

SONNING COMMON
COMMUNITY SCHOOL

POLICY
STATEMENT ON
CRISIS
MANAGEMENT

POLICY No. 21 Version 5
Autumn 2007

POLICY STATEMENT ON CRISIS MANAGEMENT

This policy will describe the Sonning Common Community School plan for dealing with emergencies and crises that might arise in the school.

The following list is not exhaustive, but covers situations in which this plan might need to be put into action:

- 1) Death of a pupil or a member of staff;
- 2) Destruction of part of the school;
- 3) Violence or assault in the school;
- 4) Hostage situation;
- 5) Travel accident involving pupils;
- 6) Natural disaster in the community;
- 7) Death or injury on school journeys or residential visits;
- 8) Civil disturbance or terrorism;
- 9) Abuse or potential abuse or threatening behaviour towards a pupil outside school.

The school will ensure that the School Critical Incident and Emergency Management Plan (SCIEMP) is regularly reviewed and updated for changes (at least annually). The current SCIEMP is attached to this policy for reference. To ensure that the plan is readily accessible in the event of an emergency, copies shall be distributed as follows:

- One copy to be kept in the, staff room and all staff members should know where to access it;
- One copy to be kept by the headteacher;
- One copy to be kept by the deputy headteacher;
- One copy to be kept by the chair of governors.

The responsibility for the review and implementation of the SCIEMP belongs to the Crisis Management Task Group, which will consist of the chair of governors,

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vice-chair of governors, caretaker, headteacher, deputy headteacher and school secretary.

All members of staff should familiarise themselves with the SCIEMP and also read the appendix 2 “Coping in the Event of School Emergencies and Crises at Sonning Common Primary School”, written by Mr. P Marples with reference to a book called “Wise Before the Event” by W Yule & A Gold (pub. Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation 1993).

Appendix 1

SCHOOL CRITICAL INCIDENT AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PLAN

TASK	RESPONSIBILITY	DATA REQUIRED	COMPLETED
Contact emergency services as required	Staff and headteacher		
Inform all staff members	School secretary	Current staff list with contact details	
Inform all governors and LEA	Headteacher or school secretary initiates telephone tree	Current governors telephone tree and LEA contacts	
Inform next of kin if appropriate	Crisis management task group	Staff or pupil emergency contact lists	
Set up emergency helpline and keep notes of all incoming calls	Crisis management task group	Access to Bishopswood telephone line or mobile phone	
Write script of facts and answers to likely questions	Crisis management task group		
Inform all parents and reunite children with parents if appropriate	Parent governors and school secretary	List of pupil contact numbers. Scripted answers to questions.	
Maintain a record of all those who have been informed	School secretary		

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Publish a list of useful phone numbers	Crisis management task group		
Inform all pupils	Headteacher and deputy headteacher		
Make plans for funeral attendance if applicable			
Communicate with media if applicable	ONLY headteacher or chair of governors	Scripted responses to questions	
Engage outside agencies for pastoral or medical support if appropriate	Headteacher and deputy headteacher	List of addresses and telephone numbers of agencies	
Record crisis experience in pupils' records	Headteacher and deputy headteacher		
Debrief staff and pupils involved	Crisis management task group	List of those involved with contact numbers	
Identify high risk pupils and staff and need for individual or group treatment	Crisis management task group		

- Useful contacts list
- Alternative telephone line
- Local churches
- Governors telephone tree
- Staff and pupil emergency contact numbers

Appendix 2

GUIDELINES for COPING IN THE EVENT OF SCHOOL EMERGENCIES AND CRISES AT SONNING COMMON PRIMARY SCHOOL.

These guidelines have been formulated with many references directly written in from the book *Wise Before the Event* by W. Yule and A. Gold (pub. Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation 1993).

INTRODUCTION

Whilst large-scale disasters are rare, there are many other small-scale traumas, happening with greater frequency, which may affect our school. Regardless of the size of the incident, the distress caused to the individuals concerned can be equally devastating.

No-one can predict when a disaster will occur but thinking ahead and planning will not make such an event happen. Forward planning can, and will, help a school to cope better after an incident and will help reduce the distress of staff and pupils.

The following are examples of the crises that might arise:

IN SCHOOL: death of pupil or member of staff through natural causes as illness;

a traffic accident involving a pupil or member of staff;

a deliberate act of violence, such as a knifing or use of a firearm;

a school fire or site accident.

OUT OF SCHOOL: deaths or bad injuries on school journeys;

tragedies involving many children at football grounds, on ships or planes;

civil disturbances; refugee children joining the school uprooted from their countries and shocked by war and atrocity; abuse or potential abuse of a pupil outside the school, pupils accosted or threatened.

All such events when they occur are likely to affect children's sleep and concentration, and therefore their social and academic performance at school This is

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known as post traumatic stress disorder.

These symptoms may go on only for a short time or may last for a considerable length of time depending on the individual involved.

Children may re-experience or have flash backs of the trauma. They may try and avoid thinking about the experience resulting in not talking or expressing their feelings to parents and peers. Children may think differently about their future and re-think their values. They may in certain instances suffer survivor guilt.

In children heightened anxiety and arousal may appear, resulting in concentration difficulties, sleep disturbance, clinginess to parents, memory loss, heightened alertness to danger, fears related to their trauma, depression and irritability, bereavement reactions, anxiety and panic.

Infants and even younger children may well show many kinds of regressive or anti-social behaviour.

Staff who have been involved in tragic accidents or bereavement will also suffer reactions. They may not know how and when to talk about their trauma. They should avoid burdening children and seek help from family, friends and colleagues.

Those most likely to be affected are:

- those who were at greatest risk;
- those who witnessed death and carnage;
- those who come from unstable family relationships;
- children who are less able intellectually;
- refugee children (there is a higher proportion of problems amongst girls than boys).

Sonning Common Primary School must develop a plan to deal with emergencies and crises. This involves the following steps:

- Identifying potential critical incidents.
- Identifying support agencies and personnel.
- Develop a School Critical Incident and Management Plan.

- Clarifying roles - for all personnel.

TASKS WHEN A CRISIS OCCURS:

Provide accurate information - all factual information should be relayed as and when it is known. Delay and uncertainty breeds rumour and distress.

Provide for an emergency telephone line which is not the school's main phone line e.g. Bishopswood or a portable so that the school can proceed with necessary business while also dealing with incoming calls. The telephone in the swimming pool is also available for incoming and outgoing calls.

Deal with enquiries by bringing into school those families of the individuals involved.

Those answering the phone should keep notes.

Keep an up-to date list of pupils' next of kin - this will be kept in the secretary's office.

Informing parents is a very important issue made more complex in case of a large scale crisis. There is a 'telephone tree' so that correct information can be passed on quickly e.g. parent governors or parents association committee members.

In certain circumstances maybe the whole school community will need to be informed as quickly as possible by letter.

Messages must be passed on sensitively and may need to be rehearsed.

A record needs to be kept of those who have been informed by the school secretary.

Transport may be required and a school minibus is usually available.

Suggest to distressed parents that friends, neighbours or relatives should be contacted.

Offer useful phone numbers e.g. the hospital disaster number.

Where appropriate give contact numbers of other families involved in the crisis.

Deal with the media by protecting children, parents and those staff involved in the crisis. The headteacher and chair of governors are the only people who should

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communicate with the media. Ensure therefore that the media are directed towards them. No staff involved directly in the crisis should deal with the families involved.

All staff should be informed as quickly as possible. A small team, head, deputy, secretary, chair of governors and a parent governor should manage the crisis. Inform all governors and the L.E.A.

All pupils may need to be informed simply and calmly. This is best done in class groups so that questions can be easily asked and dealt with. Use only facts and do not speculate. Do not try to answer questions to which at the time factual answers cannot be given.

Closure of the school should be avoided and as far as possible the school routine should be adhered to.

Make plans for attendance at funerals taking into account differing religions and backgrounds.

Short term action.

Children & Parents - If a crisis happens outside school ensure the safety of all the children, obtain first aid or other appropriate medical aid, then inform the school. Parents should then be informed immediately by the head or other team member.

Children must be re-united with their families as soon as is practicably possible. In some circumstances it may be preferable for parents to go to their children.

Staff - support should be organised from within the school, in whatever fashion those requiring support find most helpful. If this cannot be done a reliable outside agency such as the L.E.A. can be brought in to help.

During the hours of a crisis all members of the crisis management team may require relief. Ensure they receive it.

Outside professionals and agencies will be able to support the work of the school when dealing with the aftermath of a crisis. Also local religious leaders should be contacted see Appendix 3-4.

Encouraging pupils to talk: Initially adults should listen to children who need to talk about a trauma however disruptive it may seem to be in class. However after a day

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or two a designated member of staff should be available such as the head or deputy so that the normal routine of the school can recommence.

If a child wishes to unburden him/herself to a member of staff close contact should be maintained with the parents. Staff should observe and listen rather than dominate such sessions.

Children may also wish to express their distress through their work and although they may become distressed staff should be aware this is also a healing process.

Helping a class or school come to terms with a crisis.

Pupils not involved in the crisis may need educating about the reactions peers may be feeling. Expressions of sympathy are not sufficient.

If children are recovering at home or in hospital then support from school of many kinds can be encouraged.

Debriefing Meeting: can be arranged and led by an experienced and skilled person from outside the school.

These meetings can -

- Clarify what happened.
- Allow for a sharing of reactions.
- Reassure the participants that such reactions are not abnormal.
- Mobilise resources.

After the initial feelings of numbness and shock caused by a crisis it is important to make sense of what happened. Sharing what happened is important in the healing process. Separate debriefings can be given for staff directly involved.

Expressing sympathy to those who have been hurt or bereaved is vital. The head should visit home or hospital or represent school at funerals. Others members of the school community will want to express their sympathy in a number of ways.

Medium term action.

Other tasks arise after the initial problems have been dealt with.

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Helping children back into school life:

- The class teacher visiting at home or hospital.
- Considering part-time attendance and deciding on a suitable curriculum within a realistic time span.
- Checking on worries about being away for a long time and meeting other children again.
- Setting up a sanctuary arrangement if the child gets upset.
- Talking about what is happening in school including reactions to the crisis.
- Rescheduling projects.
- Ensuring appropriate support in teaching methods and staff support (in the case of serious injury).

Ground rules when working with outside consultants.

- * Children, staff and the consultants should agree the boundaries of sharing confidential information. Many medical and non-medical therapists, particularly those trained in individual psychodynamic therapies, are used to maintaining complete confidentiality between therapists and child. This is not appropriate when staff are being helped to help the child. Equally, it is not appropriate to share all information with everyone. Staff need to keep to a minimum the information they share about a pupil. Pupils should never be given a promise that all information will be kept secret.
- * Staff should be clear about whom to contact when they are worried about a particular child.
- * Regular meetings between the consultant and appropriate staff will enable progress to be reviewed and the consultant to suggest ways in which the school can continue to offer support.

The headteacher maintains overall responsibility and control for what happens in school as far as academic and social well being is concerned. However parents will be consulted on important issues affecting the education of their child.

Attendance at funerals.

There are many different religious and cultural views about the participation of

young people in funeral rites. The school will want to respect these views and customs as well as the wishes of parents and the children themselves.

The current consensus among mental health professionals is that most children (and adults) come to terms with their grief more quickly if they say farewell formally. Whenever possible, survivors should be encouraged and enabled to attend funerals of those who died, and the parents of those who died should be encouraged to allow it.

Special assemblies and memorial services.

In addition to funerals that families may choose to be private, schools may wish to mark the event with a special assembly or a memorial service. Discussion could be held with staff, governors, parents, pupils and the local community on what form this should take and who should be involved. Planning the ceremony often becomes an important therapeutic act in itself.

For many who have been affected by a major incident, a memorial service acts as a way of acknowledging that it is now over. Even so, many staff and pupils may be upset during the service and this needs to be considered in planning, for example, where it is to be held and if access should be given to the media. Some schools have planted special gardens in memory of pupils or staff members; others have installed seats in the playground in their memory or have commissioned sculptures or paintings.

Keeping families informed.

Remember to keep families informed. Information sheets for families can be useful. The information could include:

- who has been called in to advise staff and pupils.
- how parents can have access to help.
- whom to make contact with if they are worried about their child's progress.

Continued monitoring of children's progress.

By now staff and parents should know the person to whom any concerns about a child should be reported. Pupils too should be clear about whom to talk to. Some

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staff will be meeting regularly, occasionally with an outside consultant, and part of the agenda should be to keep children under review. Records should be kept and children referred as necessary. It should be made clear that records held in the schools are open to inspection by parents and older pupils. Guidelines should be established on how to maintain contact with parents: for example, a short letter home might draw attention to the progress made by pupils in their return to 'normality'.

The parents of children in any of the high risk groups described earlier should be given the option of receiving specialist help. If the children's distress remains high six to eight weeks after the incident, they should be referred to a specialist with skills in treating PTSD. Staff and parents need to be clear about the procedures for ensuring appropriate help quickly.

Longer term planning.

Any crisis experience should be recorded in the school's individual pupil records so that new staff are aware and briefed on the methods being used for continuous support.

Anniversaries should be marked by commemoration of some kind taking into consideration the views of the families of those being commemorated.

Members of the school may be involved in legal processes as a result of a crisis - the school must be aware and keep records.

As time passes the story of a crisis can change - the school should be aware of this and be ready if necessary with the original emotional support.

Coping with Crises Task Group:

This task group should consist of the headteacher, deputy head and secretary from the school staff. The governing body should also be represented and will include the chair or vice chair, a representative of the environment committee and all parent governors.

The caretaker being resident at the school may be the first person to be informed of an incident and will be available to drive the minibus if required.

Parent governors may not all be directly involved in the operations of the task group but should be a first point of contact for the task group. The parent governors can

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then be involved in the effective relaying of information and reassurance to parents when required.

The task group will consist of the chair of governors, vice-chair of governors, an environment governor, caretaker, headteacher, deputy headteacher and secretary.

Use of the telephone:

The school telephone will be the main means of receiving information and dealing with parents and outside agencies. The school will arrange an alternative 'line out' with Bishopswood School when the need arises.

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Appendix 3:

USEFUL CONTACTS

Alternative emergency telephone line - Sonning Common School 0118 9722109

Alternative Emergency telephone Line - Bishopswood School- 0118 9724311.

CONTACT	NAME	PHONE NUMBER
Director of Children's Services	Keith Bartley	01865 815122
Chair of Governing Body	Jackie Million	01189 72 3469
Police	PC Mike Birdseye WPC Julie Greenhough	0118 9526259 local 0118 9536505 Reading
Fire Brigade		999
School Doctor/Medical Officer	Dr Karlman	0118 9296456
School Nurse	Sandra Stickland	01491 208534
Educational Psychologist	Linda Johnston	01235 554554
Child Guidance Clinic	Jenny Tozer	01491 576464
Sonning Common Health Centre		0118 9722745
Townslands Hospital, Henley		01491 637400
Emergency Department at Hospital	Royal Berkshire Hospital	0118 9875111
Education Social Worker	Margaret Bhatt	01865 873747
Social Services Area Team Leader	Robert Willsmore	01865 872747
Counselling Services	see Appendix 4	
Local Religious Groups	see Appendix 5	
Other Voluntary Agencies	see Appendix 4.	
Press and Media Contacts	Maria Brunsdon	01491 572178
This list updated on 25/11/2007		

Appendix 4

USEFUL ADDRESSES AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Stress Clinic (Dr Dora Black)
Department of Child and Adolescent
Psychiatry
Royal Free Hospital
Pond Street
London NW3 2OG
Tel: 0171 794 6874

Centre for Crisis Management & Education
93 Old Newton Road
Newbury
Berks RG14 7DE
Tel: 01635 30644

Good Grief
c/o Barbara Ward
3 Wheelwright Court
Walkhampton PL20 6LA
Tel: 0822 855 619

The Refuge Council
Bondway House
3 Bondway
London SW8 1SJ
Tel: 0171 582 6922

Deputy Principal Educational Psychologist
The Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea
Professional Development Centre
108a Lancaster Road
London W11 1QS

The British Red Cross
9 Grosvenor Crescent
London SW1X 7EJ
Tel: 0171 235 5454

CRUSE - Bereavement Care
126 Sheen Road
Richmond
Surrey TW9 1UR
Tel: 0181 940 4818

**National Association for Pastoral Care in
Education**
c/o Dept of Education
University of Warwick
Coventry CV4 7AL
Tel: 0203 523523

Stress Clinic (Dr J Thompson)
Academic Dept of Psychiatry
Univ Collge & Middx Hospital
School of Medicine
Ridinghouse Street
London WIN 8AA

Traumatic Stress Clinic
Maudsley Hospital
Denmark Hill
London SE5 9AF
Tel: 0171 703 5411

Appendix 5

Local Religious Organisations

Church of England

Christ the King, Sedgewell Road, Sonning Common

St John the Baptist, Kidmore End

The Vicarage

Kidmore End

☎ 0118-9723987

All Saints Church, Rotherfield Peppard

Peppard Rectory

Rotherfield Peppard

☎ 01491-628603

Roman Catholic

St Michaels Church, Peppard Road, Sonning Common

18 Peppard Road

Sonning Common

☎ 0118-9723418

Evangelical

Sonning Common Free Church, Grove Road, Sonning Common

13 Hemdean Rise

Caversham

☎ 0118-9470152

Congregational

Peppard Congregational Church, Blounts Court Road, Sonning Common

The Manse

Blounts Court Road

Sonning Common

☎ 0118-9724389

Methodist

The Methodist Church, Highmoor Road, Caversham Heights

72 Highmoor Road

Caversham

☎ 0118-9472223

