



DRAFT (under review)- Critical Incident Policy

Adopted by the Board of Directors: February 2026

School Mission Statement

“To create and sustain, with God’s help, a learning, caring and serving community where all people are valued for who they are and who they may become in the light of Jesus Christ.”

This school is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

1. A Critical Incident or Tragedy may be defined as a single incident or sequence of incidents which:

- are sudden and unexpected
- contain real or imagined threats to a person
- overwhelm usual coping mechanisms
- cause severe disruption
- are traumatic to anyone

2. Critical Incidents affecting St Bede’s Inter-Church may include:-

- The death of a student(s) or member(s) of staff through sudden accident, murder, terminal illness or suicide.
- A serious accident involving students and school personnel on or off School premises.
- A violent attack or violent intrusion onto school premises, e.g. involving an armed intruder or a bomb alert.
- Fire, flood, building collapse or major vandalism in the school.
- A hostage situation.
- A disaster in the community, e.g. transport accident, terrorism.

Reactions to major stress in adults and young people

Staff and students alike can be affected both emotionally and in their work achievements by crises, and these effects can sometimes last for many years. It is clear that the school should be aware of the possibility of these reactions and other fears. We must ensure that victims receive sensitive understanding/treatment, in addition to counselling from either within or outside school. We need to plan ahead to minimise the impact of such crises.

3. Developing a Critical Incident Contingency Plan

Although it is not possible to predict when and where a disaster will strike, there is much that St Bedes can do to be prepared should the "worst" happen. This policy is to enable the SLT to put in place the following contingencies within the policy so that in the event of a disaster, on whatever

scale, staff can act quickly to cope with the distress and confusion and begin to regain a sense of control.

4. Cambridgeshire LA has the following co-ordinated support strategy for schools in the event of a Critical Incident, which will apply to St Bedes.

- (a) **Advice and support for school staff** - this is provided primarily by the Educational Psychology Service.
- (b) **Support from other LA Officers and Services** - The involvement and expertise of other LA personnel is also available to St Bedes:-
- (c) **Education Social Workers** are familiar faces in schools and can offer listening time and advice to students and staff.
- (d) **Youth Service:** This may be a useful contact for secondary schools to help support young people both in and out of school. This support can be accessed by contacting the local senior or area youth worker or County Youth Service Manager.

Critical Incident/Tragedy Plan

Critical Leadership Team

In the event of a Critical Incident St Bede's Critical Incident Leadership Team will convene. This team will be made up of the school's senior leadership team and the school's senior administration leads.

A vital first task is to obtain accurate information about the incident.

- What has happened ?
- Where and When?
- Extent of injuries, numbers and names?
- Location of injured and uninjured?

The school should contact the Cambridgeshire's Directors for Education who will initiate the Critical Incident Response Procedure.

Informing Staff – Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher

- Ensure all staff are informed promptly of the incident - it may be necessary to convene a short staff meeting in person or on Teams
- Establish procedures for keeping staff up to date with incoming information.
- Agree how and when students will be informed.
- Be sensitive to the feelings of staff, particularly those who are closest to the students and adults involved in the incident and to those who have had recent personal traumas.

Informing Directors and both Diocesan Directors of Education– Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher

Informing parents/carers - of children directly involved

- A factual statement should be added to the school website
- Parents/carers of children directly involved should be contacted quickly and with sensitivity.

- Consistency and reliability of information is essential. Avoid relying on a chain of communication. And instead refer to an agreed script used by all who are contacting parents
- The school may need to set a room aside for meetings with parents/carers.
- In the event of an incident involving death or serious injury, particularly off site, the police will often make the first contact with families.

If using the telephone:

- Fully brief the member of staff making the contact, recognising that this can be a very stressful task. A script will be provided by the SLT.
- Take careful note of those parents/carers who have been contacted and those who still need to be informed so that duplicate messages are not given. Consider removal of affected parties from distribution lists as they may receive upsetting info etc. Where appropriate, offer help with transport arrangements.
- Check that the parents/carers are not on their own. Make suggestions for contacting relatives or neighbours as appropriate.
- Inform parents/carers of the telephone number in the school that has been dedicated to receiving enquiries.
- Inform parents/carers how to obtain more information and when they can expect this to be available.

Informing parents/carers - of children not directly involved – Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher

Wherever possible, parents/carers of all other children in the School should be informed that the School has experienced an incident and that their child may be upset.

- Communicate with parents/carers via email and website. Include:
 - brief details of the incident without names;
 - an explanation about the involvement of the Educational Psychology Service or other services supporting staff and students at the school
 - how parents/carers can get more information. (See Appendix 1 for example letter).

Informing students – Headteacher/ Deputy Headteacher/ Heads of Department/ Tutors

- Some staff may find it difficult to be involved in the dissemination of information to students and the Critical Incident Leadership Team should be sensitive to this.
- Students should be told simply and honestly what has happened. This is probably best done in the smallest groups possible - classes, tutor groups or year groups. Whole year groups – Year 7 – Drama Studio, Year 8 – Hall, Year 9 – Gym, Year 10 Pilgrim Theatre and 11 – Chapel.
- Questions should be answered in a straightforward way, passing on only facts and avoiding speculation.
- Some classes, tutor groups or year groups may be more directly affected by the incident and will benefit from extra consideration, support and sensitive handling of information.
- Siblings and other close relatives of victims should be informed separately and, where possible, in liaison with parents/carers.

Dealing with enquiries

The school may be inundated with telephone calls. People will need to staff the telephone which can be a stressful task. All remaining admin staff briefed by the office manager.

- The confidential nature of the task should be emphasised to all telephone operators and clear guidance given on what it is appropriate to say.
- An agreed factual statement prepared by SLT, should be available for the telephone operators, which includes reassurance about the action being taken at the school/ incident site.
- Those answering the telephones should keep notes and have them checked against School records so that there is certainty about who has telephoned in and who should still be contacted. This should include media, directors, etc.

Dealing with the media

- Identify a senior member of staff to liaise with the media – Deputy Headteacher
- Prepare a brief written statement which can be read out or handed to reporters. Stick to the facts - do not be tempted into speculative comments.
- Tell reporters when they can expect further information and aim to work co-operatively with the press.
- In the event of a death prepare some positive comments about the student(s)/ staff who have died and expressions of sympathy for the bereaved family.

SUPPORTING STUDENTS IN THE EVENT OF A CRITICAL INCIDENT

Students need access to clear and concise information

- Check that procedures for monitoring staff and students are in place.
- Teachers should stick to the facts and not be tempted to give speculative comments.
- Act promptly to dispel rumours and misinformation which can cause unnecessary distress.
- Be explicit in acknowledgement of the event.

Give opportunities for students to talk through personal reactions

- It is helpful to provide a quiet, private place for students to go to.
- Allow students to express feelings.
- Anticipate and understand students' reactions.
- It is important to help students realise that grief is a *natural* and *normal* reaction to loss.
- Children with previous bereavement/loss/separation experiences and those with special educational needs may need extra support.
- Be alert to the possible occurrence of unhelpful grief responses such as anger, bullying and scapegoating - act promptly and positively to defuse and deflect such behaviours.
- Ensure a member of staff makes contact with children at home or in hospital.

SUPPORTING STAFF

- Arrange briefing meeting for staff.
- Arrange debriefing meeting for directly affected staff.
- Some teachers may wish to take a less active role in supporting others.
- School staff need to be supportive of each other at this time, e.g. staff may wish to schedule staff meetings in order to receive further advice on how to support bereaved children.

- Staff who are co-ordinating the school's response should be supported and scheduled for relief periods.
- Arrangements may need to be made for staff to see a counsellor or talk with an outside agency/support worker, either singly or as a group.

SUPPORTING PARENTS/CARERS

- Whether the incident has occurred at the school or off site, parents/carers are likely to look to the school for information, advice and support.
- Prepare a room with tea/coffee making facilities where parents/carers can congregate.
- The Chaplain to be available to talk to parents/carers and keep them up- to-date with information as it becomes available.
- Provide information leaflets about the impact of trauma and sudden death and likely reactions - these can be prepared and collected in advance by the School as part of the Contingency planning process.
- Provide information about the types of support that are available to them and their children both in school and within their local community (this information can also form part of the Contingency planning process).
- Contact families of those hurt or bereaved and express sympathy.

APPENDIX 1

LOCKDOWN PROCEDURES

Lockdown procedures should be seen as a sensible and proportionate response to any external incident which has the potential to pose a threat to the safety of children and adults in the setting.

Lockdown procedures may be activated in response to any number of situations, but some of the more typical might be:

- a) The close proximity of a dangerous animal
- b) A reported incident or disturbance in the local community (with the potential to pose a risk to children and adults in the setting)
- c) A warning being received regarding an environmental risk locally, of air pollution (smoke plume, gas cloud etc.)
- d) A major fire in the vicinity of the setting
- e) An intruder onsite (with the potential to pose a risk to children and adults in the setting)

Information regarding the perceived threat could come from a variety of sources:

- Communication from an outside source via reception
- Staff or students spotting an intruder/animal on site

Such information should be reported immediately to a member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT)

A full lockdown signifies an immediate threat to the setting. Any member of SLT has the authority to put the school into Lockdown.

It is difficult to plan for every eventuality; these procedures may have to be adapted.

Immediate action:

The lockdown bell will sound for 5 minutes.

The Emergency Services will be contacted on the instructions of a member of SLT.

The Deputy Headteacher will monitor CCTV. By monitoring CCTV, the police can be kept up to date with live updates.

Checklist

- All students and staff should quickly move away from the threat and return to/stay in the building.
- Students and staff on the sports field should make their way to the Sports Hall and remain there until the all clear is given.
- External doors should be locked by Premises staff or a member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) if possible.
- Internal doors may be locked (where a member of staff with a key is present)
- Move furniture behind the classroom door if it is not locked
- Shut and lock windows, draw blinds and curtains, move students away from internal door windows (so an intruder cannot see in)
- Turn off lights and computer monitors
- Turn all mobile phones immediately to silent
- The end of lockdown will be signalled by a message on the computers via Imperio
- Students will not be released to parents/carers during a lockdown and staff should not leave the premises unless instructed to do so.

We ask that Parent/Carers:

- Do not contact the setting during lockdown as this could block telephone lines that are needed for contacting emergency services
- Do not come to the setting during lockdown as this may place themselves and others in danger
- Wait for the setting to contact them about when it is safe for them to come and collect their child

After lockdown has taken place:

- A message to parents/carers will be sent home as soon as possible following any serious incident to inform parents/carers of the context of lockdown.
- Following the need for lockdown, the SLT will create a full record of the event. Policies and procedures will be reviewed as soon as possible to identify any areas for potential development.

Staff and students will practice this termly.

APPENDIX 2

EVACUATION

In the event of the need to evacuate the site beyond the normal fire drill, students will leave in a single line in the following order:

- Year 7
- Year 8
- Year 9
- Year 10
- Year 11

Paper registers will have been taken at the fire drill and should be taken at all points when students are gathered.

If it is necessary to inform parents/carers to collect their children they will be checked off the register as they are picked up.