

Critical Incident Policy 2020



LONDON EAST ACADEMY & AL MIZAN SCHOOL

ISLAMIC SECONDARY SCHOOL FOR BOYS & ISLAMIC JUNIOR SCHOOL

Date agreed	Chair of Governing Body	Head Teacher	Review
September 2020	Hussain Shefaar	Askor Ali	September 2021

1. RATIONALE

A critical incident policy is essential if the school is ever faced with a serious incident which required a swift and effective reaction to meet the needs of all stakeholders in a rapidly developing situation. This policy sets out the responsibilities of each member of the response team.

Definition – what is a critical incident?

"An event or events, usually sudden, which involve the experience of significant personal distress to a level which potentially overwhelms normal responses, procedures, and coping strategies and which is likely to have emotional and organisational consequences"

Examples

In school :

The death of a student or a member of staff through natural causes, such

1. as illness.
2. a traffic accident involving a student or member of staff
3. a deliberate act of violence, such as knifing or the use of a firearm
4. a school fire or an explosion in a laboratory

Out of school:

1. deaths or injuries on school journeys
2. tragedies involving children from many schools
3. civil disturbances
4. refugee children joining a school

Effects

The effects of a critical or traumatic incident on a child can be wide ranging and can impinge upon his or her family, other children [particularly those close to the child or the incident, or who may be emotionally vulnerable themselves] and upon the staff the school.

On children

The potential effects of a traumatic incident upon children are significant. They might include: recurrent dreams of the event; feeling as if the event is recurring; sleep disturbance; guilt about surviving; diminished interest in significant activities; feelings of detachment; exaggerated startle response; memory impairment; trouble concentrating; disturbing images and memories of the event; avoidance of activities which recall the event. The reactions of the child will be influenced by his or her developmental stage, and may range from separation anxiety in the very young, apparent indifference in young children, to feelings of guilt or revenge in older children.

On the School Community

The effects upon the school community of a traumatic event, whether occurring at the school, or involving students away from the school environment, can be profound, disruptive and long lasting. The immediate impact may involve shock, particularly to those who witnessed the event, disruption of the timetable, new responsibilities for staff in supporting children and informing their parents, and communication difficulties. After the event there may be continuing need to support and monitor students who have been affected and to support staff. The consequences for a school may last for a year or more and involve the students, staff and governors.

2. PURPOSES

- To ensure that swift and appropriate action is taken the moment the school is made aware that a critical incident has occurred.
- To provide accurate information effectively to staff; students; parents; governors and LEA and Al Mizan.
- To offer sensitive, non-intrusive support in the short and medium term to all those affected directly or indirectly by what has happened.
- To maintain as far as possible the normal routines of school life so as to offer a secure framework of continuities to all students

The guidance notes that follow are to help the school manage a critical incident. Not all of the actions described will be needed. The Critical Incident Management Team [CIMT] will decide how much of what follows will be followed when they have their first briefing meeting as described below. A second assumption in this advice is that the school is in session. If the critical incident occurs outside school hours, the LT member of staff on duty should decide how much of what follows should be implemented. These notes assume that the emergency services have been called as necessary.

3. GUIDELINES & RESPONSIBILITIES

The Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)

- Team members to be members of SMT. One member of SMT to take responsibility for the school while the CIMT is working. All SMT (CIMT) lessons to be covered until further notice from the Headteacher.
- The CIMT to be based in the Headteacher's office
- SMT member i/c of the school to be based in own offices
- All incoming calls from relatives or the LEA/Al Mizan related to the critical incident to be passed to who will work to advice from the CIMT.
- All incoming press calls referred to Headteacher
- All incoming calls not related to the incident to be managed by the main office.

- Office staff to manage incoming calls and route all critical incident calls to the Headteacher.
- School Administrator to work on reception to deal with personal. A member of the CIMT to join the staff as soon as possible to deal with enquiries relating to the critical incident. CIMT member to decide on room use for personal enquiries - Interview Room and the Meetings Room for small groups. Main hall of the school in the 1st floor of LMC to be used for larger groups.

Action to be taken within hours

Collect Information

This to be done by the Headteacher or the most senior member of the SLT present. The information required will be:

- what has happened ?
- where and when ?
- name and contact number of an adult at the incident site
- extent of injuries, number and names
- location of injured, name and contact number of adult present
- location of uninjured, name and contact number of adult present
- what immediate help if any is required from the school ?
- who has been informed ?
- what has been said ?

Brief CIMT

This to be done by the Headteacher or the most senior member of the SMT present. Briefing to cover:

- the incident
- action to be taken immediately
- responsibilities of members of the CIMT

Communication

With the LEA and Al Mizan

Contact to be made with Adviser with responsibility for independent schools or an officer - briefing on incident/advice/help sought as agreed at CIMT briefing [Headteacher responsible].

- Number for separate incoming line to Headteacher's office given.
- Contact to school office - statement emailed/faxed by CIMT member responsible.

With the Governors

Contact to be made with the Chair and Vice Chair of Governors - they should in turn brief all other Governors.

With Families Directly Affected

This will be the responsibility of the CIMT - either one or two members depending on the number of contact needed. In the CIMT file there will be hard copy of all telephone numbers and addresses for staff and students. This must be updated half-termly by School Administrator. Before the first contact is made, the CIMT will prepare as follows :

- brief the member[s] of staff making the contact rehearsing the message first
- remember to take careful note of those parents who still need to be informed so that those who already know are not made contact with unnecessarily
- offer help/advice with the arrangement of transport
- check that parents are not left alone in distress, perhaps making suggestions for making contact with relatives or neighbours offer useful phone numbers, either for support or for more information - for example the emergency disaster number if one has been given or the hospital number It may be appropriate for parents to come into school to be ready for further information. Some people are likely to need immediate emotional support. The CIMT should decide on this at their briefing meeting and request such from the LEA/AI Mizan or mobilise the school's own resources.

With Students and Staff Directly Affected

Students and staff who were involved in or witnessed the incident should be identified quickly as they may require higher levels of support. The CIMT to decide on appropriate support – this could involve staff who have had counselling training or LEA similarly trained staff.

With Staff Not Directly Involved

Staff should be informed as soon as possible. Preferably, this will be at specially convened staff meeting. Advice should be given on managing the students and on media enquiries. Staff are most likely to be asked if they will brief other students in the school. Staff should be able to decline this task if they feel unable to do so. The CIMT should be sensitive to the problem particular staff may have with the incident and should ensure that support is available for these staff.

With Students Not Directly Involved

This should be done in the smallest groups possible - classes, tutor groups. Students' questions should be answered as straightforwardly as possible. Staff who undertake this task should be told to pass on facts only and never to speculate on the causes of the crisis or its consequences. Where questions cannot be answered at the time, that should be said.

With Families Not Directly Involved

The CIMT should consider preparing a letter to all parents of students in the school. This letter should explain what has happened and let parents know that

their children may be distressed. If there is any possibility of legal liability or police action, the LEA and Al Mizan personnel section should be contacted before the school issues information to parents. A letter may be sufficient, but the CIMT should also consider whether the school should call a meeting at a future date - this may be appropriate if the incident was one which would generate concern about some aspect of the school's organisation.

What happens next depends on the nature of the incident. The CIMT should meet after steps 1-3 have been followed and decide on their next priorities. Matters to consider are:

- Support needed in following days for students, their parents and staff
- Media Management
- Timetable for the next day

Action to be taken in the following days/months

The school will need to consider the following :

Information about the incident

In the days following a critical incident all members of the school community will need to be provided with more information about the incident. Some may need to be formally debriefed and the school should consult the appropriate authority about when these staff and students can be given further information. It is important that students, staff and parents know what support is available to them. Consideration should be given to support needed by the CIMT following their work in the first hours after the incident. The media will also require further information - this should be arranged through Schools Office – LMC media officer could be asked to get involved.

An explicit acknowledgement of the incident

The school should be aware that the stress resulting from the incident may affect staff, students and their families. In particular the school should recognise the effect on emotionally vulnerable children. It is to be expected that both staff and students will have problems concentrating on work.

Opportunities to talk through personal reactions

Whilst the school's aim should be return to normality as quickly as possible, it should also encourage children and staff to talk about their feelings. Some children and staff will need counselling as part of a group, others may need one to one counselling by trained staff. If outside professionals are to be used, the school should secure parental permission. Although this is listed as a short term activity, the school should recognise that some people will need support for a considerable time.

Formal and informal recognition and rituals

These will vary according to the incident, but might include:

- writing to the families concerned
- visiting injured students/staff in hospital
- attendance at funerals - if welcome
- special assemblies/memorial services
- anniversaries should be recognised as sensitive times and
- schools should plan that these are planned for and handled with care

Re-establishing normal routines

Continuity is important for both staff and students. The normal day and routines should be re-established as quickly as possible. School closure should be avoided if at all possible.

Return to school by students/staff directly affected

The school should consider how re-entry should be managed. The staff/students are likely to need significant support to reintegrate back into school life

Critical Incident Management Strategy – When the School is not in session

When the school is not in session, different arrangements to those described above will apply.

During Term Time The Headteacher or the most senior member of the LT available should arrange for the SLT to meet as soon as notified of the critical incident. The strategy will then follow the steps outlined above as if the school was in session.

During School Holidays

The Headteacher will arrange an SMT duty rota ahead of all school holidays. This will be published to all staff and to the Chair and Vice Chair of Governors. The member of the SMT who is on call does not need to be on site but should be within 1 hour's driving distance of the school. Their responsibility will be to respond appropriately following the strategy outlined above. They would most probably call together all available members of the SMT to assist. The School office will be on duty during office hours throughout the school holidays and will also maintain a record of those who might be called to assist in the event of an incident. The schools' office is responsible for the maintenance of the data record that allows the school to contact staff, parents and students.