

Corona Virus Related Critical Incidents in Schools – 10 Point Briefing

*“A critical incident may be defined as any sudden and unexpected incident or sequence of events which causes trauma within a school community and which overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of that school.”* Critical incidents vary greatly in magnitude from the expected death of a staff member, to sudden and traumatic incidents such as a stabbing on site.

1. The current situation with Corona Virus means that there is an increased risk of critical incidents both within school and the wider school community. This is coupled with a general raised level of anxiety due to the uncertainty around the virus and additional complication of potential school closures.
2. In the event of a critical incident, the Educational Psychology Team will offer support the school’s management team in order to appropriately manage the event. The approach taken is based on research into best practice and is founded on helping schools manage the immediate aftermath of an event, including advice and support around communication, practical arrangements and managing emotions.
3. Whilst no two incidents are the same, responses to critical incidents follow a recognised pattern and with time, most children and adults will come to terms with what has happened and recover without the need for professional counselling. Help and support is best given by trusted, familiar adults as and when it is needed. The EPT will support schools to facilitate this and be confident in this role.
4. When an incident occurs, it is important that schools let the LA know as soon as possible. There is one central number 01274 439000 that can be used for this purpose. Alternatively contact the Director of Education’s office on 01274 431266. You will then be contacted by a member of the EPT to identify what support is required.
5. A senior member of the Educational Psychology Team will contact you to identify what steps have been taken so far and what needs to happen next. This will be by telephone or video call.
6. What happens next depends on the magnitude of the incident, but may include advice about:
   * How to communicate the information to children and staff: what messaging systems are available? Form of words to express regret but at the same time reducing anxiety and possible panic.
   * How to communicate with parents: what messaging systems are available? Form of words to express regret but at the same time reducing anxiety and possible panic.
   * Share information with staff to talk about typical responses to critical incidents and how to manage them
   * Providing a focus for students to share feelings for example use of tutor / mentor groups; other school sharing forums
   * Identification of and planning for vulnerable children
   * Practical issues such as memorials / books of condolences.
7. The EP managing the incident will support you in the immediate aftermath of the incident and they will also follow up with you over the next few days to support with any issues that arise. In the event that your school is shut, this will be done remotely.
8. If after a period of time, if there are members of the school community who are showing signs of continued distress the EP will discuss this and signpost to further support.
9. Documents to support schools to manage emotional wellbeing in relation to corona virus can be found here: <https://bso.bradford.gov.uk/content/educational-psychology>
10. Documents to support schools to manage critical incidents can be found here: <https://bso.bradford.gov.uk/content/critical-incident-and-bereavement-support>

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