



NEWBRIDGE-ON-WYE CHURCH-in-WALES SCHOOL CRITICAL INCIDENT and BEREAVEMENT POLICY

CRITICAL INCIDENT / BEREAVEMENT POLICY

Revised Policy approved by Governing Body

2022

H.A. Nixon
(Head Teacher)

P. Hobbs
Chair of Governors

NB. If the incident involves the unexpected death of a child, please note section 1.3 below and consult PRUDIC procedure filed with this Policy

N.B.

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PCC Communications Manager

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1. Introduction

Critical Incident - "any sudden, unexpected incident involving grief, loss and shock, including situations involving the terminal illness or sudden death of an individual or group of individuals within a school."

1.1 This policy summarises the School's plans for safeguarding pupils during and after a "critical incident" (for example a death in the school community) and for supporting them in coping with the trauma -- bereavement, grief, shock -- which would very probably be suffered by at least some pupils or staff in reaction to such an event.

1.2 The Policy is based on the Powys County Council's Critical Incident template policy. It should be read with the School's Emergency Management Plan which covers incident responses to emergencies such as evacuation or lockdown

1.3 The Head Teacher should take charge of the School's response to any critical incident unless unable to do so effectively (absence, illness, etc) in which case they will delegate responsibility for dealing with the incident to the Deputy Head Teacher or another member of staff. References to the Head Teacher in this policy therefore apply to the DHT or any staff member standing in for the Head Teacher.

2. Aims

The purpose of this Policy is to mitigate the effects of any emergency on the school community and in particular

- To prevent or minimise loss of life or personal injury
- To equip and enable the School to manage unexpected or difficult incidents, drawing on its own resources but accessing additional support, advice or information from Powys County Council or other agencies where appropriate
- to ensure that swift and appropriate action is taken once the school is made aware that a critical incident has occurred or is likely to occur
- to maintain, or restore as far as possible, the normal routines of school life, so as to offer a secure framework and continuity for all pupils
- To facilitate working with the media while minimising intrusion on pupils, parents or staff
- to offer sensitive, non-intrusive support in the short and medium term to all those directly or indirectly affected by what has happened

3. PRUDIC

3.1 The death of a pupil should be regarded a critical incident requiring response under this Policy. However, the unexpected death of a child requires police investigation under **Procedural Response to Unexpected Deaths in Childhood ("PRUDIC")**. This may inhibit the school in giving or sharing information (see below). . *A copy of PRUDIC procedure should be filed with this Policy*

3.2 In PRUDIC cases the Schools Service Designated Lead Officer for Safeguarding will usually represent the school and the Service at any PRUDIC meetings --- Information Sharing and Planning, Case Discussion meeting Case Review etc. This seeks to avoid additional distress and trauma being caused to school staff who knew and worked closely with the child who has died. . Details of what these meetings entail and the timeline for holding them can be found in the PRUDIC Guidance.



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4. Prevention / provision for incidents / emergencies

A critical incident could occur at any time and the school intends to be prepared for this so far as is reasonably practicable. In addition to the precautions set out in the School's Health & Safety and other Policies, the Head Teacher will ensure that the following actions are undertaken at the start of each academic year (and updated throughout the year, as necessary):

1. Complete an updated "Useful Contacts List" --- A copy form is at Appendix 1 to this Policy
2. Complete an All Pupils Contact List (or equivalent), follow up any apparent gaps in pupils' parent / carer contact details and update for new pupils
3. Keep back-up (both electronic and hard) copies of the Useful Contacts List and All Pupils Contact List in a form / place / site readily accessible even if the school buildings and computer systems have ceased to be available. (The Lists will help the Schools Service and other County Council departments to support the school effectively in an emergency).
4. A list of pupils out on visits on any day is held in the school office.
5. Staff leading groups of children on any visit have a mobile phone and the School Secretary has their phone number.
6. The Head Teacher, the DHT or other appointed delegate have ready access to keys to the school buildings and perimeter gates
7. The locks on the perimeter gates are regularly tested and can be easily opened with the keys.

5 Incident Response

5.1 The Head Teacher has authority / discretion to take such action as she considers appropriate and necessary in response to a critical incident, giving priority to the safety and wellbeing of pupils or other children involved. but will at appropriate stages during or after a critical incident

- (a) seek to maintain normal routines and business continuity
- (b) pay regard to multi-cultural and multi-faith factors in any incident response. and at later stages
- (c) consider grant availability for further training staff in areas such as bereavement and childhood resilience.
- (c) identify and utilise ways in which the Curriculum may help staff to provide learning experiences for pupils about loss, change and bereavement.

5.2 Contacting the Emergency Services and Powys County Council

There should normally be early contact and close co-operation with Powys County Council, (contacting PCC Safeguarding Lead or Communications Manager if available) and briefing any PCC Support Team

Contact numbers are on the front page of this Policy

Note: The PCC staff taking the initial call from the School will need to know from the caller:

Name and position:
Which school caller is from:
The nature of the incident:
Where it happened:
The people involved:



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A call back telephone number:

PCC will advise the Head Teacher on the situation, send an officer to site if required and to mobilise other assistance as appropriate

5.3.. Account for all pupils, assemble and log available factual information about the incident

5.4...Ensure that all available school staff know about the incident, know what they have to do and which actions are priorities

5.5,,, Prepare a short written statement stating the bare facts in moderate language and confirming that further details will follow ---.

5.6 Sharing Information Circulating basic information at an early stage is likely to be essential to reassure parents, but the statement should if possible be agreed with PCC after
(a) clarifying the legal position with PCC and in particular whether the school has appropriate consents and permissions under GPDR to share the information .
(b) (In the event of an unexpected death in childhood) follow any guidance from the PRUDIC Lead Officer or the PCC Safeguarding Lead as to what information can be shared--- to ensure that any statement by the school complies in particular with the need to withhold any information considered by the PRUDIC inquiry to be sub-judice or otherwise needing to be withheld. (The PRUDIC Information Sharing and Planning Meeting. should be convened within 2 days of the death)

5.7 (Subject to 5.6 above) Provide copies of the short statement to staff with instructions to use it to respond to phone calls from parents etc. and not to give any further detail. The statement should be updated and recirculated as appropriate .

5.8.. All school-based records or information about any child or children involved in the incident, or who died, should be retrieved and secured from intrusive or unauthorised investigation pending advice from PCC. (In the event of an unexpected death in childhood, the Designated Lead Officer for Safeguarding will contact the school to access those records to feed into the PRUDiC process.)

6. Further Actions

Depending on the circumstances and facilities available, the Head Teacher will organise the following:

- (a) Periodic briefing for all staff on what has happened and is expected to happen
- (b) Safeguarding the children in the developing situation, including contacting and briefing parents and (if appropriate) arranging for them to collect their children (It may, for instance, be appropriate to transport to some other location children whose parents cannot immediately collect them)
- (c) Ensuring, so far as practicable, that staff do not respond to media enquiries but divert them to the Head Teacher or to PCC staff
- (d) Ensuring, so far as practicable, that names of pupils or others possibly harmed by or involved in the incident are not released
- (e) Establishing the details of what happened and keeping a log of events
- (f) Continued liaison with PCC officers



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- (g) Maintaining security of pupils eg requiring identification of anyone on the scene who is not recognised
- (h) Recording by staff of details of visitors and of telephone calls received
- (i) Protecting pupils from media attention
- (j) Consideration, in consultation with PCC officers, the Vicar, governors and others, of whether the school should remain closed and when it should re-open, and when and how to contact those injured or affected or their families
- (k) Preparation (with named Senior PCC Officer) of joint report on the emergency, for PCC Head of Schools and Inclusion
- (l) Immediate counselling or other support for particular pupils or staff
- (m) Consideration and planning of longer-term issues (e.g. anniversaries)

7. Relations with the Media

7.1 In general, all media enquiries should be referred to PCC -- if PRUDIC applies it will be difficult for the Head Teacher to be sure of not contravening PRUDIC rules --, but in some circumstances the Head Teacher may decide that they must respond to a media query or allegation.

7.2 In these circumstances:

- The Head Teacher should if possible warn PCC that this is happening
- A member of staff or governor should be present to monitor the interview and if possible make a subsequent note of what was said
- The Head Teacher will seek to establish in advance the questions to be asked
- It is recognised that the media may use anything which is said, even if said "off the record".
- The Head Teacher should be ready to refuse to comment on particular issues raised.
- Requests for photos or other details of pupils or staff should be refused
- The Head Teacher will immediately report on the interview and contents to PCC and to the Chair of Governors

8. Informing Pupils

Information provided to pupils should be

- (a) Accurate.
- (b) Clear - if someone has died, say so rather than "passed away" or similar euphemism
- (c) Given in small groups (particularly for younger children or siblings / friends of any person who has died / been injured)
- (d) Given by a staff member familiar to the group eg the Class Teacher
- (e) Communicated sympathetically but calmly

9 Informing Parents

9.1 Responses to enquiries from parents soon after the incident should initially be limited to the above short statement (or questions covered in it), reassurance that their child is not involved and an



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indication that the school will not be closing, Clearly, however, parents will expect more information and will need it to help them support their child. A letter sent soon after the incident to all parents / carers will be necessary and helpful, but the wording should be checked with PCC Schools Service / Communications before being sent to ensure that

- (a) it complies with the PRUDiC procedures If relevant
- (b) It is accurate and consistent with previous information put out by PCC (PCC may need to correct a previous inaccuracy)
- (c) the families of anyone deceased or injured have made no objection to it being sent. (The Head Teacher may override any objection if publication appears to be in the interest of pupils)

9.2 Depending on the nature of the incident, the views of families involved and (if appropriate) the response of the PRUDiC Chair, a letter to parents / carers should

- set out briefly the known facts of the incident. Do not speculate.
- include any additional health information relevant to other pupils or give links / contact details of organisations who can give relevant information or advice
- acknowledge the seriousness of what has happened ;
- state that pupils should continue to attend school as usual, or details of any change in attendance arrangements
- (In event of death and depending on the wishes of the family of the deceased) State that details will be given when known of the arrangements for the funeral and attendance by pupils. (e.g. pupils wishing to attend the funeral should be collected from school by their parents and permitted to go straight home following the funeral if upset).
- Include, in appropriate terms, a closing appreciation of the deceased and expression of sympathy / condolences for the family

9.3 The letter should be signed by (or on behalf of) the Headteacher.

10 Managing Pupils and Staff

10.1 Pupils who are involved in, or witnessed, the incident should be identified quickly as they may require high levels of support. The severity of children's (and adults') reactions will depend on their specific risk factors. These include exposure to the actual event, personal injury or loss of a loved one, level of parental support, dislocation from their home or community, the level of physical destruction, and pre-existing risks, such as a previous traumatic experience or mental illness.

10.2 Children who are emotionally vulnerable may be particularly susceptible to adverse reactions to such events, even if they were not directly involved. Such children should be identified, and their reactions monitored. However, most children are resilient with all sorts of difficulties and can be helped to cope by family and friends.

11 Pastoral Care and Supporting Recovery.

11.1 It is important to try to re-establish / maintain the usual structure and formality in the running of the school. It is likely however that some pupils will continue to need opportunities to take time out,. Extra support may be needed.

11.2 Encourage children to be open with their feelings. If someone has died, ensure that children are aware that they are allowed to talk about the deceased - -they should be encouraged that this is appropriate.

11.3 In the event of a death, ascertain details of the funeral arrangements and ask the family if pupils and staff can attend . It should be left to the parents of primary age children to decide and take their children the funeral. Secondary aged pupils should decide for themselves whether to attend and it can be helpful to go along in groups of peers.

11.4 Staff should be alert to changing and varied expressions of grief or shock in children. Feelings and expressions of grief are common, appropriate and healthy. Responses vary from person to person, with



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reactions strongest at the moment of the event and gradually fading as time goes on. This happens more quickly when people are supported by their family, friends and professionally. The following reactions may occur:

- Emotional reactions can be fear, panic, depression, helplessness, anger, wrath, guilt, shame
- Somatic reactions can involve hyper arousal, sleeping problems, digestion problems, headaches
- Cognitive reactions can include confusion, disorientation, uncoordinated thinking, concentration problems, reduced ability to solve problems
- Social reactions include aggression, alcohol/drugs (teenagers), social withdrawal, inability to cope with daily routines

11.5 For teachers, it is important to inform pupils about these facts and encourage them to allow their peers to work through their emotions in their own way and at their own pace. In classes there will be a variety of reactions by pupils and one of the main problems is how pupils get along well with each other after a critical incident.

11.6 Children and adults should be taught or advised that individuals will react in different ways – both in intensity and in length. Most people will recover after a few days from the first shock and return to normal. Others need more time and a few will not be able to return to normality even after 4-6 weeks. In such a case, it is important to seek professional assistance.

11.7 At traumatic times it is important to provide as much continuity and security to children as possible. Every attempt should be made to maintain the normal school day, so as to ensure that children are unsettled as little as possible. It will, however, be appropriate to undertake tasks that have a low cognitive load, such as art and craft activities, as most children will not be able to concentrate well in the first hours after a traumatic event.

11.7 As with any emotionally charged experience, it is important for staff to remain aware of confidentiality issues and respond appropriately to information or concerns shared with them by their pupils.

11.8 Time out Areas

The school should identify, and make available, designated places for children to go privately for *time out*, or for expressions of emotion. This will reduce the likelihood of whole classes becoming increasingly upset through the expressed grief of a small number of its members.

11.9 Witnesses

It is important to ensure that children who have had an increased exposure to the event (i.e. they saw, heard or experienced the event happening) and wish to talk about their response, can do so separately from children who were not exposed to the event. This is to avoid traumatising children who were not present for the incident, whilst enabling those who were present to express their response in a safe place.

11.10 Reduced Attendance

Some children may not be attending school after the incident, and it will be necessary to assist their return to school in ways that meet their individual needs as far as possible. The school could consider such arrangements as:

- negotiating a date for return with parents;
- arranging with parents for a visit by the class teacher or form teacher to a child's home;
- briefing children who may be able to help in the process of re-settling, and arranging for part-time attendance at first, if this is considered helpful;
- arranging that the child knows about the sanctuary that they can go to if upset during the school day;
- making sure that all staff who teach the child are aware of the need for sensitivity in relation to missed work, and a possible need to re-schedule work;
- checking whether special arrangements with examination boards will be needed;
- keeping staff regularly updated and supported - providing comfort for distressed pupils is a difficult and draining task and all staff, including the headteacher and members of the senior management team, need the opportunity to express their own feelings. Having the time and space for this to happen is essential;



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- Arrangements may be made to express sympathy to the families directly affected by the incident. Injured children can be visited in hospital, and other children who know them encouraged to send letters or cards;
- professionals from the Authority, especially educational psychologists, can work within the school to support the work of teachers with pupils and to be available to staff who wish to consult them;
- other sources of help may be called upon at the discretion of the headteacher e.g.
 - local religious groups could be contacted and their representatives invited to meet the headteacher to discuss ways in which they might help in the school's attempts to support all involved;
 - the school could also consider contacting agencies such as CRUSE and the Samaritans, with a view to making their support available to the bereaved, or to others who may wish to talk to them. A list of organisations and their contact details is available at the end of this document and in the PRUDiC guidance 2018.

11.11 Continued support

Staff should continue to monitor children *informally* during the months following the incident. All staff should seek to be available to children who wish to talk to them about what has happened.

11.12 Consider arranging an after-school meeting, with relevant support staff available if required, for parents to discuss practical concerns or bereavement issues may be helpful.

11.13 Consider the need for children to say goodbyes within the school and the community. Discussions may need to be held with parents, governors and staff about the desirability and the form of events, such as special assemblies and memorial services.

11.14 Decisions about permanent memorials, however, are best postponed until a few months after the incident, and in consultation with families affected. It is (generally) not advisable to install visible permanent memorials such as photographs and plaques within the school site, but each decision is individual to the community and the event.

11.5 Anniversary

Staff should be aware that affected individuals will experience renewed grief on the anniversary of the incident in the years following its occurrence. The headteacher will need to ensure that staff are made aware that this is a time of remembrance for some, and that sensitivity and support may be needed.

11.16 Legal Proceedings

Staff should be advised of any legal proceedings and their implications, especially in regard to cases of unexpected deaths in childhood.

12. The role of the Powys Educational Psychology Service in crisis intervention

12.1 Powys Educational Psychological Service - Aims

To enable educational establishments to deal with the initial shock of crisis situations.

To support the senior management of the school/institution with the re-establishment of normal routines.

To mobilise individual and collective resources for dealing with trauma.

To use psychological support to reduce the incidence of post-traumatic stress.

To identify vulnerable individuals who need more intensive support.



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12.2 Powys Educational Psychological Service - Objectives

Normalisation - helping those involved to realise that their physical, mental and emotional reactions are common and that it is the incident which is abnormal.

Reduction of tension through the airing of feelings and sharing of information.

Cognitive organisation - making sense of the experience and incorporating it into the frame of reference and meaning with which they understand themselves in the world.

Validation and enhancement of existing ways of coping, using the BASICPh model.

Mobilisation of inner resources to develop new ways of coping.

The overriding objective being to prevent post traumatic stress syndrome which can have such a debilitating effect on individual lives.

12.3 Powys Educational Psychology Service - Likely Involvement and support provided

In the event of a crisis or emergency situation being reported to the Educational Psychology Service, the Service will contact the school(s) whose pupils have been affected, or who are likely to be affected by the event, to arrange for appropriate support to be made available to the school.

12.4 Kinds of support provided

- An audit of the needs of the children and staff, including establishing those vulnerable children and staff who are likely to require higher levels of support (circles of vulnerability).
- An audit of the skills and resources available in the school to support pupils and staff.
- Advice/information for parents and staff on how to handle children who have experienced a traumatic event.
- Advice/information for teachers on strategies which are helpful to colleagues who have been traumatised.
- Advice on the management of grief and loss in school, including coping with strong emotions such as anger, and providing sympathetic and effective pastoral care.
- Support for senior staff who are dealing directly with the media or distressed parents or governors.
- Group coaching and coping for the most affected children and staff.
- Links with other agencies who will carry out longer term care.
- In a large scale incident the Service may need to draw on colleagues in other areas of the county, and to work closely with other agencies.

12.5 Contact and Response

Schools can contact the Educational Psychology Service for advice during working hours.

Once the Educational Psychology Service has been informed of an incident, a decision will be taken as quickly as possible about the level of support that can be offered to the school and who is likely to be coming along to the school to see them.



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Telephone contact will be established the same day and, whenever possible, the Educational Psychologist who will co-ordinate the service response will visit the school to plan what happens next.

13 ADDITIONAL INFORMATION / RESOURCES

A. Organisations

CRUSE BEREAVEMENT CARE offers personal and confidential help to bereaved people.
Cruse Helpline: 0808 8081677

Cruse can also offer support for bereaved children through specially trained volunteer counsellors - contact can be made through the local Powys branch by telephoning: 01686 610220 or emailing powys@cruse.org.uk/Powys-area

RELEASE - Bereavement support for children, young people and their families, aimed to give help and support for young people if somebody close dies.

Telephone: 01978 316800 Ext. 213
Email: info@nightingalehouse.co.uk
www.nightingalehouse.co.uk

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS is a nationwide organisation of bereaved parents, siblings and grandparents. They can offer comfort and support, and have an extensive library of titles on all aspects of bereavement. There are also groups which support siblings of a dead child, and for parents who have been bereaved through suicide or murder.

National Office – 0345 1203785 Helpline: 0345 1232304
Email: helpline@tcf.org.uk www.tcf.org.uk

2 *WISH UPON A STAR* provides immediate support, counselling and support groups for parents who lose a child or young adult under 25 years of age suddenly and traumatically.

Tel: 01443 853125 09.30 – 16.30, Monday - Friday
Email: support@2wishuponastar.org
www.2wishuponastar.org

CHILD BEREAVEMENT UK provides support for bereaved parents and children
Helpline: 0800 0288840 09.00 - 17.00, Monday – Friday
Email: support@childbereavementuk.org
www.childbereavementuk.org

THE CHILD DEATH HELPLINE is a helpline for anyone affected by the death of a child of any age, however recently or long ago. Calls are answered by a bereaved parent, trained and supported by professional staff. Please note this is a listening service not a counselling service although they can provide details of services in local areas.

Helpline (Freephone): 0800 282986
Additional Freephone number for ALL mobiles: 0808 8006019
The Helpline is open every day of the year from:
19.00 - 22.00, every evening
10.00 - 13.00, Monday - Friday
13.00 - 16.00, Tuesday - Wednesday
www.childdeathhelpline.org.uk

THE LULLABY TRUST provides specialist support for bereaved families and anyone who has suffered the sudden death of an infant.

Helpline (Freephone): 0808 8026868 10.00 - 23.00, Monday - Friday



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18.00 - 23.00, Weekends & Bank Holidays

Email: support@lullabytrust.org.uk

www.lullabytrust.org.uk

SURVIVORS OF BEREAVEMENT BY SUICIDE provides support for those bereaved by suicide.

Helpline: 0300 1115065

09.00 - 21.00, every day

Email: sobs.support@hotmail.com

www.uk-sobs.org.uk

WINSTON'S WISH provides support for bereaved children and young people aged up to 18 years. An interactive website is also available.

Helpline: 08452 030405

09.00 - 17.00, Monday – Friday

Email: info@winstonswish.org.uk

www.winstonswish.org.uk

Books

Yule W & Gold A - 1993:

Wise before the Event - Coping with Crises in Schools

LONDON: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation

ISBN 09033 - 19667

Steffes D - 1997:

When Someone Dies - How Schools can help Bereaved Students

RICHMOND: Cruse - Bereavement Care

ISBN 0900321105

James P W - 1997

Healing the Wounded Heart - Limiting the Damage of Childhood Bereavement

ISBN 0340678887

B. _ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A Pocket full of posies Kent County Council

Critical Incidents: Support Framework for Norfolk Schools Third Edition 1999

Forewarned is Forearmed – School Based Responses to Critical Incidents

Flintshire County Council



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Appendix

NEWBRIDGE-ON-WYE CHURCH – IN – WALES SCHOOL

SCHOOL USEFUL CONTACTS LIST

(Updated to 2022)

USEFUL CONTACTS	NAME	PHONE No.
SCHOOL CONTACTS		
Headteacher		
Chair of Governing Body		
Pastoral lead in school		
Trained ELSA		
EXTERNAL CONTACTS		
Head of Education, Schools Service		
School Challenge Advisor		
Designated Lead Officer for Safeguarding		
Principal Educational Psychologist		
Communications Manager, Powys County Council		
School Nurse		
Children & Young People's Partnership		



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Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services		
Primary Mental Health Practitioner		
Education Welfare Officer		
Police (Family Protection Team)		
Fire, Ambulance		
Counselling Services (including Powys County Council Counselling Service for Powys Employees)		
Religious groups		
Voluntary agencies		
Other agencies/contacts		
Date of update		