

Critical Incident Policy

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to minimise the impact of critical incidents on the emotional and physical wellbeing of the school community through clear and timely communication.

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

Scope

The policy covers the approach taken during any critical incident and emphasises the importance of risk management before any event.

The appendices are practical strategies to be used during any critical incident. The policy and procedures are adhered to by all Senior Leaders in the Severn Academies Educational Trust (SAET) in the event of a critical incident.

Before an Incident

Whilst no MAT or individual academy can take every precaution against critical incidents and some can never be planned for, SAET understands the importance of being proactive and preparing for such events.

Appendix 2 is our Critical Incident Plan template to be completed and regularly updated (termly) by each Academy. The procedures highlight the importance of excellent and measured communication and the involvement of multi-agency. The procedure makes clear the roles and responsibilities of key individuals during a critical incident. SAET takes risk management seriously.

All aspects of Safeguarding and Health & Safety (see policies) are an absolute priority in all academies in SAET. Each school has a planned Critical Incident Management Team with defined responsibilities (see Appendix 1). Each academy conducts regular fire practices, lock downs, and the effectiveness of this, and the plan, is reviewed by the SAET Core Team/Local Governing Board regularly across the year.

Each individual academy has a detailed Emergency Plan, which is regularly reviewed by Heads of School, staff and Local Governing Bodies as part of their delegated responsibilities.

During an Incident

Whilst no two incidents will be the same, some similarity in approach can be planned for.

As soon as an individual academy becomes aware of any incident that might have an impact, the Principal/Headteacher or senior delegated staff in their absence, should establish the facts and assess its significance for the individual academy and the MAT as a whole. They should attempt to contact the SAET CEO and/or SAET Director of Operations/SAET Educational Director.

At this point, the Critical Incident Management Plan will be triggered by either the Principal/Headteacher or senior delegated staff in their absence. The key tasks are listed in the plan. As stated above, the emphasis is on clear and timely information and the need to minimise the psychological impact to all, through a highly supportive and well-organised response.

After the Incident

The aim of the work carried out in an individual academy during the following days, weeks and months is to help the immediate and broader community come to terms with the incident.

A return to normal routine requires sensitive planning, timing and implementation. All staff should monitor pupils' emotional well-being and be attentive to any on-going difficulties, particularly amongst those most directly affected and also vulnerable groups. Staff should also be mindful of the well-being of colleagues and report any concerns to the Academy Senior Team.

Some staff and pupils may need more support in adjusting to normal routines. A sensitive approach to encouraging this via home visits, rotas of support, phased returns may be implemented as appropriate.

Following any critical incident, SAET working with the Principal/Headteacher will carry out a review. The review should consider the following:-

- What went well, what was most/least helpful?
- Were there any gaps?
- Have all necessary referrals to support been made?
- Is there any unfinished communication (e.g. insurance, press)?
- Have all records been secured?
- Have any identified training needs be identified?
- Does the Critical Incident Management Plan need to be reviewed?

All SAET Core Team leaders will be prepared to lend support to any other academy in the group during and after a critical incident.

Appendix 1

Responsibilities

Lead Co-ordinator

The Principal/Headteacher (senior leadership delegate in their absence) will be the Lead Co-ordinator for any incident or event under this procedure. They will:

- Overview the situation and delegate tasks and roles as per the Critical Incident Plan to appropriate staff with the relevant skills and competence;
- Be the central point of contact for information both internally and externally, but may not be the person leading direct communications with these parties;
- Ensure the relevant authorities are informed of the incident including SAET CEO and/or SAET Director of Operations/SAET Educational Director and WWC Emergency Planning team if advised by the SAET Team.

Welfare

It is important that a member of the Senior Leadership Team is given the responsibility for determining appropriate actions to ensure the welfare of pupils and staff. There may be a need for both immediate and long-term actions following an incident. This person will coordinate post incident care and support.

Communications

Good internal and external communications are vital for the efficient management of an incident or event. The Principal/Headteacher will nominate individuals with clear responsibilities for internal and external communications. Specific communication requirements are detailed in the Critical Incident Plan

Resources

Generally, the Academy Business Managers (with the support of the SAET Director of Operations) will be tasked with ensuring resources are managed during, immediately after and longer term following an incident. This will include ensuring good access to and exit from site and how to shut off electricity, gas and water supplies appropriate to the incident. Provision of temporary classrooms, canteen facilities, information technology, furniture and stationery etc will be the responsibility of this individual.