



**HORRIS HILL
SCHOOL**

Critical Incident Policy and Procedures

Policy reviewed:	Autumn term 2023
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CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY

INTRODUCTION

1. The impact of a major incident involving the School could result in human injury and trauma, disruption to our core business, or both, and the School must be ready to respond with a positive and timely action plan which will minimise the human effect and allow the School to return to routine business as quickly as possible. A situation that is handled poorly has the very real potential to expose individuals to harm and to damage the School's reputation. We must therefore be prepared to manage critical incidents in a thoroughly effective way; this document aims to give guidance on procedures, and on factors involved in the decision-making process, both to the Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) and to individuals.
2. The role of the CIMT is to provide leadership and direction before, during and after critical incidents. Further details about the CIMT can be found at Annex C.
3. The most essential part of Critical Incident Management is the foundation formed by training and pre-thought of all those likely to be involved with, or affected by such an incident. Although we hope that the school will never be involved in a serious incident, some scenarios are more likely to occur than others. The school should identify these scenarios and train effectively for them, so as to minimise their impact on the school community.

WHAT IS A CRITICAL INCIDENT?

4. Critical Incidents are characterised as serious events leading to, or with the potential to result in, major injury/emotional trauma/ stress to pupils, staff, parents or visitors, or significant physical damage to buildings and School property. They are likely to cause a severe disruption in School routine and business, and/or could be the cause of the School's reputation coming under threat, and will require more than normal day-to-day management. Examples of such incidents could include:

- Fire
- An intruder on School premises
- Road traffic accidents
- Widespread absence, or illness through contagious disease
- Problems during an off-site activity
- Missing pupil
- Major disruption to the business functioning of buildings, facilities or ICT systems
- National or global pandemic

RESPONSE CHARACTERISTICS

5. Dealing with most serious incidents follows three phases and the School's response should be based on separating the requirements of each:
 - a. **The Immediate Reaction.** Gathering information, requesting appropriate support (including: police, fire, ambulance), communicating with all concerned, setting up the CIMT, dealing with the media.

b. **Handling Human Reaction.** Identifying those individuals in need, recognising the whole-School effect, the subsequent discussion on an incident, the provision of professional support where necessary, and the ritual closure of an incident. This is also known as the emotional phase.

c. **Getting back to business.** Re-establishing routines and facilities as quickly as possible.

KEY ISSUES TO CONSIDER IN SUCCESSFUL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT

6. **Procedures.** The School should have a simple set of procedures to cover the most likely incidents. We judge these to be:

- Evacuation of the school buildings in the event of a fire
- Malicious intrusion of the school premises
- Road traffic accident (RTA)
- Major illness
- Problems during an offsite activity

These procedures should be clearly understood and practised at least annually by both staff and, where appropriate, pupils, to allow immediate actions to be carried out swiftly and efficiently. Procedures are at Annex A.

7. **Information.** The gathering of accurate and timely information is vital to the management of any incident. Inaccurate or a lack of information can easily lead to confusion, uncertainty and distress; it can seriously damage the PR effort and with it the School's reputation. Responsible persons involved in an incident away from School need to be aware of essential basic information required by the School; in the same way the School needs to know all available facts to initiate onward communication, and for the appropriate reaction to take place effectively. The facts essential to this process are:

- What has happened?
- Where has it happened?
- What time did it happen?
- Name and mobile phone number of member of staff in charge
- Confirm identity of group (and total number, pupils and adults) involved
- Names of those injured and their location (e.g. hospital)
- Damage to vehicles/property etc;
- Who has been informed of the incident?
- What is being done now?
- What assistance is required from the School?

Information needs to be updated and verified on a regular basis; in the case of incidents occurring away from School, the responsible person on the ground and the CIMT must clarify who will conduct any follow-up in this regard to prevent a duplication of effort.

8. **Communication.** Communication is clearly one of the most important elements in dealing successfully with a critical incident and there are several aspects to be considered:

a. **Focal Point Communication.** The principle of focal point communication must be rapidly established at the outset. This ensures that there is only one nominated person on

the ground during an "away" incident, responsible for verifying, recording and passing information. It creates control over others who may wish to communicate with, for example, parents or friends to reassure them, and thus prevents the untimely or inaccurate passage of information. Similarly all staff and pupils must be aware that they should not communicate their perceptions about the incident to anyone, without permission from the CIMT which will provide the focal point in School.

b. **Communication Tree.** Once an incident has been reported and declared critical, it is important to initiate the communication tree with the aim of passing information concurrently and rapidly to those who need to know. The CIMT must allocate telephones to maintain access both in and out of the School. Responsibilities in this respect are as follows:

- Head Proprietor, Parents, Pupils
- Bursar Civil authorities, CIMT, Insurers, HSE, Admin Staff, Proprietor
- Deputy Head Teaching Staff

c. **Out of Hours.** An incident out of hours is likely to be discovered by living in staff. If the incident is major, the Head and the Deputy Head are to be called immediately at their homes whence they can initiate the communications process.

d. **Continual Communication.** Major incidents rarely conclude quickly, and their effects develop over a period of time. There is always new information to digest which often requires rapid reaction. It is important for the CIMT to establish a communications centre to process this need. The Headmaster's Study will become the communications centre under the control of CIMT. Information received by the communications centre is to be passed to the CIMT for processing, and is to be recorded on log sheets. Parents, Staff and pupils will also need to be regularly appraised on developments. It would not be unusual to hold daily briefings with daily information letters during the period in which the incident is considered critical.

e. **Communication with the Media.** This is considered under a separate section and can be found at Annex B.

9. **Setting up the CIMT.** It is a matter for the Head, Deputy Head or Bursar to determine whether an incident is critical. Procedures for setting up the CIMT, its organisation and its function are contained in Annex C.

10. **Liability and Evidence.** The nature of most incidents exposes a liability, and the School's duty is to attempt to identify where that may lie and to initiate appropriate action. Potentially serious cases may be investigated by the civil authorities, but the School should ensure that up to the time that occurs, evidence is appropriately preserved.

a. **Witnesses.** Witnesses to an incident should be immediately taken to an isolated room where they can give an account of events to one member of staff nominated by the CIMT. Other members of staff should be available to give support to traumatised pupils. Statements may be required by the Police, and indeed they may also need to re-interview witnesses thereafter. The Police will normally expect witnesses to be isolated from each other before providing a statement, however it may be more appropriate to keep pupils together to prevent undue stress following a particularly harrowing incident, for example.

b. **Staff.** Where it appears likely that a member of staff is liable, the CIMT will organise the taking of a statement with union representation available. It would not be unusual for such a member of staff to be traumatised, and appropriate support should be provided.

c. **Evidence.** The scene of an incident should be isolated by ring-fencing as soon as possible, under the direction of the Bursar. Any item which could be considered evidence is to remain untouched in an isolation area. The Bursar is to ensure that evidence is not tampered with, prior to the arrival of the Police.

11. **Handling Reaction.** Experience in schools where critical incidents have occurred, shows that parents, staff and pupils react in a variety of ways that can be characterized within the emotional range of denial, guilt, anger, distress and helplessness. Sensitive handling of these reactions will help to reduce the effect, and will allow the School a quicker return to the routine and business of education. Some key elements to assist in this process are:

12. **Communicating.** The swift and accurate passage of factual information to parents, staff and pupils will prevent rumour and speculation fuelling the imagination and exacerbating already taut emotions. Staff should be clear about only one version of events to ensure unity, as they may later have the responsibility of discussing issues with pupils.

- **Confronting.** Pupils in particular should be allowed to confront the incident by discussing the truth and the facts. Those clearly traumatised by the effects of the incident and their parents will need to be advised about the availability of professional help and a list of contacts is at Annex D.

- **Supporting the Supporters.** The CIMT will be aware that, particularly as time passes, staff may become increasingly affected by the heightened emotions of a traumatic period. Consideration may be given to a short break away from School for those in need and the provision of cover where necessary.

- **Formal Recognition, Rituals and "Closure".** The CIMT will wish to consider the sending of sympathy notices by the School and by pupils, visiting the injured, and attending a funeral if invited. Consideration should also be given to the holding of special assemblies and memorial services, and the option of a more permanent memorial if appropriate. At a time judged to be suitable, one of the appropriate services could be used to signal the "closure" of the incident to allow school routine to be re-established. Staff and pupils will be aware of anniversaries, and the School may wish to consider an appropriate commemoration.

13. **Getting Back to Business.** The CIMT will judge a suitable time when School routines could be fully recommenced. The School may be ready to embark on this course once the incident has been psychologically "closed".

POST INCIDENT REPORT

14. The CIMT is to organise a post incident report with the aim of learning lessons, evaluating procedures and recommending changes as appropriate. Evidence should be taken from all those involved, including the external services.

DISTRIBUTION OF DOCUMENT

15. This document is to be distributed as follows:
- Staff Common Room
 - Core Members of the CIMT and the SLT
 - Lead School Nurse
 - School Coordinator
 - Chairman
 - Estate Manager
 - Health & Safety Consultant

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

1. This section deals with specific immediate action procedures to follow in the case of an emergency and covers fire, intrusion, road traffic accidents, illness and outings and expeditions. The appropriate appendices are listed below.
2. Immediate actions which could be common to most incidents are:
 - **Evacuation.** See "Fire" at Appendix 1, and "Intrusion" at Appendix 2.
 - **First Aid.** In a major incident causing multiple casualties on site, a First Aid point is to be rapidly established in a safe location and is to be readily accessible for emergency services. The point is to be supervised by the School Nurse who will gather all available qualified First Aiders to assist until the emergency services arrive. The School Nurse will then assume the role of medical liaison with those services.
 - **Restricting Access to the Site.** On instructions from any member of the CIMT, the staff are to take action to prevent access to the site by unauthorised persons.
3. Specific incident procedures are covered as follows:
 - a. Appendix 1 – Fire Procedures
 - b. Appendix 2 – Intrusion.
 - c. Appendix 3 – Road Traffic Accident.
 - d. Appendix 4 – Illness.
 - e. Appendix 5 – Off Site Activities.
 - f. Appendix 6 – Emergency Assistance Contacts List.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES – FIRE

DETECTION AND EVACUATION

Processes for responding to the detection of a fire are described in the Fire Policy. The priority is preservation of life by immediate evacuation of all building occupants to a safe location. Management and staff must co-ordinate to ensure that:

- a) Somebody takes control of the incident with a particular focus on care of pupils.
- b) The Fire Service is called immediately if it is suspected or known that there is a fire.
- c) Senior management (Headmaster, the Deputy Headmaster and Bursar) are informed (calling them at home if necessary).
- d) All building occupants are accounted for.
- e) The alarm activation is investigated, but only if it is completely safe to do so.

ASSEMBLY

16. **Location.** Tennis Court is the main fire assembly area as directed under the School's Fire Procedures. Horris Wood and Horris Bank have their own fire assembly areas.
17. **Roll Call.** As quickly as possible, the Head, or a representative, is to call the register roll and to account for missing pupils and members of staff.
18. **Collecting Pupils.** In the case of a serious and prolonged incident, the School is to be prepared to make arrangements for parents to collect pupils. If possible, a safe building should be used as a temporary holding area until collection can be completed. The provision of blankets/warm clothing and hot drinks is to be considered during cold weather incidents.

LIAISON WITH EMERGENCY SERVICES

19. The CIMT is to be prepared to liaise with emergency services at their Incident Control Point (ICP) in coordinating their effort to control the situation.

INCIDENT CLOSURE

20. Once the emergency services have declared buildings safe, pupils may return to their work under supervision. In the case of a serious incident, the CIMT will have to consider the option of total or partial school closure until alternative accommodation can be provided.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES – INTRUSION

INTRODUCTION

1. The potential for an intruder to threaten the School's pupils and staff cannot be ignored. It is an open site, largely with uncontrolled access, and all staff must have a clear understanding of the threat and the best way to safeguard their pupils and themselves. The characteristic of intrusion can best be defined as the unsolicited entry to a school building by one or more with irrational intent.

2. Whether an intruder is armed or not, it is likely to take place by one who is either confused, deranged or intoxicated, or possibly demonstrating all three characteristics. Clearly the aim is to make sure that pupils are protected from excessive behaviour which could possibly lead to violence. To achieve this, the intruder needs to be either persuaded to leave the room voluntarily, or failing persuasion, under escort.

DEALING WITH AN INTRUDER

3. Despite their displaying symptoms of a worrying psychological condition, most intruders will respond to quiet and calm reason, and to gentle persuasion. No attempt should be made by the teacher or by pupils to use force, and indeed all the intruder's demands should be followed where possible. The aim is to avoid antagonising a volatile situation. Particularly in intimidating circumstances, the teacher should try to re-establish their leadership role within the class. This will give confidence to frightened pupils and will provide the intruder with a focus for communication.

4. If the situation is likely to become protracted, clearly help must be summoned. Until appropriate technological improvements can be made to classrooms, this could be done by finding a suitable excuse for a responsible pupil to leave the room, to warn not only classes in near proximity but also Reception.

5. **Lockdown.** If it is considered necessary the School's lockdown process will be started. The instruction is for all pupils and staff to remain in their current location and to secure doors and windows. Walkie talkies will be used to communicate between SLT members managing the situation, until control is handed over to the authorities.

6. **Isolation and Evacuation.** It is important for the intruder to be isolated, thus once Reception becomes aware of the situation, arrangements will be made to warn all other classes; the evacuation of all buildings should take place quietly and quickly, without the sounding of any alarms. As for fire evacuation, assembly is to be as detailed in the Fire Procedures.

7. **Dispersal.** Once a register roll call has been made by the Head or a representative, and all have been accounted for, further dispersal to evacuate the School site must take place as quickly as possible. Although the situation may demand some flexibility, the most likely dispersal route is via the Main Drive to a suitable location where pupils and staff should be held until parents or guardians can collect them. Reception must be prepared to warn parents of the situation to notify them of the selected location. If the situation warrants it, all staff must evacuate the site, with the exception of a skeleton management team (Head, Bursar, and Estate Manager) to co-ordinate activities with the authorities. They should initially base themselves in a building which is both secure and has good communications.

8. **Armed Intrusion.** In the case of armed intrusion, once the majority of pupils and staff have been evacuated from the site, the Police will control the situation, which could conceivably now involve some pupils and staff as hostages.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES – ROAD TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS

1. Any teacher or driver in charge of a minibus should follow some basic rules, in case of an accident that causes damage either to the minibus or to another's vehicle or to both. These are:
 - If you can, immediately pull off the road at a safe place that avoids obstructing other traffic and turn on the 4-way hazard-warning flashers.
 - Disembark your passengers to a safe distance away from both the road and the vehicle, under the supervision of another.
 - Place warning triangles a distance to the front and rear of the vehicle.
 - If recovery is required, telephone (number in minibus) and ask for assistance.
 - Obtain details of the all drivers and vehicles involved (driver's name and address, vehicle registration number, vehicle type, model and colour, insurance company and policy number). Note the actual location and time of the accident and draw a sketch map of the road layout.
 - Try also to obtain witness names and addresses.

PASSAGE OF INFORMATION

2. It is, of course, imperative that the School is informed about the accident at the earliest opportunity, not only to offer assistance by organising relief transport, but also by informing parents and Next of Kin of those involved. Teachers or drivers in charge should follow the information guidelines contained at paragraph 7 of the main document.

DEALING WITH CASUALTIES

3. It is a requirement of the Road Traffic Act that all injuries, however light they may at first appear, must be reported to the Police as soon as possible and no later than 24 hours after the incident. This should be done either by the teacher or driver in charge, or by Reception, and this action is to be coordinated between the two.
4. Light injuries may be attended to by the teacher or driver in charge, provided they feel competent to do so, by using the vehicle's First Aid kit. Advice may be sought from the School Nurse by telephone, for example.
5. More serious injuries may require hospital treatment, and teachers or drivers in charge should call for ambulance assistance, if the Police have not already done so, by dialling 999.
6. Once again, this is to be coordinated with the School Office to prevent any duplication of effort. Those in charge must make sure they find out the name of the hospital where the injured are to be taken. This is then to be passed to the School so that parents can be kept informed.
7. If fatalities are involved, the Police will take full control of the situation, and teachers or drivers in charge should follow their further instructions.

ACCIDENTS ABROAD

8. Procedures to be followed in the case of an accident occurring whilst abroad will be similar to those above. Communication with the School may be more difficult, but every urgent effort is to be made to find a channel of communication with the School Office during normal hours, or with either the Head or Bursar during silent hours. Serious accidents should also be reported to the nearest British Consular office, whose local knowledge and advice will be invaluable.

9. The repatriation of any dead and injured will be coordinated by the CIMT in conjunction with the Foreign Office. The CIMT will probably wish to send a member of staff from the School to the accident site to help co-ordinate such matters.

10. Teachers in charge should ensure that reserve cash funds are accessible to deal with emergency accommodation and feeding requirements, and other related issues.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES – ILLNESS

INTRODUCTION

1. The potential for illness to interrupt the School's activities needs to be considered. A relatively large number of children, many of them boarding have the potential for an epidemic to occur. The School, as part of its Duty of Care to pupils, ensures as best it can that its pupils are protected as far as reasonably practicable from illness that could develop into an epidemic. Medical forms, completed by parents, assist in establishing what immunisation has been carried out and what potential risks there may be. Nevertheless, an outbreak that spreads through the School rapidly must be considered.

2. Clearly in the early stages, before it is established that a Critical Incident is occurring the illness will be approached in the usual way with treatment by the School Nurse and School Doctor and the Health Centre used.

DEALING WITH AN EPIDEMIC

3. When it becomes apparent that an outbreak of illness, in excess of a 'normal' situation is occurring, the CIMT will be involved and the CIMT, with appropriate co-opted members will handle the situation. The School Nurse will play a pivotal role as the School's medically qualified person and will, assisted by the School Doctor, keep the CIMT apprised of the medical implications as time progresses.

4. **Notification to Authorities.** Certain illnesses and diseases are required to be reported to the authorities. Where notification to the medical authorities is required, this will be carried out by the Lead School Nurse. Where notification is required under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995 is required, this will be carried out by Bursar.

5. **Isolation and Quarantine.** Guidance will be sought from the medical authorities and School Doctor as to the correct course of action with respect to Isolation and Quarantine. Temporary areas will be established as required in the Health Centre and dormitories, if necessary, to confine pupils and staff to specific areas. Where appropriate, people will be transferred to hospital if the situation dictates.

6. **School Closure.** In event of a severe situation, the CIMT will review the need for the School to close temporarily while any epidemic is brought under control. Additionally the CIMT will review the possibility of closing sections of the School and requesting that parents keep day children at home until the position becomes clear.

7. **Communication.** Parents will be kept informed of the situation to ensure that they are fully apprised as things develop. Consideration of daily bulletins will be made particularly when things are developing quickly. Epidemics tend to follow a 'normal distribution' type of curve whereby in the first phase the start is slow and then in the second phase numbers rise to a peak and in the third phase die down as things are brought under control.

8. **Incident Closure.** The CIMT will establish when the incident is closed following advice from the medical authorities. A post incident report will be organised to establish the cause of the incident and to learn lessons with a view to preventing a recurrence.

9. **Return to Normal.** The School will be able to return to normal following the closure of the incident. Though a Recovery Plan may be required, for instance including need for full cleaning and disinfection of areas of the School.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES – OFF SITE ACTIVITIES

INTRODUCTION

1. Detailed instructions for staff leading parties off-site for School outings are contained in the document Educational Visits Policy. This short brief outlines the main procedures to consider in the case of an emergency.

PLANNING

2. **Risk Assessment.** A risk assessment must be carried out prior to each trip off-site. Organisers are to consider the risks of transport to and from the destination, the risks associated with all activities being conducted, the qualifications of instructing staff, and risks posed by accommodation and site's facilities, for example. Most organised sites with "tailor-made" activities will have their own risk assessments; staff should satisfy themselves that these exist, and that a copy is available.

3. **Communication.** Staff should carry with them at all times, a list of relevant telephone numbers in case of an emergency – a list can be found at Appendix 6. Mobile telephones are to be carried by all staff involved in activities.

4. **Medical.** Staff should make sure that they are aware of the location of the nearest hospital or clinic, and routes to it. Parties undertaking physical activities should make sure that a qualified First Aider is immediately available.

5. **Qualifications.** The Head will decide whether staff are suitably qualified to conduct the activities planned.

IMMEDIATE ACTION

As soon as an incident occurs, the teacher in charge of the group should:

- Administer First Aid to those injured, and ensure that all others are supervised and sheltered whilst awaiting further instructions.
- If no site instructor is available, telephone the site main office to organise an ambulance, and police if necessary.
- On a self-help outing, directly telephone for medical assistance and police as required.
- Telephone the School to inform the Head of the incident (see paragraph 7 of this document's main policy) and in conjunction with the School Office to organise the passage of information to parents and relevant staff.
- Organise the return of those uninjured to the site or main base of the outing.
- Remain with any injured persons until medical assistance has arrived.

FOLLOW UP ACTION

6. Teachers in charge should ensure that:

- The emotional effects of the incident on all children and staff are fully considered. (See paragraph 11 of the main document).
- Focal point communication is rapidly established. (See paragraph 8).
- Unless authorised by the CIMT, press interviews and photos should be avoided.
- Where appropriate, evidence should be gathered. (See paragraph 10).

EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE CONTACTS LIST

Contact	Land Line	Mobile
School Staff		
Headmaster – Rob Stewart		07789 304813
Bursar – Paola Bright	01494 873195	07443 851706
Deputy Head Teaching & Learning – Melanie Lewis		07447 947793
Head of Boarding and Pastoral – Jade Vidler		07927795110
Head of Lower School – Laura Wowk		07875 597588
Houseparent Horris Wood – Joely VAN Zyl	01635 580675	07903729880
Houseparent– Horris Hill – Amy Rutheford	01635 39582	07481892706
Estate Manager – Stephen Burn		07713 470460
Maintenance – Ian Derbyshire		07557 771585
School Nurse – Mark Hale		07500 874627
Head Grounds Man – Steve Ham	07541 344242	07512 790465
Head Chef - Stacey Wilette		
Proprietor – John Forsyth		07780 816294
Emergency Services		
Emergency Ambulance	999 or 112	
Police	101	
Fire Service	999	
Doctor – Dr Badham, Eastfield House Practice	01635 41495	
Hospitals		
• Basingstoke & North Hampshire	01256 473202	
• Royal Berks Hospital	0118 3225111	
• Hampshire Clinic	01256 357111	
• West Berks Community Hospital	01635 273300	
• Berks Independent Hospital	01189 560056	
Dentist - Briars	01635 40311	
Chemist – Wash Common	01635 35033	
Utilities		
Boiler Breakdown (Gas & Oil) – F G Alden Ltd	01865 855000	
Boilers – Main school building - Anchor	01962 844488	
LPG Gas Supplier – Calor Gas - Acct No: 42126100	0345 766 1111	
LPG Gas Leak – Calor Gas	0345 744 4999	
LPG Gas Breakdown – Calor Force – Acct No: 83572361	0345 744 4999	
Heating Oil Supplier – Ford Fuel Oil	01488 72929	
Electricity Suppliers – SSE - Power Cuts	105	
Electricity Suppliers – EDF - Power Cuts	0800 111 999	
Water – Southern Water	0330 303 0368	
Fire Alarms – Premier Fire	02380 696550	07786 564888
IT Servers – Softegg	0118 936 0080	
Telephone – Southern Communications	0800 090 1965	
Laundry/Dishwasher - JLA	01422 822282	

Electrical – White Horse	01367 218004	07833 097939/07557 400512
Children’s Agencies		
Care Quality Commission (CQC)	03000 616161	
Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)– Hampshire County Council	01962 876364	
Hampshire Partnership Team	01962 876355	
Social Care office Hours	0300 5551384	
Social Care Out of Hours	0300 5551373	
Social Care professional line	01329225379	
Health & Safety		
Health & Safety Executive (HSE)	Website only	
Health & Safety Consultant – John Watson		07702 736634
Other Contacts		
Bankers - Santander		
Insurance Adviser – Towergate – Rachele Kensall	01438 587730	07557 058489
Local Paper – Newbury Weekly News	01635 550444	
Other Local Schools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cheam • Elstree • St Gabriel’s • Thorngrove 	01635 268242 01189 713302 01635 555680 01635 253172	
Portable Classroom Supplier <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Portable Offices (Hire or Buy) • Portakabin 	0800 0329720 0333 696 9187	
Coach Hire – Aldermaston	0118 971 3257	
Coach Hire – Baileys	01635 203005	07808 514744
Coach Hire – Weavaway Travel	01635 820028	

DEALING WITH THE MEDIA

INTRODUCTION

1. Any serious incident at School or off-site is highly likely to attract the attention of local and perhaps national media. The School and its competency in dealing with the incident will be portrayed to the public in a widespread and graphic manner. Public opinion will be formed as a result of an interview which could have a broadcast time as little as 30 seconds, and the School must be prepared to deliver a confident and positive message in that short space of time. This requires training and familiarity with the workings of the media - it is too easy for the unprepared to be caught out by sensational interviewers resulting in the wrong signals about the School and the incident being sent.

LIAISON

2. The attention of the media, particularly in a serious and drawn out incident, may well become intrusive, and the CIMT will need to control this aspect of accessibility, by the appointment of a Press Liaison Officer (PLO) from within the School, who will be responsible for coordinating the outflow of information, dealing with media requests, and controlling their activities on site. The PLO will become a co-opted member of the CIMT. Being the primary point of contact with the media, he or she should carry a mobile telephone and, particularly during the height of the incident, should be free of other responsibilities. The PLO may not be authorised to give information, except statements prepared by the CIMT. The co-ordination of interview requests will be conducted by the PLO.

THE PUBLIC FACE OF THE SCHOOL

3. Having agreed a statement or text with the CIMT, the primary face of The School should be the Head who will normally front formal interviews. The CIMT will identify the spokesperson.

4. If control of the media on site by the PLO, and possibly by the Police, has been tight, the media are very likely to target staff, parents and pupils at their homes. Although the School can exercise very little control over such situations, it is important that all concerned are given swift, clear guidance about the facts of the incident, together with the name of the PLO, so that the CIMT is made aware of proposed interviews and can, if necessary, update information. This can be achieved by the sending of an information letter as soon as the incident occurs, which should also include the name of the PLO, and by the regular briefings of parents, staff and pupils.

5. Should members of staff and pupils be interviewed either on or off site there are some general "do's" and "don'ts" to be considered:

Do's

- Do respond to factual and objective questions (what and when, for example)
- Do be as positive as the situation will allow - praise those involved, for example.
- Do remember that the interview airtime will be short and that the interview is likely to be heavily edited, therefore think about the main messages to get across in a speedy and succinct way, and ensure that this is achieved.
- Do think about the effect of the message on pupils, colleagues, parents and potential parents.
- Do, within reason, choose a suitable time for interview.
- Do be careful of the visual image that TV companies may wish to portray, and if it is inappropriate, select a more suitable background and location.
- Do prepare and rehearse a message with the mutual agreement of the CIMT.

Don'ts

- Don't respond to subjective questions, such as why and how.
- Don't speculate.
- Don't bluff. If you don't know the answer, merely say that "that is still being investigated", for example.
- Don't make "off-the-record" statements.
- Don't make excuses or blame others.
- Don't respond to unsubstantiated quotes ("it has been said that...").
- Don't be lead ("would you agree that...").

CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM (CIMT)

ROLE

1. The CIMT's role is to provide leadership and direction before, during and after critical incidents.

COMPOSITION

2. **Core Members.** Core members of the CIMT are:
 - The Head
 - The Bursar
 - The Deputy Head
3. **Deputies.** Core members are required to nominate deputies and should advise the School Office and their deputies when travelling abroad or otherwise out of contact.
4. **Contacts List.** A contacts list is at Appendix 6 to Annex A.

DECISION ON FORMATION

5. The Head, Bursar and the Deputy Head will discuss, the effect of an incident upon the School's viability, morale and/or reputation, and they will decide on whether it should be considered "critical" or not. The Chairman of Governors, or nominated deputy, must be informed if an incident is deemed to be critical.
6. As soon as an incident is considered "critical", the Head is to convene a meeting of the core CIMT without delay. Selected co-opted members may thereafter be appointed and invited to attend meetings as necessary. The Head will generally lead the CIMT, though the Bursar may initially lead the onsite response.

FUNCTION OF CIMT

7. **The Incident.** During an incident, the CIMT will wish to consider:
 - The preservation of life and the prevention of further harm to those who have been, or could be, affected by the incident.
 - Liaison with local authorities including the emergency services.
 - The full effect of the incident on the functioning of the School, and whether or not it can remain immediately open.
 - Accurate information gathering.
 - Resources required to deal with the incident (people, equipment, consultants, contractors).
 - Timely and continual communication to parents, pupils and staff
 - Handling human reaction.
 - A media response and a PR line to take.
 - The preservation and, if appropriate, the collection of evidence.
 - Returning to business as usual as soon as possible.

8. **Post-Incident.** After an incident has closed, the CIMT should take time to consider lessons learnt and take the appropriate action.

9. **Planning.** The CIMT will meet at least once a year to review the relevance of the policy document and its procedures, to recommend amendments and to ensure that the message is delivered satisfactorily to those who need to be aware. The CIMT may consider that this can best be conducted through seminar and practical exercise.

PROCEDURES

10. **Protracted Incidents.** During protracted incidents or during intense phases, the operations room (see paragraph 13 below) may require constant manning. Actions taken during such a period are to be recorded by individual members on log sheets.

11. **Information.** Information is to be passed to the operations room from the School Office which will become the main communications centre.

ADMINISTRATION

12. **Location.** Assuming that it is available and secure, the CIMT will meet in the Headmaster's Study which will be converted into an operations and planning room for the duration of an incident.

13. **Accommodation.** In the case of a protracted incident or during an intense phase of it the Bursar should be prepared to arrange temporary accommodation for visiting members of the CIMT.

14. **Feeding.** The kitchen should be prepared to provide meals as the situation demands for the CIMT and others involved.

SUPPORT AGENCIES

- **CRUSE**

CRUSE is a national organisation for the widowed and their children:

Cruse House
Union House,
7 Union Street
Andover
Hants SP10 1PA

Helpline: 0808 808 1677

- **TOGETHER FOR SHORT LIVES**

Together for Short Lives is a leading UK charity offering help and support to children and their families:

New Bond House,
Bond Street,
Bristol,
BS2 9AG

0117 989 7820
Helpline: 0808 8088 100

- **CHILD DEATH HELPLINE**

0800 282 986 or 0808 800 6019
(Evenings: 7:00p.m. to 10:00p.m.
Monday to Friday mornings: 10:00a.m. to 1:00p.m.
Tuesday and Wednesday afternoons: 1:00p.m. to 4:00p.m.)

- **TCF (COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS)**

TCF is a nationwide self-help organisation for bereaved parents:

53 North Street
BRISTOL
BS3 1EN

0345 120 3785
Helpline: 0345 123 2304