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Critical Incident Response Plan (CIRP)

Legislation and Guidance

This plan is informed by the following statutory guidance and legislation:

- **Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE)**
- **Working Together to Safeguard Children**
- **Health and Safety at Work Act 1974**
- **Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999**
- **Civil Contingencies Act 2004**

It also aligns with:

- The school's **Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy** [NNC and WNC EXAMPLE SAFEGUARDING AND CHILD PROTECTION POLICY AMENDMENTS 2025 \(1\).docx](#)
- The school's **Lockdown Policy** [Lock Down Policy 2026.docx](#)
- The school's **Health and Safety procedures** [Health and Safety Policy 2026.docx](#)
- The school's **Business Continuity Plan** [Business Continuity Plan.docx](#)

This plan reflects the school's duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, including during emergency and crisis situations

1. Definition of a Critical Incident

A critical incident is any event which:

- Causes significant distress or harm
- Disrupts school operations
- Requires a coordinated response

Categories

- **Category 1:** Serious incident during school activity (including a residential, trip or visit)
- **Category 2:** Death/serious harm/missing person
- **Category 3:** Site unsafe/unusable (e.g.: fire)
- **Category 4:** Civil emergency resulting in the school being needed as a reception centre

Response Levels

- **Level 1:** Major incident
- **Level 2:** Significant incident

When unsure: **activate Level 1**

2. Link to Lockdown Procedures

Where there is an immediate threat:

- Follow **Lockdown Policy immediately**
- Secure pupils and staff
- Await instruction from leadership/emergency services



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3. Leadership

Critical Incident Manager (CIM)

- Headteacher (or delegated senior leader)

CIRT (Core Team)

- Headteacher
- School Business Manager
- DSL/SENCo

Extended Team

- Chair of Governors
- Additional staff as required

4. Activation

Initiated by:

- Headteacher or senior leader

Immediate steps:

1. Confirm facts
2. Contact emergency services
3. Activate CIRT
4. Begin action log

5. Communication

Principles:

- Accurate
- Controlled
- Centralised
- No speculation

Key rules:

- Only Headteacher speaks to media
- Staff must not share information independently
- Communication to parents via school systems only

Staff communication:

- Use staff cascade / messaging system if needed

6. Immediate Response

- Ensure safety first
- Contact emergency services
- Secure area / apply lockdown if needed
- Set up incident base
- Allocate roles
- Start action log

7. Safeguarding and Welfare

Led by DSL:

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- Identify vulnerable pupils
- Provide safe spaces
- Coordinate support

Staff wellbeing:

- Support offered
- Debrief after incident

8. Operational Actions (Level 1)

Where appropriate:

- Contact families of those directly affected
- Set up parent support room
- Establish controlled media area
- Deploy staff to incident site if required
- Cancel non-essential activities

Pupil communication:

- Age-appropriate and factual
- Delivered in small groups where possible

9. Specific Scenarios

Death of a pupil or staff member:

- Inform family first
- Staff briefing
- Structured pupil support
- Ongoing pastoral care

School closure:

- Inform parents and staff
- Liaise with Local Authority
- Identify alternative provision

Civil emergency:

- Work with Local Authority
- Provide support as required
- Prioritise safeguarding

10. Managing the School During Incident

- Maintain routines where possible
- Cancel non-essential events
- Ensure supervision and safety

11. Recovery

- Staff debrief



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- Ongoing support
- Review response
- Update procedures

12. Monitoring

- Annual review
- Updated after incidents

13. Linked Policies

- Safeguarding
- Lockdown
- Online Safety
- Behaviour
- Staff Code of Conduct



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☒ **APPENDIX: Emergency Quick Action Checklist (STAFF USE)**

☒ **⚠ CRITICAL INCIDENT – IMMEDIATE ACTION GUIDE**

☒ **STEP 1: STOP & ASSESS**

- Stay calm
- Ensure your own safety
- Identify immediate risk

☒ **STEP 2: PROTECT**

- Supervise pupils
- Move to safe location if needed
- Initiate **LOCKDOWN** if required

☒ **STEP 3: CALL FOR HELP**

- Dial **999** (if emergency)
- Notify Headteacher / SLT immediately

☒ **STEP 4: SECURE**

- Do not allow pupils/staff to leave area
- Follow instructions from SLT or emergency services

☒ **STEP 5: COMMUNICATE**

- Share factual information **ONLY**
- Do **NOT** speak to parents/media independently

☒ **STEP 6: RECORD**

- Note key facts:
 - Time
 - Location
 - What happened
 - Who involved

☒ **STEP 7: SUPPORT**

- Reassure pupils
- Keep language calm and simple
- Stay with group

☒ **STEP 8: FOLLOW INSTRUCTIONS**

- Await direction from:
 - Headteacher (CIM)
 - CIRT
 - Emergency services



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⚠ DO NOT:

- Share unverified information
- Contact parents directly
- Post on social media
- Leave pupils unsupervised

☑ REMEMBER

- Safety first
- Follow procedures
- Stay calm and professional



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Appendix 1

School Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT)

CORE	Role	Contact Details
Emma McLean	Headteacher	Head@pattishallschool.co.uk School: 01327 830 301 School mobile: 07938 733 331 Work mobile: 07849 140 108 Home mobile: 07415037047
Lowri Thorpe	Senior Teacher	Lowri.thorpe@pattishallschool.co.uk
Jo Miller	SENDCO	Senco@pattishallschool.co.uk
Clare Sceats	SBM	Office@pattishallschool.co.uk
EXTENDED		
Danielle Winstain	Chair of Governors	Cog@pattishallschool.co.uk
WNC LA Contacts		
Press Office	Communications	0300 126 7000
Emergency Planning Team	Emergency Planning	Office Hours: 0300 126 1012 Out of hours: 07885 292 851
Martin Collard	School Improvement Partner	01604 237037
EMERGENCY SERVICES CONTACTS		
Northamptonshire Police	Police	999 or 101
Northampton General	Local Hospital	01604 634700
OTHER CONTACTS		
BBC Radio Northampton, Chronicle & Echo, Daventry Express	Media	Search for contacts
Children and Young Person's Bereavement Service	Northampton General Hospital	01604 545131 or 07810551318
The Lowdown (Northampton) Time to Talk (Daventry)	Youth Counselling Services	01604 622223 01327 706706
CRUSE	Bereavement support for children	0870 167 1677 / 0844 477 9400 www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk
Winston's Wish Family Line	Bereavement support for children	0845 2030 405 www.winstonwish.org.uk
The Compassionate Friends	Support for bereaved parents who have lost a child of any age from any circumstances	0117 953 9639 0845 123 2304
Child Bereavement Trust	Information line for parents who have been bereaved	0845 3571000 01494 568 900
The Samaritans	Confidential emotional support for anyone in a crisis	0845 790 9090 Website: www.samaritans.org
Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide	Can provide details of local self-help groups for those bereaved by suicide.	01482 610728 0115 944 1117
Childline	National help line for children	0800 1111
British Red Cross National Office	Advice on memorials and donations	020 7235 5454



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Appendix 2 – Critical Incident Account Sheet

To be completed on your own and as soon as possible after the incident. Turn over for more space, making sure you sign any extra pages.

Name:

Role:

Date:

Time:

Factual account

What events led up to the incident? What was your involvement? Where and when did the incident happen? Who have you discussed this with?

Signed:



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Appendix 3 – Receipt for Documentations and/or Other Items

DO NOT LET ANYTHING BE REMOVED FROM SCHOOL WITHOUT A SIGNED RECEIPT. COPY ITEMS IF PERMITTED

Description of Documentation or Other Items

Received by:

PRINT NAME:

POSITION:

REPRESENTING:

SIGNED:

DATE:

TIME:

Counter signed by PATTISHALL CE PRIMARY SCHOOL representative

PRINT NAME:

SIGNED:



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Appendix 4 – Action Log

Date	Time	Initials	Action/Contact



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Appendix 5 Staff Meeting Agenda

The Critical Incident Response Team can facilitate the meeting.

1. Attendance – anyone who is not present should be informed of the critical incident as soon as possible following the meeting.
2. Provide as much accurate information as possible, including:
 - names of the students or staff members directly involved,
 - time and place of the event,
 - any additional information surrounding the event, and
 - names and grades of the siblings of those directly affected who are also in the school.
3. Introduce the Critical Incident Response Team, and any additional support staff or community resource people who are present and explain their roles.
4. Briefly review the school critical incident plan. Provide extra copies.
 - Prepare teachers to deal effectively with informing their students of the critical incident.
 - Give out a script and model how students should be told.
 - Encourage teachers to allow time for classroom discussion.
 - Provide all staff with a copy of the protocol for class discussion. See Appendix 7 for guidelines on leading a classroom discussion.
 - Clarify procedures for handling students who want to leave the classroom.
 - Students who are highly emotional should be accompanied to the designated area.
 - Students who wish to leave the school should only be released to a parent, guardian or their designate.
 - Inform teachers of support plans.
 - Identify staff who will run the support and the appropriate procedure for sending students for the support.
 - Advise staff to be aware of their feelings and support each other.
 - Clarify the way to get counselling assistance for staff members.
 - Inform staff of any outside agencies involved in student or staff support.
 - Ask for staff help to identify students who may be at risk or need extra support.
 - Make counselling plans for all students who are potentially at risk for suicide or other serious emotional responses to the critical incident.
 - Direct staff to refer students who appear to be emotionally unstable to the counsellors.
 - Review media policy.
 - Inform all staff of any changes to the regular school schedule or cancellation of normal school events.
5. Set the date and time of a follow-up meeting.
 - Assure staff that they will be kept informed of any relevant information in this update meeting.
 - Follow up meeting will provide an opportunity for staff members to discuss classroom experiences and report information back to the group.



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Appendix 6 - Sample Letter to Parents

Dear Parents/Carers,

You may have heard...../ It is with sadness and regret that I have to inform you.....

(known facts of the incident)

As a school community, we are all deeply affected by this tragedy/ I am sure that you will wish to join me and my staff in offering our condolences and sympathy to those affected/to

(refer to individuals/families affected only where it is appropriate to release this information)

I have now spoken to all pupils and staff in school about what has happened and you will need to be aware of the following arrangements that we have now made:

(Details about:

- *school closure,*
- *changes to timings of school day*
- *transport*
- *lunch time arrangements*
- *changes to staffing*
- *arrangements for specific classes/year groups*
- *counselling support*
- *provision of further information as relevant)*

(If appropriate, advice about media contacts)

I think it is very important that we all take the time to talk with and reassure children about what has happened. This is likely to be a very difficult time for us as a school community and we will all need to support each other.

We appreciate the expressions of concern we have received, however it would be helpful if parents did not telephone the school during this time so we can keep phones and staff free to manage the situation.

Yours sincerely



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Appendix 7 - Informing Pupils

- Pupils should be told simply and truthfully what has happened, in small groups if possible, e.g., class, tutor, year, etc. In some circumstances, it may be appropriate to bring pupils together as a whole school. Where this is the arrangement, ensure that pupils have an opportunity to ask questions and talk through what they have heard with form/class teachers in smaller groupings afterwards.
- Begin by preparing the pupils for some very difficult/sad news.
- Taking account of children’s needs and backgrounds, give simple, factual information using language and concepts appropriate to the age of the children.
- Avoid using euphemisms, use words like ‘dead’ and ‘died’, etc.
- Pass on facts only; do not speculate on causes or consequences.
- If questions cannot be answered this should be acknowledged.
- Address and deal with rumours.
- Try to give expression to the emotions that individuals may be experiencing (e.g., shock/disbelief, etc) and explain that strong and difficult feelings are a normal part of the process of coming to terms with this sort of experience.
- Do not refrain from referring to the deceased by name, perhaps highlighting some positive aspect(s) of their lives.
- Finally, explain what arrangements the school has in hand for coming to terms with what has happened.

“I’ve got some very sad news to tell you today that might upset you. There is a serious illness called meningitis. Sometimes people with meningitis get better but sometimes people die from it. Some of you will have known that Jane Smith in year 4 was suddenly taken ill last week. I have to tell you that Jane died in hospital yesterday.

Like me, many of you will find it hard to believe that this has happened. It is obviously a very big shock for us all. Jane was such a happy girl who got on well with everybody. We will all miss her.

It is important for you to know that strong and perhaps difficult feelings are part of the normal process of coping with this sort of situation. It will help to talk about what has happened and about your thoughts and feelings. Please do take the opportunity to talk to your family, friends, teachers and adults in school. This is likely to be a difficult time for us as a school community and we should all try to support each other. Please come and talk with me if you have any questions or if you just want to talk.”



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Appendix 8 - Supporting the Individual Pupil

- Be accepting and allow the pupil to express their emotions. Ask open ended questions (e.g., “How are you today?”) or just sit with them if this is what you feel is appropriate. Avoid touching or hugging but try to be as natural and unembarrassed as possible. Have some tissues to hand. It might be appropriate to use reflective listening (i.e, repeating back to the child what they have said) and/or summarise what they have said. This gives an opportunity for the child to elaborate and/or modify what they have said as well as an opportunity to hear a perspective on their own experiences. Sometimes it is helpful to give a name to the emotion that you are hearing being expressed (e.g., “That sounds very sad”, “Did you feel angry then?”, etc).
- You might have to explain your limits of confidentiality (i.e., confidentiality can be maintained except where you believe that the pupil is at risk or there are issues relating to a possible criminal act).
- Don't forget that knowing what to say is far less important than being able to listen in a sympathetic and supportive manner. If it seems appropriate to offer advice, then strategies for the pupil that you might want to suggest could include:
 - Talking to their family and friends.
 - Crying and expressing their emotions in a suitable safe context.
 - Maintaining normal routines.
 - Eating normally.
 - Taking physical exercise.
 - Maintaining normal sleep patterns.
 - Carrying on seeing and being with friends.
 - Listening and playing music.
 - Being creative through art, drama, music, etc
 - Maintaining interests and pastimes.
- As part of such sensitive support, it will be important to ensure that the pupil can continue to seek support from you but without them becoming dependent. If appropriate, agree to a set number of sessions at a set time and place where you can be confident of not being disturbed (in terms of your own safety and accountability ensure that parents and relevant staff are aware of any such arrangements).
- Using a visual aid such as an outline of a hand, ask the pupil to identify 5 individuals (e.g., staff, peers, family, other adults) who they feel they could approach as part of their support network to help them feel safe. Ask them to test it out. If all else fails, what else could they always have ‘up their sleeve’ (e.g., Childline, etc)?



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Appendix 9 – School Incident Form & Incident Management Situation Report

Use this form to record initial information received on the incident and to log situation updates. This form should be started as soon as possible, and all boxes completed.

New or updated information on this form should be entered in RED so those receiving a copy will know what is new or has changed.

CALL INFORMATION

Date:	Time:	Your Name:
↓		
Name of School(s): PATTISHALL CE PRIMARY SCHOOL		
↓		

INCIDENT DETAILS

<i>Description: detail nature of incident; names of any pupil(s) involved, including age; names of siblings attending or having just left school; if individuals affected are adults, note the time they have been at the school, links to other schools and any precursors (e.g. illness, absence from work and length of time)</i>
How were you made aware of the incident?

IS IT A CRITICAL INCIDENT?

Is it an incident requiring immediate action or is there significant disruption to day to day operation of the school?

No Yes	Date and Time declared critical:
Are there any casualties or fatalities?	
Have the emergency services been called?	
Is the incident currently affecting school activities? If so, which areas?	

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What is the estimated duration of the incident?
What is the actual or threatened loss of staff/pupils? 1 – 20% ☐ 20 – 50% ☐ Over 50% ☐
Has access to the whole site been denied? If so, for how long? (provide estimate if not known)
Which work areas have been destroyed, damaged or made unusable?
Is there evidence of structural damage?
Which work areas are inaccessible but intact?
Are systems and other resources unavailable? (include computer systems, telecoms, other assets)
If so, which staff are affected by the ICT disruption and how?
Have any utilities (gas, electricity or water) been affected?
Is there media interest in the incident? (likely or actual)

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Does the incident have the potential to damage the School's reputation?

Other relevant information?

IN AN EMERGENCY SITUATION – CONTACT:

NCC EMERGENCY PLANNING DUTY OFFICER 07885 292851

The Duty Officer will be able to advise and coordinate NCC services to support you.

Enter any further information on the incident in the Action Log.



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Appendix 10 – Critical Incident Response Team Roles

Role	Responsibility	Possible Candidates	Name & Contact Number(s)
CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGER	- Contacts Emergency Planning Duty Officer. - Acts as or appoints school's single point of contact, acting as liaison between schools and emergency planning team (co-ordinating centrally) - Consider the need to alert other colleagues and external agencies. - Establish a Critical Incident Response Team. - Collate all relevant information relating to the emergency. - Co-ordinate the emergency response strategy for the school, liaising with relevant services, NCC and school governors as appropriate. - Monitor the emergency response. - Provide regular staff / team briefings. - Authorise any additional expenditure.	HT DHT Chair of Governors SLT Member	
DEPUTY CIM	- Assists Incident Manager. - Co-ordinates and manages staff in the Incident Management Team. - Monitors staff welfare and organises staff roster. - Co-ordinates evacuation, if necessary. - Liaises with the Emergency Services and other organisations as necessary.	DHT Vice Chair of Governors SLT Member	
PARENT LIAISON	- Advises parents and provides information. - Provides point of contact.	SLT Member School Governor	

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OFFICER	● Arranges on-site co-ordination of visiting parents. ● Maintains regular contact with parents where appropriate.		
ADMIN	● Operate telephone lines. ● Help collate information. ● Relay incoming and outgoing messages. ● Provide admin support to the Incident Manager and Deputy. ● Maintain a master log of key events and decisions.	Bursar Administrator Support Staff	
MEDIA/ COMMS	● Acts as point of contact for media enquiries. ● Works with the County Council's communications team to prepare media statements. ● Assist with internal communications.	SLT Member School Governor	
PUPIL WELFARE	● Maintain supervision. ● Ensure the safety and security of pupils. ● Co-ordinate the roll call register. ● Provide information and offer reassurance. ● Monitor pupils' physical and emotional welfare.	Teaching Staff	

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