

Frederick Bremer School



Critical Incident Policy 2024

Person Responsible	Shermaine Lewis
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Critical Incident Management Plan

This plan has been prepared and agreed by the staff and governors of Frederick Bremer School to assist in dealing with critical incidents both on and off the site that affects any individual and the school community.

Aims

The aims of the school's plan are:

- To provide support for all children and staff affected by the incident
- To maintain where possible the normal running of any parts of the school not affected
- To return the whole school to normality as soon as is reasonably possible
- To establish effective communications with all stakeholders especially parents/carers

Definition

1. A critical incident is one which arises suddenly. Critical incidents may occur in school or out of school, but both types will have a major impact on staff and children. An incident becomes a critical incident when it constitutes a serious disruption arising with little or no warning on a scale beyond the coping capacity of the school operating under normal conditions, and requiring the assistance of the Emergency Services.
2. Examples of incidents impacting on schools could include:
 - death or serious injury as a result of violence, accident, self-harm and/or sudden/traumatic illness
 - major fire or explosion / building collapse
 - riot and/or civil disorder
 - natural and/or man-made disaster
 - terrorism
 - missing person(s)/abductions
 - an illness such as meningitis within the school or the local community
 - a serious accident at school or in the immediate vicinity
 - assault on staff or pupils by parents or members of the public
3. Incidents can occur:
 - on the school site during school hours
 - on school transport
 - whilst the pupils are taking part in activities away from the school site
 - on school premises as part of after school activities
 - within the local community involving pupils from the school
4. An incident is deemed critical when it:
 - constitutes a serious disruption;
 - is on a scale beyond the coping capacity of the school and requires assistance from Emergency Services or other external agencies.

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The core Critical Incident Management Team consists of the following personnel:

Headteacher	Jenny Smith	Equans Site Business Continuity Management (BCM) Leader	Elise Owandj Ahondo
Associate Deputy Headteacher	Steve Moore	Equans Deputy Site BCM Leader	Pedro Pires
School Business Manager	Shermaine Lewis		

Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) Responsibilities

Headteacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead the CIMT • Coordinate the CIMT and their responsibilities • Assess the type and scope of emergency • Determine the threat to human life, building structures, IT infrastructure • Escalate to the external stakeholders as required • Regularly report to external stakeholders • Initiate the Business Continuity Plan • Liaise with Site BCM Leader
Associate Deputy Headteacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Act on the order of the Headteacher and deputise the role of Headteacher • Contact the Emergency Services if required • Liaise with the Emergency Services throughout incident • Ensure the Emergency Services have sufficient knowledge of the incident and building
Safeguarding Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Act on the order of the Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher • Ensure the Safety and Welfare of all pupils • Act as a central point of contact for any pupil welfare issues
School Business Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Act on the order of the Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher • Ensure the Safety and Welfare of all employees • Act as the central point of contact for any staff welfare issues • Mobilisation of safety, first aid or fire marshals • Locate and account for those who were on site or in the immediate vicinity • Provide staff communications and safety briefings.
Operations Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Act on the order of the Headteacher and deputise the role of School Business Manager • Complete the Incident Response Checklist and Incident Report Form
Equan Site Business Continuity Management (BCM) Leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead the Bouygues E&S Immediate Response team • Coordinate the Bouygues E&S Immediate Response team and their responsibilities • Assess the type and scope of emergency • Liaise with Headteacher and provide regular updates regarding the incident • Escalate to the Bouygues E&S Secondary Response Team • Determine the threat to human life with assistance from BCM People Welfare Activities Leader and the threat to the building structures • Regularly report to the Bouygues E&S Secondary Response Team • Initiate the Bouygues E&S Site BCP • Update/ review Bouygues E&S Site BCP, BIA and Risk Assessments.
Equans Deputy Site BCM Leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Act on the order of the Site BCM Leader/ Deputy • Contact the Emergency Services <i>if required</i>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaise with the Emergency Services throughout incident • Ensure the Emergency Services have sufficient knowledge of the incident and building • Provide the Emergency Services with any keys required, site maps etc.
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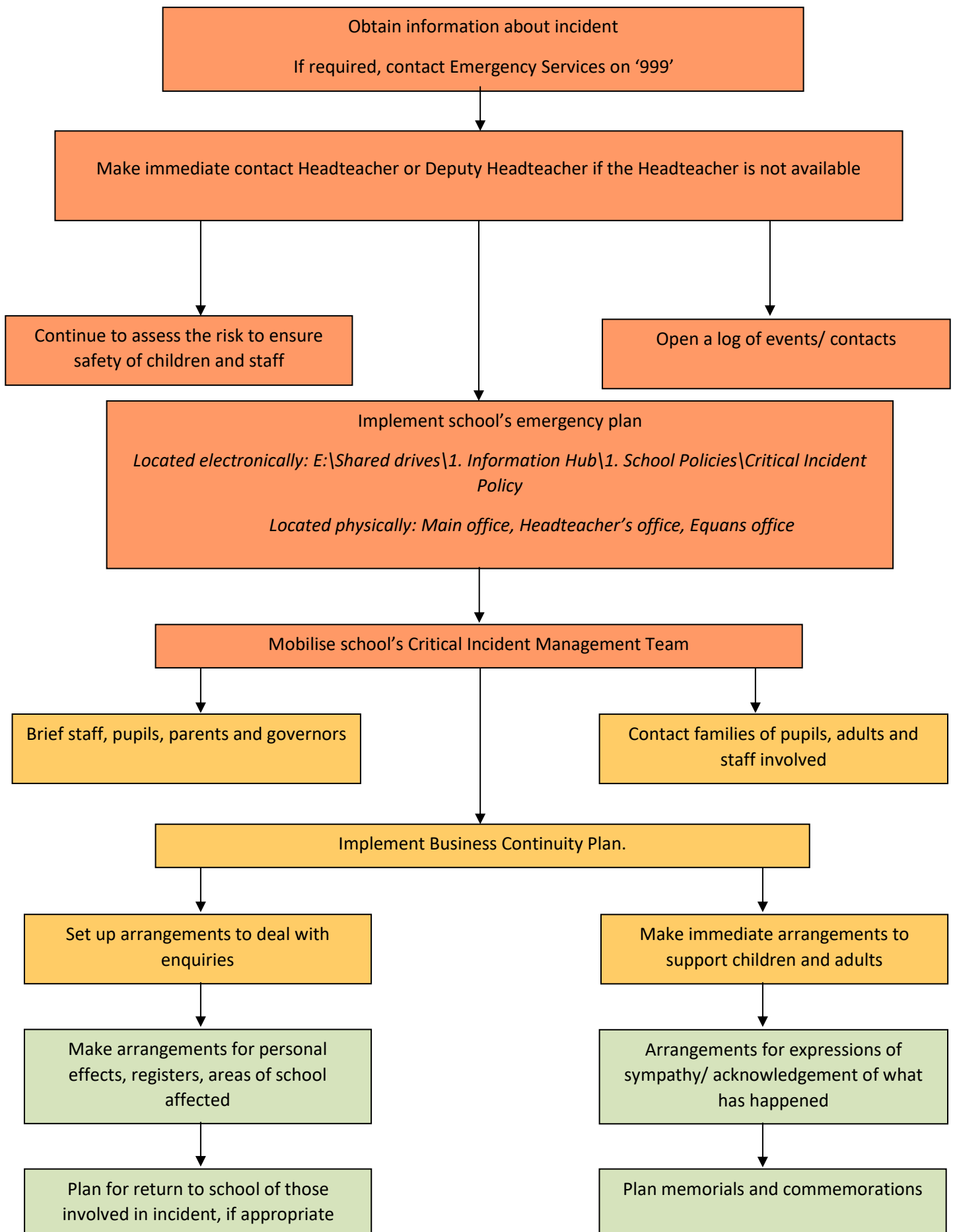
The extended Critical Incident Management Team consists of the following personnel:

First Aider(s)	Angelina Tomlinson Laura Hall Kareem Kavde Saleema Mahmood Hazel Turner	SLT (not in core CIMT)	Stewart Hesse Claire Binns
Special Needs Co-ordinator	Ria Mills	Network Manager	Tony Akingbule
Attendance Officer	Lynne Deere	Safeguarding Leads	Fenella Hewitt Pru Bevoir-Stephens Gemma Anderson
Receptionist	Rochelle Irving – AM Charlenne Doman - PM	Operations Manager	Harriet Cooke
Work Experience Co-ordinator (where relevant)	Kelly Padley		

This plan is generic and covers a range of potential circumstances, such as:

- Serious injury to a pupil or member of staff (e.g. travel accident)
- Significant damage to school property (e.g. fire)
- Criminal activity (e.g. bomb threat)
- Severe weather (e.g. flooding)
- Public health incidents (e.g. flu pandemic)
- The effects of a disaster in the local community

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Actions to take in a Critical Incident

Notification of an incident

You may hear about the incident from a number of sources:

- A staff member
- A pupil
- A contract worker on site
- The police
- Parents
- The media
- A member of the local community
- Equans
- Local authority

Obtain and collate accurate information about the incident so that calm and appropriate action can be taken. Immediately inform the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher in the Headteacher's absence as soon as we are informed about an incident.

Whoever receives the notification/alert should ask for as much information as possible:

- The name of the caller
- What has happened?
- Have the emergency services been informed and are they responding?
- Exact location [and any access problems if not on site]
- Any casualties
- What actions if any have been taken so far?
- The name and contact at the scene [if not on the site]
- What assistance is required?

An Aide Memoire [Appendix 1] and is kept by the reception telephone

Incident Response Checklist

Immediate action (within hours)

Actions: CIMT Chair: Headteacher (Add to/amend as required)	Check	Comments
Evaluate the nature of the incident as thoroughly as possible and give safety, welfare & social responsibility issues extremely high priority. Depending on the nature of the incident confirm contacting the Emergency Services via 999, if required.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Evacuate where there is an immediate danger to pupils and staff. Ensure the emergency services instructions are followed or dynamic risk assessments of the incident are undertaken to determine a safe assembly	<input type="checkbox"/>	

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location. Ensure disabled pupils and staff are given assistance.		
Retrieve the existing contingency plan. Ensure that the current edition is available to several people so that it is still available even if one or more members of the CIMT are not available at the time of the emergency. At least one paper copy of the plan should be kept off site by Headteacher and SBM so it can be accessed even if the buildings are unavailable.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<p>If the incident has occurred on an educational visit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaise with the educational visit leader on a regular basis • Consider sending extra staff to support the educational visit leader • Discuss with the educational visit leader the arrangements for notifying parents / carers • Consider how parents / carers and pupils will be reunited 	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Call together the Critical Incident Management Team using via the radio system if during school hours or via Whatsapp if outside school hours. The membership of this team can be altered at this time, depending on the circumstances. If during school hours inform the Chair of Governors and/or Health and Safety Governor	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Inform the Chair of Governors and/or Health and Safety Governor and LA where necessary	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Update an Incident Action Plan based on this contingency plan.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Establish a communications room and dedicated phone. This is likely to be in the meeting room unless the school premises are not available. Other rooms will need to be established e.g. briefing area for parents / carers; briefing area for media.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<p>A decision may need to be taken at an appropriate time if it is necessary to close the school. If so, use the standard closure notification system which currently uses texts and email. Contact would be needed with IT provider and catering company.</p> <p>- If during working/school hours:</p> <p>Avoid closing the premises/school and endeavour to maintain normal routines & timetables if it is safe to do so.</p> <p>- If outside working/school hours:</p> <p>Arrange for:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bouygues E&S to open certain parts of the premises/school as appropriate and to be available (and responsive) to requests, if safe to do so. • School administration support • IT support as required 	<input type="checkbox"/>	

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Message to be placed on School Website page if school to be closed. <p>Consider what you are wearing when you go into premises/school, in case you are unavoidably drawn into a TV interview.</p> <p>NB: It is especially important that if names of those who may have been involved in the incident are known DO NOT release – or confirm – them to anyone, before those identities are formally agreed and parents are informed.</p>		
<p>Social networking sites. We need to be aware that information may be made available on social networking sites very early in an emergency situation and this could serve to inform (or possibly misinform) parents and others. The need for prompt action to provide accurate information is therefore vital.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<p>Start the incident log and record keeping procedures. See appendix 2.</p> <p>This record is vital as later enquiries or court cases can depend on the accurate recording and availability of information. It is essential to have an up to date record of: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What action has been taken; • What has been said; • The people who have been informed; • Which people have attended (as helpers or visitors) etc. 	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<p>Contact the families of children and staff involved.</p> <p>It is obvious that this will need doing but what is not always clear is who should do it. This decision can only be taken in the light of the actual circumstances. It is most important to keep (and use) an accurate log of this so that no family is unintentionally omitted or contacted twice by different persons.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<p>Inform teaching and support staff</p> <p>Because of their close contact with pupils, it is important to provide full and accurate information and to brief them about what can be appropriately discussed with pupils. Advice to staff about giving information to the media will also be important. Normally, this should be channelled through the person identified to handle media enquiries and information. A staff meeting would probably be called so that staff feel involved in the procedures. Information about points of contact should be included.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<p>Inform pupils</p> <p>Arrangements would be made to inform pupils not directly involved. There may be a need to provide updated information as a situation develops and this would be probably done through assemblies. Where relevant, advice</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

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would be given about talking to the media if the circumstances warranted it. Pupils would also be informed of the support strategies that are available.		
Arrange to inform other parents <p>All parents will be concerned and, in some situations, very worried.</p> <p>Arrangements should be made to inform them using brief but accurate information, probably through our texting service. More detailed information can be provided to parents at a later date, if appropriate.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Contact appropriate support services <p>The LA may well be able to advise about whether other support services should be involved. The school also has its own counsellor and adviser it can contact.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Respond to/inform media <p>All staff should be instructed not to speak to the media.</p> <p>The press and other media can have a considerable impact on an incident.</p> <p>A good working relationship with the media can be very helpful in providing accurate information to the public. If the incident involves the emergency services initial communications may be provided by those services. The local authority communications team support with media management</p> <p>Media Management:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure media access to the site, pupils and staff is controlled and only allow access to site if appropriate 2. Some staff should be outside as pupils leave the site. 3. Designate a specific area for the media away from the main entrance to the school. 4. Develop a brief media statement – only give out accurate factual information. Contact all parents before giving more than a brief statement. 5. Arrange for an appropriate member of staff to act as a spokesperson <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This would usually be the Headteacher or the Chair of Governors. - Advise staff to direct media enquiries to this person. 6. Work closely with the media to establish what information they require and when their deadlines are. Provide regular statements. 	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Inform associated schools <p>Other schools and settings could be directly affected by an incident, not least because they may have on their roll siblings of pupils involved. This</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

may need to be dealt with earlier depending on the relationships involved.		
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Short Term (within hours or days)

1. Hold on to normal routine if possible

One of the aspects of a crisis is the anxiety felt by all the people associated with it, including those who have no direct involvement. It is good practice to hold to normal routine as far as possible to ensure some security in the lives of children, in particular, at a time of crisis.

2. Arrange a debriefing for staff and pupils involved in the incident

Aim to:-

- Clarify what happened;
- Allow for a sharing of reactions
- Reassure the participants that such reactions are not abnormal
- Mobilise resources

It may be best for this to be done by an experienced person from outside school.

3. Develop a support plan for handling feelings and reactions of people

Schools will need the advice and assistance of specialist staff to deal with people's reactions to the incident. It is important not to allow an ad hoc approach but to draw up a support plan with the professionals in this area. It may be necessary for the staff of the setting to have a location where they can meet to discuss the school's (or setting's) response to the incident. The school may need to buy into the Education Psychology Service to provide counselling for staff/pupils. A similar service may be available through the Health Service for pupils.

4. Release a more detailed press statement

Having worked with the media initially, it is a helpful process for both school and the media to provide more up to date and detailed information as it emerges. This will be appreciated, will help to keep others informed and possibly reduce the number of enquiries. The local authority communications team support with media management.

Medium Term (within days or weeks)

1. Continue to provide updates on facts

Depending on the circumstances, it may be necessary to continue to provide updates for staff, parents and the media for several days or, in some situations, even longer.

2. Monitor the effects on pupils and adults and organise support for those needing it.

3. Prepare for involvement in funerals, memorial services, etc.

4. Prepare strategies for re-entry into school

When attendance at school has been interrupted by a critical incident, it is important to prepare for return. This will require briefing for staff and pupils and possibly a modified timetable

Longer Term

1. Continue to be aware of people's state of mind

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As things return to normal, it is important to continue to be aware of those who are vulnerable and watch out for continuing or emerging symptoms.

New staff and staff unfamiliar to vulnerable pupils will need briefing about the situation.

2. Maintain regular contact with relevant families.

3. Memorials

Schools/settings will want to consider whether it is appropriate to organise memorial assemblies, or physical memorials. It may be appropriate to seek advice from Headteachers who have had similar experience. Refer to appendix 7 for more guidance.

4. Prepare for anniversaries

Anniversaries are likely to be sensitive and difficult times. It is wise to prepare together for these. Marking an anniversary with something positive may be more helpful than allowing it to pass without drawing attention to it. The views of parents of any pupils who had been involved in the tragedy, or who had lost their lives, need to be taken into account.

5. Be aware of the effects of legal procedures

Enquiries and court cases, etc. can be long drawn out affairs, keeping alive the trauma of the event. Schools should make it their business to be aware of these proceedings and the possible effects on those involved.

6. Provide support as the facts progressively emerge and change

Schools should be aware that the understanding of the event can alter as information emerges. Strong feelings of guilt may develop and support may be needed for these people.

7. Review procedures

In the light of experience, review procedures and implement any learning from the incident. That information could be shared with the Local Authority as it could contain information that might be useful to other schools/settings.



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Appendix 1 – Aide Memoire

In the event that you receive a call please ensure you take down the following details:

Name of caller	
Contact number of caller	
Brief Description of what has happened	
Exact location of the incident	
Information on any casualties	
What assistance is needed?	
Have the emergency services been called?	
Are the emergency services attending?	
What actions have been taken so far?	



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Notification of incident

Information about an incident may come from a number of sources (e.g. member of staff, pupil, parent / carer, member of the public, the emergency services, the local authority). Whoever receives the alert should ask for, and record, as much information as possible.

- + **Maintain a written record of your actions using this form and a logbook. You may wish to record any new contact details in section 1.**
- + **Offer reassurance and support. Be aware that all those involved in the incident (both directly and indirectly) may be suffering from shock or may panic.**
- + **Find out what has happened. Obtain as clear a picture as you can.**
- + **Discuss with the informant what action needs to be taken and by whom.**

Name of informant:
.....

Date and time of call:
.....

Contact details of informant:
.....

Date and time of incident:
.....

Exact location of incident:

.....

.....

.....

Details of incident:

.....

.....

.....

Where is the informant now and where are they going?

.....

.....

.....



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People affected (including names, injuries, where they are, where they are being taken to):

.....

.....

.....

What arrangements are in place for people not directly involved in the incident?

.....

.....

.....

What advice have the emergency services given?

.....

.....

.....

Who has been informed?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Headteacher | <input type="checkbox"/> Police |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CIMT | <input type="checkbox"/> Fire & Rescue Service |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Site Team | <input type="checkbox"/> Ambulance Service |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Governors | <input type="checkbox"/> Local authority |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pupils | <input type="checkbox"/> Health and Safety Executive |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Parents / carers | <input type="checkbox"/> Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Extended services | <input type="checkbox"/> Media |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Insurance company |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Trade unions |

Does anyone else need to be informed?

.....

.....

.....

Are any other actions required?

.....

.....

.....

.....

+ If the incident happened on an educational visit, please ask the questions below. You might already have these details, but it could be useful to seek confirmation.

Name of educational visit leader:

Number of pupils on educational visit:

.....

.....

Nature of educational visit:

Number of staff on educational visit:

.....

.....

Location of educational visit:

.....

.....

.....

If the incident happened abroad, do the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office need to be notified?

.....

.....

.....

Bomb Threats

- + If you receive a telephone call from someone who claims to have information about a bomb, record as much information as possible.

Time of call:

Telephone number you were contacted on:

.....

.....

Exact wording of the threat:

.....

.....

- + Stay calm. Being cautious, and without provoking the caller, try to ask the questions below.

Where is the bomb right now?

What will cause it to explode?

.....

.....

When will it explode?

Did you place the bomb? If so, why?

.....

.....

What does it look like?

What is your name?

.....

.....

What kind of bomb is it?

What is your telephone number?

.....

.....

What is your address?

.....

.....

- + Try dialling 1471. You may get information on where the phone call was made from.

Did dialling 1471 work?

Time the call ended:

.....

.....

+ **Contact the Police (999) and headteacher / SBM immediately.**

+ **Carry out further actions based on Police advice.**

What sex did the caller sound?

☐ Male

☐ Female

Approximately how old was the caller?

.....

Did the caller have an accent?

.....

Did the caller use a codeword?

.....

Did the caller sound familiar?

.....

What sort of voice did the caller have?

☐ Normal

☐ Loud

☐ Quiet

☐ Whispered

☐ Clear

☐ Disguised

☐ Well spoken

☐ Poorly spoken

☐ Deep

☐ High pitched

☐ Hoarse

☐ Nasal

☐ Impediment

☐ Stutter

☐ Lisp

☐ Slurred

☐ Other

At what pace did the caller speak?

☐ Normal

☐ Quick

☐ Slow

What manner did the caller have?

☐ Normal

☐ Calm

☐ Excited

☐ Laughing

☐ Upset

☐ Angry

☐ Rational

☐ Irrational

☐ Irritated

☐ Muddled

☐ Other

Were there any distinguishable background noises?

.....

.....

Notes:

.....

.....

Appendix 2 – Incident log

[illegible]

Appendix 3 – Key Holders

Name
Elise Owandj Ahondo - Site Manager
Pedro Pires – Senior Site Service Officer
Phillip Ketedzi – Site Service Officer
Lloyd Russell – Site Service Officer
Out of Hours Emergency

Appendix 4 – Key School Contact details

Name
Jenny Smith – Headteacher
Steve Moore – Associate Deputy Headteacher
Shermaine Lewis – School Business Manager
Harriet Cooke – Operations Manager

Appendix 5 – Other Key Contacts

Role	Contact name
Bouygues E&S Site Business Continuity Management (BCM) Leader	Elise Owandj Ahondo
Bouygues E&S Deputy Site BCM Leader	Pedro Pires
Bouygues E&S People Welfare Activities Leader	Phillip Ketedzi
Bouygues E&S Incident Log Maintenance	Sam Apple-Mcken
Bouygues E&S Deputy Incident Log Maintenance	Pedro Pires
Bouygues E&S Contract Representative	Shane Deehy Nicola Searle
LBWF Safeguarding Team	
LBWF PFI Contract Manager	Gustavo Abreu
LBWF School Closure	N/A
LBWF Children's Support Services – Business Section	N/A
LBWF Communications Team	Eddie Townsend – Director of Communications Nick Dovey – Digital and Media Manager
LBWF Health and Safety Team	N/A
LBWF Insurance Team	Andrea Nitschke



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Attendance Officer	Lynne Deere
Communication Assistant	Jessica Loky

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Appendix 6 – Other Organisations

Organisation	Contact details	Notes
Police	Tel: 999 (24 hour) Tel: 101 (24 hour, non-emergency number)	
Fire & rescue service	Tel: 999 (24 hour)	
Ambulance service	Tel: 999 (24 hour)	
National Health Service	Tel: 111 (24 hour) www.nhs.uk/111	
Department for Education	Tel: 0370 000 2288 (office hours, general enquiries) www.gov.uk/dfe	
Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office	Tel: 0207 008 1500 (24 hour, consular assistance) Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)	If abroad, please dial: +44207 008 1500
Environment Agency	Tel: 0845 988 1188 (24 hour floodline) www.gov.uk/ea	
Met Office	Tel: 0370 900 0100 (24 hour, weather desk) www.metoffice.gov.uk	
Health and Safety Executive	Tel: 0845 300 9923 (office hours, incident contact centre) Tel: 0151 922 9235 (24 hour, duty officer) Tel: 0151 922 1221 (24 hour, duty press officer)	
Education Support	08000 562 561 (24 hour) Alternative number: 020 8987 6212 https://www.educationsupport.org.uk/get-help/help-for-you/helpline/	Education Support can provide practical and emotional support to staff in the education sector, and their families.

Appendix 7 – Policy for Bereavement and Loss

Rationale

The governing body believes that bereavement and loss are an inevitable part of learning and growing. No matter how prepared we think we are, death is often traumatic and unexpected. Its unpredictability can severely unbalance a school whose normal working environment is one based on routine.

Policy

The governors feel strongly about the way death is handled and discussed in school and as such believe that the school should endeavour to provide:

- an environment that is sensitive and compassionate to the needs of those wishing to grieve, whatever their cultural or religious beliefs.
- a commitment to an education about death and the associated rituals and traditions of mourning.
- opportunities for discussion that help lessen the stigma attached to death, reducing its status as a taboo subject.

Guidelines

- The school will respond in a planned and agreed manner, so that all staff know what is expected and can contribute their part in a way that is consistent with the ethos of the school.
- The Headteacher will co-ordinate the school's response and be vital in creating an appropriate atmosphere. They will be the first point of contact and will liaise with all parties concerned and affected. They will allocate a specific person (usually the young person's Head of Year) to support the bereaved. This person would, in the later stages of bereavement, offer support and check on the progress of any pupils involved.
- In addition, a small group of staff will be identified to keep in touch with the family so contact from the family's point of view is manageable but also does not come to an abrupt end after all the initial attention. This group would probably consist of the pupil's Head of Year or their representative, the pupil's form tutor, and or a member of staff particularly close to the pupil.
- The Headteacher or his representative will inform all staff.
- Pupils and parents or carers will be informed at the same time and as promptly as circumstances will allow. Pupils in school will be informed face to face, parents or carers by letter or email on the same day. Absentees from school will be noted to ensure that they are also informed on their return by their form tutor. Staff who are absent will be informed by their line manager.
- In living in a multi-ethnic and multi-faith society it is necessary to be aware of the differing cultural and religious traditions of grieving and mourning. The school should ensure that they do not deny young people the opportunity to grieve and mourn within the traditions of their own culture and religious beliefs.
- The Head Teacher will liaise with the media and possibly the police.

Managing the First Day

- Upon hearing news of a death, members of staff should contact the Headteacher.
If a parent, relative or close friend of a pupil has died, the Headteacher will decide (after speaking to the pupil's next-of-kin) who should approach the pupils.
- A parent or relative coming into school to break the news, possibly with support from a member of staff, would normally be the best and usual approach. If no parents, relatives or carers are able to attend, the Headteacher will need to decide who is best suited/qualified to deal with the situation.
- The Headteacher, supported by the Senior Leadership Team and the pupil's Head of Year, should gather all details surrounding any death. It is vital to have all the facts. If the death/s have been particularly traumatic

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the media may be involved. It is essential that correct information is disseminated to all staff.

Multiple Deaths, Death in School

- In the event of multiple deaths, additional support and resources will probably be required. The senior leadership team will meet to agree a planned course of action.
- It is likely that there will be considerable (if unwanted) media interest. The Headteacher will decide what information should be released. Clearly information that might upset, confuse or exacerbate the situation should be withheld.
- It is important that one individual, pre-selected and briefed by the team acts as spokesperson, relaying consistent information. Another consideration might be the setting up and running of an emergency school hotline.
- It may be necessary to retrieve the personal belongings of the deceased for their return to the next-of-kin. Information on the school's database, including references and addresses will probably need to be amended and updated. This also applies to notice boards etc. The school may decide to write to parents to allow them to explain to their children the meaning and implications of an event.

Funerals, Memorial Services/Pupil Participation

Before the bereaved pupil or member of staff returns to school there is likely to be a funeral. It is probable that pupils and staff will express a wish to attend, or take part in the service, but they should only do so with the agreement of the deceased's family or relatives' prior agreement, as well as the agreement of their own parents/carers. The Headteacher, or his/her representatives, should be the only person representing the school and in contact with the family/relatives, will need to discuss funeral arrangements.

- If the bereaved family wish pupils and staff to attend, the team should be available to offer support before and after the service. If they do not wish the school to attend, their wishes should be respected and the school should consider arranging an alternative.
- Planning a memorial service, reading lessons, poems, or choosing hymns may all assist in the grieving process.
- The form most affected might like to write down their thoughts and feelings; these may be given to the bereaved family. It should be the role of the Head of Year to ensure that no inappropriate remarks or comments are made. After either service, staff and pupils should be encouraged to meet and express their thoughts and feelings. Refreshments would normally be provided. Such services are important in initiating the mourning process.
- The garden may serve as a venue for gatherings and quiet moments of reflection.

Death of a Member of Staff

- When such an event occurs it is usually extremely traumatic, especially for members of staff forced to deal with their own grief as well as comforting pupils. Planning how a school manages such an event is important. To avoid rumours it is advisable that the news is broken as soon as possible. A gathering together of staff to allow them to grieve in private before announcing the news to the rest of the school is something that should be considered.
- Generally such news is broken in assembly, in a space where everyone may be told simultaneously. Later in class pupils should be allowed the opportunity to express their grief individually with the support of the form tutor. Some pupils may have already experienced death and their way of coping with such events is sometimes observed in emotional outbursts. Some may express feelings of anger, panic or relief. It is important to try to remember that this is a time when everyone is hurting.
- For a community as close knit as a school, a memorial service in keeping with the ethos and ethnic beliefs of the school is normally a good idea. The coming together of the whole school collectively for one purpose helps each individual come to terms with his/her own grief in a shared experience – i.e. helping to initiate

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the grieving process. Such services also offer the opportunity for those who may have been unable to attend the funeral to express themselves through drama, poems and letters.

- It is at times like these when members of the staff often feel insecure of their own abilities, finding it difficult to cope. Without encroaching on their privacy staff might keep an eye on those teachers particularly affected by the death of a close colleague.

Death of a Pupil

- The death of a fellow pupil is probably the most demanding situation a young person might be forced to face whilst in school. Comprehending and coming to terms with such an event is going to be equally difficult and will require great emotional support from the school staff.
- If faced with a sudden death the Headteacher should contact the deceased parents/carers/next of kin as soon as possible thus enabling compliance with any of their wishes. The immediate class friends and siblings of the deceased should be gathered and the news, if not already known, be broken before an announcement is made to the rest of the school, thus allowing private grief. To avoid rumours an announcement should be made to the whole of the school as soon as practically possible. Additional support from fellow teaching colleagues may well be required as well as the assistance of the school's bereavement counsellors.
- In event of a young person becoming terminally ill their wishes and those of their parents or carers should always be respected. Should the young person wish to attend school year staff may need to inform pupils of the young person's condition. Occasionally the pupil may wish to talk to their fellow classmates about their predicament themselves. Honesty about death and dying we feel is the best line of approach.

Supporting the Family

- Parents and carers often feel that teachers are experts on their children. They may invariably therefore turn to the school for advice and information, especially on matters of bereavement. It is important to remember that the family, friends and the immediate community often best support those suffering from bereavement, as is the case with other stressful life events.

The following are some points that may be helpful to bear in mind when talking to parents and carers:

- A death in the family will disrupt the family for many months; in fact the family will never be the same again. Family members are grieving, relationships alter, and members may take on new roles. Sometimes there is a change of carer, house or school, all of which add to the disruption and distress experienced by the young person. To support the young person it is helpful to minimise, if possible, changes and disruptions in their normal daily routine and life in school.
- The bereaved family members may emotionally and physically withdraw from the young person, to protect themselves from more distress. Some adults will deny the bereaved person is grieving, at it will be distressing for them to acknowledge the young person's pain. This may cause distress and confusion, causing grief reactions of anger, withdrawal or psychosomatic behaviours such as, headaches, stomach ache or sickness.
- The bereaved young person may regress in behaviour, becoming clingy, difficult or withdrawn. His/her schoolwork may suffer. These changes will be partly due to grief but also to the disruption and changes within the family, causing the young person to feel confused and unsafe. Even the simple withdrawal of attention from the young person can lead to problems; the young person may feel resentment, jealous or guilt towards the dead person. The expression of this verbally can cause the remaining family members distress and shock. Parents and carers need to know this is normal and will decrease as the young person and the family become more stable and settled.
- Parents and carers need to be informed of the benefits that a young person gains in being involved in the ceremonies and rituals that follow the death. An explanation as to how mourning practices help young people to express their feelings and come to terms with and accept the reality of their loss can be very beneficial.
- Finally, teachers need to remember that parents and carers will often use them as role models, counsellors or extended family; looking to them for support for themselves as well as finding appropriate ways of

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supporting and talking with their children. Teachers therefore may require their own support structures, so they too can turn to others for emotional support, advice and information if needed. Supporting bereaved families, whilst rewarding, can also be emotionally draining.

Self-care for those working with the bereaved

It's easy to overlook the stressed and anxieties placed on those dealing with the bereaved. In many instances these can be quite exacting and yet because our sympathy and attention naturally rests with those grieving we can easily forget the emotional weight resting on the shoulders of those offering support. To assist, the following points we think are worth bearing in mind:

- Anticipate possible reactions you may experience with grief and loss. Each one of us is likely to react differently depending on our age, personality, cultural and religious background. If you are ever unsure about how you should react to others' grief, honesty is always the best line of approach.
- Try to accept that you may experience emotional reactions yourself. Such an event might trigger thoughts of your own past grief experiences. You may even find yourself doubting your own abilities. It is not unusual to experience existential thoughts and find yourself querying life's injustices, questioning perhaps your own beliefs.
- Panic attacks and worries about death – your own, or perhaps that of your family – may also become a preoccupation.
- Try to accept that giving such support can affect you in perhaps ways you had not considered. Normally these reactions will subside after a few days or weeks but if they persist do not be afraid to ask for professional support.
- Never take on too much. If you find that you are having difficulty in managing to cope, look to others to offer support – a partner, friend, or colleague.
- It is important to remember that you alone cannot carry other peoples' grief