

A Guide to Managing Critical Incidents In Schools

Contents



Introduction

Managing Critical Incidents in Schools	4
What is a Critical Incident?	4
What types of critical incidents can affect a school?/Incidents that have affected schools:	4
Managing a Critical Incident	4
Section One: Before the incident	5
Section Two: During the incident	5
Section Three: After the incident	5
Section Four: Appendices with resource materials	5

Section 1 - Before the incident

Critical Incident Management Strategy	6
Critical Incident Management Team	6
Critical Incident Management Plan	6
A central information point	7
School closure	7
Critical incidents during Weekends & School Holidays	7

Section 2 - During the Incident

Implementing the Critical Incident Management Plan	8
Normal school routine	8

Briefing sessions for staff	8
Breaking the news to pupils	9
Making the Announcement to Pupils	10
Supporting pupils	10
Support from LCC Educational Psychology Service	10
Pupils absent from school	11
Vulnerable pupils	12
Informing parents	12
Role of parents	13
Media management	13
Acceptable use of mobile phones, e-safety and social networking policy	13
Support for staff	14
Support within school	14
External support	14
Assisting statutory investigations	15

Section 3 - After The Incident

Support for pupils	16
Support for bereaved families	16
Support for staff	17
Memorials and Commemorations	17
Review of Critical Incident Management Plan	17



Appendix 1 - Useful Contacts	18	Appendix 8 - How school staff can support pupils at a time of crisis	28
Appendix 2 - Decision Tree	21	Information for staff	
Appendix 3 - Critical Incident Management strategy planning tool	22	General guidelines for staff	29
Appendix 4 - Announcements to pupils	23	Useful tips for staff	29
Advice for teachers		Restoring normal routine	30
Appendix 5 - Breaking the news to pupils	24	Appendix 9 - Responding to pupils' questions following a sudden death	31
Advice for teachers		Information for staff	
Appendix 6 - Children and young people's understanding of death	25	Appendix 10 - Understanding your reactions	32
Information for staff		Information for pupils	
Appendix 7 - Death by suspected suicide	26	Appendix 11 - Informing parents of a sudden death - Letter to parents	33
Information for staff		Appendix 12 - Understanding your child's reactions and how you can help - Information for parents	34
Guidelines for staff if you suspect a pupil has suicidal thoughts	26	Appendix 13 - Press statements Information For staff	36
Responding to a distressed pupil	27	Appendix 14 - Media interviews Information for staff	38
Response to disclosure of suicidal thoughts	27	Appendix 15 - Pupils returning to school after bereavement Information for teachers	39

Introduction

Managing Critical Incidents in schools

This guidance is intended to prepare schools for a critical incident and to ensure effective management in a difficult situation. Although it is not possible to prepare in detail for every situation it's essential to have a general plan to hand which outlines the steps that need to be taken.

It is not a statutory requirement to have a School Critical Incident Plan, but Lincolnshire County Council strongly advises schools to draw up a plan for the unexpected, regularly review its contents and maintain training for staff.

What is a Critical Incident?

A critical incident may be defined as any sudden and unexpected incident or sequence of events which causes trauma within a school community and which overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of that school.

What types of critical incidents can affect a school? / Incidents that have affected schools:

- sudden death of pupil or member of staff
- disappearance of a pupil or member of staff
- death or injury of a pupil or staff member on a school outing
- severe injury to pupil or staff member as a result of road traffic accident
- serious assault on pupil or staff member in school
- violent/disturbed intruder on school premises during school day
- serious damage to school building or property through fire, flood or vandalism
- an incident which affects access/egress for the school
- civil disturbance, or terrorism in local community
- a more widespread emergency in the community for example, the release of hazardous substances, severe weather etc.
- pupil or member of staff with contagious illness
- immediate evacuation of the school with no likelihood of return for a number of hours
- death or serious injury of someone within close proximity of the school

Not all of these examples will require a full scale response, however plans should consider the long-term effects that can arise during or following an incident. It should be noted that whilst these incidents may be the highlight of concern, children may also suffer secondary losses which could also affect them. Examples of this include losing their home, belongings etc.

Managing a Critical Incident

Experience has shown that schools which have a Critical Incident Management Plan in place will handle the situation better. They tend to provide the best support to pupils, staff and families and return to normality sooner while continuing to be alert to the vulnerability of all concerned.

Critical incidents happen when least expected. When a school is affected by a crisis, all staff have an important role to play in supporting the emotional health and wellbeing of their school community and in maintaining control of the situation in the school.

It is important that staff know that they have a significant role at this time, that they feel valued and that their contribution is acknowledged. It should be recognised that on occasion some members of staff, for various reasons, may not be in a position to take an active role in managing a critical incident.

The effects of a critical incident on a pupil or staff member can be wide-ranging and can impinge upon his or her family particularly if the pupil is close to those at the centre of the crisis or the incident. A critical incident can also impact on the wider community including pupils and staff from other schools.

The guidance is the result of careful consideration and schools are urged to give thought to it now. This guidance is based on the cumulative experience of school staff in dealing with critical incidents and of personnel from external agencies who support schools staff and pupils throughout such events.

Each school's response to managing a critical incident will differ according to the nature of the incident, the specific circumstances and previous experiences.

Section One: Before the incident

This section emphasises the importance of being proactive in preparing for critical incidents. It highlights the importance of having a Critical Incident Management Strategy and Critical Incident Management Plan and details the role of a school's Critical Incident Management Team. It also highlights the importance of a multi-agency and well co-ordinated response.

Section Two: During the incident

This section describes action to be taken by a school when responding to a critical incident. It identifies important sources of support available to a school's Critical Incident Management Team and the essential tasks to be undertaken as part of a collaborative and well-managed response. Detailed advice is given with regard to staff briefings, breaking the news to pupils and contacts with parents*. This section also gives advice on managing the media, the importance of pupil and staff welfare and support available during a critical incident response. The need to identify vulnerable 'at risk' pupils is also highlighted.

Section Three: After the incident

This section deals with, the important work required to help the school and the broader community cope with and recover from, a critical incident. It advises on monitoring and support arrangements necessary for pupils and staff. It also emphasises the need for ongoing vigilance and identification of those with delayed or complicated grief reactions and who may be 'at risk'. This section also advises on supporting families, memorials and commemorations and reviewing the schools Critical Incident Management Plan.

Section Four: Appendices with resource materials

This section contains publication references, resources and support service details that schools may find helpful. It also details the information sources used in developing this guidance.

Lincolnshire County Council extends thanks and acknowledgement to the Department for Education Northern Ireland (DENI) for giving permission to replicate their guidance document.

** In this document the term parent includes guardian and primary carer.*

Section 1 - Before the incident

Critical Incident Management Strategy

Firstly, schools should develop their Critical Incident Management Strategy. This should identify the areas which need to be considered to minimise the impact of critical incidents. It should address the different actions necessary and the responses required to different types of critical incidents and have clear guidelines in place to react to any school related emergency.

The strategy should be developed by a representative group with membership drawn from the Board of Governors and the school's Senior Management Team. This group should engage with the wider school community as part of the development process. Appendix 3 is a template which can be used as the basis for planning a strategy.

The key areas for consideration in the strategy are the:

- role of the Head Teacher, the Senior Management Team and the Board of Governors
- establishment of a Critical Incident Management Team and individual roles within the Team
- procedures for dealing with different critical incidents
- liaison with external support agencies
- relevant professional development of staff

Critical Incident Management Team

The Critical Incident Management Team will vary according to individual school circumstances. The team should include members of the Senior Management Team including those responsible for pastoral care, special educational needs and child safeguarding within the school. Non-teaching staff should be represented on the team. The Board of Governors should be asked whether it wishes to be represented as experience has shown this to be a valuable addition.

A team leader must be identified within the Critical Incident Management Team. This position is likely to be held by the head teacher, deputy head or another member of the school's Senior Management Team and this person should co-ordinate the school's response to any critical incident. The task of this team is to develop and maintain the Critical Incident Management Plan and co-ordinate the response during an incident.

Critical Incident Management Plan

The Critical Incident Management Plan must balance the twin objectives of managing the incident and meeting the needs of the whole school community.

The plan should identify the key elements that need to be dealt with at various stages of a critical incident. These need to be grouped together according to their priority so that the essential tasks are dealt with first and others follow as required.

These key elements will include:

- a school response depending on the nature of the incident
- essential tasks, contingency arrangements and staff deployment
- clear lines of communication
- a resource contact list of external agencies
- support for staff and pupils
- procedures for dealing with the media
- plans for on-going support
- consideration of memorials or commemorations

When developing the plan it is important that schools designate a central point or points of contact within the school. Support for staff and pupils is also important.

A central information point

The plan will need to prescribe methods of contacting and communicating with key people. There should be a staffed information point in an easily accessible area to ensure timely, accurate and relevant communication during an incident. Consideration should be given to a cascade system of telephone contacts. This allows school staff to disseminate information quickly, without placing the burden of work on one person.

Particular attention should be given to:

- how essential telephone lines can be kept clear to receive important messages whilst ensuring that key information is given out
- staff to receive incoming calls
- staff to deal with distressed parents by phone/ in person
- staff to deal with distressed pupils
- use of a prepared statement
- how to deal with the media.
- a log of incoming and outgoing calls should be maintained to ensure that duplication is avoided.
- support for staff and pupils

Lincolnshire County Council may be able to provide initial support to the school community, along with organisations such as the emergency services and the voluntary sector.

The Critical Incident Management Plan should include contact details for key agencies as necessary, for example, police, school chaplain and their Educational Psychologist. A sample list of useful contacts is found at Appendix 1. This list should include the names of and current phone numbers of school staff including the Chair of Governors, counselling services and key holders. It should be reviewed and updated each term. It is important that the members of the Critical Incident Management Team have a copy of this list at home, as critical incidents can occur outside school hours and term-time.

Schools need to be aware that, during a critical incident, offers of help and support will come from many sources; some will be welcome as part of the school's Critical Incident Management Plan and others, though well intentioned, may only serve to complicate that response. It is therefore important to give careful consideration whether accepting help from any source, other than those which have been planned, will be of benefit to the school community. All contact with pupils by any agency or individuals should be governed by current child protection legislation and guidance for schools.

School closure

Depending on the nature of the critical incident and its impact on the school it may be necessary to suspend the normal timetable for a period of time to permit an appropriate response. In very exceptional circumstances, such as a death on school premises, it may be necessary to close the school. Further advice on closure, or part closure of schools can be found in Lincolnshire County Council's School's Handbook (Section B05 – Emergency Closure or Part-Closure of Schools).

Critical incidents during weekends and school holidays

The plan should include any necessary action and response required for potential critical incidents that may impact on the school during weekends and school holidays.

Section 2 - During the Incident

Implementing the Critical Incident Management Plan

No incidents are alike. As soon as a school becomes aware of any incident that might have an impact on it, the head teacher or Critical Incident Team Leader should find out the facts and assess its significance for the school. The head teacher or team leader's decision will determine the response. The position can be reviewed as new information emerges.

When a critical incident occurs the school should inform key contacts and keep them updated. These may include the emergency services, the Board of Governors, Lincolnshire County Council and other relevant agencies which may have a role in providing support.

The key tasks will include:

- responding to any inevitable risk or threat eg evacuation or first aid
- notifying the emergency services/other relevant authorities and agreed parties
- mobilising the Critical Incident Management Team
- agreeing the school routine for that day
- informing staff
- establishing a dedicated, telephone line
- setting-up recovery/designated room
- informing pupils and parents
- preparing/adapting a media statement
- assessing initial impact of the critical incident on staff and pupils

Normal school routine

Schools should restore normal school routine as soon as practicable. It may be useful to continue certain curriculum activities at intervals during the days following the critical incident. Sustaining the normal routine, with timetable flexibility to allow pupils and staff to access support, will maintain a sense of continuity and stability for the whole school community.

Briefing sessions for staff

It is essential that staff receive factual information on what has occurred, how the incident will be handled and how they can contribute to the school's response. A formal staff briefing should take place as soon as possible after the circumstances of the incident are known with a time set for formal debriefing at the end of the school day(s). Absent teachers should also be briefed on the situation.

This information should be given by the head teacher or team leader. Staff should be kept updated on developments during the course of the day and this can be done during morning breaks and/or lunchtime using the staff room.

The initial briefing should:

- give a brief statement of factual information
- outline the school's response and proposed plan of action
- allow staff to ask questions and to get a response
- outline staff responsibility for monitoring pupil and staff welfare
- identify vulnerable staff and pupils who may be at risk
- clarify specific responsibilities for staff
- advise staff on procedure for dealing with media enquiries
- advise staff on agreed procedure for informing pupils and parents
- inform staff of the support services that are available
- reassure staff and pupils that they will be supported
- advise staff of time/place of next briefing and debriefing session

Breaking the news to pupils

It's important to inform pupils of a critical incident as soon as possible. Delaying a formal announcement may make the situation worse, as rumour can add another aspect to handling the critical incident and pupils may feel that a delay shows a lack of concern or sensitivity by the school staff and could undermine the credibility of information given later.

With social media, it is possible that those outside the school may be aware of the incident before you contact them, and names of those affected may be circulating. This should be taken into consideration when informing pupils of an incident.

Consideration should be given to the range of different groups among the pupils and how they are to be informed. Very young children and those with special educational needs must be informed in a way which is appropriate, using language and methods of communication already familiar to them.

In some cases, where emotions may be running high, schools should consider informing pupils in small groups, for example, siblings, close friends, class group, and year group preferably in their regular classroom setting. Many pupils will likely be in shock so a small group setting will also act as a 'safe space'. The best person to communicate this difficult news will normally be the class/form teacher, the head of year or another member of staff known to the pupils. Staff should be able to decline this task if they feel unable to do it.

Before making the announcement at a critical incident, attention needs to be given to what the pupils are to be told as well as how they are to be told. Appendix 4 provides sample announcements and Appendix 5 provides useful information on informing pupils. Teachers should be given a carefully worded announcement to read aloud in classrooms.

Where there has been a death it is important that the bereaved family's right to privacy is respected. In this instance the announcement made to pupils will usually include a statement of condolence and this should be sensitive to the different religions and cultures present in the school community. The announcement should also advise pupils of the support arrangements to be put in place and how these can be accessed.

Staff should be aware that young people's understanding of death will depend on their cognitive and developmental stage. Appendix 6 provides information on the concept and common reactions to death in various age ranges.

In the case of a suspected suicide there are a number of issues that need to be considered. These issues are dealt with in Appendix 7.

Making the announcement to pupils

Teachers should make the announcement simultaneously, where possible, to ensure that pupils attending school hear about it at the same time. Before making any announcement teachers should be mindful of vulnerable pupils in the group including those recently bereaved, those with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language. When making the agreed announcement teachers should pass on the facts that are known, never speculate on the cause or causes of the incident and be truthful when questions cannot be answered.

After the announcement, teachers should always allow sufficient time for pupils to begin to discuss their feelings. Teachers do have a listening, supportive and containing role and should be encouraged to remain calm and to listen to the pupils.

Supporting pupils

After making the announcement teachers should allow time for discussion. Allowing pupils to share experiences helps with recovery, Appendix 8 "How School Staff Can Support Pupils at A Time of Crisis" and Appendix 9 "Responding to Pupils Questions following A Sudden Death" provides useful guidelines and responses for teachers. There is also a need for on-going monitoring of pupils while in class, corridors and school grounds to ensure they are supported.

A school should always provide a designated area/areas for pupils should they wish to come out of class. There, they should be allowed to talk about their feelings to someone, for example, a member of staff, someone from the schools pastoral care team, a counsellor supporting the school or a school nurse if known to the pupils. It is best that pupils have the opportunity to discuss their feelings with someone they know, but, if appropriate, the schools can also be supported by the Educational Psychology Team. For those pupils that are particularly distressed the suggested information contained at Appendix 10 can be used as part of the support arrangements. Although most pupils would benefit from remaining in school with their friends, consideration may need to be given for these pupils to go home. Arrangements should be made directly with parents to ensure that the pupils are supported at home.

Support from LCC Educational Psychology Service

LCC Educational Psychology can support schools in working proactively to develop a plan for a critical incident and in staff training for dealing with loss and bereavement.

On receiving a request for support from a head teacher, the team will respond promptly with a level of support which is judged to be appropriate to the nature, size and severity of the event.

It is possible that a critical incident may not fit the criteria for one particular level. In this case professional judgement will be used to respond appropriately.

Level 1 – Bereavement and Loss

- Accident, illness, death of a pupil/member of staff/parent, out of school
- Event is not sudden and/or traumatic
- School has support strategies in place
- Low impact/awareness for majority of pupils/staff
- Advice needed for staff – coping with bereavement and loss, normal grieving process

Response: Telephone conversation with head teacher/school senior management team. Possible educational psychologist visit as necessary.

Level 2 – Critical Incident

- Accident, illness, death of a pupil/member of staff/parent at or near school, or on a school trip
- Event is sudden and traumatic
- High media interest
- Schools feel unable to cope; significant numbers of distressed pupils and staff
- School requests support from Educational Psychology for support and advice to manage the critical incident

Response: Team of two or more educational psychologists go to the school

Level 3 – Major Incident/Emergency

- Large scale incident affecting the school and/or the local community
- Lincolnshire's Resilience Forum would activate command and control structure
- Educational Psychology's response is part of a much larger multi-agency response led by LRF
- National as well as local impact – high media interest

Response: Educational Psychology team involvement co-ordinated by PEP/SEP in conjunction with partner agencies.

The response by the Educational Psychology Team will be evaluated on a case by case basis, and the appropriate response deployed to the school concerned.

Pupils absent from school

Pupils who are absent from school due to illness, work experience, educational trips or fixed period exclusion should also be informed. This is of particular importance if a pupil has died and the absent pupil is in the same class or is a known friend. In such a case, early contact should be made with the pupil's parent by the class or form teacher. A pupil's return to school in any of these circumstances requires sensitive management.

Vulnerable pupils

Schools should acknowledge that the critical incident may act as a trigger for an extreme response by some pupils who are vulnerable even though they are not directly involved.

Vulnerable pupils include:

- close friends and relatives of those affected
- pupils with a history of self-harm or suicidal thoughts
- pupils who have experienced recent bereavement, separation or other significant loss
- pupils with mental health difficulties
- pupils with a history of substance abuse
- pupils with child protection needs
- pupils with learning, communication or sensory difficulties
- non-communicative pupils who have difficulty talking about their feelings
- pupils experiencing serious family difficulties including mental/physical illness

Pupils with special educational needs including pupils with learning and communication difficulties will require special consideration from staff. They may be at a different developmental level to their peers, which may affect their understanding of trauma and death. These pupils should be told the news separately if possible by using short simple sentences in language appropriate to their level of understanding. They may ask the same questions repeatedly and need extra patience and support. Non-verbal approaches such as pictures, drawings and photographs may help them to explore and express their feelings and concerns. The school's Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) should be asked about the best approach for pupils with special needs.

Informing parents

When a critical incident occurs, parents must be informed. The type of critical incident will determine the nature of contact with parents, who is best placed to inform parents and the urgency with which this is done.

Parents of pupils directly involved should be telephoned or visited. If the death of a pupil has occurred, one has to be mindful of the bereaved parents' needs. It is important for the head teacher or another school representative to make contact with the parents as soon as possible to express sympathy, liaise over messages of condolence from staff/pupils and to ask about funeral arrangements. Schools should always take into account the wishes of the family before sending school representatives including pupils to a funeral and be sensitive to different religious practices and cultures.

Other parents also need to be informed; this is likely to be done most effectively by letter. Appendix 11 provides a letter and Appendix 12 gives practical and constructive suggestions on how parents can support their children. Schools should consider issuing the information in Appendix 12 along with this letter.

When making contact with parents it is important that any letter issued should give the facts of the critical incident and ensure that only accurate information is shared. Schools should also consider the needs of parents whose first language is not English.

Schools also need to have a contingency plan where the critical incident requires all parents to be contacted as a matter of urgency. It may be useful to provide those making the calls with a 'script', so that all parents receive the same message and avoid any confusion.

Role of parents

Parents can play a supportive role in helping pupils cope at a time of crisis. It is helpful for the school and parents to communicate shared messages when supporting the children. A unified approach will make things easier to manage and it is important that those with parental responsibility know how to access support both within the school and externally.

In all cases, giving parents some information on how young people react to a traumatic event will be helpful and reassuring, for example, pupils may be anxious, lack concentration and be restless or unable to sleep. Where there are vulnerable pupils, some parents may need to be contacted personally.

Media management

While schools are under no obligation to speak to the media, co-operation with the media can make the difference between accurate and inaccurate reporting. Agreed necessary procedures must be in place to deal with the media before a critical incident occurs. It is important that a structured approach to media management is developed to ensure a positive and supportive response from the media. Lincolnshire County Council may be able to provide support in dealing with the media.

Appendices 13 and 14 provide useful guidance on dealing with the media following a critical incident.

It is, however, strongly recommended that before making a statement:

- a check is carried out with the police, ambulance, and fire and rescue service
- the relevant Lincolnshire County Council communications officer for schools is contacted for advice on the statement for the media or an interview for radio or TV.
- a decision is taken on whether all media enquiries and follow up enquiries are handled by the head teacher or another designated member of the Critical Incident Management Team
- an accurate, factual report is prepared as background to any questions
- no other staff should make comment or provide comment on the incident
- news media should not be permitted on school property without the prior approval of the head teacher – this applies to television, radio, print media and photographers
- pupils should also be advised about dealing with contact from or with the media
- pupils should also be encouraged to use discretion when commenting about the incident on social networking sites

Acceptable use of mobile phones, e-safety and social networking policy

Communication management during a critical incident can be supported by policies around acceptable use of mobile phones, e-safety and the use of internet.

Whilst the number of pupils who will have mobile phones and other personal devices is rising, it is essential that schools provide boundaries for their use in school.

Within the policy, it may be worthwhile adding that members of the school community should not publish specific and detailed thoughts and information. Pupils should be aware of the ease of uploading personal information and images and the consequences it could have during an emergency. Pupils should be advised never to give out personal information of any kind which may identify them or their location (if there is suspicion that the material on a mobile phone may provide evidence relating to a criminal offence the phone may need to be given to the police for further investigation).

During an emergency situation, parents should be advised not to contact their child via a mobile phone but to phone a dedicated number or wait for information to be provided by the school or relevant authorities.

Support for staff

The impact of a critical incident on staff may be distressing and some may have difficulty coping. The extent of this impact will depend on staff involvement in the incident and the particular circumstances surrounding it. The impact will also vary according to staff experience and training, coping skills, past trauma history and current stresses.

Sources of help and support need to be in place as an integral part of the Critical Incident Management Plan and not hastily arranged at times of tragedy. A school ethos that promotes a caring, supportive community is an important pre-requisite for helping all staff to feel valued and to cope at times of great stress. In addition to support arrangements for all staff from within the school, external sources of help should be identified and made known to all. Any practical and emotional support, and potential longer term counselling, should be considered within the framework of a whole school approach to managing a critical incident.

The needs of the head teacher and other senior members of staff, who are expected to exercise sensitive and strong leadership during the incident, must also be provided for in the plan. While this group of staff may be well supported from within the school, it is likely that support will also come from outside the school. Sources of help may include accessing the Employee Support and Counselling Service at Lincolnshire County Council, the Educational Psychology Team, the Chair of Governors and relevant clergy/faith workers.

During a crisis, consideration needs to be given to the provision of opportunities for staff, as individuals or in groups, to discuss their own reaction to what has happened, to assess the climate of the school and to share their observations on the monitoring of vulnerable pupils.

Staff must be well supported during a crisis. In order to support pupils effectively, staff need to be kept informed, to understand the importance of their role and to be supported themselves. The needs of all staff must be monitored and appropriate support provided.

Support within school

Informal support in school may be available through staff, colleagues and friends who can help each other and, if appropriate, someone in the Senior Management Team, if not already involved. More formal support may include, for example, providing cover arrangements for staff that are temporarily unable to carry out their normal duties, arranging for staff to have time out if necessary and advising staff of external support that may be available to them.

External support

In the immediate aftermath of a critical incident the school community needs the type of support described in this document such as calm reassurance by familiar adults, in order to help them understand and come to terms with what has occurred as part of the normal grieving process. Lincolnshire County Council's Schools Liaison Officer may be able to signpost support to external organisations. In the longer term, however, some staff, who may have become vulnerable due to particular circumstances, may benefit from additional counselling support from specialist counselling teams.

Assisting statutory investigations

Schools need to be aware that a critical incident such as the sudden death of a pupil can trigger an investigation that may involve a number of statutory agencies.

The sudden death of a pupil is an extremely difficult and emotionally charged time for all concerned. Schools should be aware that alongside a coroner's inquest there may be other officially established reviews, such as serious case reviews (SCRs) or inquiries into the pupil's death and the circumstances surrounding it.

It is important that schools anticipate being asked to contribute information about the pupil to any such review or inquiry and ensure that all relevant records relating to the pupil are secured. It is important to stress that the purpose of such reviews is not to inquire into how a child died or who is culpable. It is to learn from the experience on how best to protect children in the future and if there are ways of improving the practice of all professionals working with children particularly in relation to multi-disciplinary and inter-agency working.



Section 3 - After the Incident

The aim of the work carried out in school during the weeks, months and sometimes years following a critical incident is to help its immediate and broader community cope with and recover from the critical incident. A return to normal routine requires careful and sensitive planning, timing and implementation. Staff should continue to monitor pupils' emotional wellbeing and be attentive to pupils with ongoing difficulties.

Support for pupils

Returning to school for some pupils after a critical incident may be very difficult and every attempt should be made to provide as much continuity as possible. Suitable arrangements to support a pupil or pupils returning to school should be made.

These arrangements include:

- arranging a home visit to discuss plans for returning to school, even on a phased basis
- helping arrange a rota of support from school friends
- arranging for school work to be sent home where appropriate
- briefing staff and pupils on how best to support individuals returning to school
- arranging support for temporary or permanent mobility difficulties or disfigurement
- planning support for emotional needs eg leaving class when distressed

Appendix 15 deals with planning a positive return for a bereaved pupil.

A record should be kept of a pupil who has been affected by bereavement. When a pupil affected by a critical incident moves school the receiving school should always be informed.

Pupils who continue to show signs of significant distress after a number of weeks and who are finding the return to normal school routine difficult may require a referral for specialist support. Schools should also consider the need for a support plan for individual pupils or a group of pupils returning to school after a long absence or those considered at risk. Safeguarding children is a multi-agency issue and can become a child protection issue where schools should liaise with external agencies for appropriate guidance and reassurance. The support plans for these vulnerable pupils should become an integral part of the schools' pastoral care arrangements.

Staff may have to cope with the continuing impact of the critical incident and with issues as they arise during teaching and learning. The classroom provides opportunities to deal with these issues in a more extensive way. It would be unwise to focus obsessively on the critical incident, yet issues arising from the event should not be avoided. Schools should remember that some pupils' ability to concentrate is significantly affected after a critical incident. If public examinations are imminent for pupils it is important to make the examining boards aware of the situation.

Support for bereaved families

The family of a pupil who has died will require support for a long time after the tragic event. Family members may be at the same school and have difficulty in adjusting to their loss. Parents may wish to have mementos of their child's involvement in the life of the school and to hear about his/her achievements.

The return of personal belongings and/or school work to the family, perhaps in a 'memory folder' or 'memory box' needs to be handled sensitively. Schools should also consider what to do when events arise that would have

involved the deceased pupil, for example, award ceremonies. The management of public examination results and the return of coursework also requires careful consideration. It should be remembered that whatever precedent the school sets should be applied to similar incidents in the future and be in line with family wishes.

Support for staff

Some staff may need support in the longer term. The strain on staff of leading a school through a critical incident can be extremely difficult and may not be identified until after the crisis. Staff, both teaching and non-teaching, can often underestimate the impact on them and may not recognise that they are experiencing difficulty. The Critical Incident Management Team must be alert to this possibility and ensure that staff are directed to sources of support.

Memorials and Commemorations

A school may wish to hold a memorial or commemoration. Holding a special assembly is a way of celebrating the life and achievement of the pupil or colleague and gives the school a corporate means of thanksgiving and farewell. The wishes of the bereaved family should always be taken into consideration and schools should be mindful of different religious faiths and accepted practices.

Significant dates such as anniversaries or celebrations may revive deep feelings among pupils and staff and need careful thought and preparation. Additional support for pupils and staff may be required at this time. In addition, it is important to take account of any long-term legal processes, for example, a court case or an inquest, possible media interest and any related public events which may be unsettling for the school.

Advice can be sought on this through the County Council's Educational Psychology Service.

Review of Critical Incident Management Plan

A review should be carried out within six weeks of a critical incident. This review should be undertaken in collaboration with those support agencies involved and should include consultation with the school community to evaluate the effectiveness of the plan and to make necessary modifications if required.

The review should address the following questions:

- What went well?
- What was most/least helpful?
- Were there any gaps?
- Have all necessary referrals to support services been made?
- Is there any unfinished business?
- Have all records relevant to the critical incident been secured?
- Are there any identified training needs?
- Does the plan need to be reviewed/changed/updated?

The Critical Incident Management Team should meet on a termly basis to discuss the plan and ensure that it is fit for purpose including considering the recent experiences of other schools. Key contact details should always be reviewed on a termly basis.

There must be a formal review of the Critical Incident Management Plan annually.

Appendix 1 – Useful Contacts

LINCOLNSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL	
Head of Education Support	01522 553213 (Office hours)
School Liaison Officer	01522 554884 (Office Hours)
Director of Children’s Services Office	01522 553201 (Office hours)
Duty Emergency Planning Officer	01522 582220 (Office hours)
	01522 888111 (Outside office hours, request a call back from the Duty EPO)
Communications Team	01522 552305
Educational Psychology Team	01522 553341
	Grief and loss: A support pack for schools, including guidance documents, helpful website links and leaflets is available directly from the Educational Psychology Team or via Section A13 in the School Admin handbook on LCC Schools Secure site.
Employee Support and Counselling Service (School Employees)	01522 555440 Emp.supportandcounselling@lincolnshire.gov.uk
Health and Safety Helpline	01522 836713
	01522 836717
	07793 187663
Advice for schools may be found in the LCC Health and Safety manual, available at: http://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/jobs/manuals/health-and-safety-manual/	
Passenger Transport Unit	01522 782020
LCC Insurance Manager	01522 553675 (LCC or buy-back only)
Educational Visits	Tel: 01522 553209 Fax: 01522 516033
	Email: evsupport@cfbt.com
The latest Educational Visits Policy and Guidance, including model policies and template letters for schools can be accessed at: http://lincolnshire.cfbt.com/en-GB/Behaviour-and-Safety/Advisory-Services/Education-Visits-Service	
VINCI-Mouchel Property Service Centre	01522 836222 (LCC or buy-back only)
24hour helpdesk	
LCC’s Employee Support Counsellor (Staff)	01522 555440 (LCC Schools Only)
EMTET (Ethnic Minority & Traveller Education Team)	01427 787190

TEACHER ASSOCIATIONS

National Association for Primary Education	01604 647 646
NUT	020 7388 6191
NASUWT	0121 453 6150
Association of Teachers and Lecturers	0207 930 6441
National Association of Headteachers	0300 30 30 333
Association of School and College Leaders	0116 299 1122
UNISON	0800 171 2193

RELIGIOUS ORGANISATIONS

Diocesan Education Trust	01522 504051
Lincoln County Hospital Duty Chaplain	01522 573080
Roman Catholic - Nottinghamshire Diocesan Board of Education	01332 293833
Islamic Association of Lincoln	01522 543103
Lincoln Jewish Minyan	info@lincolnjewishminyan.org.uk

LOCAL SERVICES AND ORGANISATIONS

Lincolnshire Centre for Grief & Loss	27 Tentercroft Street Lincoln LN5 7DB Tel: 01522 546168 Fax: 01522 546172
Specialist Family Practitioner Team	01476 464259 (Monday-Friday 09:00 – 17:00)

NATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

CRUSE Bereavement Care

0870 167 1677 (national rate)

Website: www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk
www.rd4u.org.uk (a site for young people)

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

The Compassionate Friends

0117 953 9639 (national rates)

Support for bereaved parents who have lost a child of any age from any circumstances

Winston's Wish Family Line

0845 2030 405 (local rates)

Website: www.winstonswish.org.uk
 Information and guidance for families of bereaved children.
 Can provide contact details for local groups which support bereaved children

The Samaritans

Website: www.samaritans.org
 Confidential emotional support for anyone in a crisis

Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide

Phone: 0115 944 1117

Can provide details of local self-help groups for those bereaved by suicide

Childline

0800 1111 (free phone)
 National help line for children

British Red Cross National Office

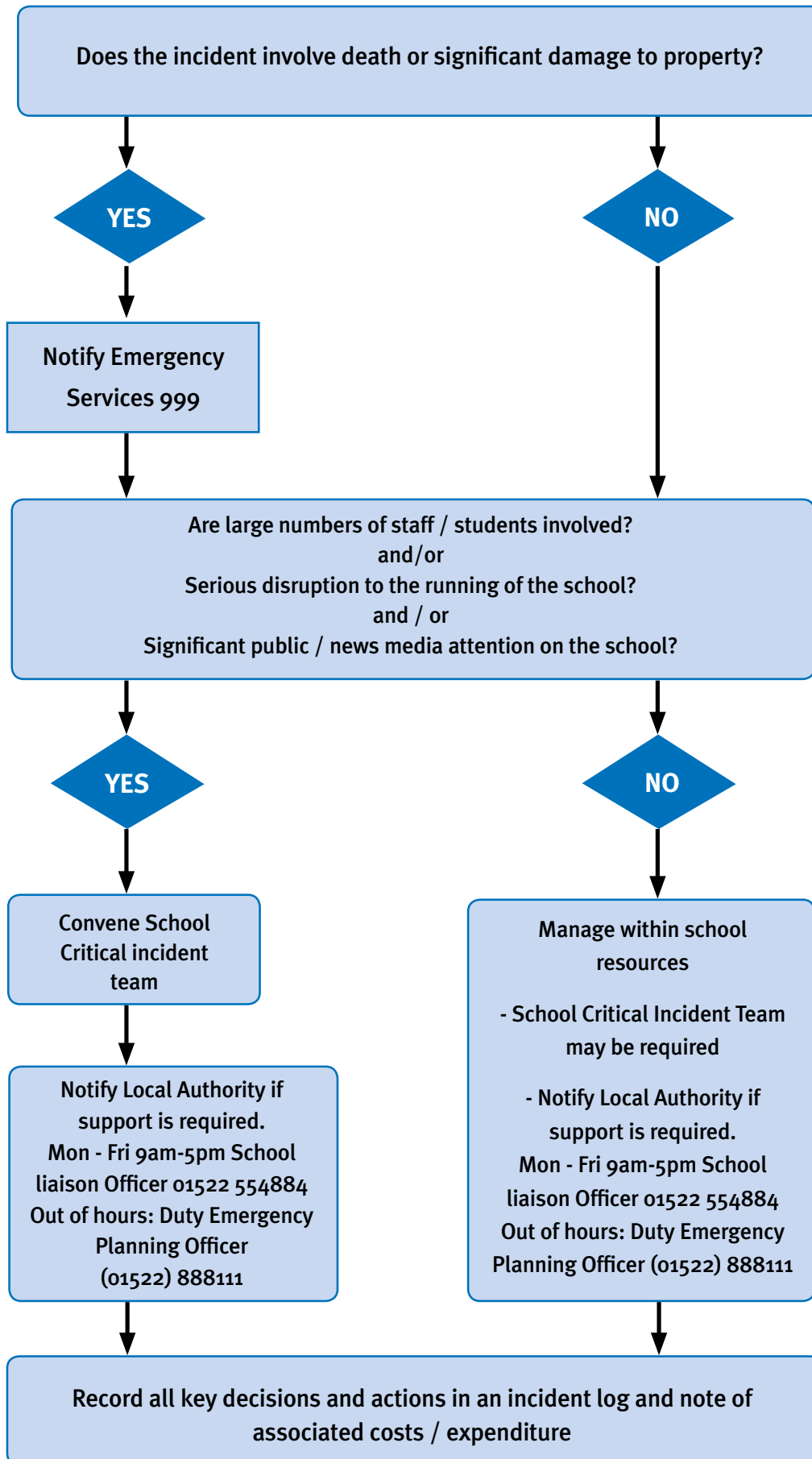
0870 170 7000

Advice on memorials and donations
 9 Grosvenor Crescent
 London
 SW1X 7EJ

National Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children

0808 800 5000

Appendix 2 – Decision Tree



Appendix 3 - Critical Incident Management strategy planning tool

Critical Incidents do happen and it is important that a school has a strategy in place to best respond and manage any traumatic situation should it occur. This strategy should identify the key areas that need to be considered to assist a school in the development of a plan for management of critical incidents. A Critical Incident Management Plan should be an integral part of a school's pastoral care system and development plans. This planning tool is to help you identify key issues that should be considered.

<p>Aims and objectives of the strategy</p>	<p>Recognise which incidents may be critical for the school community.</p> <p>Respond to a critical incident in an informed manner.</p> <p>Create a positive, open, communicative climate where the needs of staff and pupils are met in critical incident situations.</p> <p>Create a safe school environment whereby the physical, social and psychological health of pupils and staff is prioritised.</p> <p>Outline, monitor and review the management plans for dealing with different emergencies.</p> <p>Promote active coping skills within the curriculum.</p> <p>Establish positive working relationships and dialogue with outside agencies, thus enabling full and effective collaboration in the event of a critical incident.</p>
<p>Implementation/key areas for consideration</p>	<p>Define roles and responsibilities for all staff – identify the Critical Incident Management Team.</p> <p>Identify support personnel for Critical Incident Management Team.</p> <p>Consider procedures for dealing with different critical incidents.</p> <p>Consider staff and pupil welfare.</p> <p>Plan contact with parents.</p> <p>Plan links with relevant agencies.</p> <p>Decide on media management (including social media).</p> <p>Consider arrangements to apply during school holidays.</p> <p>Consider religious and cultural issues for the school community.</p> <p>Consider a proactive approach to social media in times of crisis with pupils.</p>
<p>Links with school policies</p>	<p>Pastoral Care</p> <p>Child Protection</p> <p>Internet/mobile phone use</p> <p>Health and Safety</p> <p>Special Educational Needs and Disability</p>
<p>Curricular links/ support</p>	<p>Personal, Social and Health Education</p> <p>Form time</p> <p>Social, Emotional and Mental Health</p> <p>Circle Time</p> <p>Assemblies</p>
<p>Professional development</p>	<p>Identify and secure relevant training needs for staff.</p>
<p>Monitoring/ review of strategy</p>	<p>Review each term, annually and following any incident that may take place.</p>

Appendix 4 - Announcements to pupils

Advice for teachers

Where announcements are made to pupils, they should be simple, straightforward and sincere. The following examples provide a suggested structure and are not intended to be followed as script. After the announcement, information should be made available to what support is in place to come to terms with the incident.

Fatality after a road traffic collision

We are taking this time to think about _____, a Year 10 pupil who died last night in a road traffic collision. _____ was travelling with her family to _____ when the collision occurred. We do not know any further details at this time except that the rest of her family is safe.

_____’s funeral is being held at _____ on _____. A funeral is a special time to remember a person who has died. The school will let your families know about the funeral arrangements in a letter which will be sent home tomorrow.

Let’s take a moment of silence to think of _____, to remember all the good things about her and to say goodbye. In our silence, we will express our loving thoughts.

After a sudden death

Sadly a tragedy has happened in our school community. _____, a Year 12 pupil has died suddenly. We want to respect the family’s need for privacy at this time but you will be given information about funeral arrangements as soon as possible.

This kind of tragic news is hard to accept. You may experience many feelings within the next few days. Everyone deals with loss differently and it is important to respect the way others grieve. We want to listen to your feelings and concerns so support staff are available in _____. Feel free to arrange to go there and talk to someone.

Appendix 5 - Breaking the News to pupils

Advice for teachers

Before telling the pupils about an incident consideration needs to be given to issuing the “Information for Pupils” (Appendix 10) or the leaflet ‘Helping You Cope With Grief and Loss’ (available from the LCC Educational Psychology Team) and allowing time for discussion.

If the incident involves the disappearance or sudden death of a pupil or member of staff it is important to consider the wishes of “their relatives” and remember their right to privacy.

Teachers should relay the information, agreed at the staff briefing, to pupils at schools - preferably at the same time. Relaying the information to vulnerable pupils and pupils absent from school also needs to be considered. Any “news” should contain appropriate language and factual information only with clear, concise, “bite size” explanations delivered in a calm manner.

Remember

Be patient - you may have to repeat the information many times. Be honest, specific and straightforward - it is acceptable to say you do not have all the answers. Be available for the pupil. Monitor initial reactions.

Allow time for pupils to discuss their feelings. Provide reassurance and information about the school support which is available. Inform pupils of a designated area should they be unable to stay in class. Monitor ongoing and developing reactions. Refer on for additional support if in doubt.

Share your own feelings, if appropriate; acknowledge the pupil’s feelings: if necessary, use pictures and social stories to aid understanding.

Be prepared for a pupil to come back and ask more questions.

Be proactive: if you can, have information ready for possible questions. Assure pupils they will be kept updated.

Appendix 6 - Children and young people's understanding of death information for staff

Children and young people's understanding of death will depend on their cognitive and developmental stage. They will revisit the loss as they mature, reach significant milestones and become more able to talk about their experiences and questions in relation to death. Children and young people with learning difficulties will progress through the developmental stages at a slower pace or indeed may remain at an early stage in their understanding of death.

Children and young people do experience similar feelings to adults following a death but often express their feelings differently depending on their development age.

Age	Concept of Death	Possible Reactions
Under 5	<p>Death seen as reversible and may expect the dead person to reappear</p> <p>May feel they are responsible for the death</p> <p>Magical thinking - make up fantasies to fill gaps in knowledge</p>	<p>Fears abandonment and separation</p> <p>Loud protest</p> <p>Despair</p> <p>Indignant at changes in patterns or routine</p> <p>Sleep problems</p> <p>May revert to what appears to be "babyish" behaviours</p>
5 to 8 years	<p>Gradual understanding of death as something irreversible and where life has ended</p> <p>By 7, understands death is inevitable and can happen to anyone at any time</p> <p>May feel guilty and responsible</p>	<p>Withdrawal, sadness, loneliness, depression</p> <p>Anger, guilt, temper tantrums, nightmares</p> <p>Behaviour, learning or school problems</p> <p>Perfect child, brave and in control</p> <p>May become preoccupied with death</p> <p>May experience separation anxiety when leaving parents in case something happens</p> <p>May not show true feelings, and appear unaffected as a result</p>
8 to 12 years	<p>Understanding that death is irreversible</p> <p>Develop knowledge that death is something that will happen to everyone and is permanent</p> <p>Realisation that death will also happen to them one day</p>	<p>May become fearful of death and begin to avoid experiences as a result</p> <p>May feel confused or stressed</p>
Over 12 years	<p>Broadly the same concepts as adults</p> <p>Experience of death may impact thoughts and feelings about the future</p>	<p>May engage with risk taking behaviour to defy mortality</p> <p>Questioning of beliefs and own purpose in life</p> <p>May find it difficult to discuss true feelings with friends and family</p>

There is no right or wrong way to grieve. It is important to allow children and young people to grieve in their own way and their own time. They may fluctuate in and out of grief, needing time to play and have fun as well as to cry. It is important for adults to give children permission to do this.

Appendix 7 - Death by suspected suicide information for staff

The term suicide should not be used by a school until it is determined by the Coroner's Office. Where an inquest is required it may be a considerable period of time after the death.

When providing support for vulnerable pupils, it would be prudent to make a working assumption of suicide, if all reasonable indicators suggest that this might be the case. Pupils and members of the community may be inclined to describe a death as a suicide before this has been established. Phrases such as 'tragic event' or 'sudden death' should be used by the school when talking to pupils. However, if and when suicide is confirmed then this term should be used.

In the aftermath of a sudden death within the school community pupils' vulnerability may increase. Teachers should realise that some pupils may develop suicidal thoughts and/or self-harm. Staff need to be proactive in identifying and monitoring these pupils. Pupils considered to be 'at risk' should be immediately referred to the Designated Teacher for Safeguarding who will then notify parents and advise them of the referral pathway to obtain support for their child. This will include the child's GP.

Schools should maintain contact with parents to ensure that appropriate action has been taken to protect and support the pupil at risk. Careful records should be kept and securely stored as set out in the school's data protection guidelines. Action must also be taken to identify other at risk groups in the school, including close friends and relatives and to direct them to appropriate support. Information for parents can be found in Appendix 12.

Where there appears to be an emerging cluster of perceived suicides in a school or a number of schools in close proximity, liaison may be required with the relevant Health and Social Care Teams. This coordinated response will ensure an appropriate community response to the situation while minimising sensationalism and avoiding the glamorising of suicidal behaviour.

As with any death, schools will wish to remember the person who has died and to pay tribute to their memory. When an apparent suicide has occurred, schools should be careful to remember the person without condoning the means of death. It is important that events are reported in a sensitive and measured way so that other vulnerable young people are not put at risk. The language used is very important.

Schools should remember to be vigilant around the time of the inquest, court cases and the anniversary of a death and access any support services as may be required.

Guidelines for staff if you suspect a pupil has suicidal thoughts

Note that suicidal thoughts may also be referred to in some circles as 'suicide ideation'.

Your Responsibilities

You have two major responsibilities:

1. To respond with empathy and in a non-judgemental way to the pupil in need.
2. To follow the usual safeguarding procedures with an appropriate referral to ensure the pupil's safety.

Responding to a distressed pupil

Listen. It can be very difficult for a young person to disclose distress so it is essential that he/she is given time and attention. Privacy is also important.

Take it seriously. Disclosures of distress should never be minimised. The young person should be taken seriously but the adult should not express alarm. The young person needs to feel safe and have confidence in adults.

Accept the possibility of suicidal thoughts. These feelings are real and should not be dismissed.

Do NOT promise confidentiality. Ensure that the young person knows that the information will be handled sensitively but that it must be shared with others to safeguard them.

Show a caring attitude. It is acceptable to express care for the young person and a commitment to their well-being.

Be open. If suicidal intent is suspected it is appropriate to ask the young person whether they are thinking of harming themselves and have any plans.

Supervise closely. Keep the pupil with you until you can deliver them to the care of the Designated Teacher for Safeguarding (or appropriate alternative). Sometimes it is more helpful for the teacher to whom the pupil expressed their distress to be the one who stays with him or her while the designated teacher makes safeguarding arrangements.

Response to disclosure of suicidal thoughts

The Designated Teacher for Child Protection (or appropriate alternative) should ensure that the pupil is safeguarded by doing the following:

- Continue to supervise closely. The pupil should not be left unsupervised at this stage
- Contact parents. Parents should be advised of the content of the disclosure, the school's concern and asked to take the child or young person to the doctor for an 'emergency mental state assessment' and potential referral to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
- Safely hand over the young person into the care of parents. Parents should be advised to supervise very closely
- Contact the young person's doctor. It may be helpful if schools also contact the doctor directly to inform him/her of the concerns

If the above is not possible

If the school cannot safely deliver the young person into the care of parents, or has concerns that appropriate support will not be sought / provided, it is possible for school staff to take a child or young person directly to an Accident and Emergency Department acting in loco parentis.

Follow-up

The Designated Teacher (or other member of staff) should remain in contact with parents and plan to support the young person upon return to school. In planning to support the young person the school should consider seeking medical / psychiatric advice.

Appendix 8 - How school staff can support pupils at a time of crisis

information for staff

Pupils will react to a critical incident in a variety of ways; no two reactions are the same. Their own personality, their family support and their life experiences will influence their responses. Here are some common reactions.

THINKING	FEELINGS
Disbelief Confusion Inability to take in information Talking: repeating what they have experienced/ heard Nightmares Thinking that they cannot cope Lack of concentration Spending a lot of time thinking of what has happened	Anger Fear Sadness Fright Irritable Overwhelmed Guilty Worried Easily upset
BEHAVIOURS	PHYSICAL COMPLAINTS
Panic Anxiety Crying Regression Withdrawal Aggression/argumentative	Cold and shivery Unable to rest or settle Hyper-vigilant Feeling sick/knot in stomach Loss of appetite Feeling tired all the time

Adults often wish to shield children from pain and distress. Experience and research have shown, however, that children and young pupils are best supported by having the incident acknowledged in an appropriate way rather than ignored. It is important to be available and receptive to pupils, to listen to them, to empathise with them and assure them that their emotions are normal.

It is normal for adults to be upset. It is appropriate for children and young people to see this as it can help them to understand their own emotions. Staff working directly with pupils can show that they are upset, but not out of control. It is important to maintain a safe, secure and predictable environment for the pupils in their care. Staff should remember that they are modelling a response for children and young people and helping them to develop coping skills.

General guidelines for staff

Never underestimate the positive effect that concern and support from a caring, familiar adult can have on a pupil.

At a time of crisis pupils can be distressed, frightened and upset. It is desirable for them, in the first instance, to be supported in a familiar environment by adults who are known to them. School has a significant influence on a pupil's life.

On a day to day basis it provides support and a social network for the pupil.

At a time of a crisis, when pupils may be experiencing insecurity and change, it offers security and containment.

Attending school helps to keep a routine and maintain a regular daily pattern.

The way staff respond to a pupil can significantly affect the outcome of their experience. Staff reactions are very important.

Teachers know the pupils already and they are therefore in a good position to observe change, notice issues which are not being resolved and decide whether onward referral is warranted.

Useful tips for staff

- Acknowledge the event to pupils
- Talk with pupils, giving them honest factual information, not shocking details
- Be willing to listen to them, and give them time
- Remain calm, keep control of the situation and contain their feelings (ie allow expression of feelings but not allowing hysteria to build up)
- Be willing to answer questions. (It is not important that staff answer all questions but that they listen to pupils' fears and worries and take their queries seriously)
- Be genuine and professional
- Be non-judgemental
- Give information to them including the 'normalisation' of their reactions (ie their reactions are normal reactions to an abnormal event)
- Encourage pupils to talk, share their feelings and seek help as appropriate
- Maintain a routine in school (flexible, caring and containing)
- Offer sensitivity, care and empathy
- Keep pupils in relevant peer groups
- Keep pupils informed and updated
- Allow pupils to make a response to the situation, eg the making of sympathy cards (for family of deceased) or get well cards (if pupils are injured)
- Involve them in special ceremonies/rituals/any response the school will make
- Do not remove a deceased pupil's belongings/work/photo/name from classroom/s and environment – these should be discussed with pupils at a later stage

Restoring normal routine

The resumption of normal routines (in as flexible but as structured a way as possible) re-establishes a pattern and support for the pupil while being sensitive enough to respond to the incident and its aftermath.

It is important to be mindful that life has changed for the pupil as well as for the staff. The healing process involves accepting what has happened, coping with the implications and adapting over time to the new situation.

It is necessary to continue to monitor pupils' reactions. Most symptoms should settle over time. These may include sleep difficulties, poor concentration, and loss of motivation in schoolwork, avoiding issues/places, upset, worry and anxiety. If they do not show signs of recovery or if they are becoming worse, a pupil may need more specialist support.

Advice and support is available from the School Liaison Officer at Lincolnshire County Council. It is important to recognise that parents may need to be informed that a referral to a GP is necessary. Some pupils may require a more specialist intervention straight away. Early contact with their parents should be sought in order to discuss this further. Other pupils may need specialist intervention sometime after the event. If symptoms persist for longer than 5/6 weeks referral for specialist help should be considered.

Remember that PARENTS, FRIENDS, PEERS and STAFF are the key supporting people for pupils. Make use of all of them.



Appendix 9 - Responding to pupils' questions following a sudden death

Information for staff

It can be very difficult to respond to questions from children following a sudden death especially when the member of staff is also shocked and bereaved. Many factors will influence a pupil's idea of death - their developmental stage, their experiences, their ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds, and their personal way of seeing things.

It is useful to agree a 'script' for all staff. The advantage of this is that staff will have a form of words to use so they are not caught unawares and that pupils get to hear a reassuring message over and over again. This is particularly reassuring and helpful to young pupils or pupils with special needs when processing the information.

Some questions will reveal that children feel insecure about whether the adults in their lives will be around to look after them. Reassure them that even though nobody knows the future, they can be sure that there will always be reliable adults to look after them.

It is not unusual for young children to ask the same question again and again.

Repeating questions and getting answers helps the child understand and adjust to the loss of someone loved.

Sometimes children become very interested in physical details. Keep the reply very simple and factual. Repeat it as often as necessary and do not be drawn into giving further details. Be careful not to use euphemisms such as 'sleep' or 'went way' for death. Keep it simple, factual and clear. Younger children find it difficult to understand the permanence of death. Euphemisms will only make it worse.

When answering questions about death tell a pupil only what he or she is capable of understanding. There is no need to be evasive, but modify explanations to what the pupil can comprehend; use language the pupil can understand; and what is said is important, but the manner in which it is said has even greater significance. Be aware of voice tone. Try to answer the questions in a matter-of-fact way without too much emotion.

Suggested answers to questions

Question: Why did they die?

Answer: "There are some things we understand and some things we don't understand. We do/don't know exactly why _____ died. The doctors have told us the reason was....."

Question: Why do people die?

Answer: Dying is a natural part of life. All living things like plants, animals, and people are special parts of the natural world. Nature almost always gives us long, healthy lives. Like all things in nature, after many years people grow old and reach the end of life. This is called death.

Question: Is death like sleeping?

Answer: No. Dying is not like sleeping at all. People sleep to rest and stay healthy. Sleep gives hard working parts of our body time to build up strength again. Think of how good you feel after you sleep. You feel so good because your body is rested and ready for another day. When someone dies, their body stops working. It is not resting anymore. Its job is over.

Appendix 10 - Understanding your reactions

Information for pupils

You have experienced an incident which has been very upsetting for you. Even though this event is over, you may still be experiencing some reactions to it. This is normal. It is unlikely that you have experienced anything like this before and so you may never have been faced with such reactions.

Your reaction may last a few days, a few weeks or longer. Your parents, teachers and friends can help you cope with this and help some of these feelings and reactions reduce. Sometimes this might be a bit more difficult and you might need more help. This does not mean that anything is wrong with you. It only means that the event is just too powerful for you to deal with on your own. Here are some reactions you might experience.

THINKING	FEELINGS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confused • Nightmares/bad dreams • Poor concentration • Restless • Not interested in what is going on • Spending a lot of time thinking about what happened 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worried • Guilty • Angry • Sad • Easily upset • Cross • Overwhelmed
BEHAVIOURS	PHYSICAL COMPLAINTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of appetite • Being very quiet • Agitated • Being quarrelsome/arguing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling tired all the time • Unable to rest or settle • Feeling sick/knot in tummy • Cold and shivery

Remember

- Your reactions are normal.
- They should lessen in time, normally over the next few weeks.
- If you have any concerns tell your parent or a teacher.
- People love you and care about you. Let them help.

Dreams or other thoughts about the traumatic event will get less over time. They are normal reactions to what you experienced. They are signs that your mind is trying to understand what happened.

Things that might help you

- Talk to people and tell them what is on your mind. Talk to your parents or to your teachers. Talking is a great way to help at this time. No one can resolve all their worries by themselves. Your teachers, parents or friends may be able to help you
- Make a memory book or box
- Write something, or draw a picture
- Take some exercise – walking, running, playing games. This will get rid of some of the tension in your body & mind.
- Keep yourself busy
- Keep doing all the usual things – this will also help you
- Spend lots of time with your friends and your family
- Do things that you like and that make you feel good
- Get plenty of rest
- Do not be afraid to ask for help

Appendix 11 - Informing Parents of a Sudden Death – Letter to Parents

Date:

Dear Parent

It is with great sadness that I have to tell you of the sudden death of _____ (use caution if naming a pupil) a pupil in Year/a Year ____Teacher. The pupils were told this morning by their Headteacher/class/form teacher.

_____ died of (an asthma attack, meningitis etc) and the pupils have been reassured this is something that does not happen very often. Your child may or may not want to talk about it but it is likely that he/she will need extra love and support from you in the days ahead. This does not mean that anything is wrong with him/her. It only means that this traumatic event has been too powerful for him/her to deal with on his/her own. He/she may be feeling anxious. Take time to listen to your child and try to provide a predictable routine for him/her at home.

We have enclosed an information leaflet for you which may be useful at this time. Trained staff are helping to support us through this difficult time. It is sometimes necessary for a member of the team to speak to a class or to individual pupils who may be distressed. He/she will be guided by the Headteacher/class teacher in this. If you do not wish your child to receive such support from the team please contact us immediately.

We are deeply saddened by this great loss, but we know, at these times, it's best to keep the school environment as normal as possible. Our thoughts are with _____'s family at this tragic time and the school community sends them sincerest sympathy and support.

_____’s funeral is on _____ at ____am/pm at _____. We are in touch with the family regarding their wishes for the school’s representation at the Service.

If you require further clarification or have any concerns please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Appendix 12 - Understanding your child's reactions and how you can help - Information for parents

When a child or young person experiences a traumatic incident it can be very upsetting for them and for you. Even though the event is over your child may still be experiencing reactions to it. It is normal for children and young people to be upset after such a happening. It is unlikely that they have experienced such an event before and so their reaction may be challenging for you.

Their reaction may last a few days, a few weeks or longer. Reassurance, understanding and support from you, along with their teachers and their friends can help them to cope.

Here are some common reactions to a traumatic incident. You might have noticed some of these.

THINKING	FEELINGS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confused • Nightmares/bad dreams • Poor concentration • Restless • Not interested in what is going on • Spending a lot of time thinking about what happened • Thinking that they cannot cope 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worried • Guilty • Anxious • Fearful • Easily upset • Cross • Panicky • Overwhelmed
BEHAVIOURS	PHYSICAL COMPLAINTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of appetite • Being very quiet • Nervous • Being quarrelsome/arguing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling tired all the time • Unable to rest or settle • Feeling sick/knot in tummy • Cold and shivery

Remember

- These are normal reactions
- The reactions should lessen in time normally over the next few weeks
- If you continue to have concerns some more specialist help may be needed. Talk to your doctor about this

Helping your child

It is important that you are strong enough to bear whatever your child wants to talk about and to answer their questions.

DO	DO NOTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Take time to listen and answer questions• Be honest in your explanations and in showing your own sadness or grief• Let them know their feelings are important• Give plenty of reassurance and affection. Let them know you love them and will be there for them• Keep to routines and patterns as much as possible• Be aware that changes such as clinging or aggressive behaviour or physical problems may be an expression of grief• Take things one day at a time	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Try to hide your own sadness or grief but try not to overwhelm them with such• Tell your child not to worry or be sad. They cannot control their feelings• Feel like you have to have all the answers or get it right all the time• Be surprised at your child's ability to set grief aside and alternate between sadness and happiness. Time with friends and playmates enables them to release anxiety about incidents over which they have no control



Appendix 13 - Media statements

Information for staff

Schools are under no obligations to speak to the media. If however, schools feel it is necessary to issue media statements the following guidance may be useful.

Media statements can be issued and updated as new and accurate information becomes available. Explain that the whole school has been deeply shocked and that all available resources and support services have been gathered. Outline what steps are being taken to provide support for students and staff in an effort to get things back to 'normal' as soon as possible.

Media statements should include;

- Facts about the incident, what has been done and what is planned
- Information regarding the implementation of the school's Critical Incident Management Plan and the fact that the situation is under control
- Affirmation of the principles of critical incident management in order to reduce and prevent further stress; stabilise the situation; normalise and promote the functioning of the school, its staff and pupils; and ensure everyone receives the help they need

Historic school destroyed by fire

Date

(School) was destroyed by fire in the early hours of Saturday morning. Emergency Services responded to a 999 call reporting the blaze at 3 am on Saturday. There were no injuries reported. The cause of the fire is under investigation. Damage is estimated at £__ million.

“It is a tragedy to have lost this school, not only for our students and their families, but for our community.”
, Chairperson of Governors said.

“Schools are much more than a place of learning. They are where our communities meet for special events, to vote and to play. (School), in particular, was a landmark in our community with historical building designation.”

(School) was built in 1906 and has undergone substantial renovations in recent years.

Arrangements have been made to house(school) pupils at (place) for the remainder of this school term, with the addition of temporary classrooms at (place). All parents were contacted by telephone on Sunday.

To assist in supporting our staff and pupils through this time of shock and loss, support is being provided to the school by trained agencies.

Contact: _____ Chair of Governors of (School) at:

Adapted from 'When Tragedy Strikes' (INTO & UTU, 2000)

School grieves sudden death of pupil

Date

As reported by Lincolnshire Police , (use caution if naming a pupil), a pupil at (school) died tragically on (date). The circumstances of _____'s death are not known at this time and an investigation is currently ongoing.

This is a tragic loss to _____'s family and to our school community. To assist in supporting our staff and pupils through this time of grief, additional support is being provided to the school community. A letter has been sent by the school to parents, informing them of this incident and providing information on the support services available through the school.

A special assembly to remember _____ has been arranged for _____

Contact: Headteacher (name) of (school) _____ .



Appendix 14 - Media interviews

Information for staff

It can be difficult to manage media interviews especially when a school is dealing with a critical incident. But it might be in the best interests of the school to get their message across. A school should think carefully and consider what is best before deciding on the best course of action. Before any interview takes place, it's important to decide on the key messages – for example, is it about clarifying public misunderstanding?

Schools should have a 'one spokesperson' practice. The spokesperson should be well briefed on the details and expectations of the interviewer. Briefing should include the most likely questions that may be asked. Negative lines of questioning and difficult questions should be anticipated and appropriate responses prepared. If media deadlines cannot be met it is essential to say so and to keep to new deadlines if agreed.

Before making a media statement. The school's spokesperson should:

- liaise with the Chair of Governors and external agencies involved in order to identify two or three key messages to be highlighted
- write these down before the interview and refine for accuracy, clarity, simplicity and impact
- keep spoken comments simple, factual and short so that key points such as what has been done so far, are not edited out
- be aware that interviews, if not live, may be edited and comments taken out of context if you are not careful with what you say
- take time to respond to questions and seek clarification if necessary
- be aware of legal issues, particularly the language/terminology used
- avoid making comments which imply blame or fault for any part of the incident, as there could be significant legal implications
- remember that official enquiries are likely to follow serious incidents. Media comments on the public record may have a bearing on such proceedings
- avoid 'off the record' comments at all times
- express concern and the school's grief, restricting answers to facts and accentuating the positive developments following the event
- Look confident in front of the camera and in control by planning and preparing what you want to say – use empathy and emotion to convey care and concern
- Be aware of your surroundings and background images/text which may be unhelpful in a TV interview

Appendix 15 - Pupils returning to school after bereavement

Information for teachers

Returning to school after bereavement can be difficult for a bereaved pupil. It can also be difficult for peers and staff to know how best to support the pupil. The circumstances of the bereavement and the age and developmental stage of the pupil will determine the approach used by teachers.

The following advice may be helpful in planning a positive return to school

Speak to the bereaved pupil. Check how he/she feels about coming back to school and what he/she may want to happen. Discuss the support that will be available. Speak to the parents to find out what they may want.

Discuss with class peers how they feel and how they can support the pupil. Discuss normal grief reactions. Encourage them to share their feelings and experiences of bereavement and how they coped. They may have sent cards or messages.

Ask a group of friends to be supportive during the first days following the return to school.

Consider a phased return. Plan for the day of the return of the pupil with a key member of staff taking the lead. When the pupil comes back to school it is important to acknowledge the loss. You may wish to say something like “I am/we are sorry that _____ died. I/We know you are sad and I/we want to support you at this time”.

Consider giving the pupil age appropriate information on normal bereavement responses and grief reactions. However, be wary of this in the first instance, especially if the pupil has already had some time absent from school.

Allow for possible changes in emotions, behaviours, concentration, and work levels.

All teachers need to be made aware.

Allow for “time out” when the pupil wants to be in a quiet place or to talk with a school counsellor, pastoral care teacher or another member of staff.

Carry on normal routines with normal approaches to discipline, with sensitivity. Once a pupil returns to school following bereavement complete a record of this and place on the pupil’s file.

