CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY

Created:	July 2026
Next Review Due:	July 2027
Applies To:	All staff, students, visitors, contractors and volunteers
Owner:	Head of School
Approved By:	Board of Directors

Mission, Vision and Values

Mission
To inspire our children to reach their full potential by fostering curiosity and an interest in learning, awakening their minds and illuminating their world.

Vision
To create an affordable international secondary school with a high standard of education where children learn through practical and project-based work. To develop our students' moral and intellectual capacity, and to encourage creativity and adaptability.

Aim
An education that is broad, balanced and challenging, with an emphasis on developing strong connections to our host country, Uganda.

Values
Desire for lifelong learning; an ability to adapt; be innovative and reflective thinkers; open minded, and empathetic while achieving high academic success according to individual potential

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1. Policy Statement

7Hills International School (7Hills) recognises that serious incidents, emergencies and crises may occur without warning and may have a significant impact on the safety, wellbeing and operational continuity of the school community. While such events are uncommon, schools have a moral, safeguarding and professional responsibility to ensure that robust systems exist to reduce risk, protect life, support effective decision-making and enable calm, coordinated responses under conditions of uncertainty.

This framework establishes the strategic and operational systems through which 7Hills prepares for, responds to and recovers from critical incidents affecting the school community. The document reflects the school's commitment to safeguarding, organisational resilience, student wellbeing and responsible leadership.

The school recognises that critical incidents rarely unfold in a predictable or orderly manner. Initial stages are often characterised by incomplete information, heightened emotion, confusion, conflicting reports and rapidly changing circumstances. Effective crisis management therefore depends not only upon procedures, but also upon clear leadership, professional judgement, communication discipline, safeguarding awareness and a culture of calm and coordinated action.

At 7Hills, crisis management is understood as part of the wider responsibility of protecting children and maintaining trust within the school community. This framework is therefore closely connected to the school's safeguarding culture, pastoral systems, risk management processes and operational leadership structures.

The school also recognises the specific realities of operating within an international context in Kampala, Uganda, including infrastructure limitations, transport challenges, communication instability, environmental risk, medical response times, regional uncertainty and the complexity of supporting an internationally diverse community during periods of disruption.

This document should not be viewed simply as an emergency response manual. It is intended to function as an institutional resilience framework that supports preparedness, coordinated leadership, safeguarding and continuity of education during periods of crisis.

2. Institutional Philosophy and Guiding Principles

7Hills International School believes that effective crisis management is rooted in preparation, professionalism, safeguarding and compassionate leadership. During periods of disruption, students and families require adults who remain calm, organised, ethically grounded and capable of making proportionate decisions under pressure. The school is guided by the following principles:

- the preservation of life and safety takes priority over all other considerations
- safeguarding responsibilities remain central during all phases of a crisis
- communication should be factual, proportionate and carefully controlled
- students require emotional as well as physical protection during emergencies
- leadership decisions should be informed, transparent and documented

- recovery following a critical incident may be prolonged and requires sustained support
- misinformation and speculation can significantly increase harm during crises
- preparedness and rehearsal reduce confusion and improve collective response
- continuity of learning and pastoral care remain important institutional responsibilities during disruption

The school also recognises that there is no universally perfect response to a critical incident. Decisions may need to be made quickly using incomplete information. The purpose of this framework is therefore to support informed and coordinated action rather than rigid procedural compliance.

3. Definition of a Critical Incident

For the purposes of this framework, a critical incident is defined as any event or situation that causes, or has the potential to cause:

- serious harm or threat to students, staff or visitors
- significant disruption to normal school operations
- major safeguarding concern
- substantial emotional distress within the school community
- reputational or operational risk requiring coordinated leadership intervention

Critical incidents may be sudden, evolving or prolonged in nature and may occur on or off the school site. Examples may include, but are not limited to:

- death or serious injury of a student, staff member or visitor
- intruder, hostile threat or violent incident
- fire, explosion or structural damage
- major medical emergency
- severe weather or environmental hazard
- transport accident involving students or staff
- civil disturbance or community unrest
- missing student incidents
- safeguarding emergencies
- serious incidents during educational visits
- hazardous material incidents
- prolonged infrastructure failure affecting school operations
- significant community trauma affecting the school

Not all emergencies constitute critical incidents. The threshold for activating this framework is determined by the Head of School or delegated senior leader based on the level of threat, disruption, safeguarding concern or operational impact.

4. Oversight and Roles

4.1 Board of Directors

The Board of Directors holds responsibility for ensuring that the school maintains appropriate systems for crisis preparedness, safeguarding and institutional resilience. The Board will:

- approve and review this framework
- ensure adequate resourcing for preparedness and response
- receive reports regarding major incidents and post-incident reviews
- monitor institutional learning and improvement following critical incidents
- support strategic continuity planning and risk management

The Board recognises that operational control during active incidents rests with school leadership and emergency services.

4.2 Head of School

The Head of School retains overall executive authority during a critical incident and is responsible for:

- determining whether this framework should be activated
- establishing strategic priorities and operational direction
- coordinating with emergency services and external agencies
- authorising communications to parents, media and stakeholders
- ensuring safeguarding oversight during all stages of the incident
- leading recovery and review processes following the incident

Where the Head of School is unavailable, authority transfers to the Deputy Head of School or delegated senior leader.

4.3 Crisis Management Team (CMT)

Once activated, the Crisis Management Team (CMT) coordinates operational response, communication, safeguarding and continuity planning. Membership may include:

- Head of School
- Deputy Head of School
- Designated Safeguarding Lead
- Operations Coordinator
- Communications Lead
- Senior Leadership Team representatives
- Medical personnel
- Other staff as required by the nature of the incident

The Crisis Management Team operates from a designated command location where communication systems, records and operational coordination can be maintained securely. Clear records of:

- decisions

- timings
- communications
- actions taken
- safeguarding concerns

must be maintained throughout the incident.

4.4 Staff Responsibilities

All staff members share responsibility for maintaining safety, safeguarding and calm supervision during a critical incident. Staff are expected to:

- follow instructions issued by leadership and emergency services
- prioritise student safety and safeguarding
- act calmly and professionally
- avoid speculation or dissemination of rumours
- maintain confidentiality where appropriate
- support students emotionally and practically
- report relevant information promptly and accurately
- cooperate fully with crisis procedures and reviews

The school recognises that staff may themselves experience distress during or following a critical incident. Appropriate welfare and professional support will therefore be provided where required.

5. Immediate Response Framework

When a potential critical incident is identified, the following principles guide the initial response.

5.1 Assess

Initial information should be gathered as quickly and accurately as possible. Leadership must establish:

- the nature of the threat or incident
- immediate safeguarding concerns
- whether emergency services are required
- whether movement increases or reduces risk
- the location of students and staff
- whether communication restrictions are necessary

The school acknowledges that early information may be incomplete, inaccurate or contradictory.

5.2 Protect

Protective action may include:

- lockdown
- invacuation
- evacuation

- medical response
- perimeter control
- supervision and containment
- communication restriction

5.3 Communicate
Communication should remain:

- factual
- proportionate
- calm
- centrally coordinated

Staff must avoid speculative messaging, informal updates or social media commentary.

5.4 Record
All significant decisions, timings and actions should be documented.

5.5 Review
The situation must be reviewed continuously as circumstances evolve.

6. Lockdown Procedures
Detailed operational procedures, communication systems, drill expectations and staff responsibilities relating to lockdown situations are outlined in the 7Hills Lockdown Guidelines 2025–2026. All staff are required to review and follow these procedures during drills and real incidents.

6.1 Purpose of Lockdown
Lockdown procedures are implemented where there is a serious and immediate threat to safety on or near the school site and where remaining inside secured locations is assessed as the safest option. Potential triggers may include:

- intruder or hostile threat
- nearby violence or unrest
- armed threat
- dangerous animal
- hazardous environmental risk
- attempted forced entry

6.2 Lockdown Signal
A pre-agreed lockdown signal is used to initiate procedures.
All students and staff receive training regarding lockdown expectations and behaviour.

6.3 Lockdown Actions

On hearing the lockdown signal:

- students and staff move immediately to the nearest secure location
- doors and windows are secured where possible
- lights and illuminated screens are turned off
- students are positioned away from sightlines
- silence is maintained
- mobile devices are placed on silent
- registers are completed when safe to do so

No individual may leave a secured area unless authorised by senior leadership or emergency services. Staff must not open doors in response to knocks, verbal requests or unidentified communication.
The school recognises that lockdown situations may be prolonged and emotionally distressing. Staff are therefore expected to supervise students calmly, maintain reassurance and monitor student wellbeing throughout.

6.4 All Clear

Lockdown remains in place until lifted by the Head of School or emergency services. No movement occurs until formal authorisation is given.

7. Evacuation and Invacuation

7.1 Evacuation

Where remaining on site presents greater risk than movement, evacuation procedures may be implemented. The school's Fire and Emergency Evacuation procedures remain applicable during fire-related incidents.

Detailed fire evacuation procedures, assembly arrangements, sweep responsibilities, Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs), drill recording systems and evacuation accountability procedures are contained within the 7Hills Fire Drill Guidelines 2025–2026.

Evacuation decisions during non-fire incidents are based upon dynamic risk assessment and guidance from emergency services.

Students remain supervised throughout evacuation and registers are taken at assembly locations.
Where necessary, off-site evacuation locations may be used.

The school recognises that Kampala traffic conditions, road safety concerns and communication challenges may affect evacuation planning and therefore maintains flexibility within operational decision-making.

7.2 Invacuation

Invacuation involves bringing students and staff indoors or moving them to designated internal safe locations due to risks outside the school environment. Situations may include:

- civil unrest
- environmental hazard
- dangerous weather
- smoke or air quality concerns
- nearby security incidents

The school distinguishes clearly between invacuation and lockdown:

- invacuation protects from external environmental or community risk
- lockdown protects from active or hostile threat

Students remain supervised at all times and registers are maintained. Where invacuation extends for a prolonged period, leadership will coordinate:

- welfare support
- toilet access
- hydration
- medical support
- communication with families

8. Educational Visits and Off-Site Incidents

The school recognises that critical incidents occurring during educational visits or off-site activities may involve additional complexity due to distance, communication challenges, transport limitations and unfamiliar environments.

Educational visits and off-site emergencies are additionally governed by the Educational Visits Policy, associated risk assessments and trip emergency procedures.

Group leaders assume immediate operational responsibility during the initial stages of an incident and must:

- safeguard all members of the group
- contact emergency services where necessary
- inform the school immediately
- maintain supervision and accountability
- preserve accurate information regarding the incident

The Crisis Management Team will then coordinate:

- communication with families
- safeguarding oversight
- support for staff and students
- liaison with authorities
- transport and repatriation arrangements where required

International visits may require coordination with embassies, consular services or international agencies.

9. Communication

Communication during a critical incident must be:

- accurate
- timely
- proportionate
- coordinated
- safeguarding-aware

Poor communication can significantly increase panic, misinformation and emotional distress. The school recognises that misinformation may spread rapidly through:

- WhatsApp groups
- social media
- student messaging
- parent speculation
- external community commentary

Leadership therefore retains central control over formal communication.

9.1 Staff Communication

Staff communication occurs through designated internal systems only. Staff must not:

- share unverified information
- speculate regarding causes or outcomes
- post incident information on social media
- communicate unofficial updates externally

9.2 Communication with Parents and Carers

Parents and carers will be informed as soon as it is safe and operationally appropriate. Communication may include:

- factual updates
- reassurance
- instructions regarding collection procedures
- safety expectations
- continuity planning information

During active incidents, parents may be instructed not to attend the school site if doing so increases operational or safeguarding risk.

9.3 Media Management

All media enquiries are managed by the Head of School or designated representative. Staff and students must not engage directly with journalists or provide unauthorised statements. The school recognises that media management forms part of safeguarding and reputational protection. Statements should:

- avoid speculation
- prioritise dignity and privacy
- remain factually accurate
- avoid sensationalism
- protect children and vulnerable individuals

10. Safeguarding During Critical Incidents

The school recognises that critical incidents increase safeguarding vulnerability. Students may experience:

- fear
- confusion
- separation anxiety
- trauma responses
- emotional dysregulation
- heightened vulnerability to misinformation or peer influence

Safeguarding responsibilities therefore remain central throughout all stages of incident management. Particular consideration must be given to:

- younger students
- students with SEND
- medically vulnerable students
- students with anxiety or trauma history
- students requiring medication or emotional support

The Designated Safeguarding Lead remains involved throughout all significant incidents.

11. Student and Staff Wellbeing

The school recognises that emotional responses to critical incidents vary significantly between individuals. Students and staff may experience:

- shock
- fear
- distress
- confusion

- guilt
- anger
- emotional withdrawal

- delayed trauma responses

The school will avoid minimising emotional impact or pressuring individuals to return immediately to normal functioning. Support may include:

- counselling referral
- pastoral check-ins
- reduced academic expectations temporarily
- staff debriefing
- phased reintegration
- safe spaces and supervised support

Recovery following a significant incident may be prolonged.

12. Educational Continuity and Business Continuity

The school recognises that some incidents may significantly disrupt normal operations. Leadership will therefore consider:

- temporary closure
- remote learning provision
- examination continuity
- staffing disruption
- infrastructure limitations
- transport disruption
- communication systems
- safeguarding continuity

Where prolonged disruption occurs, continuity planning aims to maintain:

- safeguarding
- communication
- student wellbeing
- continuity of education where reasonably possible

The school acknowledges that operational flexibility may be required during major disruption.

13. Parent Reunification Procedures

Where students require collection following a critical incident, reunification procedures will prioritise:

- safeguarding
- controlled release
- accurate identification
- communication clarity
- emotional support

Students will only be released to authorised adults.

The school recognises that reunification periods may involve heightened emotion, misinformation and anxiety. Staff are therefore expected to maintain calm, professionalism and clear supervision.

14. Post-Incident Management and Recovery

The school recognises that the conclusion of the immediate emergency does not mark the end of the crisis.

Post-incident management may involve:

- safeguarding review
- welfare support
- communication management
- operational recovery
- staff support
- counselling referral
- timetable adjustment
- academic flexibility
- community reassurance
- memorial or cultural considerations where appropriate

Following significant incidents, the school will conduct a structured review considering:

- effectiveness of response
- safeguarding considerations
- communication systems
- operational strengths and weaknesses
- training implications
- procedural improvement

The purpose of review is institutional learning rather than blame.

15. Training, Drills and Preparedness

The school maintains ongoing preparedness through:

- lockdown drills
- evacuation drills
- staff induction
- safeguarding training
- scenario review
- leadership rehearsal
- operational review meetings

The school recognises that rehearsed familiarity reduces confusion and improves collective confidence during real incidents. Training also seeks to ensure that students understand procedures without creating unnecessary fear or anxiety.

16. Monitoring and Review

This framework is reviewed annually and following significant incidents. Review considers:

- operational effectiveness
- safeguarding implications
- changes in risk profile
- community feedback
- lessons learned
- CIS expectations
- evolving international best practice

17. Distribution and Access

This policy is available to all staff, students and parents via the school website and on the school Google drive. Printed copies can be requested from the school reception.

18. Related Policies and Procedures

This framework should be read alongside:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Fire Drill Guidelines
- Lockdown Guidelines
- Educational Visits Policy
- First Aid Policy
- Risk Assessment Procedures

Appendix A - Lockdown Procedures and Action Checklist

This summary document provides clear, practical and authoritative operational guidance for staff in the event of a hostile threat, intruder or other serious on-site risk where remaining inside and securing rooms is assessed as the safest option.

Lockdown may be initiated by:

- Head of School (primary authority) or Delegated Senior Leader in the absence of the Head.
- Operations Coordinator where immediate threat is identified.

* Emergency services guidance takes precedence once present on site.

Lockdown Signals

• A clearly recognisable, pre-agreed lockdown signal is used.
• Staff must not use informal signalling or make unsanctioned announcements.

Immediate Staff Actions (On Hearing the Lockdown Signal):

1. Move all students and visitors into the nearest secure room.
2. Lock doors where possible; wedge or secure if locks are unavailable.
3. Close and secure windows; draw blinds or cover sightlines.
4. Position students away from doors and external windows.
5. Turn off lights, projectors and illuminated screens.
6. Maintain silence; mobile phones on silent.
7. Take a register when safe to do so.
8. Report missing or additional persons to the designated coordination lead.

Room Lockdown Quick Checklist☐ Door locked / secured
☐ Windows closed & covered
☐ Students out of sightlines
☐ Lights & screens off
☐ Silence maintained
☐ Register taken when safe
☐ Missing / extra students reported

Movement Restrictions

- No one may leave a secured room unless instructed by a senior leader or emergency services.
- Staff must not open doors to unidentified persons or respond to knocks.

Communication During Lockdown

- Primary method: internal communication channels designated by SLT (e.g. WhatsApp).
- Staff must avoid use of unofficial messaging or social media.
- Rumour sharing or speculative reporting is prohibited.

Students Outside Class at Time of Lockdown

• Students must enter the nearest supervised safe location.
• Support staff escort where safe to do so.

Toilet / Medical Situations

Where movement presents risk, individuals should remain in place, minimise visibility and await instruction

All-Clear Signal

- Lockdown ends only when authorised by the Head of School or emergency services.
- Staff must not self-dismiss or assume resolution.

Post-Lockdown Immediate Actions

- Welfare and safeguarding check of all students.
- Completion of incident report by room supervisor.
- Debrief with leadership where requested.

Appendix B - Shelter (Invacuation) Procedures

Situations Where Shelter May Be Used

- Nearby disturbance or civil unrest.
- Hazardous smoke, fumes, or air quality concerns.
- Severe weather or environmental risk.
- Community event affecting safe movement outside.

Key Distinction

- Shelter = controlled movement to safe internal areas.
- Lockdown = protection from an active or hostile threat.

Authority to Initiate Shelter

- Head of School or delegated Senior Leader

Shelter Actions

1. Bring all students and staff indoors immediately.
2. Move to designated internal safe zones where identified.
3. Close windows and doors; switch off ventilation if required.
4. Conduct roll call and report absences.
5. Maintain calm supervision and reassurance.

Duration & Welfare Considerations

- Access to drinking water and toilets arranged where safe.
- Medical and SEND needs prioritised.
- Staff to monitor anxiety and wellbeing.

Communication

- Regular factual updates issued via agreed channels.
- Parents informed when safe and appropriate.

End of Shelter

- Lifted only by Head of School / delegated leader following risk reassessment or guidance from authorities.

Appendix C - Evacuation Procedures

Authority to Evacuate

- Automatic via fire alarm system.
- Head of School / delegated leader where risk requires evacuation.

Evacuation Actions

1. Leave building immediately by nearest safe route
2. Do not collect personal belongings unless essential medication
3. Supervise students and proceed to allocated assembly point
4. Take register and report findings to evacuation coordinator

Safe Assembly & Supervision

- Students remain in class groups
- No re-entry until authorised by senior leadership / emergency services

Off-Site Evacuation

- Used only where remaining on campus poses greater risk
- Pre-identified relocation points used
- Parents notified once safe

Accessibility & Inclusion

- Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs) followed for identified students and staff

Appendix D - Bomb Threat & Suspicious Package Procedures

Critical Principles

- Evacuation is not automatic
- Police guidance overrides internal procedures

If a Suspicious Object is Found

- Do not touch or move the item
- Clear immediate area and prevent access
- Inform senior leadership and security immediately
- Contact emergency services

If a Threat is Received by Phone
Record as much detail as possible, including:

- Exact wording
- Caller identity / accent / tone
- Background noise
- Time and duration of call

If Threat is Received by Email or Message

- Do not forward or delete
- Preserve message and report immediately

Decision-Making on Evacuation

- Based on police advice and risk assessment
- Evacuation routes must avoid suspected areas

Post-Incident Procedure

- Written incident record completed
- Debrief and review conducted by Crisis Management Team

Appendix E - Critical Incident Log Template

Incident Reference Number	
Date	
Time Incident Reported	
Reported By	
Location	
Nature of Incident	
Incident Level	Level 1 / Level 2 / Level 3 / Level 4
Emergency Services Contacted	Yes / No
Time Emergency Services Contacted	
Lead Incident Manager	
Crisis Management Team Activated	Yes / No

Initial Incident Summary
Provide a factual summary of the incident using confirmed information only.

Immediate Safeguarding Concerns

- Students affected:
- Staff affected:
- Visitors affected:
- Medical concerns:
- Missing persons:
- Security concerns:

Immediate Protective Actions Taken	**Time Action Taken**	**Authorised By**

Communications Log

Time	**Communication Issued**	**To**	**Method**	**Issued By**

Incident Outcome
Provide a summary of how the incident was resolved.

Follow-Up Actions Required

Action	Responsible Person	Deadline

Post-Incident Review Completed
Date:
Lead Reviewer:
Recommendations:

Appendix F - Crisis Decision Record

Date	Time	Decision Maker	Incident Reference Number

Decision Made
Provide a clear description of the decision.

Reason for Decision
Explain why the decision was made based on information available at the time.

Information Available at Time of Decision

1.
2.
3.

Risks Considered

1.
2.
3.

Persons Consulted

1.
2.
3.

Outcome of Decision

Effective	Partially Effective	Ineffective	Comments:

Appendix G - Parent Reunification Register

Student Name	Year Group	Released To	Relationship	Time Released	ID Checked	Notes	Staff Signature

Appendix H - Emergency Contact Directory

Emergency Services

Service	Contact Number
Police	0800199991
Ambulance	0800111044/0800 111044
Fire Service	0800121222
Local Hospital	+256312256001/

School Leadership Contacts

Role	Name	Contact Number
Head of School	Mark Bridgeman	0791448310
Deputy Head	Priscila Perdomo	0791448196
Operations Manager	Douglas Welayi	0786736846
Admin Representative	Constance Nabukenya	0779751987
DSL	Scott Porter	0759680786

External Support Contacts

Organisation	Contact Person	Number
Board Chair	Bonita Kwizera	0708212072
School Lawyer	Gideon Atuheirwe	0705749636
Insurance Providers	Sudi - Case Med Care	0740888884

Appendix I - Crisis Management Team Activation Checklist

Initial Actions

Action	Completed
Assess immediate risk	☐
Contact emergency services if required	☐
Activate Crisis Management Team	☐
Establish command location	☐
Confirm student and staff locations	☐
Determine protective action	☐
Begin incident log	☐
Secure entrances/exits	☐
Notify Board Chair if required	☐
Prepare parent communication	☐
Allocate staff responsibilities	☐
Review safeguarding concerns	☐

Operational Actions

Action	Completed
Roll call completed	☐
Visitors accounted for	☐
Medical support arranged	☐
Media holding statement prepared	☐
Communication restrictions implemented	☐
Parent reunification area prepared	☐
Welfare support arranged	☐

Recovery Actions

Action	Completed
Debrief completed	☐
Incident review scheduled	☐
Safeguarding follow-up completed	☐
Counselling support arranged	☐
Parent follow-up communication sent	☐
Documentation archived securely	☐

Appendix J - Post-Incident Review Form

Incident Reference Number	
Date of Review	
Lead Reviewer	
Incident Type	

What Worked Well?	**Areas for Improvement**

Communication Effectiveness

- Staff communication:
- Parent communication:
- Emergency service coordination:
- Internal coordination:
-

Safeguarding Review

Were safeguarding responsibilities maintained effectively?
Yes / No
Comments:

Recommendations

Recommendation	**Responsible Person**	**Deadline**

Final Reflection

Provide an overall evaluation of the school's response and institutional learning following the incident.
