

GLC CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY

This policy was ratified by the GLC Board of Directors on :	Summer 2024
This Policy will be reviewed by the GLC Board on :	Summer 2027

GLC Mission Statement

The GLC's mission is to develop active and thriving citizens within a diverse, truly fair and equal community.

This will be achieved through:

- High quality teaching that deliberately develops competencies of curiosity, creativity, communication and critical-thinking;
- An inspiring and meaningful curriculum;
- The development of productive relationships by instilling the values of compassion, resilience, responsibility and aspiration to prepare our young people for learning and life;
- A commitment to the wellbeing of our staff;
- A culture of professional generosity, collaboration, challenge and support throughout the GLC;
- The development of effective external partnerships for the benefit and wellbeing of our community.

Equalities Statement

The GLC's commitment to equality is enshrined in our mission statement to develop 'active and thriving citizens within a diverse, truly fair and equal community'.

We are a vibrant, innovative and successful organisation: we work hard to be the place of choice to work and to learn. Across the 5 academies of the GLC, we pledge that everyone enjoys an equality of opportunity. We work tirelessly to ensure that individual characteristics including age, ethnicity, socio-economic background, academic ability, disability, gender, religious beliefs, sexual orientation are not discriminated against in any way. We create inclusive environments characterised by mutual respect where difference is celebrated.

GLC Critical Incident Policy

What is a critical incident?

A critical incident is an **'Unexpected occurrence, which may suddenly have a major impact on one or all academies within the GLC. It may overwhelm the normal coping strategies and strengths of those involved'**. Critical incidents are situations or crises that are beyond the everyday experiences of academy life that are likely to be distressing to a significant number of adults and children.

Preventative and precautionary measures

Whilst no amount of planning can totally prevent accidents and problems occurring, it is hoped that some can be prevented and the effects of others minimised by taking sensible precautionary measures. It is expected that:

- All GLC staff and pupils should be familiar with their GLC academy's routines for fire and bomb evacuations;
- All staff should be familiar with the routines and procedures for dealing with emergencies [as detailed in this policy];
- All staff and pupils should be familiar with the academy's security procedures, in particular that all visitors not wearing a visitor's badge should be questioned and escorted to reception;
- All staff organising academy trips and visits follow the guidelines and write a risk assessment to be signed off by the Head of School and in specific cases, the GLC Board of Directors;
- All staff should sign in and out of the premises;
- All relevant staff are aware of pupils with medical needs or health problems;
- All staff are aware that they should assess associated risks to children before carrying out a curriculum or other activity;
- All staff are aware that they are responsible for assessing risks to themselves before undertaking an activity.

Critical Incidents may include:

- Arson attacks;
- Major fires;
- Significant vandalism;
- The sudden death, on site, of a pupil or member of staff;
- Pupil suicides and sudden deaths within the community;
- Violent attacks on pupils and/or staff members;
- Incidents involving an intruder, believed to be armed, on academy premises;
- Road traffic accidents, involving fatalities within the community;
- Abductions / disappearances;
- Allegations or actual incidents of abuse against pupils by staff and staff against pupils;
- Incidents involving the murder of academy children that attracted the attention of national and international media over prolonged periods;
- A civil disturbance or terrorism;
- Floods.

In the event of such an incident the priorities of GLC staff must be able to :

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

The GLC Critical Incident Management Team [CIMT] will be comprise from the following:

- CEO : Viki Reid
- Head of School : Grainne McLaughlin
- Head of School : Dan George
- Head of School: Sam Otto
- Head of School: Clare Hall
- Head of School: Emma Pattison
- Other senior staff from the affected school [as decided by the Head of School]
- GLC Premises Officer : Jo Jones
- Communications Officer: Claire Couves

The GLC Academy [where the critical incident takes place] will have senior staff that will join the CIMT.

NB. The Head of School of the academy where the incident takes place will chair the meeting. If the incident affects more than one academy, the CEO will act as Chair. If the CEO is unavailable, the deputy CEO will act as Chair. In the case where both are absent the heads of school will decide between them, who is best to take charge.

The GLC's reaction to a critical incident can be divided into the following categories:

- a) Immediate action;
- b) Short term action;
- c) Medium term action;
- d) Longer term action;

IMMEDIATE ACTION – i.e. within an hour of the incident occurring

1. Obtain and collate information relating to the incident – uncertainty breeds rumour and accurate information is essential;
2. Gather and brief the CIMT [Critical Incident Management Team] – brief the team, allocate roles and responsibilities;
3. Take immediate action to ensure young people and staff are safe;
4. Trigger support from the Police, Fire Service, the Local Authority [LA] and other contacts on the emergency as necessary – the CIMT Chair will decide who is going to contact whom;
5. Establish a centre of communications with direct phone lines to each member of the CIMT [NB if the incident requires an evacuation, the communications centre will be located at another GLC site]. From here the communications officer will quickly establish a real-time line to the GLC website to provide accurate and timely information to parents and the public. Where possible the communications officer will send messages to the phones of parents advising them of an incident and directing them to the GLC website.
6. When the position is stabilised the CIMT may wish to send a letter to parents, or prepare a leaflet providing more detailed information, advice and guidance;
7. Contact any parents that may be directly affected by the incident – this must be done quickly and with sensitivity. Consistency of information is vital. It may be appropriate for families to come to their GLC Academy and where immediate emotional support can be provided;
8. GLC Academy staff will refer any media enquiries to the chair of the CIMT. It is vital that all staff in contact with pupils are kept well informed and feel secure in handling comments or questions from pupils.
9. **In the case of an evacuation:**
 - All staff and young people will evacuate the building as regularly practiced in fire or bomb drills;
 - Once all young people have been accounted for, they will be briefed on the incident and invited to call their parents if they have a phone [during this call parents should be directed to the GLC website for detailed information];

- A decision will be made by the chair of the CIMT how long it is reasonable for young people to be detained in the evacuation areas e.g. if the evacuation takes place during a heavy downpour, it would be sensible to make immediate arrangements to send the young people home. NB it is vital that this is done in a controlled manner so that all young people are safe. Young people will remain with their teachers if they cannot be safely sent home. [For Gateway Academy and Gateway Primary Free School where a site is please see Annex 1];
- On the evacuation site, a medical area will be established. Any young person, with a medical condition will be able to go to this area [once they have been registered] to seek medical attention from a first aid officer.

10. In the event of a lockdown on the site:

- **A tannoy announcement** will be made as follows:
- **'[Head of school name] has instructed a lock-down of all areas of the building. Will all staff please take the necessary actions until further notice';**
- **This will be immediately followed by an email/phone call to the CEO, Heads of School/all staff.** These will initiate a lock-down of the building of the school in question. Staff will lock doors internally and keep pupils away from classroom windows until an 'all clear' announcement has been made. Where doors cannot be locked from the inside a desk should be jammed against the door to prevent entry. In the case of the Free School where classrooms do not have doors, staff should block the corridors;
- **Pupils and adults who are not in the building [for example at play or PE] should follow the national recommendation to Run, Hide, Tell; staff where possible, will convey this to all those in outside spaces;**
- **The CEO will notify the emergency services on the behalf of the affected school;**
- This policy can't account for every eventuality. We expect colleagues to use their professional judgement as appropriate.

11. In cases where an evacuation is not required:

- Inform young people of the incident, as necessary – this can be done in small or large groups depending on which is most appropriate. Care needs to be exercised to protect both children and/or adults closely involved in the incident. It is important that children receive a consistent account of the incident allowing for differences in their ability to understand;
- Secure professional support as necessary;

12. Deal with the media – an approved statement for release should be prepared by the CIMT and a designated spokesperson briefed and prepared to respond on the academy's behalf.

13. Devise a plan for handling the reactions and feelings of people. CIMT need to consider outside professionals to support and debrief staff and pupils affected by the incident. Those providing support may also need support. At this point the CIMT will need to plan for their short term reaction to the incident.

SHORT TERM ACTION – the next stage, depending on the incident, this may include:

1. A reunion of children with their families – especially where the incident occurs outside the academy. Usually children will need to be brought home, but sometimes parents and families need to visit the scene of the incident to understand how they deal with repercussions in terms of children's fears etc.
2. Managing staff – support needs to be organised for all staff, preferably from within the academy, but using outside agencies if appropriate. Staff monitoring should be a priority, even members of the CIMT. If a crisis persists over many hours staff become tired, weary and upset and this affects their powers to make sensible decisions.
3. Encourage pupils to talk – activate strategies for enabling young people to talk about the incident, and their feelings, using outside agencies if appropriate. Staff will need briefing about ways to help the children affected by the incident, and how to identify patterns of behaviour etc. This may have implications for the wider curriculum i.e. training in bereavement counselling for staff, provision of a range of books, PSHE discussions etc.

4. **Debriefing meeting – it may be appropriate to hold a debriefing meeting for staff, children and parents to:**

- Clarify what has happened;
- Allow for sharing reactions;
- Reassure people that reactions are normal;
- Mobilise resources, e.g. parental support groups.

An experienced person, possibly someone from outside the GLC, should lead this meeting.

5. **Formal and informal recognition**

- It is important to remember to express sympathy to families of the hurt or bereaved;
- Visits to children/staff in hospital. Pupils may wish to send cards and letters;
- The Academy may also need to consider attendance at funerals, and/or the desirability of holding special assemblies or memorial services. Anniversaries are also key times when support and sensitivity are required.

6. **Re-establishing routines**

Every attempt should be made to provide continuity for the children. The return to GLC academy of staff or pupils directly affected by the crisis will need to be managed carefully and with sensitivity but the re-establishment of routine is an important stage in emotional recovery.

MEDIUM TERM ACTION

1. Return to the GLC academy for staff or pupils after long absence – reintegration will need to be planned carefully, and may involve home visits prior to return, part time attendance initially, reducing workloads, putting in place mentoring process etc;
2. Consulting professionals – consideration should be given to consulting the Educational Psychology Service for support and guidance, especially to help those showing unusual or prolonged reaction to the incident;
3. Keeping parents informed – it may be appropriate to produce a leaflet for parents giving guidance on the possible delayed reactions of pupils to an incident and making suggestions to help them deal with these;
4. Support for staff – on-going monitoring and support for staff is a major consideration. CIMT especially will not be immune to reaction from their ordeal.

LONG TERM ACTION

1. **Monitoring the vulnerable**

The effects of a crisis can reverberate for years, and it is especially important that new staff and pupils are briefed in the GLC's history to help them understand and deal with potential repercussions especially at anniversary times;

2. **Marking anniversaries**

These difficult times need to be treated with sensitivity. Some suggestions for GLC academies to mark anniversaries are by annual concerts, memorial services, memorial prize giving ceremonies, memorial gardens etc.

3. **Legal processes**

The length of time taken over some legal processes can prolong the recovery process following a critical incident. CIMT may need to plan for this, especially where staff involved may be attending legal processes and facing extended emotional trauma. Curriculum implications – it may be appropriate to schedule INSET training for staff in loss counselling, bereavement etc.

Guidance for GLC staff in the event of a major incident on an academy site:

- Obtain facts and information;
- Inform the CEO/Head of School or a senior member of staff;
- In the event of a fire, activate the alarm at the nearest alarm point;
- In the event of an injury, send someone to alert the medical team;
- Complete paperwork as appropriate.

Guidance for GLC staff in the event of a major incident off site:

- Obtain the facts and information;
- Administer first aid as appropriate;
- Inform a responsible person at the location to seek their support;
- Establish a contact with the emergency services;
- Allocate responsibilities so that all other pupils are safe;
- Inform the CEO/Head of School for advice and to make contact with parents/ carers;
- Keep a record of witnesses;
- Travel with any casualties to hospital;
- Meet relatives at hospital to pass over responsibility and provide update information;
- Complete paperwork as appropriate.

Annex 1 Evacuation of academies on a shared site

The Gateway Academy and Gateway Primary Free School share a site. The following details the process for evacuation of all pupils from the site:

In the event of a full evacuation:

- When a decision has been made to fully evacuate the site, all forms of communication will be exploited to inform parents as quickly as possible;
- All pupils will follow the evacuation process as practised during their regular drills. Once all pupils have been registered, an instruction will be made for siblings to move to a designated place;
- Secondary pupils [assembled on the Hard Court] will be dismissed first. Pupils who are unable to get home will remain with Gateway staff;
- Primary pupils with secondary siblings [who have permission to escort the young children home will be dismissed by the GPFS Head of School];
- Primary pupils [including those remaining with secondary siblings] will be escorted to the Hard Court by their teachers. They will stand in class order with their teachers, waiting for their parents to arrive [secondary aged students who have not left will be held here too];
- Senior staff will be allocated to the 'field gates' on St Chad's Road to safely see the students off the site and to direct parents where they should go to collect their children [staff will include key senior leaders from both schools so that they can allay the fears of parents].
- Parents will enter the Hard Court as directed by another member of staff and will be held back from the main body of pupils [so that good order can be maintained]. The class teacher will make the connection with the parent and release the child to the authorised adult.