



Responding to a critical incident Policy

Related documents include:

Health and safety policy
Safeguarding policy
Fire evacuation policy
Fire policy
Attendance policy
Missing Student policy

Legal Status:

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

Monitoring and Review

- This policy will be subject to continuous monitoring, refinement and audit by the Principal
- The Principal and Welfare Manager will undertake a formal annual review of this policy for the purpose of monitoring and of the efficiency with which the related duties have been discharged, by no later than one year from the date shown below, or earlier if significant changes to the systems and arrangements take place, or if legislation, regulatory requirements or best practice guidelines so require.
- The next official date for review is **November 2025**

Introduction

Abbey College take the safety of our students, staff, and employees very seriously.

In the event of a critical incident the following actions will be taken:

A Critical Incident is defined as *'an emergency affecting student, personnel or property, requiring immediate responsive action beyond that which could be reasonably expected from the college's own management team during the day to day running of the school.'*

It may involve:

- the death of a child, staff member or guest
- a serious accident involving children and/or college personnel on or off the premises
- a violent intrusion onto college premises (e.g. an armed intruder or a bomb alert)
- extensive damage to college premises
- college fire, flood or explosion
- the effects of disasters in the wider community

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- incidents on educational visits
- epidemics
- the release of hazardous substances near or on the college site
- IT Systems being compromised as a result of a cyber-attack or significant information security breach

Everyone in our community is likely to be affected in large or small measure by any one or combination of the above incidents. Thinking through what might need to be done in such circumstances and having helpful information in an accessible place could make all the difference in successfully managing a situation.

PLANNING PROCESS

It is important to involve staff in the planning process, to ensure that they support the plan and are able to implement it in the event of an emergency. Staff have been identified that are prepared to take on key roles in an emergency and have nominated one member of staff to take responsibility for updating and reviewing the plan once it is in place.

Key person and roles are identified as:

- The College Principal to head the management of an incident
- Welfare Manager & Houseparents to support students
- Bursar to guide the admin staff & maintenance team
- Senior teacher to support academic staff
- Catering manager to guide catering staff

The following principles apply to managing a wide range of incidents:

- design the plan to suit your establishment (particular care should be taken if your establishment has residential accommodation)
- it should be simple and straightforward to implement
- it should be known by all those having identified responsibilities within it
- it should be regularly reviewed and critical information updated
- it should be held in a duplicate copy off-site or otherwise accessible in the event of fire/flood etc

Managing people in the aftermath of a critical incident relies heavily on good information and having thought through the practical consequences of the range of interested parties and how they can be helped.

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ROLES OF INDIVIDUALS

It is important that individuals understand their role within the Critical Incident Management Plan. There are a number of specific responsibilities, which need to be identified and assigned to individuals. Individual responsibilities include:

- Person to take charge of the Critical Incident Management Team (Principal)
- Welfare (Welfare Manager)
- Communications (Administration)
- Media (Marketing and Bursar)
- Resources (Site Manager/Resource Manager)

The attached plan template includes suggested roles and responsibilities. The allocation of these will vary from school to school. In a large secondary school it may be possible for a number of individuals to undertake these roles. Within a small primary school, many of them will fall to the Principal. It is important that provisional allocations of responsibilities are made, but these may need to be reviewed in the light of staff absence for a variety of reasons, or according to the timing of the incident.

INFORMATION GATHERING

Up-to-date records on personnel and students and the premises will be essential in hard copy and electronic form. A Fire list of students on campus is created weekly and stored in the Fire Plan Folder. E Reception will also be used to see who is onsite at any given time. A second copy of these and the *Critical Incident Management Plan* is kept securely and stored appropriately off the premises by the Bursar in order that vital information is not lost in the event of fire/flood/explosion.

All actions will be recorded using the incident log and retained for future reference. Immediate witness accounts will be kept securely for police evidence, if required.

BASE FOR CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM

For Abbey College, the Critical Incident will be managed from the meeting room of the college, located in the main building. If the premises needs to be vacated the reserve off-site base is Malvern Wells Village Hall (the key holder is known to the college).

Communications

The plan includes all emergency contacts for students, employees and directors. The duty phone will be the dedicated mobile phone to use in the emergency. Malvern Wells primary school will provide a landline if the building needs to be evacuated.

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Internal Communications

It is important to establish mechanisms for informing staff of developments. This will be through morning briefings. Staff will be debriefed at the end of each working day. All staff will be kept up to date with developments. All relevant information will be recorded and shared via SharePoint or emails, whichever is deemed more appropriate.

Media Relations

The Marketing Manager and Bursar will be the media liaison and will undertake all communications. All guidance will be taken from the Directors of the College.

Evacuation and Shelter Procedures

All staff are inducted to deal with an emergency evacuation due to a critical incident. This forms part of our regular CPD training days. A rehearsal for an evacuation is carried out at least termly by all staff members to familiarise them with the procedure. Evacuation procedure cards are displayed in all classrooms, buildings and boarding houses.

Students are also inducted in how to respond to an emergency incident as well as having regular fire drills.

To evacuate the premises our fire evacuation procedures will be followed and will be supported by welfare staff.

In the event of a lockdown, all students and personnel will be directed to the assembly hall or sports hall dependent of what emergency has taken place.

Emergencies during educational visits

Advice for dealing with emergencies on educational visits is available from DfE (Nov 2018) via the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-and-safety-on-educational-visits/health-and-safety-on-educational-visits>

The Council for Learning Outside the Classroom (LOtC) awards the The Council for Learning Outside the Classroom (LOtC) awards the Learning Outside the Classroom Quality Badge. This is a useful organisation to contact for advice before booking with outside organisations before embarking on trips.

<http://lotcqualitybadge.org.uk/>

The following documentation is required for all visits to be approved by the Principal.

All excursions should have in place:

- A visit itinerary/programme
- Appropriate Risk Assessments
- Supervising Adults
- Emergency contact details

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On the visit, the visit leader should carry a visit leader emergency action card. (Worcestershire county council emergency procedures action plan for off-site visits)

The visit leader should take charge of an incident until relieved by the emergency services or by a senior member of employer/establishment staff. In the event that the visit leader is incapacitated, all members of the visit leadership team should have the competence to take charge and to initiate the establishment emergency plan.

The designated emergency contact should carry an emergency contact action card.

The designated emergency contact (a member of the senior leadership team) should provide an emergency contact for the group (this needs to be available after hours for evening activities and 24 hours for residential visits).

The school contact must have, readily available, written or online accessible details of the visit, including a list of all involved, contact arrangements with the group, and day and night contact details for parents and staff next-of-kin. On residential or after-hours visits, the emergency contact should have access to this information at home.

Make sure that arrangements will work after hours, at weekends and during the school holidays if visits are taking place at these times.

Lockdown Procedures

On the rare occasions it may be necessary to close and lock the doors of the College so that it is not possible to enter its interior. This will ensure that students, staff and visitors are safe in situations where there is a hazard in the School grounds.

A lock down is executed when there is a serious safety risk for the premises, for example a chemical spillage, proximity of dangerous animals or attempted access by unauthorized persons intent in causing harm/damage.

The aims of this policy is to:

- Remove students and teachers from the threat
- Isolate the dangerous situation from much of the school
- Allow an accurate accounting of students within each room
- Depending on the situation, facilitating an organized evacuation away from the dangerous area

Notification of Lockdown

Staff will be notified that lock down procedures are to be taken immediately by the Fire Alarm sounding 3 times in succession. This will be done repeatedly. (This is not a Fire Drill Alarm, which is a

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continuous sound, but three short sounds times in succession once.) Once the notification has been given, staff and students should:

- Close all windows and doors
- Lock the doors
- Out of sight & minimize movement
- Get under the tables where possible
- Stay silent and avoid drawing attention
- Be aware you may be in lock down for some time

The process will be activated and the students will be ushered into the school building as quickly as possible and the outer doors locked.

Depending on the nature of the lock down, the students will remain in the room they are in and the staff will ensure the windows and doors are locked. The students need to be positioned away from possible sightlines from external windows/doors. They must get under tables where possible. Lights, smart boards and computer monitors to be turned off. Mobile phones are put on silent mode.

Staff members and students not in class for any reason will proceed back to the class as soon as possible if safe to do so. If this is not possible, staff and students should go to the nearest available securable space. The Director of Academic Studies and Principal should be alerted to any students who are not accounted for. **No one should move about the school.**

Staff members need to support the students to keep them calm and quiet. Staff members will remain in lock down until informed by a key Executive Staff Member in person that there is an all clear. The alarm will stop at that point.

Post Incident Care and Support

The Senior Management Team will assess the needs of employees and staff who may have been affected by the incident taken place and offer any support that is required for all employees and students. For example, offering counselling sessions.

Staff & Students

Anxiety and the urgent pressure of events may produce stress amongst staff. The Critical Incident Management Team needs to think about how to support individuals in the aftermath of the events.

Those more likely to be affected are those whose lives were most at risk during the incident; those who witnessed tragic or frightening events or their immediate aftermath; and those who have themselves experienced traumatic events in the past or whose support networks are less robust.

Parents/Carers and other visitors

When parents/carers hear an incident has taken place, parents of day students may naturally come to the college for information. A space where parents/carers can be seen in groups or on an individual basis where

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concerning or tragic news can be shared in a considerate way. A staff member or trusted adult from the college community will be on hand to receive visitors and deal sensitively with their enquiries. This can be more difficult in situations where the police limit the information that can be shared; It can be very difficult to contain events which are often shared quickly through social media. Clear communication route to share accurate and appropriate information as advised by other specialist services. It will also be important for all staff to be aware of the need to resist commenting in such forums. Our Marketing manager will be in charge of liaising with all communications with social media and press.

Abbey College has a majority of students who are international students. As parents live abroad the dissimulation of information has to be sensitively handled. Therefore, all communication must be through the Principal or Bursar.

Log Keeping

Any emergency affecting a school may afterwards become the subject of a detailed inquiry. It is important that accurate written records are kept, and that no piece of information about either the planning or the response to the incident is lost. Records may also be in the form of a recording made via a CCTV camera, a telephone or on an answer machine. The records should be retained after the incident for future reference.

Each member of staff involved in dealing with the emergency should log decisions made, telephone calls made and received and tasks carried out. In an emergency, things happen very quickly and it is unlikely that you will remember all the people you have spoken to and actions you have taken unless you write everything down.

Stand-down

The Critical Incident Management Team may need to continue to function for some time after the incident in order to consider a number of issues. These may be:

- When and how to re-open the college
- How to deal with continued interest from the media
- The provision of information to parents/carers and the public
- Support for the families of those hurt or bereaved
- Attendance at funerals
- The organisation of memorial services
- Particular thought needs to be given to the sending of cards and flowers
- Investigations are likely to be undertaken by various bodies such as the police and insurance companies

Recovery

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Abbey College in Malvern Ltd (Number 08661073)

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When the emergency services have left the college, or in the case of an incident on a trip off site, when students and staff have returned home and media interest has subsided, the college can begin the recovery process.

The Principal will work with the local authority to develop a recovery plan for college. A range of support will continue to be available from the local authority including the Education Psychology Service.

There may be formal inquiries or even police investigations into the incident, which may continue for some time, and require the cooperation and support of college staff, pupils and parents/carers.

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