

Critical Incident Policy

The Eden School



Introduction

Approved by:	The Board of Governors	Date: 31 st of August 2024
Last reviewed on:	1 st September 2024	
Next review due by:	1 st August 2025	

Introduction

A **Critical Incident** refers to an unforeseen event that has the potential to cause trauma and disruption within the school community. Such incidents may arise on or off the school premises and may have severe consequences for pupils, staff, parents/carers, and the broader community. **The Eden School** acknowledges the importance of having a robust, well-structured, and effective response plan to mitigate the impact of such incidents.

The purpose of this policy is to outline clear procedures and strategies to ensure the school community can respond swiftly and effectively to a critical incident, safeguard the welfare of all stakeholders, and minimise disruption to teaching and learning.

Objectives

The objectives of this policy are as follows:

1. **Immediate Response:** To provide a framework for a timely and coordinated response to critical incidents.
2. **Welfare of Pupils and Staff:** To ensure the emotional, psychological, and physical safety of pupils, staff, and the school community.
3. **Effective Communication:** To establish protocols for clear and accurate communication with stakeholders, including parents, emergency services, and the media.
4. **Business Continuity:** To have contingency plans in place to ensure continuity of education and minimise disruption.
5. **Post-Incident Support:** To offer long-term emotional support for those affected by the incident, ensuring a smooth return to normality.
6. **Compliance:** To ensure all responses to critical incidents are in line with statutory safeguarding requirements, health and safety legislation, and Department for Education (DfE) guidance.

Scope

This policy applies to **all members of The Eden School community**, including pupils, staff, parents, governors, visitors, and contractors. It covers all types of potential critical incidents, including but not limited to:

On-Site Incidents:

- Death or serious injury of a pupil, staff member, or visitor.
- Fire, explosion, or hazardous environmental incident.
- Acts of violence, including armed intruders or terrorist threats.
- Structural damage to the building, leading to immediate safety concerns.

Off-Site Incidents:

- Death or serious injury during an off-site trip.
- Significant road traffic accidents involving staff or pupils.
- Natural disasters affecting staff or pupils outside school grounds.

Other Incidents:

- Public health emergencies (e.g., pandemics).
- Severe weather events (e.g., floods, extreme heat, or storms).
- Major cyber incidents or data breaches.
- Any event requiring school closure or evacuation.

Roles and Responsibilities

Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)

The **CIMT** is responsible for the strategic and operational response to critical incidents. Members include:

- **Headteacher:** Overall leadership and decision-making responsibility.
- **Deputy Headteacher:** Operational oversight and delegation.
- **School Chaplain:** Emotional and spiritual support to staff and pupils.
- **Business Manager:** Liaison with external agencies, insurers, and emergency services.
- **Site Manager:** Management of physical school site, building safety, and evacuations.
- **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL):** Ensure safeguarding protocols are followed.
- **Communication Officer:** Handle all media and external communication.

Role of the Headteacher:

- Ensure the school's critical incident response is enacted effectively.
- Liaise with emergency services and relevant local authorities.
- Initiate communication with staff, parents, governors, and external agencies.

Role of the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL):

- Ensure the safeguarding of pupils throughout the incident.
- Identify vulnerable pupils and arrange for appropriate emotional support.

Role of the Business Manager:

- Coordinate practical arrangements such as site safety, temporary facilities, and insurance claims.

- Ensure the school maintains a detailed record of all activities during the critical incident.

Role of the Communication Officer:

- Act as the media spokesperson and manage all external communications.
- Prepare statements and updates for parents and staff.

Critical Incident Response Procedures

Initial Response

1. **Notification:** All incidents should be reported immediately to the Headteacher or Deputy Head. If unavailable, the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) should be notified.
2. **Assessment:** The Headteacher, in collaboration with the CIMT, will assess the severity of the incident and activate the relevant procedures, including:
 - **Evacuation:** If the incident poses immediate danger, the evacuation procedure will be initiated, and pupils and staff will proceed to designated safety zones.
 - **Invacuation (Shelter):** In cases where external hazards (e.g., severe weather or civil unrest) pose a threat, pupils and staff will be brought inside and remain in secure areas.
 - **Lockdown:** In case of a violent intruder or terrorist threat, the lockdown procedure will be enacted. Pupils and staff will remain in classrooms, doors will be locked, and windows covered until the all-clear is given.

Communication:

- Immediate communication will be sent to parents and carers via the school's messaging system, updating them on the situation.
- The media spokesperson will manage any inquiries from external parties, ensuring that only accurate, relevant information is shared.

First Aid and Medical Support:

- Ensure immediate first aid is provided to anyone injured.
- Contact emergency services as required.

Post-Incident Management

Business Continuity

1. **Temporary Relocation:**
 - If the school premises become unusable, alternative arrangements will be made for temporary teaching spaces (e.g., local community centres or church halls).

- Remote learning will be activated where appropriate to ensure continuity of education.

Counselling and Support:

- Following a critical incident, psychological support will be provided to staff and pupils who are emotionally affected by the event.
- External counsellors will be contacted if necessary to provide group or individual therapy.

Media Handling:

- All media inquiries will be directed to the designated spokesperson. No staff members or pupils should speak to the media independently.
- A detailed statement will be released to ensure that the public and media receive accurate and timely information.

Long-Term Support

Debrief and Evaluation:

- A formal debrief will be held by the CIMT following the incident. Lessons learned will be documented, and any necessary revisions to the policy or procedures will be made.

Monitoring Wellbeing:

- The wellbeing of staff and pupils affected by the critical incident will be monitored in the months following the event.
- The school will provide ongoing counselling and support where necessary.

Incident-Specific Plans

Fire Incident

1. Evacuate the building immediately using established fire evacuation procedures.
2. Account for all pupils, staff, and visitors at the assembly points.
3. The Site Manager will liaise with emergency services and ensure the building is safe before re-entry.

Severe Weather Incident

1. Implement evacuation procedures if necessary.
2. Monitor weather reports and provide regular updates to parents and staff regarding school closures or early dismissals.

Cyber Incident

1. Isolate affected systems and report the data breach or cyberattack to the appropriate authorities.
2. Activate IT security protocols and ensure critical information systems are protected.
3. Inform parents, staff, and governors of any personal data breaches and the steps being taken to mitigate the damage.

Training and Testing

- **Staff Training:** All staff will be trained annually on how to respond to critical incidents, including the procedures for evacuation, invacuation, and lockdown.
- **Emergency Drills:** Fire drills and lockdown drills will be conducted regularly to ensure pupils and staff are familiar with the procedures.

Contact Information

- **Emergency Services:** 999
- **Local Authority Emergency Contact:** [Insert Contact Details]
- **School Insurer:** [Insert Details]
- **Counselling Services:** [Insert Details]

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years, or sooner if necessary following a critical incident. The Board of Governors will approve any amendments, and the SLT will ensure its effective implementation.

Next Review Date: October 2026

This policy reflects **The Eden School's** commitment to the safety and wellbeing of its entire community and aligns with both the DfE's guidelines and best practices in emergency response and critical incident management.

The Eden School's Critical Incident Team

Role	Name	Email Address
Headteacher (Lead)	Laura Osei	headteacher@theedenschool.com
Fire Safety Coordinator	Annor Boakye Darkwah	b.annor@theedenschool.com
Premises Manager	Brenda Baptiste	b.baptiste@theedenschool.com
IT Manager	Tungamirai Ziyambi	t.ziyambi@theedenschool.com
Chaplain	Laura Osei	headteacher@theedenschool.com
Behaviour Lead	Joshua Clarke	j.clarke@theedenschool.com
Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)	Akwasi Agyemang	dsl@theedenschool.com
SENCO	Sharon Davis	headteachersenco@theedenschool.com