



# SUSI EARNSHAW

*School of Academics & Performing Arts*

## Critical (Major) Incidents Policy

Last updated: 29 <sup>th</sup> July 2021	Next review: July 2022
Ratified by: Julia Hammond (Head)	Date: 29 <sup>th</sup> July 2021

The World Health Organisation (WHO), describes a critical incident as an event out of the range of normal experience – one which is sudden and unexpected, involves the perception of a threat to life and can include elements of physical and emotional loss.

Such incidents come in many forms from major disasters such as Lockerbie, Hungerford, and Dunblane, to smaller scale incidents involving the death or serious injury of pupils, staff, or parents. Whatever the scale of the incident, the effect on the individuals involved can be equally devastating.

A Critical Incident 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

A possible Critical Incident at the Susi Earnshaw Theatre School may include:

- The death of a pupil(s) or member(s) of staff through sudden accident, murder, terminal illness, or suicide.
- A serious accident involving pupil(s) 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.

TRAUMA caused by the above is enough to challenge any individual mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually, including those of a child.

The emotional effects of disasters on children are not always immediately obvious to parents or school staff. Indeed, at times children find it difficult to confide their distress to adults as they know that it will upset them. In some children the distress can last for months, even years, and may additionally affect their academic attainment. Some young people may not feel comfortable enough or be able to share their feelings and thoughts in public or with staff either because they are unable to do so or because they fear their confidence may be abused. Similarly, because many adults are not able to talk about death, bereavement and tragedy, they may unwittingly stop children talking about similar emotional experiences.

At the Susi Earnshaw Theatre School we take all children's needs seriously, including emotional and psychological and are committed to ensuring all children receive the help they require to explore such matters as death and significant harm or injury in an environment of trust, care and safety. We also recognise the impact such incidents can have on the well-being of staff and parents/ carers and will do our utmost to support any recovery needed and to work with any agencies

It is now recognised that children are no more resilient than adults to traumatic events and their reactions are basically the same. Therefore, here at Susi Earnshaw's we have an important role to play in helping children to understand and cope with the impact of such events. School should be a happy place where a child feels safe and is offered support and security in all times, not just times of insecurity. Our teachers have many skills and techniques which they use routinely to help troubled children, and, with some further training and confidence building, these skills can be adapted to help children cope with a range of traumatic incidents.

## SUPPORTING PUPILS IN THE EVENT OF A CRITICAL INCIDENT

Pupils need access to clear and concise information

- 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 pupils to talk through personal reactions**

- It is helpful to provide a quiet, private place for pupils to go to.
- Allow pupils to express feelings.
- Anticipate and understand pupils' reactions.
- It is important to help pupils 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.

### **Formal grieving**

- Give opportunities for pupils to write and draw, send cards or flowers, letters of condolence, attend funerals, plant a tree, etc. A special assembly or memorial service may be appropriate.
- Be aware of differences in cultural, spiritual, religious values.

### **Establish normal routines**

- The School is the normal place for a child to be and offers security at a time of insecurity.
- Children will look to teachers for role models of how to deal with death and crisis.
- Trauma reactions are normal reactions and are best helped in a normal and familiar environment.
- Returning to the normal routine of academy life also reinforces a feeling of security.
- Encourage and support the return to School of pupils and staff most affected.
- Recognise that emotions and feelings may differ from pupil to pupil.
- Strong feelings and emotions are perfectly normal reactions in the immediate aftermath.

### **SUPPORTING STAFF**

- There should be recognition of the differing needs of each affected individual.
- All staff need to be familiar with the School's Critical Incident Contingency Plan.
- Teachers need to consider their own feelings related to either the present incident or past experiences, so they can feel comfortable in dealing with children's distress.
- 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.
- All staff need to be aware of possible delayed reactions, particularly of those actively involved.
- 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.
- Some staff may find it helpful to make a personal gesture, such as by sending cards/flowers, letter of condolence, attending the funeral.

### **SUPPORTING PARENTS**

- Whether the incident has occurred at the school or off site, parents are likely to look to the School for information, advice and support.
- Prepare a room with tea/coffee making facilities where parents can congregate.
- Allocate a member of staff to be available to talk to parents 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).

At the Susi Earnshaw Theatre School we will follow any guidance given by the Local Authority as well as any advice given by the Emergency Services. The school's reaction to a critical incident can be divided into the following categories: a) Immediate action b) Short term action c) Medium term action d) Longer term action

## IMMEDIATE ACTION

1. Obtain accurate information relating to the incident and relay this to the Head
2. Ensure staff have an emergency number (mobile) to contact the Head as outside lines may be jammed as a response to any incident outside of the school.
3. The Head should contact the parent/ carer of the child caught in the tragedy and ask them to come into school for a full briefing if this is appropriate. (This may not be appropriate if the parent/ carer needs to go to a hospital if the child has been seriously injured.)
4. Parents/carers need to be informed of all available facts as early as possible.
5. Staff will be informed as early as possible.
6. Ensure any incoming calls by other parents or agencies are answered. A record of who has telephoned should be kept so the school knows who else needs to be contacted.
7. All other parents/ carers should be informed that a significant accident has occurred and the result of this may be that their child will be upset. Any parent who is distressed will be offered support and telephone numbers given of agencies which can help.
8. A telephone call will be made to inform our neighbouring schools that an incident of significance has occurred.
9. The school will contact the Local Authority press officer for advice regarding dealing with the media. All guidance will be adhered to. No member of staff will talk to the media unless previously arranged. Additionally, all parents/ carers and children will be asked not to talk to the media in the best interests of the children, staff, and school as a whole. It is expected that the LA press officer will deal with any request for television, radio or newspaper interviews. All enquiries will be directed to and through the press officer who will (if required) arrange to have a briefing session with the press.
10. Pupils will be informed of what has happened in a factual but sensitive way so to avoid any misunderstanding. It is preferable to do this as classes so that children can ask any questions they may have. Facts only will be shared, and staff will not share any personal comments or speculations. They will be told as close to the time that parents/ carers are informed.
11. School routines will continue (as far as possible). This is to ensure the children feel secure and know there is stability in school.
12. If the incident has resulted in a death, a member of the school team will enquire as to the burial customs of the family (some religions hold their funeral services within 24 hours of death). This will include whether sending flowers, for instance, is appropriate.

## SHORT TERM ACTION

Once it is confirmed that the Susi Earnshaw Theatre School is facing a major crisis the following will be followed:

1. Ensure children receive any medical or first aid support they require and that they are physically safe from any further harm.

2. Ensure children are re-united with their families as soon as practicable. If necessary, organise for families to be taken to their children.
3. Ensure all staff, teaching and non-teaching, have an opportunity to express their emotional reactions to the crisis.
4. Make contacts with other professionals and organised support for any member of staff or child who requires professional help. The Proprietor has responsibility for ensuring that the right professional support is in place for the children. If appropriate, set up a regular support group, counselling sessions and someone who will monitor and access the children's and/or staff's needs and their well-being.
5. Organise for appropriate agencies or the local clergy to come into school to talk to all the children in assemblies if this is required and will be helpful.
6. After a few days or when deemed appropriate, organise for a designated person in school to be available to listen to any of the children's reflections, thoughts and feelings on the prior events. If a child feels more comfortable talking to another member of staff, this will be acknowledged and organised.
7. If a child or a group of children have been personally affected by the incident, all other children need to be given time to make cards and send messages as appropriate.
8. Staff need to be aware that children may show a reaction in their play and learning and that this can be a normal reaction to significant events. Staff need to make observation notes and keep careful records of any behaviour that is unusual for the child. These should be shared with the parent and the Head must be informed. Appropriate support will be put in place if this is required.
9. Organise a debriefing session for children and staff by an experienced person from outside the school. This is to ensure:
  - there is clarification about what has happened
  - there is an opportunity for everyone to share and talk about their reaction to what has happened
  - give reassurance
  - mobilise resources
10. The Head must contact the families of those who have been hurt or bereaved and express sympathy and give support.

#### **MEDIUM TERM ACTION**

Careful and sensitive planning is required to ensure pupils, staff and the whole school community recover as quickly as possible, and that stability is recreated. At the Susi Earnshaw Theatre School, we will:

1. Make sensitive arrangements for the return to school which may include:
  - the possibility of part time or flexible attendance
  - preparing re-entry into the class
  - ensuring the curriculum is well thought through
  - a catch-up package is planned
  - organising visits by the class teacher and friends to give confidence and a clear message of a support network at school
  - set up 'sanctuary' arrangements for any pupil if they feel upset or become overwhelmed by the recent events.
2. Arrange alternative teaching if necessary (the pupil may have difficulties concentrating or writing and this will need to be considered by staff)

3. Arrange support for affected staff. Staff may need to have their own needs met and the Proprietor will contact any appropriate outside consultants or agencies to assist with this. Advice will always be sought from Health or Local Authority personnel.
4. Liaise with parents which will include the sending of bulletins. These may include what help has been put in place, a list of people who can offer further support and who to contact if parents have any further concerns about their child.
5. Decide about attendance at funerals. This will usually be the Head, the Proprietors and other members of the staff if available.
6. A special assembly or memorial service will be planned to allow the whole school community to acknowledge the events and to ensure there is a moving on from these.
7. Ensure staff and parents/ carers are aware of how they will be kept up to date with their child's progress in school. The Proprietor will contact any parent/ carer personally and establish a plan of communication.

#### **LONG TERM ACTION**

At the Susi Earnshaw Theatre School, we recognise that the effect of any crisis can last for many years. The following will be considered:

1. Introduce strategies to continue monitoring the most vulnerable pupils and staff. All new members of staff will be informed of the events that took place and additionally, have access to any monitoring notes made. New staff will additionally know how to obtain further help if this is necessary.
2. Consult and decide on whether and how to mark the anniversary of the event.
3. Plan how to deal with any legal processes, enquiries and even news stories that may bring back distressing memories and cause temporary upset within the school.

	<b>TASK</b>	<b>TIME SCALE</b>	<b>LEAD PERSON/ TEAM</b>
<b>1.</b>	Obtain facts/information at start of crisis.	Within hours	Head
<b>2.</b>	Leadership team meet with support personal.	Within hours	Head and Proprietor
<b>3.</b>	Establish a Critical Incident Management Team	Within hours	Head and Proprietor
<b>4.</b>	Contact Families	Within hours	Welfare Officer
<b>5.</b>	Call a staff meeting to give information	Same day if possible	Head
<b>6.</b>	Inform pupils in small groups	Same day if possible	Head, Pastoral Lead, Form Tutors
<b>7.</b>	Arrange a debriefing meeting for staff Involved in disaster	Same day if possible	Head and Proprietor
<b>8.</b>	Debriefing for pupils involved in the disaster	As soon as possible allowing for health and safety.	Head, Pastoral Lead, Form Tutors
<b>9.</b>	Identify high risk pupils and staff	Next few days	Head and Health and Safety Officer
<b>10.</b>	Identify the needs of individuals or groups	Incrementally over the next few days/weeks	Head and Proprietor
<b>11.</b>	Organise treatment etc..	As required	Head, Pastoral Lead, Form Tutors

### **Emergency Contacts**

School Emergency Line: 07973 362 351

Crisis Management Insurance DWF Solicitors.

Easy access Number: 0330 102 4201

(£25000 cover for crisis management. Plus, one week of PR advise)

### **Business Continuity Plan**

If for any reason the school cannot operate from the building, online teaching will resume following the same format as building closure during lockdown. This will be until a suitable replacement building is found or are current building is safe and in working condition. Also, due to our strong links within the community, Barnet College will offer temporary space for those with EHCP's or struggle to access the curriculum from home.