



CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY

Policy Date: February 2022

Reviewed: May 2024

Reviewed: September 2025

Review Date: August 2026

Responsible Person: Karen Holmes

RATIONALE

A critical incident can be defined as a sudden, unexpected and tragic event or sequence of events which causes trauma and confusion within More Than Ed Independent School and which overwhelms its normal coping mechanism.

It may affect pupils, staff, parents and governors, and may relate directly to the safety of our school community or may involve an incident beyond the school premises.

As a critical incident is likely to have a severe impact, both in the short and long term, our aim is to ensure that strategies and procedures are in place to protect the physical and emotional wellbeing of every member of the school community.

The Critical Incident Policy and Plan cannot cover every aspect of recovery from a critical incident. Occurrences may arise which cannot be foreseen or considered.

The critical incident may occur during the school day, during the evening, during the school holidays or on a school trip.

It is important that the incident policy is easily understood and swings into action immediately.

The following must be remembered in relation to the incident policy:

- ~ that it is followed as closely as possible.
- ~ that designated personnel understand their tasks and are competent to carry them out.
- ~ that other people do not take unilateral actions.
- ~ that consideration and sensitivity is shown by all.
- ~ that pupils, staff and parents are protected from press intrusion.
- ~ that normal routines be resumed as soon as possible.
- ~ there is a realisation that total recovery may take a long time.

The Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) Jonathan Munding, Karen Holmes, Charlotte Hopkins, Hayley Winstanley, Alex North, Heidi Lindle, Cathy Ford and Michelle Needham have responsibility for ensuring that procedures are properly addressed at times of high emotion. If the incident involves legal action, a precise response to the incident should be known and is able to be verified by more than one person.

Aims of the Critical Incidents Policy

1. To maintain a duty of care
2. To minimise educational and administrative disruption within the school
3. To enable normal working to be resumed in the shortest possible time

Objectives

- ~ To ensure that swift and appropriate action is taken in the case of us being made aware that a critical incident has occurred
- ~ To ensure that the welfare of pupils and staff is paramount
- ~ To ensure that we respond in a sensitive, consistent and
- ~ effective manner which reduces confusion, panic and extreme emotion

- ~ To have in place a Critical Incident Management Team, the membership of which is known to all relevant parties
- ~ To have in place a Critical Incident Management Plan, the details of which are familiar to all relevant parties
- ~ To maintain normality, as far as possible, in parts of the school which are not affected and to restore normality as soon as possible to the parts which are affected
- ~ To have immediate access to all relevant contact details (including outside agencies)
- ~ To offer sensitive, non-intrusive support in the short and medium term to all those affected directly or indirectly by the incident

EXAMPLES OF CRITICAL INCIDENTS

A critical incident is likely to involve death or serious injury to one or more members of the school community and, or, their families either at school, journeying to or from school, participating in a school related activity, at home or in some other context.

e.g. In School:

- ~ The death of a student or member of staff through natural causes
- ~ An accident involving a student or member of staff
- ~ A deliberate act of violence such as knifing or the use of a firearm
- ~ A school fire, flood or an explosion

e.g. Out of School:

- ~ Deaths or injuries through accidents
- ~ Suicide
- ~ Civil disturbance

GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING A CRITICAL INCIDENT

- ~ The Headteacher will take charge of the school's response.
- ~ In the case of the Headteacher being unavailable, the members of the Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) will take charge.
- ~ The Headteacher's office will be the central liaison point
- ~ The CIMT will assess immediate practical needs
- ~ The CIMT will contact next of kin of those directly involved if required
- ~ A short simple statement of facts will be prepared by the Headteacher
- ~ All contacts from the media will be dealt with by the Headteacher
- ~ Secretarial staff taking incoming calls will use a statement agreed by the CIMT
- ~ When necessary, all members of staff will be informed and will be guided in relation to informing pupils
- ~ The CIMT will determine the involvement of parents if appropriate
- ~ Short and long-term support will be offered to those affected
- ~ There will be an evaluation of the way in which the incident was managed

In the Event of a Critical Incident:

Initial Response

- ~ The Headteacher should be contacted first (if not available, a director should be informed)
- ~ They should seek to clarify from relevant sources the nature and circumstances of the incident
- ~ The CIMT will meet at the earliest opportunity and agree on procedures for managing the critical incident
- ~ If the incident is on site, health and safety measures will be put in place and the emergency services contacted

Longer Term Issues

- ~ The school's structures and routines will be re-established as quickly as possible to ensure as little disruption as possible to students' education and wellbeing
- ~ Supportive strategies for pupils and staff will be implemented
- ~ There will be ongoing contact with parents
- ~ Actions taken will be reviewed and policies amended if appropriate
- ~ The PSE and pastoral programmes will be reviewed
- ~ Staff will be mindful of anniversaries and other special dates
- ~ The use of appropriate outside agencies is crucial to providing long term support as is the use appropriately trained members of staff who are known to those in need of help

Preventative Strategies

- ~ Regular review of relevant policies e.g. Child Protection, Health and Safety
- ~ First Aid training
- ~ Fire Drills
- ~ PSE Programme

All members of the critical incident management team must:

- ~ have a copy of the Critical Incident Kit and Policy at home and at school
- ~ be aware of the roles of each part of the plan to enable MTEIS to react swiftly and accordingly
- ~ have contact numbers of each other for 24-hour contact
- ~ in the event of a school trip /visit, have access to a list of names for staff and pupils.
- ~ have a register of emergency services and relevant outside agencies. Relevant members of the secretarial staff will have a register of emergency services and relevant outside agencies
- ~ Emergency evacuation drills are familiar to all members of the school community and practiced regularly.
- ~ Opportunities to explore sensitive issues such as tragedy and death will be built into the PSE and pastoral programmes

Roles and Responsibilities

Led by the Headteacher, the Incident Management Team includes all Senior leadership and the Premises Manager. Additional members of the team will be recruited to match the specific needs of the incident.

The IMT is responsible for acting under the direction of the Headteacher (or their Deputy) to restore normal conditions as soon as possible. The procedure listed in the critical incident policy should be used.

Procedure for Closing the School

Closure in advance of a school day

The school can be closed in advance of a normal school day using the following system:

- Closure authorised by the Headteacher or their Deputy Headteacher
- Notification of a school closure using the Local Authority On-line website.
- Implementing the school staff 'snow procedures' if applicable (actioned by – Senior Leadership Team)
- Recording the closure on the home page of the school website.
- Sending out text messages to all parents. Closure during a School Day It is never a preferred option to close the school during a school day, but it can be done using the following procedures:

Closure authorised by the Headteacher or their Deputy.

Students will be transported home by their tutors once parents have been made aware. If parents cannot be contacted, students will stay with their member of staff, either on or off site, until contact has been made.

Immediate Places of Safety

In the event of a major incident on site requiring the school to be closed students will be escorted from the site by tutors and transported home in tutor's cars in the normal way.

Lockdown Procedure

Please see the Lockdown Policy.

Continuing Education

In the case that the school cannot be reopened immediately, tutors will still collect their students and find an alternative venue to teach them. Meals will still be provided for all students.

Attendance

The school will continue to record attendance/absence as normal.

Wellbeing and support

To handle the potential emotional impact on pupils due to the disruption of critical activities, the school will:

- Aim to follow normal school routines as far as possible
- Set up support systems for pupils to talk and share their feelings
- Signpost pupils to appropriate support and advice
- Where needed, provide access to counselling services or specialist treatment
- The school will follow the DfE's guidance on promoting and supporting mental health and wellbeing in schools and colleges.