



## **Gosfield School**

### **Critical Incident Policy - Whole School, including EYFS**

#### **Aims and Objectives**

- To maintain a duty of care for the safety and wellbeing of students, staff and other members of the school community.
- To minimise educational and administrative disruption within school.
- To enable normal working to be resumed in the shortest possible time.
- To ensure that swift and appropriate action is taken in the case of the school being made aware that a critical incident has occurred.
- To ensure that the welfare of students and staff is paramount.
- To ensure that the school responds in a sensitive, consistent, and effective manner which reduces confusion, panic, and extreme emotion.
- To have in place a Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT), the membership of which is known to all relevant parties.
- To have in place a Critical Incident Management Plan, the details of which are familiar to all relevant parties.
- To maintain normality, as far as possible, in parts of the school which are not affected and to restore normality as soon as possible to the parts which are affected.
- To have immediate access to all relevant contact details (including outside agencies).
- To offer sensitive, non-intrusive support in the short and medium term to all those affected directly or indirectly by the incident.
- To control the flow of information, including ensuring as far as possible that children do not spread inaccurate information via their mobile phones or any other means.

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. Critical incidents happen when least expected. When a school is affected by a crisis, all staff have a significant role to play in supporting the emotional health and wellbeing of their school community and in maintaining control of the situation in the school. A critical incident may occur during the school day, in the evening, during the school holidays or on a school trip. It may affect students, staff, parents, visitors and governors, may relate directly to the safety of the school community, or may involve an incident beyond the school premises. This Critical Incident Policy does not cover every eventuality; occurrences may arise which cannot be foreseen or considered.

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

The school has in place a Lockdown Procedure, which is practised at least once each academic year so that in the event of a critical incident all staff and students are well rehearsed and fully aware of what procedures to follow.

#### **Examples of Critical Incidents**

- An incident has taken place which involves emergency services, such as a fire or a road accident on a school trip.

- A student or member of staff has died or suffered a significant injury.
- A natural disaster or severe damage to the school building has occurred.
- A deliberate act of violence such as knifing or the use of a firearm.
- Suicide.
- An incident which has generated high media interest, or significant absence e.g., infectious disease.
- A serious safeguarding incident relating to a student e.g., abuse, abduction.
- Severe Weather impacting the running of the school.

In the event of disruption caused by heavy snow, ice or flooding, the prime concern of the school will always be the safety of the students and staff. The decision whether or not to send a student to school, however, must be at the discretion of the parents, taking into account factors such as local road conditions and the availability of childcare.

The school aims to remain open in the event of severe weather. We feel this is important for those parents who are relying on us to care for their children in term time. In the event of severe weather, we cannot guarantee a normal school day, however, we will institute online learning for all year groups possible should the School close to all or some students.

There are certain factors which may lead to the school closing, such as whether:

- There are enough members of staff to be able to provide satisfactory care.
- The severity of the weather conditions is on such a major scale that it is unlikely that many people will be able, physically, to make it into school.
- The school can provide lunch for the students.
- The school grounds are sufficiently safe for students, parents and staff.
- The school has sufficient heating.
- The school has lighting and hot water across the site.
- External agencies such as the police, local government and motoring organisations are advising against school travel in our region.

### **Communicating With Staff and Parents**

The school will post whether the school is open on the website as soon as possible, normally by 6.30am on the day. Staff and parents will also be notified by text message or email.

If severe weather conditions develop during the school day we will consider closing the school early, but we will aim to remain open until the end of the normal school day at 3.50pm. Again, this would be communicated via the website and text message.

BBC Essex will be contacted and if the school is closed this information should also appear on their website.

If parents wish to collect their child(ren) from school before this time, they are welcome to do so, but students must be signed out. Anyone struggling to collect their child by 3.50pm, due to poor road conditions or transport arrangements, are asked to contact the school to inform us of the likely collection time.

There is no requirement for parents to contact the school regarding their decision to travel or not. This helps to avoid blocked phone lines.

### **School Buses**

The decision not to run the school buses will be made by a member of the Senior Leadership Team by 6.30am. Parents will be notified by text if the bus is not running and details will be put on the website.

### **The Decision to Travel**

Parents have to decide whether it is safe and desirable for them to make the journey into school. If the school is open, and once we have established which students we have on site, we will construct a schedule for the day which will include, where possible, relevant academic work, especially for those who may be preparing for exams, and a range of activities aimed at making the day as productive as possible.

If parents make the decision to travel in, it doesn't matter what time their child(ren) arrive. We will expect children to arrive throughout the morning. However, it is important that children sign in and register at the front office.

A Rapid Response situation is defined as one that necessitates the school being unable to open for a day or days during term time. This may be due to severe weather, illness epidemic, fire or civil unrest. The decision will be made by the Principal and they will instigate the rapid response text and email system (Bromcom), which will ensure that all parents and members of staff are aware of the situation quickly and that the school website is updated to reflect this.

At the start of each school year, parents are advised that in the eventuality of the school being unable to open, they will be informed via the school website and via Bromcom. Should the school have to close during the day for any reason, the school website will immediately be updated and parents will be advised via Bromcom. In the event of the internet being unavailable, the rapid response telephone system will be used.

*All parents and staff are advised that it is their responsibility to inform the Front Office of any changes to their contact details.*

### **CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM**

Principal – Rod Jackson  
Vice Principal – John Cooper  
Head of Operations Andrew Deaves  
Bursar – Lauren Shields  
DSL/Assistant Principal Pastoral – Amanda Gwynne  
Head of Prep and Nursery – Heather Bougeard  
Deputy Head of Prep – Rick Cranfield  
Head of EYFS – Sophie Delaney  
Executive Assistant – Sara Bowles  
Assistant Principal Academic – Louise Clayton  
Assistant Principal SENCO – Lisa Shannon

Other members of staff may be co-opted members of the CIMT as and when required. One or two members of staff may be asked to take responsibility for the normal running of the school whilst the CIMT is engaged with dealing with an incident. The Chair of Governors will be informed of a critical incident as soon as is practical.

### **Guidelines for managing a Critical Incident**

- The Principal will take charge of the school's response.
- In the case of the Principal being unavailable, the Vice Principal/Head of Prep or other members of the Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) will take charge.
- The Principal's office or the senior school staff room will be the central liaison point. If unavailable, the Prep School staff room will be used.
- The CIMT will assess immediate practical needs.
- The CIMT will contact next of kin of those directly involved if required.
- A short simple statement of facts will be prepared by the Principal.

- All contacts from the media will be dealt with by the Principal.
- Office staff taking incoming calls will use a statement agreed by the CIMT.
- When necessary, all members of staff will be informed and will be guided in relation to informing students.
- The CIMT will determine the involvement of parents if appropriate.
- Short and long-term support will be offered to those affected.
- There will be an evaluation of the way in which the incident was managed.

### **In the event of a Critical Event**

#### **Initial Response:**

- The Principal should be contacted first. If not available, the Vice Principal, Head of Prep or Head of Operations should be informed.
- The Principal will seek to clarify from relevant sources the nature and circumstances of the incident.
- The CIMT will meet at the earliest opportunity and agree on procedures for managing the critical incident.
- If the incident is on site, health and safety measures will be put in place and the emergency services contacted.

#### **Longer Term Issues:**

- School structures and routines will be re-established.
- Supportive strategies for students and staff will be implemented.
- There will be ongoing contact with parents.
- Actions taken will be reviewed and policies amended if appropriate.
- The PSHEE and pastoral programmes will be reviewed.
- Staff will be mindful of anniversaries and other special dates.

#### **All members of the CIMT must:**

- Be able to access the Policy from home and from school
- Be aware of the roles of each part of the plan to enable the school to react swiftly and accordingly.
- Have contact numbers of each other for 24-hour contact.
- In the event of a school trip, have access to a list of names for staff and students.
- Have a register of emergency services and relevant outside agencies.

### **Procedures for Critical Incident Management – Key roles:**

#### **Principal**

- Seeks clarification.  
Calls emergency services if appropriate.  
Summons the CIMT to inform of incident.  
Prepares relevant statements/letters for the media, website, parents, students, and office staff.
- Convenes and informs staff.
- Informs the Chair of Governors.
- Manages all contact with Media.

#### **Vice Principal**

- Arranges Senior staff cover if necessary and appropriate, liaising with Head of Prep as required.
- Manages the daily arrangements of the Senior School.
- Arranges the logistics where areas of the Senior School become unavailable.

### **Head of Safeguarding**

- Contacts external agencies – Essex County Council, Social services etc.
- Contacts relevant parents.
- Supports the physical and emotional wellbeing of students.

### **Bursar**

Contacts insurer as soon as practical

### **Head of Prep**

- Assists in the preparation of relevant statements/letters for the media, website, parents, students, and staff within Prep school in line with the Principal's guidance.
- Convenes and informs Prep School staff.
- Arranges Prep School and Nursery Staff cover if necessary and appropriate, liaising with the Vice Principal as required.
- Manages the daily arrangements of the Prep School and Nursery.
- Arranges the logistics where areas of the Prep School and Nursery become unavailable.

### **Head of Operations**

- Liaises with Site staff to ensure access for essential personnel.
- Ensures health and safety measures are in place.
- Liaises with Principal First Aider and other first aiders to offer first aid as appropriate.

### **Executive Assistant to the Principal**

- Liaises with the Office Manager to ensure phone lines are operative and all office staff available.
- Ensures office staff do not vary from the script.
- Liaise with Marketing Officer to load information onto the website and manage communications with parents via texts and emails.

### **Essex County Council contact details for Critical Incidents:**

The Schools Communications Team at Essex County Council can be contact on either 0333 013 2800 Monday to Friday 9am to 4pm. For media/press office support the Press Office out of hours number is available but should only be used for urgent media enquiries: 07717 867525. Media only contacted by the Principal or on his direction.

### **School Insurance - crisis contact details and media support:**

The school insurance provides support:

24 hour legal helpline – **0330 102 4201** Provides expert advice.

Risk advice helpline 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday – 0345 600 7531/email [risk.advice@ecclesiastical.com](mailto:risk.advice@ecclesiastical.com)

On September 12<sup>th</sup> 2024 in the King's Speech, the Government introduced a Bill known as Martyn's Law.

The school is aware of the guidance, namely:


The government considers it is reasonable to expect those responsible for certain premises and events to take appropriate measures to protect their workers and the public. However, such activity should be proportionate. To achieve this, the bill establishes a tiered approach, linked to the activity that takes place at premises or an event and the number of individuals it is reasonable to expect may be present on the premises at the same time. The requirements vary accordingly, acknowledging that larger

venues and events may be impacted to a greater extent by an attack and should be expected to do more.

For smaller premises (200-799) within the standard tier they are required to put in place simple procedures to reduce the risk of physical harm to individuals who may be present. Those responsible for larger premises and events (800+) in the enhanced tier are required to do more in recognition of the potentially higher impact of a successful attack.

For all premises, the requirements in the bill are subject to the concept of 'reasonably practicable'. Those responsible for many premises and events will be familiar with this exercise of judgement through their duties under health and safety legislation. Reasonably practicable will allow those responsible for premises and events to take into account the nature of their activities, operating environment, and available resources when fulfilling their obligations under the legislation, ensuring a proportionate and premises specific approach.

The Fireworks event, the Summer Fete and potentially the Cut Hedge Cross Country are currently the only events that may fall into the Higher Tier. The Head of Operations will act accordingly and be mindful of the new legislation when planning large scale events.



Signed \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr Rod Jackson, Principal

Date 01/09/25

Date of next review: September 2026