

CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY

Board of Trustees Approved: February 2021

Date of next review: February 2022

Reviewed by: The Principal and the Finance and Resources Committee

This policy will be reviewed every year and at every review the policy will be shared with the full Board of Trustees.

General definitions: Throughout this policy, *Wynstones* means Wynstones school and will be used interchangeably with *school* and *the school*; *parents* includes guardians, carers and those with parental responsibility for children entering the school; *students* will be used throughout.

Regulatory and publication context: Independent schools are not required to have a website, but are required to make policies and information available to parents upon request, in line with the [Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#). Wynstones systematically chooses to publish its policies online, in order to enable ease of access for parents, and to participate in the wider social discourse on appropriate, effective and fair educational provision.

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1 Purpose and scope

This policy is intended to provide a clear process for managing critical incidents involving students and staff in order to minimise the risk of independent action and to assist in ensuring that each case is managed effectively and compassionately. Wynstones' response needs to be timely and professional, and in a manner that is as personal and sincere as possible.

Incidents may vary in terms of the scale of the emergency, the level of response required and the level of media interest. Our response will be adapted, within this procedure, to meet the needs of each incident.

A critical incident is one that is so unusual or distressing that it produces a high level of emotional reaction. This reaction may be immediate or delayed and varies from one person to another person. So, what is a critical incident for one person may not be for another.

Critical incidents are disruptive events. The school has a duty of care towards all staff, students and visitors who may be affected by such an incident. It is important that the school is in a state of readiness to deal with them effectively and professionally. The guidelines outlined in this policy have been developed for this purpose.

This policy applies to all Wynstones staff, whether on site or off site unless otherwise stated.

2 Definitions

'Critical incidents' include:

- Serious injury or death
- Sexual assault or abuse
- Violence, threats or abuse
- Robbery with violence
- Sudden or unexpected death or suicide of resident or staff member
- Natural disasters

- Terrorist attacks including bomb threats
- High publicity violent crimes
- Business interruption or data breach from cyber attack
- Unscheduled closure of the school

3 Policy principles

3.1 Risk Management Measures

Wynstones is committed to providing immediate, confidential, professional and genuine support for staff and visitors in crisis situations. Wynstones will provide training and awareness sessions on critical incident response and management to members of the school.

3.2 Importance of communication

When a critical incident occurs, it is vitally important that effective communication takes place. Good communication enables the school to respond to the incident quickly, appropriately, and with minimum disruption to school life.

4 Organisational structure

4.1 Organisational scope

This policy applies to all school staff and visitors who have been involved in or exposed to a critical incident or event. Such an event can occur either at the school or outside it. Where the incident occurs at the school, management of the incident will be delegated to, managed and carried out by the Critical Incident Team.

4.2 Initial communication

Essential to the policy and procedures outlined in this document is that all staff of and visitors to the school must, after first taking measures required for their own safety, immediately inform a senior member of staff. Any other person, if informed of the incident, must report it as soon as possible to a senior member of staff. On first steps to be taken, see section 6 below.

4.3 The Critical Incident Team

In accordance with this Policy, the school has determined a Critical Incident Team to deal with critical incidents. The composition of the team is set out below in Section 4.5. A senior representative of the team is to be contacted in the first instance when a critical incident occurs. Such persons will determine what the nature and the seriousness of the incident is, and will advise what needs to be done.

Where the most senior representative has been exposed to the stressful environment of an incident, the next most senior representative should assume oversight of the team.

4.4 Levels of Responsibility

The Critical Incident Team operates at various levels and locations within the school community. Very often the team has to make a decision on whether persons in the community have to be informed. For incidents of a serious nature as outlined above, it will be necessary to make contact with the Principal or Director of Finance and Resources. Even when incidents are less serious, e.g. a sporting injury, one or more members of the Critical Incident Team should be informed, so that they can take appropriate action and will be prepared in case questions are asked by concerned relatives.

4.5 Composition of the team

The Critical Incident Team consists of the following persons:

Senior members:

- The Principal
- The Director of Finance and Resources
- The Caretaker
- The Finance Officer
- The Vice Principal
- The Inclusion Manager
- Phase Leads – Kindergarten and Lower school

Other staff members may be called upon for assistance:

Contact may be made with any of these persons if a critical incident as listed above occurs, or if there is the potential that such an incident will occur. For a list of contact numbers and contact times for these persons, see section 9.

It is not to be expected that all members the Critical Incident Team listed above will be involved in the response to a particular critical incident or crisis. As set out below in Section 6, the senior management member in charge will determine which members of the team will be need to be called up in order to deal with the situation.

4.6 Communication system

It is of essential importance that a system is organised and put in place which enables effective communication to occur when a critical incident is reported.

In order to ensure 24/7 coverage of incoming calls, the school has three main points of contact. These are:

9 am to 5pm weekdays	Administration:	01452 429220
	Director of Finance and Resources:	awelsh@wynstones.com
5 pm to 1 am	Caretaker:	mmcgowan@wynstones.com

If a call cannot be answered, then a message and a forwarding system has been put in place, so that the call will be answered by the appropriate person.

Notices have been placed through the school containing the above-mentioned contact points for a critical incident. These are to be updated regularly and certainly at the beginning of every school year.

4.7 Communication between Principal, Chair of Trustees

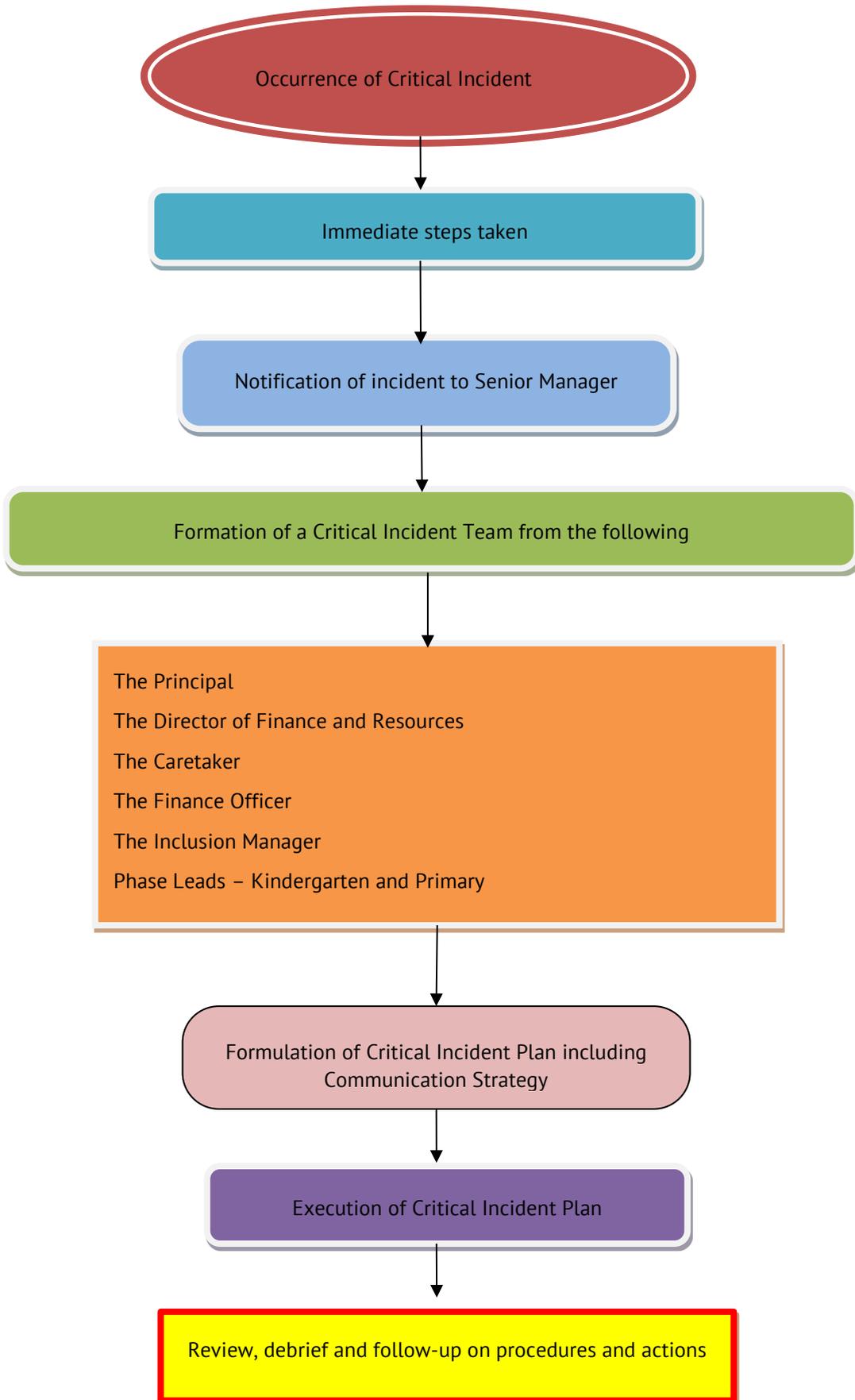
The Principal is to inform the Chair of the Trustees of incidents which are of a serious nature. The Principal should also advise other relevant parties when required. It may also be necessary on occasions to advise the OH&S authority of incidents involving death or injury.

5 Critical incidents procedure in general terms

The following is an outline of steps to be taken in the event of the occurrence of a critical incident. For specific scenarios, see further the Appendices attached to this policy. When a member of the Critical Incident Team is made aware of a possible Critical Incident:

1. The Critical Incident Team member assesses the situation and considers any apparent risks to her/his own safety.
2. Provided there is no threat to personal safety in doing so, the Critical Incident Team member takes steps to minimise further damage or injury. This may involve organising willing bystanders to provide support.
3. Where the Critical Incident team member considers a critical incident to be apparent or likely, s/he must alert the relevant Critical Incident Team members, including where possible a member of senior management.
4. The Critical Incident Team will review and analyse the situation, and having done so formulate a critical incident plan. This will include (1) setting priorities, (2) allocating tasks/responsibilities, and (3) coordinate an immediate response, including establishing communications to staff, students, families of those involved, helpers, and the media. (For communication with the media there is a separate policy, Crisis Communication and Media Policy, which is to be consulted as well.)
5. The critical incident plan will then will be put into effect, with members who have been allotted assigned tasks reporting back at regular intervals to the member of senior management coordinating the plan.
6. As soon as practical the Principal or most senior staff member available is to prepare a Critical Incident Initial Report outlining details such as the type of incident, the exact location and details of any person or persons who might be injured, in distress, or at risk.
7. The Critical Incident Team to organise ongoing Response/Follow up (may include student and staff briefing, counselling, review and reporting).
8. When the critical incident plan has been completed and the incident and its aftermath have been dealt with, the Critical Incident Team is to organise a de-briefing process in order to evaluate response procedures and make recommendations for handling future critical incidents.

6 Critical incident reporting and procedure flow chart



7 Guidelines

7.1 Initial response

In an emergency situation when immediate assistance is required, e.g. an ambulance or the presence of police, an individual person may take the decision to make the initial contact call and then inform a contact person in the school immediately afterwards. Phone numbers for emergency services are listed in section 9 of this document. They are also provided in the school handbook and on the Intranet.

7.2 Family, Friends and Staff

Once the critical incident has been confirmed, the initial contact with relatives/ significant others needs to be considered carefully. Personal contact with victims and those affected by the incident may need to be arranged outside of normal hours.

The Critical Incident Team will assess those affected by the incident and determine who apart from relatives may need to be informed.

In certain cases it may be necessary to make referrals for counselling and/or advice to agencies outside of those normally provided by the school.

Staff and students should be advised. There may be a need to issue a written statement to staff and parents/guardians, within the guidelines of the Wynstones Confidentiality Policy.

7.3 Support

It is important that persons involved in or affected by a critical incident receive the support they need. The Critical Incident Team will be available for them to consult. Pastoral support may be given. This will be organised by the Principal, Vice Principal, Inclusion Manager or Phase Leads in consultation with other members of the school community with skills in this area. The team may also seek out members of the school community who, in their judgment, may need additional support.

If the incident is of a sufficiently serious nature, the Principal may call in an external agency with professional skills in the area of crisis management and/or counselling. It will be determined, in consultation with this agency, whether there is a need for a special debriefing session with those persons directly involved in the incident or strongly affected by it. Counselling/de-briefing should be organised as quickly as possible.

7.4 Follow-up Procedures

It is important that the school return to normal as soon as possible after a crisis. As soon as practicable following the incident the Principal, or his representative, will analyse the procedures followed and will write a brief report, which may be tabled at the next Council meeting.

The Critical Incident Team and the Pastoral support team will continue to remain in contact with the persons for as long as this is necessary. This may be a matter of weeks, months or even longer. If a person involved continues to have difficulties, it may be necessary to refer him or her to a specialised counselling service.

7.5 Levels of Responsibility

LEVEL OF RISK	RESPONSIBILITY	EXAMPLES
SEVERE	The Critical Incident Team	Death, suicide or life-threatening injury; Threats of violence, assault, sexual assault, use of firearms or other weapons;

		Fire, bomb, explosion, gas/chemical hazards; Threat of infection or contamination.
SIGNIFICANT	The Critical Incident Team	Severe Occupational Health & Safety (OH&S) risk; Serious injury incurred by a staff member or student; Activity where evacuation is required; A student who requires a person after hours to act in lieu of a parent/guardian.
MODERATE	Senior Administrative Staff	Occupational Health & Safety (OH&S) risk; IT System failure; Staff member or student suffers medical injury.
MINOR	All Staff	Minor injury; Phone/Electrical failure; Computer breakdown/internet failure

7.6 Counselling

Counselling of staff and students will be a priority for incidents where trauma may be experienced.

Arrangements may be made for a suitably qualified counselling service to address staff and students, inviting them to attend a further individual counselling session if required at the school's expense.

8 Dissemination of information

It is important that, when required, factual and accurate information is disseminated to the members of the school community and to the outside world. This process is supervised by the Principal. He may require the assistance of the members of the Critical incident team for this task. It is important that privacy of individuals be respected in this process.

8.1 First steps in case of an emergency

It may be necessary to call together the school community if an emergency situation arises. The school will assemble inside sports hall or on the sports field, as directed by the person in charge. In the case of other incidents it may be possible to give an announcement in assembly, in class or put up notices at the appropriate places in the school.

In the case of an emergency it will also be possible to send an SMS to staff and parents/carers. Preparations for such communication must be made in advance by the Director of Finance and Resources and must be maintained for immediate use. Designated members of the critical incident team have the ability to SMS messages in an emergency and post a notice on the website.

8.2 Media Liaison

In a situation where there is reputational risk for the school, it is essential that a speedy response is put in place for both traditional and social media. Every effort should be made to formulate an initial media

statement as soon as possible after the incident. The statement may be placed on the school website. See further the Crisis Communication and Media Policy.

9 Key contact personnel

This list provides contact numbers for key people involved in dealing with critical incidents. For contacting the school in case of a critical incident see Section 4.6 above.

Administration	8am-5pm weekdays	01452 429220
Caretaker		mmcgowan@wynstones.com
Director of Finance and Resources		awelsh@wynstones.com
Finance Officer		nramm@wynstones.com
Principal		phougham@wynstones.com
Vice Principal		kdeferrer@wynstones.com
Inclusion Manager		ahempenius@wynstones.com
Phase Lead – Lower School		jwragg@wynstones.com
Specialist Services		
Emergency Fire, Police, Ambulance	999	
Gloucestershire Royal Hospital	0300 422 2222	

10 General information

10.1 Responsibility and Review

The ultimate responsibility is borne by the Principal. Day to day implementation of the policy is in the hands of Senior Management.

The policy will be periodically reviewed.

10.2 Delivery

A copy of this policy is available:

- at the school office