

The Ark at Waddington, Village Hall, Mere Road, Waddington, Lincoln. LN5 9NX.

Telephone 07891807113 Email arkwaddington@googlemail.com

Website www.thearkatwaddington.co.uk OFSTED registration no. EY2660835

Critical Incident Plan

The handling of a crisis is a normal part of preschool life, but some incidents are of a critical, more overwhelming nature. This policy is designed to provide a framework for handling a critical incident.

The formulation of this policy is intended to clearly define the roles, responsibilities and procedures to follow, for staff dealing with such an incident. Each critical incident is unique, and it is not possible to plan for every eventuality, but similarly each critical incident can be shocking and disorientating so a prepared procedure is essential to ensure that our reaction is effective and efficient.

All staff members have read the plan and know where to access the document should it need to be implemented.

Potential incidents which could affect The Ark at Waddington Preschool are considered to be:

- Serious injury within the preschool/village hall site
- Serious injury on an out of preschool visit
- Death of a pupil or member of staff
- Fire/flood
- Health risk – outbreak of contagious illness/disease like meningitis
- Major arson attack
- Fatal road traffic accident
- Natural disaster within the community
- Consequences of terrorist or criminal activity
- Air traffic emergency/crash

Efficient and effective communication systems are central to the effective management of emergencies. A list of emergency telephone contact numbers is to be held by the Senior Management Team. It is to be regularly reviewed and updated and a copy inserted into this emergency plan. All staff members are to carry the emergency contact list on all off-site visits and journeys. If the incident involves the emergency services, it is expected that they will take control of certain management issues.

The Ark's reaction to a critical incident can be divided into the following categories:

- Immediate action
- Short term action
- Medium term action
- Longer term action

IMMEDIATE ACTION –

Evacuation Procedure (see also Fire Policy)

In the event of a serious incident at the pre-school during a session the Preschool manager would take charge. If the Preschool manager is not present or able to take charge another member of the Senior Management Team would oversee the evacuation. It is the

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responsibility of the person in charge to account for all persons. All staff would be responsible for caring for the children and visitors and ensuring they exit the building quickly and safely. The whistle and fire alarm are likely to be used to trigger rapid evacuation.

The staff and visitor sign in book, registers and children's details for each of the rooms, mobile phone and the trip (emergency) bag will be picked up as the building is evacuated.

The nearest fire exits would be used, and everyone would assemble at the designated muster station, on the field near to the green doored garages.

Once evacuation is complete the emergency services will be called.

Visitors would be asked to leave once they have been accounted for.

If it is deemed not safe to stay at the muster point, then the staff will walk the children over to Waddington All Saints Academy.

Parents will then be contacted to collect their children.

Serious Injury or Death

In the event of a serious injury or death of a child or staff member of the preschool then the Preschool manager would take charge. It would be their responsibility to first call the emergency services (if necessary) and then the parents/carers of the child/children involved. It will be the responsibility of the room leader (or assigned 'second-in-command' in the absence of the room leader) to attend to the casualty or casualties whilst the remaining members of staff in the room will ensure that the unaffected children are quickly removed from the incident (merging with the other room if necessary to maintain appropriate ratios.) Once this has been completed staff would continue to deal with the incident as specified 'Within Hours of the Incident Occurring'.

After such an event the SMT would discuss whether it would be appropriate for the sessions to continue. The parents/carers would be informed so consideration could be made to the effect on their own child and the staff in the setting.

Abduction/Missing Child

Please refer to the missing persons policy.

Loss of Building

If the Village Hall is not safe following a fire or building collapse, then preschool sessions would be cancelled. All parents would be informed of the situation by telephone, a copy of current children contact details are kept off site. We would seek to find an alternative temporary venue but if no suitable alternative is found the preschool would temporarily close. The Parish Council are responsible for building repairs. The preschool would await building reconstruction and receipt of an insurance claim to buy new equipment, we would

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also require the Parish Council to provide details that the building is considered safe and has been deemed fit for purpose before it could reopen.

Inability to maintain Staff to Child Ratios

If an emergency arose on a day where minimum staff ratios were in place and a staff member had to leave the setting, every attempt would be made to contact the nearest available qualified relief staff. If that was not possible then the setting would be closed and all parents contacted to immediately collect their children. A list of all emergency contact numbers for relief staff is always kept in the diary.

Within Hours of the Incident Occurring

- Manager or representative obtains and collates information relating to the incident – uncertainty breeds rumour and accurate information is essential.
- The Manager and/or Senior Management Team will allocate roles and responsibilities.
- Trigger support from Early Years and Childcare and other contacts on emergency list – establish clearly who is going to contact whom.
- Set up a dedicated phone line – to deal with calls from anxious parents etc. SMT should agree a factual statement and avoid speculation.
- Inform other preschool staff – 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.
- Contact families affected – must be done quickly and with sensitivity. Consistency of information is vital. It may be appropriate for families to come to preschool and immediate emotional support could be a possibility.
- Make arrangements to inform other parents – may need to take advice from Early Years and Childcare Services, especially if there is the possibility of legal liability. We may wish to send a letter to parents or prepare a leaflet.
- Inform pupils – can be done in small or large groups depending on which is most appropriate. Care needs to be exercised to protect both children and 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.
- Encourage people involved to talk – the incident may need to be discussed before children go home for the day, for both pupils and adults.
- Deal with the media – most important to seek legal advice before agreeing to speak to or be interviewed by the media. If this is not an option, then the SMT will prepare an agreed text for release by the Manager.
- Devise a plan for handling the reactions and feelings of people affected – the most common reactions will include denial, distress, guilt, anger and helplessness. We will consider the use of outside professionals to support and debrief staff and pupils affected by the incident. Those providing support also need support. At this point we will need to plan their short-term reaction to the incident.

SHORT TERM ACTION

- Reunion of children with their families – especially where 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 to deal with repercussions in terms of children's fears etc.
- Managing staff – support needs organising for all staff, preferably internally, but using outside agencies if appropriate. Staff monitoring should be a priority, even members of the SMT. If a crisis persists over many hours staff become tired, weary and upset and this affects their powers to make sensible decisions.
- Encourage pupils to talk – activate strategies for enabling young people to talk about the incident, and their feelings, using outside agencies if appropriate. Staff will need briefing about ways to help the children affected by the incident, and how to identify patterns of behaviour etc. This may have implications for the wider curriculum i.e. training in bereavement counselling for staff, provision of a range of books, PSHE discussions etc...
- Debriefing meeting – it may be appropriate to hold a debriefing 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

An experienced person, possibly someone from outside the preschool community, should lead this meeting.

- Formal and informal recognition of rituals – it is important to remember to express sympathy to families of the hurt or bereaved. Visits to children/staff in hospital. Pupils may wish to send cards and letters. The school may also need to consider attendance at funerals, and/or the desirability of holding special assemblies or memorial services. Anniversaries are also key times when support and sensitivity are required.
- Re-establishing routines – every attempt should be made to provide continuity for the children. The return to school of staff or pupils directly affected by the crisis will need to be managed carefully and with sensitivity but the re-establishment of routine is an important stage in emotional recovery.

MEDIUM TERM ACTION

- Return to preschool for staff or children after long absence – reintegration will need to be planned carefully, and may involve home visits prior to return, part time attendance initially, reducing workloads, putting in place mentoring process etc.
- Consulting professionals – consult professionals especially to help those showing unusual or prolonged reaction to the incident.
- Keeping parents informed – it may be appropriate to produce a leaflet for parents giving guidance on the possible delayed reactions of children to an incident and making suggestions to help them deal with these.

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- Support for staff – on-going monitoring and support for staff is a major consideration. SMT especially will not be immune to reaction from their ordeal.

LONG TERM ACTION

- Monitoring the vulnerable – the effects of a crisis can reverberate for years, and it is especially important that new staff and children are briefed in the school's history to help them understand and deal with potential repercussions especially at anniversary times.
- Marking anniversaries – these difficult times need to be treated with sensitivity. Some suggestions for preschools to mark anniversaries are by 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. SMT may need to 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 training for staff in loss counselling, bereavement etc.

CONCLUSION

The prime objective of this document is to serve the best interests of pupils and staff in coping with an incident, collectively and individually. This policy has been compiled to provide guidance, in the hope that it will never be necessary to refer to it in the context in which it has been written. It is impossible to plan for every eventuality and by their nature, critical incidents will disorientate and overwhelm those involved. It is hoped that a format for a whole preschool response to such an incident will provide focus for those with whom the responsibility will rest.