

School Governors

Crisis Management in Jewish Schools

Planning, responding and supporting school communities

Governors Briefing



Why Crisis Planning Matters

Planning ahead allows school to respond calmly, thoughtfully and effectively when difficult situations arise. Clear processes helps schools manage communication, risk and decision making. Schools thrive on reputation and reputational risk is a key element of crisis management.

- Preparation is as important as response.
- Clear plans enable calm and confident leadership.
- Effective communication is critical during crises.



The Reality and Challenges of Crisis Today

- Information spreads rapidly through social media and news. Unverified information can quickly become accepted as fact, Making early and accurate communication critical.
- Information spreads instantly through social media.
- Rumours can quickly become accepted as fact.
- Schools may face rapid public scrutiny.



Role of PaJeS

- Schools may receive support from insurance providers, HR partners, crisis advisors, local authority and relevant community organisations. (It is key to know who your 'go to' organisation is in a crisis.)
- Provide crisis guidance to Jewish schools.
- Support leadership teams with communication.
- Coordinate expertise and wellbeing resources.



PaJeS Wellbeing Support

- PaJeS supports schools with crisis response, communication guidance and wellbeing resources for students, staff and families.
- Wellbeing network launched in 2019.
- Access to psychologists and specialist advisors.
- Evidence-based guidance for schools and parents



Examples of crisis situations

- Death of a parent, staff member or student
 - Global events impacting students
 - Anti semitism or community incidents
 - Unexpected press release
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- Two examples
 - How we responded to the Manchester attack (specific)
 - How we respond to the national crisis around EBISA (general)



1. Responding to Manchester attack

- Contacted Clinical Psychologist, Dr Talya Greene.
- Rapid communication to all schools with updated and relevant guidance post October including comms for parents
- Shared online zoom for all parents and carers in Jewish schools to disseminate guidance.
- Immediate meeting with all Headteachers and CST offering funded Ed Psych support for those schools directly affected.
- Continued contact with wellbeing leads to offer funded emotional support for staff.



Some specific guidance

Supporting Children at times of crisis

- Children may feel fear, anxiety or confusion.
- Maintaining a sense of safety - Routine helps restore stability and safety.
- Adults model calm and supportive responses

Psychological responses

- Younger children – anxiety, sleep problems, regression, clinginess, physical complaints
- Older children – worry, guilt, poor concentration, isolation, fatigue and changes of appetite



Talking With Children about difficult events

- Acknowledge feelings with empathy
- Use simple, age appropriate and honest explanations.
- Encourage and answer the questions children ask.
- Allow ongoing conversations over time.
- Model healthy emotional responses.



Managing Media Exposure

- Limit exposure to distressing news coverage.
- Discuss what children see online.
- Encourage trusted sources of information.



2. EBSA – A Growing Challenge

- Emotionally Based School Avoidance affects many students and is a national crisis.
- Linked to anxiety, trauma and mental health needs.
- Creates challenges for families and schools.



Community Factors

- PaJeS collaborated with BELS (Barnet Education Learning Service), to develop guidance addressing specific risk to Jewish schools.
- Concerns about antisemitism and global events.
- Pressures within close-knit communities.
- Cultural and educational expectations.
- Sensory demands around festivals
- Stress for those with eating disorders



Working With Partners

- Collaboration with Barnet Education Learning Service.
- Engagement with schools, families and professionals.
- Research informing community-specific guidance.
- JAMI, Norwood, Gateways, KeshetUK, Noa Girls, Jteen etc



Key Message for Governors

- Crisis preparedness strengthens school resilience.
- Trusted partnerships support effective crisis responses.
- Working together to ensure communication is clear and timely protects the school community.

