



CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY FOR HOLT FARM INFANT SCHOOL

DATED: February 2026

POLICY TO BE REVIEWED January 2027

The Policy was formally adopted by the Governing Board.	Date: 10.02.26
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DEFINITIONS

Critical Incidents

“A critical incident may be defined as any sudden and unexpected incident or sequences of events which causes trauma within a school community and which overwhelms the normal coping capacity of that school.”

Such incidents will usually require the assistance of the emergency services and/or Essex County Council and others. The incident or event may be unanticipated, imminent or in progress. It may occur on school property, in the local community or out of school.

A major incident may be defined as:

- An accident leading to a serious injury or fatality;
- Severe injury or severe stress;
- Circumstances in which a person or persons might be at serious risk of illness;
- Circumstances in which any part, or whole of the school is unable to function as normal due to external influences;
- Any situation in which the national press or media might be involved

As such, major incidents include:

- Death of a pupil or member of staff
- Death or serious injury on a school trip
- Epidemic in school or community
- Violent incident in school
- A pupil missing from home
- Destruction or major vandalism in school
- A hostage taking
- A transport accident involving school members
- A disaster in the community;
- A civil disturbance or terrorism
- Arson attacks on schools
- Major fires at a school
- Pupil suicides and sudden deaths
- Violent attacks on pupils and staff members
- The sudden death, in tragic circumstances of members of staff
- Incident involving an intruder, believed to be armed, on school premises
- Road traffic accidents, involving fatalities within a school community
- Abductions / disappearances
- Allegations or actual incidents of abuse against pupils by staff and staff against pupils
- Incidents involving the murder of schoolchildren that attracted the attention of national and international media over prolonged periods
- Floods
- School used in an emergency

In the event of such an incident the priorities of those adults in charge of the school or trip at the time must be to:

- Save life
- Minimise personal injury
- Safeguard the interests of pupils and staff
- Minimise loss and to return to normal working quickly

Non Critical Incidents

Some incidents might be non-critical and examples include:

- Death of a person associated with the school
- Lower scale health issues
- External incident requiring enhanced awareness
- Short term loss of staff or infrastructure
- Expected death of a pupil or member of staff

CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM (CIMT)

In the event of a critical incident the Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) will lead to reduce confusion as to who is in charge during an emergency.

The CIMT will comprise of the following (add the names)

- Amanda Watson (Headteacher and DSL)
- Katrina Whitnell (Deputy Head)
- Charlotte Scriven (Chair of Governors)
- Keeley Hutchinson- Khupe (Business Manager)

Critical Incident Response Team Essex County Council : Office hours (01245) 434745
Out of hours 07717867525

The CIMT has in place a plan to deal with all possible incidents, listing the roles and responsibilities of each member of the team. Key members of the CIMT are contactable 24 hours a day and have in place arrangements for continuity purposes during school holidays.

RESPONDING TO A CRITICAL INCIDENT

This policy is in conjunction with the other school policies, for example,

- Safeguarding
- Health and Safety
- Schools trip
- First aid
- Emergency/fire evacuation
- Data protection

Practices within school

Individual class teachers have an important role to play in managing critical incidents and may well be the best people to deal with the students in their classes. In times of crises, staff must react as they feel is appropriate (under the direction of the Headteacher) and there can be no easy formula for dealing with critical incidents. By ensuring good communication within school, a crisis may be managed more effectively.

The Critical Incidents Management Team will, dependent upon the nature of the incident itself, be concerned with any of the following issues:

- Adequate assessment of hazards and situations which may require emergency action
- Analysis of requirements to address these hazards; establishment of liaison with all relevant emergency services; development of an effective management plan
- Dissemination of planned procedures
- Organisation of practice drills to test the plan
- Regular review of the plan
- Assisting the Headteacher with all aspects of the implementation of the plan
- Arranging staff development activities, where necessary.

Procedures during a Critical Incident

The Headteacher or member of the SLT must be informed of any critical incident as soon as possible so that the correct procedures can be put in place.

- As soon as an incident is confirmed, the CIMT will meet to decide strategies
- The rest of the staff will be informed as soon as possible, preferably at a specially convened staff meeting
- All staff should share the same information
- Pupils will be told information simply and sensitively, without fabrication, preferably in smaller group situations
- The school will try, as far as possible, to keep to the normal routine.

Action Plan

Essentially critical incidents require the following procedures:

- Convene the Critical Incidents Management Team
- Establish who is in charge of the incident and establish clear roles and responsibilities within the CIMT
- Set up a communication network with clear channels
- Identify and inform First Aid personnel as appropriate
- Inform immediately the Chair of Governors; LA and any other appropriate officers,
- Collect, record and convey as much accurate information as possible
- Brief office staff regarding management of:
 - incoming enquires (telephone calls, email and social media)
 - outgoing information (telephone, email, website and social media channels)
- Set up an area for enquiries
- Use the data for students' next of kin to contact parents of affected children
- Establish incident recording logs for all actions
- Lockdown the school premises to all visitors without prior approval of the Headteacher.

It is expected that the Local Authority will:

- Use the ECC Media team so that appropriate and timely assistance is provided to the school
- Ensure that the appropriate LA officers, including Health and Safety, are advised of the incident so that the best possible level of support can be made immediately available, as appropriate
- Ensure that appropriate outside agencies e.g. counselling services, are alerted to the incident so that support is available as soon as seen to be appropriate

The Headteacher will liaise with LA officers and Media support services to ensure that the timing of information sharing is coordinated appropriately.

Action Plan Timing:

Action	Timescale
Convene the Critical Incidents Management Team in the headteacher's office, context dependent	Immediately
Establish who is in charge of the incident – usually the headteacher	Immediately
Obtain factual information at the start	Immediately
Senior staff meeting with support personnel	Immediately
Academy Trust (if appropriate)	Immediately
Contact families	Immediately – at discretion of Headteacher, context dependent.
Establish clear roles and responsibilities within the CIMT	Within first hour
LA when additional support is deemed necessary	Within first hour
Carry out quick appreciation of immediate response required	Within first hour
Call a staff meeting to give information	Within hours if practicable
Inform pupils in small groups	Same day if possible
Arrange debriefing meeting for staff involved	Same day if possible
Arrange debriefing for pupils directly involved	Same day if possible
Identify high risk students and staff	Following day
Promote discussion in classes	Following days and weeks
Identify the need for group or individual treatment	Over days and weeks
Organise emotional support if needed	As required
Mark anniversary (discreetly)	Annually

All staff members are responsible for:

- Acting in accordance with the policy
- Effectively implementing the critical incident plan
- Maintaining up to date records of critical incidents
- Understanding the critical incident plan
- Maintaining their own and others up to date records of critical incidents
- Ensuring pupils are aware of what to do in a critical emergency.

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Essex Educational Psychology - September 2024

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