**Managing Critical Incidents Policy.**

**(Guidelines for school on how to respond to a sudden serious incident affecting a** **member of the school community).**

***Introduction***

Every school is unique and has a distinct ethos and culture. These guidelines have been drawn up to assist the Principal and School Staff who are faced with the sudden unexpected death of/serious incident affecting a student or member of the wider school community. They are not comprehensive, but hopefully will assist in the management of a critical incident.

This policy applies to events which occur off the school site as well as on site.

All teachers & classroom assistants will keep the numbers of the school mobile (07715647160) as well as the numbers listed in appendix A stored on their personal mobile phones.

The agreement of the relevant Governors has been received.

***Immediate Steps in the event of a Critical Incident***

The following are steps to consider immediately upon hearing of a Critical Incident and are not in any order of precedence.

The Principal, members of staff & Board of Governors should take time to work out what steps will be appropriate in their particular circumstances and should aim to implement these steps efficiently and sensitively. Obtain as much **factual** information about the death as possible. This step is important as it will determine what is to be told to the pupils and how it should be told. Having factual information concerning the tragedy will prove useful in countering misinformation among pupils concerning the manner of the young person’s death, which can contribute to an atmosphere of hysteria. At all stages, the rights of an individual &/or their family to privacy must be respected. E.g. great care should be taken not to use the term ‘suicide’ until it has been established categorically that a death was as a result of suicide.

***1.The school routine in the immediate aftermath of an incident.***

The school community should be informed of the incident at the earliest possible opportunity. In a relatively small local area, many pupils and teachers will already have heard shocking or distressing news prior to coming to school.

If school is open or due to open, pupils & where possible parents need to be informed as quickly as possible (e.g pupils brought together for an announcement (see 3 below). Principal meets parents at the front door/gate and children are looked after with peers by familiar adults)

In the event of an incident occurring overnight, a weekend or holiday period, the school will contact families by phone to inform them and outline what support is available, should it be required.

When pupils return to school, there will be time allocated in assembly and in class initially to allow reflection and discussion together in a supportive environment. Stories may be used to approach the topic (e.g. “Badger’s Parting Gifts” in the event of a death). Further activities/events/resources will be provided, for individuals, small groups or the whole school, depending on the specifics of an incident and the children’s reactions both in the immediate aftermath and in the longer term.

Staff and parents will be made aware of any relevant support services which are available for them.

***2. Decide on the school routine for the immediate future***

The Principal and members of the school staff, in consultation with the Board of Governors &/or EA, should discuss and decide on a routine for the school to follow for the remainder of the day/week. In the event of a death, this will naturally extend up to the time of the burial.

This routine will reflect the decisions procedure for informing classmates and the wider school community including the role of the principal, class teacher, arrangements for external assistance for pupils from the Personal Development Services, other relevant school staff, Chair of Board of Governors.

In the event of a death, it will also reflect decisions taken concerning closure of the school &/or participation of staff/pupils in church services.

**In the event of a death:**

**a.**

***Decide on whether the school will remain open or closed***

Whether the school will remain open or will close as a mark of respect to the bereaved family will depend on the judgement of Principal, Chair of the Board of Governors following consultation with the school staff. If the decision is to close the school, it is advisable to do so **ONLY** after informing the pupils of the Pupil’s death and of the routine which the school will follow over the coming days. Parents should be formally notified of the school closure.

***b. Decide on the arrangements for the participation of pupils in church services.***

These decisions would be made by the board of Governors & staff in consultation with the bereaved family & pupils’ families.

***3. Informing the school community*** Principal should inform as many teachers as possible upon their arrival at the school and then proceed to the affected pupil/s class/es. The principal should be prepared to spend a reasonable amount of time with the students to allow them to react to the news. Class teacher/s and if possible EA support staff will be available if anyone wishes to speak to them individually.

***4. Decide on a strategy for dealing with the media***

It is likely that the local media will be interested in the event of sudden death. It is advisable that principals and school staffs be prepared for every eventuality and accordingly devise a strategy for handling media enquiries. Such a strategy is essential to protect the privacy of the bereaved family and to ensure that this trauma is not added to by speculative media stories. It is also important that the school and members of the teaching staff do not become embroiled in media commentary concerning the death. It is recommended that a simple statement be prepared, expressing the sorrow of the entire school community at the sudden death of one of their members and extending sympathy to the bereaved family.

This statement should be adhered to and not elaborated on in all communications with the media and should be familiar to every member of the school staff. It will also be advisable to remind students, staff & Governors that innocent remarks to the media concerning the death of their peer could be misconstrued and could lead to considerable distress for individual students and for the bereaved family.

***5. Consider the counselling services which may be required in the school.***

Consideration should be given to counselling services which may be required by pupils and teachers in the aftermath of the pupil’s death. The Principal should discuss this matter with the Pupil and Personal Development Advisor at EA and the Chair of the Board of Governors.

***6. Visit the family of the deceased.***

As leader of the school community, it is appropriate that the principal (& some or all staff as appropriate to that context) visit the family of the deceased at the earliest opportunity. Everyone should be prepared for the fact that this visit will be difficult as the family will inevitably be distressed. Time & support should be available for school staff to debrief if they wish after such a visit.

***7. Issues for Consideration in the Long Term***

In the weeks following an incident, a concentrated effort should be made by the principal and the teaching staff to return to the normal school routine. At the same time, it may be appropriate to decide to initiate a review of aspects of school policies and that all staff are given encouragement to contribute to the review process.

***8. Review of school’s response to Critical Incident***

The Principal and staff should meet to analyse their response in the aftermath of the incident. Consideration should be given to monitoring and assisting the pupils who are considered to be particularly affected by the incident.

**9. Pupil Support** The pupils will continue with the PDMU programme providing them with information and by developing their self-esteem and their sense of self-worth so that they are empowered to take decisions which will contribute to their long term physical and mental health. Advice will be available from the Pupil Personal Development Service on issues such as mental health.

***10. Review of home-school community relationships***

The development of good communications with parents and responding to the needs of a local community are increasingly part of the school’s role. In the aftermath of a tragic event such as the sudden unexpected death of a student, it is important to consider the school’s relationship with the broader community particularly in terms of the quality of its communications with parents and the degree of familiarity of parents with the school services and policies. Parents also need to be reassured that the school is a caring place where the teachers are responsive to pupils needs and are concerned about pupil’s welfare in the broadest sense.

***11. Staff contact details***

All school staff will be required to complete a contact details form for themselves in order that, should they personally be involved in a serious incident, their next of kin can be informed. (see Appendix)

These documents will be kept, in a separate file from pupil contact details, in the same drawer of the locked filing cabinet in the office. These are to be treated as **confidential**, only to be used in the event of an emergency and will be returned to staff in the event of them leaving their post. Staff have agreed.

***The Critical Incident Policy will be amended and updated on a regular basis to meet the needs of an ever changing and developing school.***

Policy adopted by Board of Governors: January 2019

Policy review date: August 2020