

BURE PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL

**CRITICAL INCIDENTS AND EMERGENCY
PLANNING POLICY**



Learning, Caring, Growing, Sharing

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Next Review	February 2027
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CRITICAL INCIDENTS AND EMERGENCY PLANNING POLICY

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish a clear framework for the effective management of Critical Incidents at Bure Park Primary School. The policy seeks to minimise risk, reduce harm, and ensure a coordinated and proportionate response in order to safeguard pupils, staff, and visitors, while maintaining confidence within the wider school community.

By implementing the procedures outlined in this policy, the school aims to provide a safe, secure, and well-managed environment. In the event of a Critical Incident, the school will take all reasonable and practicable steps to:

- Prevent or minimise loss of life and serious injury to pupils, staff, and others on the school premises;
 - Ensure the prompt notification of relevant parties, including the emergency services, the Local Authority, parents/carers, and the Governing Body;
 - Establish immediate control and coordination of the situation until the arrival of the emergency services or other relevant agencies;
 - Minimise disruption to the education and welfare of pupils;
 - Provide appropriate pastoral and practical support to pupils, staff, and parents following an incident;
 - Manage communication effectively, including liaison with the media where necessary.
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2. Definition of a Critical Incident

A Critical Incident is defined as a sudden, unexpected event or series of events that has the potential to cause significant harm or disruption to the school community. Such incidents may occur on or off the school premises and may involve pupils, staff, or others associated with the school.

An incident may be classified as critical where it results in, or is likely to result in:

- Serious injury or loss of life;
- Significant disruption to the normal operation of the school;
- Substantial public, parental, or media interest.

The school recognises that it is neither possible nor appropriate to produce a specific written plan for every conceivable emergency. Consequently, staff training and preparedness focus on a flexible, principles-based approach supported by clear lines of communication and responsibility.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

Core staff training includes regular review and discussion of procedures for responding to common emergency situations, including (but not limited to):

- Deliberate acts of violence;
- Fire or explosion;
- Serious vandalism or destruction of school property;
- Public health incidents (e.g. meningitis).

Where a Critical Incident relates primarily to damage to school buildings or infrastructure, Oxfordshire County Council will ordinarily assume the lead role in managing the incident, in collaboration with the school and other relevant agencies.

Where a Critical Incident relates primarily to people, including serious injury or death, the school will normally take the lead role, supported as appropriate by the Local Authority and external agencies.

4. Examples of Critical Incidents

4.1 In-School Critical Incidents

- Serious accident involving a pupil or member of staff
- Death of a pupil or member of staff
- Traffic accident involving a pupil or staff member
- Violence or assault on school premises
- Fire or explosion
- Significant damage to, or destruction of, part of the school building
- Abduction of a pupil
- Pupils absconding from school
- Serious illness affecting the school or local community (e.g. meningitis)
- Severe weather requiring partial or full school closure
- Bomb threat
- Terrorist alert
- Aircraft crash on or near the school site
- Major transport incident affecting the school or local community

4.2 Out-of-School Critical Incidents

- Serious accident involving a pupil or member of staff during an educational visit or swimming activity
- Death or serious injury during a school journey
- Major incidents involving pupils from multiple schools
- Civil disturbance impacting the school community

5. Key Considerations in Managing a Critical Incident

In responding to a Critical Incident, the school will address the following three interrelated areas concurrently:

- The immediate management of the incident itself;
- The impact of the incident on the school community, including pupils, staff, and families;
- The wider public and reputational impact, including communication with the media.

6. Practice Within School

Class teachers and support staff play a critical role in the immediate and ongoing management of Critical Incidents and are often best placed to support pupils in their care. Staff are expected to exercise professional judgement and act in the best interests of pupils at all times.

Effective internal communication is essential to the successful management of any emergency. While detailed planning for every scenario is not possible, the school's generic Critical Incident framework provides a clear and consistent basis for decision-making during the initial stages of an incident and supports the development of an appropriate and proportionate response.

7. Critical Incidents Team

A key component of this policy is the identification of the membership, roles, and responsibilities of the Critical Incidents Team. This team is responsible for overseeing, coordinating, and directing the school's response to a Critical Incident, including the recovery phase.

The purpose of the Critical Incidents Team is to ensure that any incident is managed in a structured, proportionate, and effective manner in order to:

- Safeguard the health, safety, and welfare of pupils, staff, visitors, and other users of the school premises;
- Minimise loss or damage to the school in physical, human, and financial terms;
- Manage the incident so as to reduce disruption to the normal operation of the school;
- Liaise effectively with external agencies, including emergency services and the media, as appropriate.

8. Composition of the Critical Incidents Team

The Critical Incidents Team will normally comprise the following personnel:

- Headteacher (Designated Safeguarding Lead)
- Chair of Governors
- Deputy Headteacher
- School Business Manager
- Health and Safety / Premises Governor

Additional members may be co-opted to the team depending on the nature and scale of the incident.

9. Responsibilities of the Critical Incidents Team

Depending on the circumstances of the incident, the Critical Incidents Team may be required to undertake the following responsibilities:

- Undertake and review risk assessments relating to hazards and situations requiring emergency action;
- Analyse operational requirements to address identified hazards and risks;
- Establish and maintain liaison with relevant emergency services and external agencies;
- Develop, implement, and oversee an effective incident management and recovery plan;
- Ensure the dissemination of agreed procedures to staff;
- Coordinate the communication of accurate and timely information to:
 - all staff;
 - parents and carers;
 - pupils, in an age-appropriate manner;
- Manage communications with:
 - the Chair of Governors and the Governing Body;
 - the Local Authority;
 - the media, where appropriate;
- Organise and oversee practice drills to test the effectiveness of the plan;
- Undertake a bi-annual review of this policy;
- Support the Headteacher in all aspects of the implementation of the Critical Incident Plan.

10. Procedures During a Critical Incident

The following procedures will be implemented during a Critical Incident:

1. **Notification**

The Headteacher, or in their absence the Deputy Headteacher, must be informed of any Critical Incident as soon as reasonably practicable.

2. **Initial Response and Coordination**

Once an incident is confirmed, the Critical Incidents Team will convene at the earliest opportunity to assess the situation and agree immediate and longer-term strategies.

3. **Liaison with External Agencies**

Arrangements will be made for staff directly involved to meet with relevant enforcement and regulatory agencies (e.g. Police, Health and Safety Executive, Environmental Health). The Emergency Manager will be present where appropriate. The team will agree what information may be shared with parents, governors, and the media.

4. **Staff Briefing**

A staff meeting will be convened to:

- provide verified factual information about the incident;
- outline available support for staff;
- agree consistent messaging for pupils and external stakeholders;
- provide a prepared statement for staff use, where necessary.

5. **Support for Staff**

Appropriate support agencies will be engaged to provide assistance to staff members directly affected by the incident.

6. **Communication with Pupils**

Pupils not directly involved in the incident will be informed in small, age-appropriate groups, with sensitivity to their emotional wellbeing.

7. **Interviews and Investigations**

Appropriate arrangements will be made to facilitate interviews by emergency or investigative agencies. Pupils will be supported and accompanied by a parent or a senior member of staff at all times.

11. Action Plan for Major Incidents

In the event of a major incident, the following procedures will be implemented in a timely and coordinated manner:

1. **Initial Assessment**

The situation will be assessed promptly to determine the nature, scale, and immediate risks associated with the incident.

2. **Notification of Senior Leadership**

The Headteacher, or in their absence the Deputy Headteacher, must be informed as soon as reasonably practicable.

3. **Activation of the Critical Incidents Team**
The Critical Incidents Team will be convened without delay to coordinate the school's response.
4. **Notification of Key External Stakeholders**
The Chair of Governors and the Oxfordshire County Council Director for Children and Adult Services will be informed immediately.
5. **Information Gathering and Recording**
All available information will be collected, verified, recorded, and communicated accurately to relevant parties. A clear record of decisions and actions taken will be maintained throughout the incident.
6. **Communication Management**
Two designated communication channels will be identified:
 - o the school telephone line for receiving incoming calls;
 - o a designated mobile telephone for outgoing communications and internal staff use.
7. **Enquiries Management**
Where appropriate, the school office or an identified area will be designated for handling enquiries.
8. **Parental Communication**
The school will use the most up-to-date next-of-kin and emergency contact records to inform parents and carers of affected pupils as a priority.
9. **Documentation**
All actions, decisions, communications, and timelines will be formally recorded.
10. **Media Management**
The Headteacher will act as the sole point of contact within the school for media enquiries. No other staff member should engage with the press or media. Media communication will ordinarily be coordinated and undertaken by the County Council's Public Relations team, recognising that school staff will be focused on managing the incident and supporting pupils and colleagues.
11. **Site Access Control**
Access to the school premises by press or television representatives will not be permitted during an incident.

Critical Incident – Action Plan Timing

This table outlines the recommended **timescales for key actions** following a critical incident. All timings are **guidelines** and may be adjusted according to the nature and severity of the incident.

<u>Action</u>	<u>Timescale</u>
Obtain factual information at the outset	Within hours
Convene a meeting of Senior Staff with support personnel	Within hours

<u>Action</u>	<u>Timescale</u>
Advise the Director of Education	Within hours
Convene the Critical Incidents Team	Within hours
Contact affected families	Immediately
Call a staff meeting to provide information	Same day, if possible
Inform students in small groups	Same day, if possible
Arrange a debriefing meeting for staff directly involved	Same day, if possible
Arrange a debriefing meeting for students directly involved	Same day, if possible
Identify high-risk students and staff	Following day
Promote discussion in classes	Over following days and weeks
Identify the need for group or individual support/intervention	Over following days and weeks
Organise counselling or professional support	As required
Mark anniversaries discreetly	Annually

Notes:

- All actions should be documented and recorded in line with the school's **Critical Incident Policy**.
- Timescales may be shortened in exceptional circumstances, depending on the **urgency and impact** of the incident.
- Staff should remain alert to emerging needs among students and colleagues beyond the initial response period.

12. Inclement and Severe Weather Resulting in School Closure

12.1 Closure Before the Start of the School Day

In the event of inclement or severe weather conditions that may require the closure of the school before the start of the school day, the Headteacher will consult with the Chair of Governors as the first point of contact in order to assess local conditions and associated risks.

Where a decision to close the school is taken, the Headteacher will inform the Deputy Headteacher and the Premises Manager, who will disseminate relevant information to their respective staff teams.

The School Business Manager will notify local radio stations to broadcast the school closure. Parents and staff will also be advised to check the school website for up-to-date information, which will be published as soon as possible.

12.2 Closure During the School Day

Where severe weather develops during school hours and necessitates the closure of the school, the Headteacher will assess the prevailing local and surrounding area conditions and determine whether continued operation of the school is safe.

The Headteacher will seek consent from the Chair of Governors prior to authorising closure.

Class teachers and/or Teaching Assistants will contact parents or carers of pupils in their class to arrange for collection as soon as reasonably practicable. Pupils will remain under appropriate supervision at all times.

Once the safety and supervision of pupils has been secured, staff with longer or more hazardous commuting distances may be permitted to leave, subject to the requirement that adequate supervision for all pupils remains in place.

Parents and staff will be advised to check the school website for further updates and guidance at: **bureparkprimary.org**

13. Major Emergency or Fire on or Around the School Site

In the event of a major emergency or fire on or around the school site, the following procedures will be implemented:

1. **Emergency Leadership**
The most senior member of staff present will assume the role of Emergency Manager. When the school is unoccupied, this responsibility may be undertaken by a nominated member of the Governing Body.
2. **Situation Assessment**
An immediate assessment of the situation will be undertaken to determine the nature and level of risk.
3. **Emergency Services**
The emergency services will be contacted without delay.

4. **First Aid**
Emergency first aid will be administered by trained staff, in accordance with school procedures.
 5. **Evacuation Procedures**
Where appropriate, the building will be evacuated using the continuous fire alarm. Fire evacuation procedures and routes are displayed in all rooms throughout the school.
 6. **Assembly and Supervision**
Pupils will remain together in their class groups at the designated fire assembly point. Under no circumstances should anyone re-enter the building until it is declared safe to do so.
 7. **Alternative Assembly Points**
If the designated assembly point is deemed unsafe, pupils will be relocated to the nearest safe area within the school grounds, under the direction of the Fire Marshal in consultation with the Headteacher.
 8. **Off-Site Evacuation**
If the wider area becomes unsafe (for example, as a result of an aircraft incident), the Emergency Manager and/or Fire Marshal will instruct staff to evacuate the site. Pupils will be escorted safely to Bicester Emmanuel Church, Bure Park, or, if this location is unsuitable, the local nature reserve. Teachers must ensure that pupil emergency contact details are collected prior to leaving classrooms.
 9. **Pupil Supervision and Release**
Pupils must not leave the care of their class teacher or the appointed supervising adult except when collected by a parent or carer.
 10. **Parental Communication**
Where practicable, parents and carers will be contacted by the Emergency Manager and advised of the appropriate course of action.
 11. **Notification of Authorities**
The Local Authority, Chair of Governors, and members of the Governing Body will be informed as soon as reasonably practicable.
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14. Bomb Threat Management

14.1 Staff Responsibilities

All staff have a responsibility to:

- Be familiar with the procedures to be followed in the event of a bomb threat and take appropriate and immediate action;
 - Be vigilant and know how to respond appropriately if a suspicious package or letter is discovered.
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14.2 Procedure Instructions

14.2.1 Action in the Event of a Bomb Threat Alert

These procedures set out the actions to be taken in the event of a bomb threat affecting any school building or school-managed property.

All actions arising from a bomb threat will be coordinated by the Headteacher or, in their absence, the Deputy Headteacher or the most senior member of staff present on site.

14.3 Dealing with Telephone Bomb Threats

Bomb threats are frequently, though not exclusively, communicated via telephone. Such threats may be made by individuals or groups for a range of motives and may include hoax calls. Any threat indicating that all or part of the school premises may be at risk must be taken seriously.

In all cases, regardless of whether the threat is believed to be credible, the following actions must be taken immediately:

- Contact the Police without delay and provide full details of the call;
- Initiate a search of the premises, in line with Police guidance;
- Consider, in consultation with the Police, whether evacuation of the premises is necessary.

It is essential that the Police are informed immediately in all cases where a bomb threat is received.

14.4 Receiving and Managing a Threatening Call

Responding to a bomb threat call may involve complex decision-making. It is therefore essential that the person receiving the call remains calm and attempts to obtain as much relevant information as possible.

The person receiving the call should:

- Remain calm and listen carefully;
- Attempt to gather as much information as possible from the caller;
- Note any details shown on the caller display, or use the *1471* facility where available;
- Record the content of the call as accurately as possible, including the time, tone, background noises, and any distinguishing features of the caller's voice.

The call must be reported immediately to the Headteacher or, in their absence, the Deputy Headteacher.

14.5 Information Gathering and Reporting

The caller may terminate the call abruptly after delivering the threat. However, staff should still attempt to record all available information and document the details as fully as possible.

In all instances where a bomb threat is received, the Headteacher or nominated Deputy must:

- Inform the Police immediately;
 - Advise the Police of any actions already taken;
 - Follow Police guidance regarding evacuation, searches, and further communication.
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15. Lockdown Procedure

15.1 Definition of a Lockdown

A lockdown is implemented when there is a significant security risk to the school premises. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- A chemical spillage nearby;
 - The presence of dangerous animals in the vicinity;
 - Attempted access by unauthorised persons with intent to cause harm or damage.
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15.2 Circumstances That May Trigger a Lockdown

A lockdown may be initiated in response to situations such as:

- An out-of-control pupil posing a threat to themselves or others;
 - The presence of an individual carrying a weapon or firearm;
 - An intruder on or near the premises;
 - Hazardous chemicals or substances in the surrounding area;
 - Severe or dangerous weather conditions.
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15.3 Notification of Lockdown

Staff and pupils will be notified that a lockdown is in effect by the **sounding of the school fire alarm three times consecutively**. This signal indicates that lockdown procedures must commence immediately.
