



TEFAT Critical Incident Manual

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1. Foreword

This manual is one that all schools will hope they never have to use. Indeed, many schools may never have to deal with a situation that might be classified as a “critical incident”.

However, experience indicates that in The Elliot Foundation Academies Trust it is likely that at least one very serious or critical incident will take place during the course of any one year that may involve one or more schools.

This manual has been devised to take account of recent incidents and to provide schools with guidance and support information on how such incidents may be handled. This ranges from initial planning and documentation that can be prepared, through the immediate handling and reporting of an incident, to the after effects and how these can be sympathetically and effectively dealt with.

The information contained in this manual has been drawn from a number of sources and experiences. In particular, with input from Head Teachers and Principals who have dealt with critical incidents themselves or have a particular interest in developing this guidance. Their assistance has been very important and is greatly appreciated.

We have involved all TEFAT directorates, Council’s Emergency Planning Officers, Principals, governors, unions and professional association representatives, on a draft of this manual to create this final document.

Your Action: It is vital to ensure that your contingency plans and procedures are up to date and in place. Use this document as a template and add the contact details and steps that are needed for your school

Hugh Greenway
CEO
The Elliot Foundation Academies Trust

2. Introduction

A critical incident may be defined as a situation involving trauma, fatality or serious injury to an individual or serious damage to property. By its nature such an incident is sudden, unpredictable and outside the range of normal human experience. Such events are normally very distressing to pupils and staff. Infrequently, a serious crisis may affect your academy. It can happen on the premises or may involve pupils and or staff when they are away. Sometimes, a disaster affecting the wider community may have a significant effect on your academy. Examples of some of the critical incidents that have happened over the last few years include:

- A fatal stabbing of a secondary pupil with siblings in your school
- Attempted suicides of staff and/or pupils on premises
- The violent non-accidental death of a whole family with primary age children
- A serious, accidental injury of a primary age pupil on academy premises
- Deaths of pupils as a result of long-term illness
- The sudden, unexpected death of a young teacher
- The murder of parents of primary age children
- The kidnapping of a primary aged pupil

These may seem very shocking but are only listed to illustrate to colleagues that it is important to be 'wise before the event'.

In the event of a crisis like this there can be three aspects to deal with at once:

- The critical incident itself
- The impact on your academy as a community
- The public impact of the incident, including how it is reported in the media

This guide has been prepared to assist Principals and academy staff to deal effectively with critical incidents. It will ensure that you are clear about the response to a crisis at an academy and will have:

- A detailed, comprehensive emergency plan to follow
- Clear guidance on whom to notify in The Elliot Foundation Academies Trust (TEFAT) and the local authority with contact numbers readily available
- Guidance on the kind of help available
- Guidance on dealing with the media
- Guidance on funeral rites across different cultures
- Lists of useful resources

3. Whom to contact

In the event of a critical incident please inform Emergency Services and ensure all staff and pupils are in a place of safety.

Inform TEFAT and the local authority as soon as possible. The first three TEFAT names on the contact list are your initial contacts. However, if you are unable to get a response please continue down the list:

Please note the contact list will be updated as and when necessary. All updates will be available on the Elliot Foundation website and academies will be informed.

Initial contacts for all emergencies in and out of hours:

Emergency Services		Contact number
Fire		999
Police		999
Ambulance		999

Elliot Foundation	Designation	Contact number
Hugh Greenway	CEO	07881 916376
Mary Gavigan	Director of Finance (interim)	07506 702979
Jem Shuttleworth	Director of Governance & Policy	07510 308980
Ruth Dickens	HR Director	07714 445393
Caroline Oliver	Regional Director	07504 001956
Simon Adams	Regional Director	07833 730571

Travis Latham	Mids Regional Director	07894 583965
Trish Martin	FM & Estates Director	07766 116211
TEFAT Central Office		0207 278 7131
Local authority		
	Director of Children's Services	
	Health and safety	
	Principal Educational Psychologist	
	Communications (media) unit	
	LADO	
School		
	Chair of local governing body	
	Relevant Community faith leaders	Eg: Parish priest

4. Rapid checklist

NB actions will depend on the nature of the incident.

Ensure that a full log is kept of all actions taken as they happen as well as all information received **appendix 4. “Who - what – where – when”**

	Ensure that all staff and pupils are in a place of safety and security
	Call emergency services (Fire, Ambulance, Police)
	Ensure that all staff and pupils are accounted for
	Inform the Elliot Foundation designated officer or a TEFAT officer from the list
	Inform the Chair of the Governing Body and other governors ASAP
	Activate the CRITICAL INCIDENT SUPPORT TEAM
	Arrange who will deal with the media, give interviews, release statements
	Contact parents be clear and consistent on the messages used
	Ensure that there are suitable phones available for outgoing calls
	Decide if there is a need to contact community or religious leaders
	Decide if counselling support is needed for staff and/or pupils
	Ensure that there is constant and consistent communication with staff
	Consider arrangements for academy meals
	Consider whether transport arrangements need to be altered
	Consider, as soon as possible, a schedule for recovery
	If appropriate, determine the funeral arrangements and decide which staff and pupils will attend

5. Critical incident planning checklist

	<p>Create your Critical Incident Response Team</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● parent liaison ● governor liaison ● press liaison and communications including web updates ● staff liaison ● liaison across the site(s) ● school continuity ● management support for the incident
	<p>Keep Critical Incident Contact list (section 3) up to date</p>
	<p>Keep under regular review all personal data for pupils, staff & others so that timely communication can take place</p>
	<p>Ensure all staff & governors are made aware of Critical Incident Response activities – training if required.</p>
	<p>Have available all local sites which could be used for respite or refuge.</p>
	<p>Ensure that communication channels and their use to parents and others are agreed and understood.</p>
	<p>Know all passwords to enable access to web pages for rapid updating of key messages</p>

6. Crisis management

Stage 1 - Initial response

Who, What, Where, When, How, Why?

Open and continue to maintain a personal log of all factual information received, actions taken and the time and date of these events. This is essential for many reasons: to have an accurate record for further investigations that might take place and includes the need to give parents, pupils, staff and the media accurate information.

Immediately after a critical incident the Principal or Deputy Principal should gather as much information as possible, we suggest you use the log at Appendix 4.

This should include:

- Clear details of exactly **what** happened
- **Where and when** (date and time the incident occurred)
- **Which** emergency services have been contacted
- On-site: Whether there is any continuing danger and what has been done to mitigate this.
- Off-site: **What help** have you requested and from whom?
- The names of those injured and the extent of the injuries
- The current location of those injured with the names and contact numbers of the adults present
- The names and location of any **witnesses** including pupils **who were** involved but not injured with the names and contact numbers of the adults present.

Stage 2 - Assess continuing risk

If there is any continuing risk the priority must be to safeguard the welfare of the children and adults. It is important to ensure that any immediate action to protect people or property does not give rise to any further risk.

Stage 3 - The critical incident support team

The Principal will take charge of events, using the Critical Incident Support Team. It is essential that academies will have considered the possible composition of such a team in discussions

with staff and governors in advance of any critical incident occurring. Refer to Section 5. The composition of the team is open to different permutations depending on the Critical Incident. The team will not necessarily comprise all of the senior management team in the academy, but might usefully involve representatives of the wider academy community, such as office staff and the caretaker.

Roles to be considered:

- parent liaison
- governor liaison
- press liaison
- staff liaison
- liaison across the site(s)
- school continuity
- management support for the incident

The emergency room

An emergency room may be useful if so it should be laid out so that operators have clear desk space with telephones. Noise could be a problem if people are too cramped. It should be possible to hold briefing sessions. If appropriate, crucial maps and charts should be on display for all to see.

Support

Support is available from various sources. In some sorts of emergencies police specialists may become centrally involved with the academy. Support may also be offered from local community and religious groups.

Communications

The needs of the crisis may place a great strain on existing communication. Refer to Section 3a. Communication channels and their use should be agreed and understood. additional spare mobile phones for the academy could be a sensible contingency.

Public information

Information released from the academy should be accurate and consistent. It will be **helpful if a policy is already in place** covering joint arrangements between the Principal and the governors for the release of information to parents, general enquiries and the media.

Sensitive issues

Special steps may be appropriate for dealing with affected parents. In view of the obvious stress for all parties involved, written notes **prepared in advance** are helpful. A member of staff who is knowledgeable about the family/families concerned should ideally undertake the task. Offers of help should be made where possible. A religious leader may be asked to lend support in particular cases. If a large number of families are involved, other sources of assistance should be considered.

Telephone and web help line

It may be appropriate to publicly announce a telephone help line. Handling such calls is labour intensive and slow but may be necessary. An alternative is to use a multi-access answer-phone, group emails, or group text messages. In this event, messages need to be concise and informative, and not seek to minimise or exaggerate the tragedy. Updated messages provided on the academy website may also be relevant.

Counselling

The emergency may bring about long-term trauma for those involved, either directly or indirectly. TEFAT and LA staff can advise on appropriate agencies and procedures if counselling for pupils and/or staff is considered necessary. Support from the TEFAT funded Employee Assistance Programme, or the local authority Educational Psychology service may be helpful to offer guidance to staff on handling pupils under stress.

Recovery schedule

It will be helpful in most cases for a recovery schedule to be agreed at an early stage by the Principal with the Critical Incident Support Team. So far as possible, this will establish dates and times of key events. For obvious reasons, it should be as realistic as possible. Included may be times of media briefings, decisions on academy closure, a schedule for reopening, parents' meetings, and times of future conferences by the Critical Incident Support Team. Even though some items may initially be tentative, it will be better to partially communicate than to allow doubt to escalate.

7. Dealing with the media

This is a delicate balance. Controlling the messages and relationships with media whilst dealing with a critical incident is extremely important otherwise incorrect messages and poor responses can be construed in adverse ways.

The response of the media is likely to be quick with a large number of personnel and their equipment. It is usually the police who are responsible for coordination of the emergency service response to a major incident and managing facilities for dealing with the media. However, not all emergency scenarios will involve the police. In this event, the media should be provided with facilities, which will allow them to gather authoritative information and pictures whilst allowing emergency operations to continue unhindered.

Media checklist

TEFAT through the designated Director will assist with preparation of statements.

- Press statement including the version or number including date, time of issue
- School contact telephone number and address
- Subject Heading
- Basic **CONFIRMED** facts
- Any notes for editors eg: key data on the school
- "More" or "End" should appear at the end of each page

Objectives

The academy needs to co-operate effectively with the media to achieve some of its own objectives, whilst assisting journalists to achieve theirs'.

The academy's key objectives are:

- To show it is controlling the incident and doing all that can be done to minimise the consequences
- To set minds at rest as far as possible and counter dangerous rumours
- To establish itself as caring, responsible and competent

Co-operation

Reasonable cooperation with the media is advised wherever possible. Journalists barred entry may use gossip and speculation instead of facts in what they write.

The academy therefore needs to:

- Establish itself as an authoritative source of information

- Control the flow of information
- Ensure information is consistent
- Retain the media's goodwill by providing as much legitimate information as possible

8. Loss & bereavement

Stages of grief

Shock and disbelief

When someone dies, whether it is sudden or expected, the initial reaction is one of shock and disbelief. Shock may be immediate but it can also be delayed and its effects need to be acknowledged and recognised.

Denial

The period of shock is often followed by a period of denial. During this time there is difficulty in accepting that the dead person will not return.

Growing awareness

This gives way to a growing awareness of the loss. It may be experienced as yearning and pining, anger, depression, guilt and anxiety.

Acceptance

Often it is only after the first round of anniversaries – major holidays, birthdays etc. – that acceptance of the death really begins. This process of ‘letting go’ may take much longer.

The shock of sudden death e.g. a road accident or heart attack brings a sense of unreality. There can be a whole range of reactions to shock: shaking, crying, headaches to name a few. These may occur immediately, but they can also be delayed and appear months later. Some families have to cope with the experience of terminal illness with its emotional seesaws of hope and despair. Even when someone has been ill for a long time there is still a sense of shock when death occurs. Suicide can leave people with a sense of guilt and failure and needs very sensitive handling.

Grief and children

Children, like adults are individuals. They go through the stages of physical, mental, emotional and social development at different rates. Grief and the variety of ways in which it can be expressed needs to be acknowledged. It helps if we are aware of the closeness of the relationship, previous experience of loss, type of death, and the level of understanding before the death takes place.

There are particular aspects about children's perceptions of death that need special consideration:

Fear

Young children's lives revolve completely around the immediate family. If one of these family members dies, fear for the rest can become of paramount importance.

Lack of experience of death

In our society children, and sometimes adults, may well have had no first hand experience of death. The media, especially TV, can give an unreal picture. The age of the bereaved child should be taken into account:

1 to 3 years

Very young children do not understand that death is permanent. They may constantly ask when the dead person is coming back. They may become insecure and become frightened when separated from a parent. They may regress and behave like a baby.

3 to 7 years

Children of this age are very egocentric. They believe that they are responsible for whatever happens. Those who are bereaved may therefore believe that they are to blame for the death. If this feeling is not explained, they may carry the guilt for the rest of their lives. Children of this age can react casually to the news of the death but may ask about it at a later stage. Some children may believe that the dead person will return. Some will believe that they might die as well.

8 to 12 years

At this age, children begin to realise that death is permanent. They also recognise that they will die one day. They can ask questions that adults may be surprised at, such as "where did the body go?" or "what does the body look like – is it like he's sleeping?" They simply express their curiosity as it may be their first experience of death and they are trying to gain an understanding of the process.

12 years to adult

Teenagers understand the impact of loss and death but may not be emotionally prepared for it. Young people of this age are already experiencing a mixture of emotions and their response to death may be more extreme and variable than adults would be.

Children who have experienced a death may show changes in behaviour. They may become clingy. They may be afraid to go to sleep at night for fear that they will not wake up again. Bed-wetting may be a sign of grief. They may show aggressive or withdrawn behaviour. Any change in behaviour needs to be noted and the child given extra care and support. This can happen weeks and months after the actual death.

Some suggestions for coping with particular situations

The death of a member of staff

The immediate issue is to break the news to the other staff (some of whom may have worked with the person for many years), to the parents and to the children. When the news is announced the language used is very important. It is not enough to say that someone has passed away or passed over. It needs to be stated that they have died. Further explanation may be required for younger children who will want to know when the person is coming back even though they have been told quite clearly that they have died. A primary academy in this situation recently sent a letter home in a sealed envelope asking the parents to explain again to their child what had happened and asking them to observe their child's reactions and to let the academy know of any unusual behaviour. It may be necessary to translate the letter into different languages so that all parents have access to it.

Attending a funeral can be a helpful part of the grieving process. If some of the pupils are to attend the funeral then it is a good idea to explain what happens at a funeral service and/or cremation and some of the beliefs expressed. Circumstances vary enormously but one secondary school closed early so that staff could attend the funeral of a colleague. Each year group in the academy was invited to send two pupil representatives. Attendance at a funeral service should be encouraged, not forced. Time for discussion of this choice needs to be given.

A special assembly is a way of celebrating the life and achievements of the dead person and gives the academy a corporate means of thanksgiving and farewell.

Letters of sympathy and support, however inadequate we may feel they sound, are usually of enormous comfort to the relatives.

Academies might wish to consider having a small resource of books and addresses, which could be used and loaned to staff and parents (see book list)

The death of a child

When a child dies we feel the sadness of a young life cut short. For the relatives there is always the sense of what might have been. The quality of support offered by an academy in these circumstances can be of tremendous help to all

Again the immediate issue is to tell the staff and decide how to tell the pupils. Where possible, it is best to do this in the familiar surroundings of the class group. The teacher, any assistants and the children in the class(es) concerned will need support from the rest of the academy. The adults in this situation will inevitably be modelling ways of coping with grief whether they wish it or not. Remember that the pupils need to see that the adults too are sad and upset.

Staff need to have some understanding of coming to terms with losses in their own lives and not to be in the process of grieving themselves because of a recent major loss. They need a good support network and be used to teaching sensitive issues. They will know not to assume that children are all right because they show no visible signs of distress. They will make positive approaches to offer help and support, not waiting for the children to make the first move.

Some academies have found it helpful to display pictures of the dead child in a prominent place. The photos can come from other children, academy outing albums or the bereaved family.

Bereaved siblings will need special care and their classes need help to know what to do and say to help them. Close friends will also suffer an enormous loss and it is all too easy to overlook the effects that this traumatic event may have on them.

Visiting the family is important immediately but so is keeping in touch if this is welcomed. Extra care needs to be taken of any siblings; decisions will need to be made about the dead child's personal things.

Holding a special assembly at which the life of the pupil is celebrated can be of considerable benefit. It requires careful planning and consultation with the family concerned. It can be an occasion to invite all parents and people of the community. Very often a whole community will be affected by the death of a child and parents will be coping with the shock and the fear that this could happen to their child too.

The family might wish to make a gift to the academy – such as a tree, rosebush, table and seat for the play area, etc. The children in the class may find comfort for themselves and give comfort to the family by making a scrapbook of the class activities, topics, etc. in which the dead child was involved.

In one academy, where a pupil was killed in a road accident whilst on holiday, her class were asked what she enjoyed doing most. They decided that the answer was 'play' so they were given an extra period of play in her memory.

Coping with death is not easy. It is a whole academy issue, which can do much to bring an academy, and the community it serves closer together.

Some children, particularly the special friend(s) of the dead child, can be particularly distressed. Academies could perhaps provide one particular person (maybe the child could say whom they would like) to be close to that child and help them through the coming days and weeks. Are there any other children or adults in the academy, who have faced similar circumstances, who would be willing to form a support group?

Part of the help academies can give is to put people in touch with the relevant agencies. See Section on useful organisations.

The death of a parent

In all circumstances children need:

- Information and honesty about what has happened and what is likely to happen. This may need to be given more than once,
- The recognition that their concept of time is often very different from that of an adult. 'Today' is now, 'soon' is hours away and 'tomorrow' may not mean anything at all.
- Help to find the right words to talk about death. The surviving grieving parent often looks to the academy for help and support too. Partnership with the parent is vital at this time. Encourage the surviving parent to ring relevant Helplines (see Section on list of Useful Organisation)
- Reassurance. The child needs to know what will change and what won't. A world which seemed safe, secure and reliable suddenly appears just the opposite. The academy may provide the only seemingly secure environment.
- Understanding that they often have a sense of guilt. They feel that they have somehow caused the death.
- Safe ways of expressing their grief other than in words, e.g. drawing, music.
- To accept that life goes on and that it is all right to relax and have fun.
- The understanding that 'treasures' which may seem unimportant to adults are an important way for a child to cope with bereavement.

Remember to amend the academy's parent address list.

If the death occurs at a time of academy transfer please inform the new academy.

Supporting colleagues who have been bereaved.

We can support them by:

- Offering the opportunity to talk about their feelings and the person who has died even though it is upsetting for them and for us.
- Offering support in the classroom if it is needed.
- Being aware of signs of stress, a change in behaviour for example.
- Sending cards, letters, flowers. But choose the time carefully, not when a major professional task is imminent and tears might overwhelm them.

Religious beliefs

We need to be aware of and sensitive to the religious beliefs of the people concerned and what the symbols and rituals mean for them. We live in a society in which all the major faiths are represented as well as humanist viewpoints. Incorporating work about the ways in which the important stages of life are marked by the different religions in the academy's Religious Education programme can be a non-threatening way of preparing all pupils for some of the experiences they are going to meet (see Section on Funeral Rites Across Different Cultures).

Things to consider in the event of the death of a pupil

If a whole academy assembly is scheduled for that day consider postponing it until the children have had a chance to receive the news in smaller groups from a known and trusted adult. If the death occurred in the local community some children and parents may already know about it and rumours about the circumstances will abound. It is best to be as truthful as possible as children will make up stories to compensate for lack of information. It is important to make a public announcement so that the academy becomes established as a grieving academy and everyone becomes freer to explore their loss and concerns.

Informing the bereaved pupil's parents that the academy will be sending out a letter notifying other parents and the reason why.

Letter to all parents in the dead child's class telling them what has happened and asking them to talk to their children and to be ready for signs of anxiety. A handout of ideas for parents eg: from the Good Grief pack, on how to help children with their grief has been appreciated by parents in the past. Visiting the family.

We thought it might be helpful to list some of things that have to be considered if this happens.

- Contact TEFAT to discuss appropriate response
- Telling the staff and making sure that all staff are told and supported before they enter the classroom.

- Telling SMSAs before they go on duty and any other staff expected on site at different times during the day.
- Discussing how the children are to be told, as individuals, small groups or whole classes.
- Special care for any siblings and special friends – liaise with other academies and schools if necessary.
- Special care for any staff or children recently bereaved.
- Consider who has links and is sensitive to religious and cultural traditions.
- Writing letters to the family.
- Deciding who is to go to the funeral and preparing children for it. Will it be an open coffin? What cultural and religious customs do you need to be prepared for? Please ask beforehand. It is best if younger children are accompanied by their parents and that they go home for a drink and have some space before returning to academy. If this is not possible, it is helpful to arrange for the children who attend the funeral to have a drink and a biscuit separately with someone who feels able to answer any questions before they return to their classes.
- What to do with the child's personal belongings. Involve close friends or the class in the discussion.
- Planning a special assembly.
- Making a book for the child's family if appropriate.
- Contacting the LA's Communications Unit for advice if there is likely to be high media profile.
- Making sure that the class the child was in and any special friends are supported.
- Putting people in touch with the relevant organisations if they wish.

9. Funeral rites across different cultures

Responses to death and the rituals and beliefs surrounding it tend to vary widely across the world. In all societies, however, the issue of death brings into focus certain fundamental cultural values. The various rituals and ceremonies that are performed are primarily concerned with the explanation, validation and integration of a peoples' view of the world.

In this section, the significance of various symbolic forms of behaviour and practices associated with death are examined before going on to describe the richness and variety of funeral rituals performed according to the tenets of some of the major religions of the world.

The symbols of death

Social scientists have noted that of all the rites of passage, death is most strongly associated with symbols that express the core life values sacred to a society. Some of the uniformities underlying funeral practices and the symbolic representations of death and mourning in different cultures are examined below:

The significance of colour

When viewed from a cross-cultural perspective, colour has been used almost universally to symbolise both the grief and trauma related to death as well as the notion of 'eternal life' and 'vitality'.

Black, with its traditional association with gloom and darkness, has been the customary colour of mourning for men and women in Britain since the fourteenth century. However, it is important to note that though there is widespread use of black to represent death, it is not the universal colour of mourning; neither has it always provided the funeral hue even in Western societies.

White is considered appropriate in many cultures to symbolise purity, as well as, in some religions, oneness with God, or eternal life in others. Sikh women generally wear white clothes for mourning, although sometimes they wear black. Though there are variations within the Hindu traditions, women generally wear white or black. Even though there is sorrow in death, if the deceased person is elderly, black or white may not be worn as they have lived a long and fulfilled life. White has also been a popular colour of mourning at Christian funerals at different periods in history, a notable example being Queen Victoria's funeral.

The colours and clothes in which the deceased are dressed are often indicative of age, marital status and caste. Amongst Hindus, if the deceased is an elderly male, the clothing tends to be simple and is normally white. Married women are dressed in new saris in shades of red and

pink, as these are considered to be auspicious colours. Some items of jewellery, especially the *mangal sutra* (tied around the bride's neck at the time of marriage by her husband), are left on the dead body and red *kumkum* powder is placed in the parting of the hair. In stark contrast, deceased widows are generally dressed in sombre shades.

Sikh families choose the clothes the deceased is to wear. For men, these may either be a western suit and turban (white, black or coloured) or a Punjabi suit and turban. Women will be dressed in a Punjabi suit, younger women in bright colours and older women in paler colours. The deceased is wrapped in a white shroud and a *rumalla* (a special silk cloth, of the same type used to cover the Guru Granth Sahib, (often in a bright colour), is placed over the top.

The symbolism of hair

Another widespread feature of funeral and mourning customs and one that is closely allied to clothing and styles of endowment, relates to the mourners' hair.

Orthodox Jewish religious custom is to observe strict mourning for seven days. During this period, male relatives of the deceased are forbidden to shave their beards.

Among Hindus, the ceremonies following a death usually last for thirteen days. However, on the eleventh day closer male family members of the deceased shave their beards and heads.

The ritual significance of food

In many cultures, an important aspect of funeral rites is concerned with ensuring the safe and comfortable passage of the soul from life into death.

Amongst Hindus, relatives of the deceased traditionally eat only simple vegetarian food for thirteen days following a death. Funeral ceremonies culminate in a feast, its grandeur varying according to the age and social status of the deceased.

The tradition of feeding the mourners after the funeral is quite widespread, signifying the continuity of life and of communal solidarity. The food that is served at such ceremonial gatherings tends to be highly symbolic. For example, Jewish mourners returning home from a funeral are normally given a hard boiled egg as a symbol of life.

Among Chinese in Hong Kong an all-night memorial mass may be said, in which both Taoist priests and Buddhist nuns may play a role. Part of the ritual involves calling out the dead person's favourite foods in order to tempt the departed soul to return. At daybreak a paper house, banknotes and paper clothing are burnt for the soul's use in the next life. All mourners present at the ceremony eat baked meats. Later the death room is thoroughly cleansed and purified.

Emotional reactions to death

Death evokes a variety of emotional responses, but the range of acceptable emotions and the extent to which the grief and sorrow experienced by mourners are allowed free expression are tied up with the unique institutions and values of each society.

The emotional tenor at funerals in England and other Western European societies tends, on the whole, to be rather low-key. While it is quite permissible for female relatives and other mourners to cry at funerals, the excessive display of grief in public is generally an embarrassment for both the bereaved and the comforter. In contrast, in some other cultures crying at funerals is not merely tolerated, it is required by custom, and at predetermined moments during the ceremony, the entire group of mourners may burst into loud and piercing cries.

In Ireland, close relatives of the deceased usually wept over the body during the wake. Although the practice of 'keening' or loud lamenting is rather less widespread than it used to be, it is still quite common to hire professional mourners to compose eulogies over the dead. The eulogy is accompanied by loud wailing. To Orthodox Jews, being properly lamented over is almost as important as being correctly buried.

Among Hindus and Sikhs, families gather to share the mourning. On the day the person dies, the family living room is turned into a mourning room: white sheets are placed on the floor and friends and family will visit. Other family members will bring food for the mourners to eat. After the cremation, people begin to return to their usual daily routine. In Sikh families, a *sehaj path* (a broken reading of the Guru Granth Sahib) is held either in the home or the gurdwara.

Funeral customs and death-related rituals

The funeral customs and death-related rituals of some of the major religions will now be discussed in more detail.

Buddhist beliefs and practices

There are about 200,000 Buddhists in the UK. Many are born into the faith as members of immigrant families from Sri Lanka, Thailand, Myanmar, Tibet, China or Japan, but some are British-born converts from other religions. There are three main schools of Buddhism – Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana – and all are found in the UK.

Buddhists believe that they live a succession of lives; *samsara* is the word used to describe the endless cycle of birth, death and rebirth in various states (e.g. human, divine, animal, etc.) and in many different planes (e.g. happy, unhappy). Life in *samsara* continues until the believer

attains an enlightened state of permanent, lasting happiness called *nirvana*: the ultimate goal of all Buddhist practice. Death is seen as a prelude to existence in another state. According to Buddha's teaching, no state lasts forever. The plane of rebirth is determined by a person's karma, which is the sum total of wholesome and unwholesome actions performed in previous existences. In order to reach enlightenment the Buddha's teachings, called the Noble Eightfold Path, should be followed. Until this state is reached we continue circling on in *samsara*.

Buddhists place great importance on the state of mind at the moment of death. When death is imminent a monk is called to chant from religious texts, or relatives may introduce some religious objects to generate wholesome thoughts into the person's mind, because the last thought before death will condition the first thought of the next life.

One, two or three days after death, the body is either buried or cremated. At the funeral monks lead the congregation in the traditional Buddhist manner, offering respect to Buddha, the *Dhamma* (his teaching), and the *Sangha* (the community of enlightened beings). Following this, the congregation accepts the *Five Precepts*, which are guidelines for – and commitment to – the leading of a moral life.

If a cremation takes place, it is traditional for a nephew of the deceased to press the button that draws the curtain on the coffin and consigns it to the furnace. Sometimes the ashes are kept in an urn, which may be stored in a monument built specifically for this purpose; alternatively they may be scattered.

Immediately after the death, friends and relatives observe a period of mourning. This is done symbolically by observing a certain amount of austerity and frugality in the house of the dead person. Mourners may, for example, wear plain white clothes, abstain from wearing jewellery, eat simple food and not indulge in entertainment.

Relatives and friends direct their efforts above all to assisting the deceased in his or her journey through *samsara*. By performing good actions such as unselfish generosity, they generate 'merit', which can be transferred to benefit the deceased. This is the primary way of showing one's gratitude and paying respect to the dead. This act may be repeated three months later and then annually thereafter. In addition to benefiting the deceased it also brings comfort to the bereaved.

Before the end of the first week after death, a member of a monastic community may be invited to the house to talk to the surviving members of the family. They will usually remind the bereaved that everything is impermanent, that nobody can live forever and death is inevitable. Buddha, however, cautioned his followers that expressions of grief may be damaging to one's mental well being, causing pain and suffering. He said that grief does not benefit the departed one, nor does this benefit the griever.

Summary

- Buddhists believe in an endless cycle of existence until and unless Enlightenment is attained.
- Death is merely a prelude to existence in another state.
- Everything is impermanent and no state lasts forever, apart from Enlightenment.
- The main efforts of mourners are directed towards smoothing the passage of the deceased in the subsequent existence.
- Merit transferring ceremonies may be held regularly, such as on the anniversary of the death.

Christian beliefs and practices

There are over six million Christians in the UK who regularly attend church. They are divided into denominations that are distinguished by various differences in doctrine and worship.

Christians believe in one God who has revealed himself as the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. This is described as the Holy Trinity. Central to Christian belief is Jesus of Nazareth in whom God assumed human form. The sacred text for Christians is the New Testament, which contains a code for living based on the life and teaching of Jesus. The resurrection of Jesus – when he returned to life after being crucified – is integral to the belief in Jesus' claim and offer of a life after death in heaven. Depending on the aspect of the central mysteries stressed by a particular Christian tradition, death can produce feelings of fear, resignation or hope.

After death the body of the dead person may be moved to the undertaker's Chapel of Rest. The word 'chapel' does not necessarily indicate a place of worship, though in the case of believers the Funeral Director often arranges candles round the coffin and displays a cross.

Some Roman Catholics or High Church Anglicans transfer the corpse to their church on the evening before the funeral; following the ritual reception of the body into the church, it remains there overnight. In some parts of the country, however, the coffin is brought to the house the evening before the funeral and transported from there to the church. The next morning a funeral service or requiem mass is celebrated during which the priest or minister wears black vestments.

The final ritual in Christian burial is the graveside committal where the minister leads the mourners in prayer as the body is lowered into the grave.

Instead of burial, some Christians may choose cremation. The ashes of the deceased may be scattered in a Garden of Remembrance or elsewhere. Alternatively, they may be placed in an urn and interred in a cemetery. Some families keep the ashes at home. If the ashes are to be scattered in the Garden of Remembrance, the family may choose the garden and the precise place of dispersal, and if they wish, they may return a few days later to witness the scattering of the ashes.

Summary

- Christian belief and practice is based on the mysteries of incarnation and resurrection.
- Belief is in one God and Jesus of Nazareth in whom God assumed human form.
- Personal identity is retained after death.
- Human beings are in continuing fellowship with God throughout life and death.
- Some Christians maintain a clear belief in heaven and hell.
- Roman Catholics believe in a state called purgatory – a place where a soul is purified in preparation for entry into heaven.
- A person lives only one physical life.
- The body is placed in a coffin by an undertaker and subsequently taken to a church or crematorium. Following a memorial service the body is buried or cremated.
- Flowers may be used in the form of wreaths. These are traditionally rounded to symbolise continuity and eternity.

Hindu cremation customs and rites

There are an estimated 800,000 to one million Hindus in the UK, the majority of who are from India, East Africa, Malawi and Zambia.

Hindus believe in the law of karma which states that each individual passes through a series of lives until, depending on the actions of previous existences, the state of *moksha*, or liberation from the cycle of birth and rebirth, is attained. Consequently, death is not understood to be the end of a process, but is merely a stage in the long chain of transition. It is this continuity, extending beyond the limits of any single lifetime, which is enhanced and focused during the elaborate mortuary rituals performed by Hindus. The funeral ceremonies involve not only the immediate family members of the deceased, but also those of the extended kin network. Particular categories of kin have special ritual and economic duties to perform on this occasion. There are many regional and sub-cultural variations in the content and duration of mourning practices; the following is limited to describing the ceremonies in the broadest terms.

When death is imminent, the person is lifted from the bed to the floor so that the soul's free passage into the next life is not obstructed. Water from the holy River Ganges is given to the dying person and a *tulsi* (basil) leaf is placed in the deceased person's mouth. The *tulsi* leaf has a dual significance. Firstly, it is associated with Lord Vishnu, one of the three gods who are collectively known as the Hindu Trinity of gods; Vishnu is also known as the preserver of the universe. Secondly, the tulsi leaf is believed to have many medical properties.

After death, the body is washed and dressed, preferably in new clothes. Married women are clothed in a pink or red sari and adorned with jewellery. *Kumkum* red powder is placed in the parting of the hair and a red spot or *tilak* is applied on the forehead. The woman's father or

brother usually provides the clothes, and when a man dies, the clothes are again provided by the wife's father or brother.

In India, the hot climate necessitates that the funeral is held as soon after death as possible; however in Britain the need to fulfil various legal and bureaucratic formalities may lead to a delay for a few days.

Except for young children under one year of age who may be buried, the customary mode of disposal of a dead body amongst Hindus is by cremation. In the villages in India, the body is placed on a bier made of bamboo poles and carried on the shoulders of close male relatives to the burning grounds. In most cases, all the relatives in the village attend the cremation. The actual size of the gathering of mourners varies with the age and importance of the deceased. Thus, when an elderly and highly respected man dies, even his genealogically and geographically distant family would make it a point to attend the cremation. The nearest male relatives of the deceased, such as the father, husband, brother or son, are generally forbidden to shave or cut their nails for eleven days following the death. This custom, however, varies in different parts of India; in Gujarat and some other parts of Western India, the nearest male relatives of the deceased are required to shave their heads on the actual day of the death.

There are now electric crematoria in many cities in India, including one near the bank of the River Ganges in Varanasi. At cremation grounds, or *ghats*, the body is placed on a pyre of wood with the head pointing north in the direction of Mount Kailasha in the Himalayas. In the case of affluent families the wood of the pyre may be an expensive variety such as sandalwood. 'Ghee', or clarified butter, is poured on the pyre to help it burn, and the pyre is then set alight by a son, brother, or brother's son (in this order of priority). Other mourners will then throw fruit, flowers, incense and fragrant spices into the fire. Mourners traditionally attend the entire cremation, i.e. until the body has been totally consumed by the fire. In the final stages of this long process, the chief mourner (i.e. the male relative who first lit the pyre) breaks the skull with a long pole in order to allow the soul to escape, a rite known as *kapol kriya*. On the fourth day (in certain parts of India this may take place on the third day) the ashes are collected by the chief mourner and the place of cremation cleared. The ashes are then traditionally immersed in a river, preferably the Ganges. Any items of jewellery that have not melted in the fire are collected and distributed among the mourners, along with a simple meal, usually a food called *kitcheree*, a mixture of boiled rice and lentils.

In Britain, the dead body is transported in a coffin to the local crematorium. The Funeral Director can arrange to have the ashes collected and scattered in the crematorium Garden of Remembrance or stored in an urn until the relatives of the deceased arranged to have it transported to India.

Among Hindus, both in India as well as in Britain, the ceremonies following a death normally last for thirteen days, but the ritual pollution incurred by the close family members is terminated on the eleventh day. The chief mourner performs a rite, aided by a Brahmin (priest), and the male

relatives present their hair and beards. On the thirteenth day the mourners offer a blessing to the deceased to show gratitude for acts of kindness they received during their lifetime. Throughout the thirteen-day official mourning period, relatives are required to eat only simple vegetarian food and generally to lead a secluded life. The custom of friends and relatives visiting to mourn is also practised.

Even after death, the deceased person is still regarded as part of the family and their names will often be included, for example on invitations to the wedding of children or grandchildren. The death anniversary is usually observed with a special meal. Within a family, a picture of the deceased parents may be kept in the home shrine and it is usual to garland the picture.

Summary

(please note that there is tremendous diversity within Hinduism, and there are many regional variations.)

- Hindus believe in reincarnation and that at death the soul sheds its body and ‘puts on’ another body (not necessarily human) in a cycle of re-birth until it reaches God.
- In India the body is usually cremated within 24 hours of death. It is wrapped in a cloth and placed in a coffin. The coffin is covered in flowers.
- By tradition, the eldest son should set the funeral pyre alight, or press the button if a crematorium is used.
- The eldest son and other close male relatives have their heads shaved as a sign of bereavement and cleansing.
- Friends and relatives keep the bereaved company, share grief and offer support.
- On the eleventh or thirteenth day all will gather to offer a blessing to the deceased in order to show gratitude for acts of kindness that they received during his/her lifetime.
- Memory is preserved in the family’s daily prayers (*puja*).

Humanist beliefs and practices

Humanists believe that we only have one life and that we should make the best of it. We should try to live happy and fulfilled lives and help others to do so and the best way to achieve this is by living responsibly, thinking rationally about right and wrong, considering the consequences of our actions and trying to do the right thing. Humanists are concerned with making the world a better place in which to live, not only for people alive today, but also for future generations – especially as the lives of their descendants represent the only sort of immortality in which humanists believe.

Humanists ask themselves the same questions as everyone else: Why am I here? What’s the purpose of life? How did life begin? What will happen to me when I die? They look for evidence before they take on a belief, and so are more likely to believe the results of scientific research or what their own experiences tell them – or remain open-minded about questions – rather than to

believe what someone else says. Humanists tend to think about these big questions for themselves. Some questions may not have answers, or we might not like the most probable answers.

Humanists experience the same feeling of loss and sadness at the death of a loved one as anyone else does. But they accept death as the natural and inevitable end to life. They do not believe in any kind of life after death, but believe that we live on in other people's memories of us, in the work we have done while we are alive, and in our children.

Humanist funeral ceremonies

There are no specific or obligatory rituals to be followed either by the bereaved or by those who wish to express their condolences. An expression of sympathy, an acknowledgement of the bereaved person's feeling of grief and the offer of a listening ear are more likely to be appreciated than any suggestion that the deceased has gone 'to a better place' (which may contradict what the family believe). Humanists may choose to be cremated or buried and the ceremony can take place anywhere, though it is most commonly held at a crematorium where, if possible, any religious symbols will be removed or covered up.

At a humanist funeral there will be no suggestion that the deceased has gone on to another life: the ceremony is intended to celebrate the life that was lived. The humanist funeral officiate will have spent time with the bereaved relatives and together they will have planned a ceremony that properly honours the person's life and, hopefully, brings some comfort to everyone who attends as they are reminded of how their lives have been enriched through knowing the deceased. At the funeral, the officiate will talk about the person's life and what they achieved and it is usual for family members or friends to read personal tributes. The ceremony may also involve suitable readings, poetry or music, and there may be a brief period of silence to allow people attending the ceremony time for their own private reflection or – if they are religious – for prayer.

Humanist may choose to be cremated or buried, and the ceremony can take place anywhere

If possible, all religious symbols (e.g. at a crematorium) are removed or covered.

The funeral ceremony is intended to celebrate the life that was lived and properly honour that person's life. Through readings, poetry, music and personal tributes from family and friends, attendants are reminded of how their lives have been enriched through knowing the deceased.

Jewish funeral customs and beliefs about death

Jewish people believe in one God who created the universe. The Jewish Sabbath begins at sunset on Friday and ends an hour after sunset on Saturday, and commemorates the seventh

day when God rested after the Creation. During this time Orthodox Jewish people do not travel, write, cook, or use electrical equipment.

Unless death occurs after sunset on Friday, in which case the burial is postponed until Sunday, the Jewish tradition prescribes that funerals should take place within twenty-four hours. Professional undertakers are involved since all arrangements are made through the Synagogue. The body is dressed in a white shroud (*kittel*), which is then placed in a plain wooden coffin. Men are buried with a prayer shawl (*tallith*) with its tassels cut off.

While the body is in the house, the Jewish belief is that it should not be left unattended.

Candles are placed at the head and the foot of the coffin and sons or other near relatives of the deceased maintain a constant vigil. If no relatives are present, professional mourners are called in.

The rabbi is sent for as soon as death occurs. He or she returns to the house of mourning an hour or so before the funeral is due to start to offer special prayers for the deceased. Close relatives of the dead person usually gather at the house of mourning, dressed in old clothes from which a piece is ritually cut as a mark of grief. Traditionally this torn garment is worn throughout the seven days of intensive mourning (*shiveh*).

After prayers offered by the rabbi at the house, the coffin is carried out and mourners usually follow on foot to the cemetery. If the cemetery is not within walking distance, transport is permitted, but many Orthodox Jews insist on covering at least part of the way on foot.

Progressive liberal Jews permit cremation. However, according to the orthodox tradition, cremation is forbidden, as human beings are created in the image of God and it would therefore be wrong to deliberately destroy a body.

At the cemetery the dead body is taken to a special room. Mourners usually wait outside until the coffin is placed in the centre of the room. Then the men stand on the left and the women stand on the right of the coffin. There are no flowers or music at the funeral ceremony, ensuring that there is no distinction made between rich and poor. Prayers and psalms are recited and the rabbi makes a special mention of the virtues of the person who has died.

The coffin is then carried to the grave followed by the mourners. The sons and brothers of the deceased shovel some earth on the coffin. After the burial the special prayer for the dead, the Kaddish is recited for the first time by the male relatives. A special meal is provided of eggs, salt-herrings and bagels. Peas or lentils are also a suitable food to serve on this occasion as, according to Jewish tradition, roundness signifies life.

In orthodox families, from sunrise to sunset during the seven days of intensive mourning, close relatives of the deceased must wear their torn garments and special slippers that are not made of leather. Prayers are said throughout the day. Neighbours and friends visit to offer condolences and help.

The ritual prescribed for women ends with this seven-day period. Men however, are forbidden to cut their hair or shave for thirty days. The sons or other male mourners go to the Synagogue every day to say the *Kaddish* for eleven months. The gravestone is then erected, symbolising the end of the official period of mourning.

Every year on the anniversary of the death, the family say the *Kaddish* and burn a candle for twenty-four hours. The grave is visited at least once a year, especially before the Jewish New Year, to ensure that cherished memories do not fade.

Summary

- Judaism is the belief in one God and that there is only one life to be lived.
- After death the body is washed, dressed in a white shroud and placed in a coffin.
- Whenever possible, burial should take place within 24 hours.
- No flowers or music are provided, ensuring that there is no discrimination between rich and poor.
- Mourners ritually cut a slit in their outer clothes as a sign of grief.
- There are seven days of intensive mourning during which close relatives say prayers throughout the day, and neighbours and friends visit to offer condolences and help.
- For the following eleven months the *Kaddish* is said every day.
- Every year on the anniversary of the death, the family say the *Kaddish* and burn a candle for 24 hours.

Muslim burial customs and rites

There are approximately three million people in the UK who are of the Muslim faith. This group is composed mostly of families originating from the Asian sub-continent. There is also a sizeable number from the Middle East, Africa, and Turkey, Asian languages and Arabic are spoken at home, though English is perhaps the most widely used and understood among them all.

The Islamic concept of death is quite simple, the idea being that “from God (Allah) we have emerged and to God we return.” Consequently, the official mourning period tends to be relatively short, usually not more than three days. Widows mourn for a year in the Middle East and North Africa. The next of kin mourn for forty days, however this does not include the deceased’s spouse or children.

When death is imminent, the person is asked to declare their faith by repeating the simple formula: “God is One and Muhammad is His Prophet”.

The Imam (prayer leader at the mosque) is informed as soon as possible after death and prayers from the Qur’an (Koran) are recited over the body.

The body is then taken to the Funeral Director's premises where it is washed by family members of the same gender as the deceased. This ritual is usually performed in a room that has been purified and from which all statues and religious symbols have been removed; special arrangements can be made with the Funeral Director to ensure that these beliefs, fundamental to the Islamic faith, are respected. After the body has been washed, it is swathed in a simple white cotton sheet or shroud; all Muslims are dressed alike to symbolise their equality before God. The body is then placed in a unlined coffin.

According to Islamic religious traditions, the prescribed mode of disposal of the body is burial. The burial of the body should take place before noon. If a person dies in the afternoon or during the night, they are buried the next morning before noon. If they die midday or thereabouts, then they are most likely to be buried the next morning, as burying after sunset is not customary. However, in Britain delays are inevitable, as there are various legal formalities that have to be completed before a certificate for disposal is given by the Registrar of Births and Deaths. Nevertheless, custom prescribes that the burial should take place with the minimum delay.

The usual practice is for the deceased to be taken to the mosque, where special prayers are recited, before proceeding to the graveyard. A brief prayer session is also held at the cemetery. The body is then buried in the grave with the head towards Mecca (south east in the UK).

On the first days after the burial prayers are said at home of the deceased.

After the Eid celebrations visits are made to the cemetery to say prayers at the family grave. This is a reminder that even in the middle of happy celebrations, life is temporary and that it is important to live correctly to ensure eternal life with Allah.

Sikh cremation customs and rites

Most Sikhs living in the UK are of Punjabi origin. They have come here either directly from the Punjab or from former British colonies (e.g. those in East Africa or South East Asia) to which members of their family had previously migrated. The first *gurdwara* (Sikh place of worship) in the UK was established in Putney in 1911. The Sikh population in the UK is the largest community outside India, that in the West London area being the largest within the UK.

Sikhs believe that birth into the faith is a result of good 'karma'. Death is the door to union with God.

The cremation is a family occasion attended, as far as possible, by the close relatives of the deceased and friends.

Prior to the funeral the body is washed and clothed by the members of the family. The dead person is attired with the symbols of the faith known as the 5K's – *Kesh* (uncut hair), *Kanga* (comb), *Kara* (steel bangle), *Kachs* (shorts) and *Kirpan* (short sword) – and the turban for a man

and sometimes a women. On a route to the crematorium the deceased is taken to the gurdwara where a *rumalla* is placed on top of the shroud. At the crematorium, prayers (*Sohilla* and *Ardas*) are said. The button is then pressed by a close male relative, usually the eldest son of the deceased. The next day, the ashes are collected and then – in both India and Britain – taken to a designated area of running water and immersed. In Britain, after the funeral, the mourners go back to the gurdwara and wash their faces and hands. In India, for reasons of personal hygiene the mourners bathe after the body has been cremated on the funeral pyre.

Beginning on the day of the death, adult relatives, or if they are unable to do so *grathis* from the gurdwara (people who perform readings), usually take part in a complete reading of the Guru Granth Sahib (the Sikh holy book) at the home of the deceased or at the gurdwara. This reading is usually spaced over a period of ten days, and close family members, including children, would usually be expected to be present throughout. At the completion of the reading, a passage from the Guru Granth Sahib about belief and practices regarding death is read, followed by *kirtan* (songs in praise of God); the prayer *Ardas* is then said, followed by the sharing of *karah parshad* (specially blessed sweet pudding) and the eating of *langar* (a communal meal). If the deceased was the head of the family, the oldest son is given a turban to symbolise the taking of responsibility for the family.

Summary

Sikhs believe that death is welcomed as opening the door to the complete union with God.

The body is washed and clothed by members of the family and attired with the symbols of the faith. The body is then wrapped in a plain white sheet or shroud, and a *rumalla* placed on top.

The body will be cremated and the ashes will be immersed in running water at a designated area. Sikhs in the UK sometimes take the deceased person's ashes back to India.

Both male and female relatives attend the cremation. They then return to the gurdwara or home of the deceased to read the Guru Granth Sahib. At the end of the reading, and after *kirtan*, *Ardas* is said, followed by the sharing of the *karah parshad* and *langar*.

10. After the event

Practicalities

- Create a single point of contact normally the Principal for any continuing enquiries and information
- Ensure all staff and governors are aware of this point of contact.
- Ensure all records are compiled in a single confidential folder and are up to date

Getting back to “normal”

The effects of some incidents can reverberate for years. Professor Yule, in his very useful book, 'Wise before the Event', points out that tragedies can bring people together. In some schools the experience is so profound that staff want to retain the sense of community that it generated.

In the longer term thought will need to be given to the following issues:

- Working with staff to monitor pupils, particularly those who are more vulnerable.
- Clarifying procedures for referring pupils for individual help.
- Informing any new staff of those pupils who were affected, how they were affected and how they could most usefully be supported. Staff who have recently experienced a trauma or bereavement in their own personal lives may be particularly vulnerable. TEFAT have an Employee Assistance Programme that provide counseling support for staff. 'Being aware that some pupils' ability to concentrate is affected after a critical incident. Some pupils may therefore plateau in their learning, for a period and may find it difficult to study. If public examinations are imminent for pupils involved in a critical incident, it is important to make the examining boards aware of the situation.
- Recognising and if appropriate, marking anniversaries. Anniversaries can be very difficult times. It is better if decisions about how to manage them are made collectively in advance. The decision making process should take into account the wishes of the parents of pupils who were killed or injured. Some suggestions for marking anniversaries are as follows: an annual concert or commemorative assembly, an annual memorial prize or the planting of a tree or special garden that blooms at the appropriate time.
- Remembering that if the incident does attract media attention it is likely that the interest will continue for many weeks.
- Being aware that legal processes and enquiries can interfere with mourning. They can prolong or impede it or, as a new legal process commences, can bring back distressing memories. Schools need to be aware when staff members are involved in these legal processes, for example, boards of enquiry, court appearances etc.

- Support for the Principal. It is the Principal who oversees and manages their school through a critical incident and one cannot underestimate the physical and emotional toll that this can have. After the event the Principal concerned will be offered the opportunity of a formal debriefing with their designated TEFAT Director.

11. School trips

Academy trips, whether one-day, residential, local or further afield should be carefully planned to reduce the possibility of incidents or difficulties occurring.

The Code of Practice and Guidance notes on health and safety of pupils on educational visits can be found on the Elliot Foundation website.

A Risk Assessment (recorded in writing) should be carried out, as required by the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1992, for the planned visit. This may require the responsible member of staff visiting the destination, checking out the facilities and any potential difficulties and assessing and minimising potential hazards.

The Risk Assessment is a key element to planning a visit and important step in protecting staff, parents and pupils alike. As well as complying with the law, it helps to focus on the risks that have been identified and that really matter – the ones with potential to cause real harm. The Risk Assessment should identify potential hazards listing the controls and measures to reduce or eliminate the risks. If there is any doubt about the safety of the arrangements, the trip or activity should not take place. Head teachers and school governors are responsible for the safe organisation of school trips, even though they may not be taking part themselves.

Since communication can be a significant factor in summoning help or in relaying information, it is now essential to consider providing the group leader with a mobile phone.

In case of emergencies the person in charge of the trip should have a list of specific telephone numbers (e.g. Principal, Chair of Governors etc). This is particularly important if the trip is out of school hours, residential or during the holidays. The contact(s) at school should be given a list of pupil's names and their home telephone numbers. In an emergency, the school contact can be phoned and asked to keep parents informed.

12. Troublemakers on site

Trespass

Trespass is not generally a criminal offence. Academies are not public places and anyone who enters without permission of the Principal (who has day to day management of the academy) is

trespassing, unless there is a recognised “right of way” across the academy site. Some groups of people, such as parents, have an “implied licence” to enter academy premises.

A number of people may have good reason to be on the academy premises and therefore possess an “implied licence” i.e.

- Registered pupils of the academy during academy hours or by agreement of the Principal e.g. after academy clubs and sports. Pupils who have been excluded could, however, be trespassers.
- Parents or guardians responsible for a pupil at the academy.
- Governors, OfSTED inspectors, TEFAT staff, Local Authority staff, contractors, those using facilities provided as part of a academy “let” etc.

Local governing bodies may wish to consider posting signs up to indicate that access to the site is restricted and that all visitors should report to reception. The existence of good academy security measures will also assist in minimising the incident of trespass. Examples of security measures include: appropriate signs, reception area, signing system, badges for visitors, access control and maintaining boundary fences in good order.

Nuisance and disturbance

If a trespasser refuses to leave an academy premises or enters after being required to leave or causes a disturbance, their behaviour may give rise to a criminal offence under Section 547 of the Education Act 1996. As a general rule, anything done by trespassers where it disrupts the routine of the academy or the duties of its staff will be an offence.

Where an individual has an “implied licence” to enter academy premises this can be withdrawn by the Principal, provided authority to do so is delegated to the Principal by the local governing body. Publicising this through signs or the academy prospectus is helpful and prudent since this can clarify the circumstances in which consideration would be given to barring someone from the site. Case law (*Wandsworth Borough Council v A*, 2000) makes it clear that if the person to be barred has an “implied licence” to enter the premises, he or she should first be given an opportunity to make representation as to why a ban should not be imposed before a final decision is taken to withdraw the licence to enter. A ban will be effective immediately. A refusal to accept a ban from academy premises may lead to consideration being given to applying to the court for an injunction and/or to the taking of action under Section 547 of the 1996 Act.

The incidence of such behaviour appears to be on the increase with parents being the main offending group.

Removing trespassers from the site

It is possible to remove from the academy premises people who are suspected of committing an offence under section 547. Police constables may do this or a person authorised by the local governing body.

Principals need to use discretion in determining whether they, or other staff, are able to safely escort a trespasser from the site. Although they would be entitled to use reasonable force, this should be avoided and the police called if the situation is impossible to control. Academy staff should not put themselves at risk. Anyone taking this action must be able to justify their actions and show that the action taken was appropriate and proportionate in the circumstances. Therefore, there should be reasonable cause to suspect the person of committing, or having committed, an offence under Section 547.

Recording events

It is very important to record by making a file note of any event involving trespass that results in nuisance or disturbance. Witnesses, if any, should also make signed and dated statements of what they said and heard.

Warning letters

Different considerations apply in relation to people such as parents who can lawfully enter academy premises as opposed to trespassers. With regard to those who have implied permission to enter, a two-stage approach will need to be taken when working with them. Section 547 will only become relevant once a parent's "lawful authenticity" to enter the premises has been terminated.

A parent of a child registered at an academy will not be on academy premises "illegally" (i.e. a trespasser) until his or her "implied licence" to enter the academy premises has been terminated and until then he or she cannot be guilty of an offence under this section.

For example, if a parent causes a nuisance and the Principal thinks a ban should be imposed, the following steps should be taken:

- A warning should be given (in writing) and the parent given the opportunity to answer the accusations made (see warning letter below).
- If a ban is then imposed (and it will only be at this point that the parent will become a trespasser if he or she enters the premises). This should be confirmed in writing and notice given that a breach of the ban may result in an offence being committed under Section 547 and an action taken under that section to remove the person from the premises (though only if entry onto the premises is coupled with causing a nuisance) or in an application being made to the court for an injunction (see banning letter below).

If the nuisance or disturbance has been caused by an individual with no right implied or otherwise to enter the premises then immediate action can be taken under Section 547 as that person is by definition a trespasser. No warning would need to be given.

Harassment, threatening, abusive or disorderly behaviour

Such offences are covered by the Public Order act 1986. The Protection from Harassment Act 1997 provides further safeguards with respect to incidents of harassment.

Principals are more likely to involve the police in such matters and the police may be able to take action under this Act.

However, Principals may not wish to involve the police in cases where the offender is very young. Individual cases therefore need to be considered before deciding on a course of action.

Further advice can be obtained from TEFAT Director of HR.

Warning letter

The following is an example of a warning letter to be sent to a parent who has caused a disturbance at the academy. The actual wording would have to be varied according to the actual circumstances. It is advisable to discuss this with the Director of HR before sending such a letter.

To (the parent)

Behaviour on Academy Site

It has been reported to me that you caused a disturbance at the academy on (date) by

_____.

This behaviour has upset a number of staff and the pupils who were present.

Such behaviour is totally unacceptable and may result in you being banned from the site.

I would be grateful if you could contact me by telephone or in writing by

_____ in order to answer these allegations.

I shall then consider what further action may be necessary including the possibility of imposing a ban on your entry to the academy premises.

Yours sincerely

Banning letter

The following is an example of a letter to a parent imposing a ban after the warning letter has been issued and subject to any response from the parent.

To (the parent)

Further to my earlier letter of _____, which warned you that you may be banned from the site, I have considered your responses to the allegations and have decided that they are insufficient.

I am therefore banning you from the premises with immediate effect. This will be reviewed on _____

(it is recommended to limit a ban to no more than 1 term in the first instance)

A breach of this ban may result in an offence being committed under Section 547 of the Education Act 1996 and an action taken under that section to remove you from the premises or in an application being made to the court for an injunction.

Yours sincerely

**** Principals are strongly advised to seek advice from the Regional Director or Director of Governance and Policy***