hampton College.

4.3 Factors to consider when decision making:

- Safeguarding and wellbeing of all pupils: it may be safer to keep pupils in certain parts of the academy rather than send them home early.
- Any decision over sending pupils home early must also include an informed assessment over their safety. This will need to reflect their age and any special educational needs of the pupils concerned, in addition to a judgement over their safety in the period between their early arrival to their home area and the time they would normally arrive.
- Any implications this may have on the community or any implications the decision making of the local authority/police for the local community may have on the school.
- The communication challenges with parents may be difficult, especially during the day.
- Academy meal arrangements are difficult to change at short notice.
- Safety of all parents arriving to collect pupils at the same time.
- Implications on reopening the academy for staff, pupils and parents, especially if short notice considering travel arrangements, work commitments for parents, ensuring the premises is fully operational and safe.

4.4 Assess continuing risk

It is important to consider if it is likely that further injuries or damage may occur? If there is a continuing risk, the first priority must be to safeguard the welfare of the pupils, staff and visitors. Ensure that any immediate action to protect people or property does not give rise to further risk.

5.0 Responses to Critical Incidents

5.1 Critical Incident - Evacuation during the Academy Day

If it is deemed necessary to evacuate the academy from the school building onto the school grounds, the Fire and Evacuation policy will be followed and staff, children and visitors will assemble at their designated fire assembly points.

Should an incident occur that requires the academy to evacuate the school site, permission has been given from Hampton College for Hampton Vale Primary Academy to decamp to their premises. However, final assembly at Hampton College will only take place if it is safe to do so. Permission to do this, is to be re-established on an annual basis.

- Staff are to take their mobiles phones if evacuating to enable whole academy communication and taking of registers on the Bromcom app.
- Children's bags and coats will only be taken by the children if it is safe to do so.
- Registers will be taken at the assembly point to ensure all staff, children and visitors are accounted for.
- Re-entry into the academy will be on the instruction of the Headteacher.

5.2 Critical Incident - Invacuation during the Academy Day

If an incident occurs which requires an invacuation or lockdown response then Hampton Vale's Invacuation/Lockdown Policy will be followed.

Refer to – Invacuation/Lockdown Policy for the process which is to be followed.

5.3 Critical Incident - Before the Start of the Academy Day

CIMT will meet using mobile devices/Teams to discuss if the academy is to open. If the decision is made to not open the academy, stakeholders will be contacted using the checklists in appendix A and B.

- The academy will reopen on the instruction of the Headteacher.

5.4 Critical Incident resulting in closure at short notice.

In the event of a heating breakdown in cold weather, disruption to the water supply, heavy snowfall, gas leaks etc., it may be necessary to close the academy at short notice. The CIMT will meet using mobile devices/Teams to discuss the situation and decide on a plan of action, referring to the Appendices A and B checklist. The decision will be made with the agreement of the Chair of governors and the MAT CEO.

6.0 Assessment of the incident

Once the incident has been assessed by the CIMT and it either considers the incident has concluded or appropriate steps are in place to manage it, the CIMT will meet to assess how to respond to what has happened/is happening. Careful and sensitive planning is required to ensure pupils, staff and the whole school community recover as quickly as possible and that stability is recreated.

6.1 Informing staff

- Ensure all staff are informed promptly of the incident - it may be necessary to convene a short staff meeting.
- Establish procedures for keeping staff up to date with incoming information.
- It will be agreed how and when students will be informed.
- Be sensitive to the feelings of staff, particularly those who are closest to the students and adults involved in the incident and to those who have had recent personal traumas.

6.2 Informing parents/carers - of children directly involved

- All appropriate parents/ carers will be informed sensitively 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 will be given of agencies which can help and offer support
- At the time of contact the parents/carers will be informed how to obtain more information and when they can expect this to be available.
- If necessary a telephone call will be made to inform the neighbouring schools that an incident of significance has occurred.

6.3 Informing parents/carers - of children not directly involved

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

- Communication is to be brief and without names. It is to be via email on the MCAS app.

6.4 Informing students

- Some classes, or year groups may be more directly affected by the incident and will benefit from extra consideration, support and sensitive handling of information.
- Pupils will be informed of what has happened in a factual but sensitive way so as to avoid any misunderstanding. It is preferable to do this as classes so that children can be informed in an age appropriate way and ask any questions they may have. Facts only will be shared and staff will not share any personal comments or speculations. They will be told as close to the time that parents/carers are informed.
- Siblings and other close relatives of victims should be informed separately and, where possible, in liaison with parents/carers.

6.5 Dealing with enquiries

The academy may receive telephone calls regarding the incident. An agreed factual statement will be prepared by the Headteacher which includes reassurance about the action being taken at Hampton Vale or incident site. This will be given to the office team so that they have clear guidance of what to say if an enquiry is received. When given this statement, the importance of confidentiality will be emphasised. Those answering the telephones should also keep notes and have them checked against school records so that there is certainty about who has telephoned in and who should still be contacted. This should include the media, governors, etc.

6.6 Dealing with the media

The school will contact the Local Authority (LA) 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. All enquiries for interviews will be directed to the LA.

6.7 Supporting students in the event of a critical incident

- School routines will continue (as far as possible). This is to ensure the children feel secure and know there is stability in school.
- Pupils will be given opportunities to talk through personal reactions
- Pupils will be spoken to and explained to that trauma reactions are normal reactions and are best helped in a normal and familiar environment.
- Staff must be made aware that children may show a reaction in their play and learning and that this can be a normal reaction to significant events. Staff need to record on CPOMs any observation notes and keep careful records of any behaviour that is unusual for the child.
- The Inclusion Team will decide what/if any contact should be made with other professionals to organise support for a child who requires professional help. The Headteacher has responsibility for ensuring that the right professional support is in place for the children. If appropriate, regular support groups and counselling sessions will be set up and the mental health lead will liaise with members of staff to assess the children's needs and their well-being.

6.8 Supporting staff in the event of a critical incident

- Arrange a debriefing meeting for directly affected staff.
- The Inclusion Team will decide what/if any contact should be made with other professionals to organise support for any member of staff who requires professional help. The Headteacher has responsibility for ensuring that the right professional support is in place for the member of staff. If appropriate, regular support groups and counselling sessions will be set up and the mental health lead will liaise with SLT to assess the staff's needs and their well-being.

6.9 Supporting parents/carers in the event of a critical incident

Whether the incident has occurred at the school or off site, parents/carers are likely to look to the School for information, advice and support. The Headteacher will allocate a member of staff to be available to talk to parents/carers and keep them up to-date with information as it becomes available. This member of staff will provide information about the types of support that are available to them and their children both in school and within their local community. They will also ensure staff and parents/ carers are aware of how they will be kept up to date with their child's progress in school.

7.0 Review of Policy

This policy was agreed and adopted on the dates shown at the beginning of this document. It will be reviewed annually or prior to this date should there be any changes to statutory requirements.

Appendix A:

CIMT checklist to be put in place immediately an incident has been identified.

Action	Member of staff
Arrange a CIMT meeting via mobile or Zoom.	PC
Contact CEO Once Incident is established	PC
Contact the LA once the incident has been established.	LC/CT
Contact the Chair of the LGC	SLT
Contact the emergency services if necessary.	LC/CT
Notifying Staff	LC/CT to delegate
Invacuation/evacuate the site if necessary.	Site Manager/Site Officer/SLT to activate alarms
Notify Parents once safe to do so.	LC/CT to delegate
Monitoring across the site	LC/CT to delegate
Notify staff that are off site for a trip/swimming etc. and keep them updated on the situation during the day advising if safe to return.	SLT
News Banner placed on the website, if appropriate	LC/CT to delegate

Appendix B:

CIMT timescale checklist to be put in place immediately after an incident has been identified.

TASK TIME-SCALE	TASK TIME-SCALE
Obtain factual information at start of incident.	Within hours.
SLT meet with support personnel.	Within hours.
Establish an intervention team.	Within hours.
Contact CEO, Chair of governors and LA	Within hours.
Contact Families.	Within hours. Continue until all are informed.
Call a staff meeting to give information.	Same day if practicable.
Inform students in small groups.	Same day if practicable.
Arrange a debriefing meeting for staff involved in incident	Same day if practicable.
Debriefing for students involved in the incident	As soon as possible. Allowing for health and safety.
Identify high risk students and staff.	Next few days.
Promote discussion in classes	Next few days and weeks.
Identify the need for group or individual treatment.	Incrementally over days or weeks after disaster.
Organise treatment, etc.	As required.

Useful Contact Numbers

Radio Stations	snow@heart.co.uk
Heart FM	0333 200 2000
BBC Radio Cambridgeshire	03459 25 2000
DfE Number	8743385
Mr M Sanderman	01733 254070