

**Oxfordshire Educational**

**Psychology Service**

**Support for Schools Following a Critical Incident**

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Contact us: 01865 323532

educationalpsychologycentral@oxfordshire.gov.uk

www.schools.oxfordshire.gov.uk/special-educational-needs/educational-psychology-service

**When will the educational psychology service be involved?**

A critical incident can be defined as a sudden, unexpected event that is distressing to pupils and/or staff. It may involve violence against members of the school, a serious accident or the sudden death of a colleague or child, or it could be that the school is subjected to major vandalism or attack.

In the event of a critical incident being reported to the Educational Psychology Service (EPS) an Educational Psychologist (EP) will contact the school(s) whose pupils have been affected, or who are likely to be affected by the event to explore what support is appropriate.

**What will the support include?**

* Support for senior staff who are dealing directly with distressed pupils, parents or staff.
* Discussion of the needs of the children and staff.
* Review of the skills and resources available in the school.
* Advice or information for parents and staff on supporting children who have experienced a critical incident.
* Advice or information for teachers on strategies which are helpful to colleagues who have been affected.
* Advice on the management of grief and loss in school, including coping with strong emotions such as anger, and providing sympathetic and effective pastoral care.



**What action does the school need to take?**

* Schools can contact the EPS for advice during working hours
* Schools should also inform the Education Safeguarding Advisory Team (ESAT)
* The person first contacted will need to advise the EPS of the following:
1. Your name and position
2. Which school you are from
3. The nature of the incident
4. Where the incident happened
5. The people involved
6. Contact details for return calls
* Telephone contact will be established by an EP on the same day, when possible, to arrange the appropriate level of involvement from the EPS.
* If the school has an EP, they may not be part of the team that works directly on the critical incident, but they will always be kept informed and will usually be involved in planning the response with the school.

**Aim:**

To enable schools to deal effectively with the initial impact of a critical incident or emergency by supporting the senior management of the school with:

* The re-establishment of normal routines
* Ensuring effective communication with the school community including parents
* Identifying vulnerable individuals (pupils and staff) who may need more support
* Accessing appropriate support if necessary

The EPS has supported many schools through difficult and distressing incidents and is able to share helpful information and good practice as a result.



**Objectives:**

*Normalisation* – helping those involved realise that their physical, mental and emotional reactions are entirely normal and this it is the incident that is abnormal.

*Exploration of the event* – through the airing of feelings and sharing of information.

*Understanding the event* – making sense of the experience and putting it into context.

*Confirming and supporting* existing ways of coping.

*Mobilisation* *of resources* to develop new ways of coping.

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