

Critical Incident Policy

RATIONALE

A critical incident can be defined as a sudden, unexpected and tragic event or sequence of events which causes trauma and confusion within a school community and which overwhelms its normal coping mechanism. It may affect pupils, staff, parents and governors, may relate directly to the safety of the school community or may involve an incident beyond the school premises. As a critical incident is likely to have a severe impact upon the school, both in the short and long term, our aim is to ensure that school strategies and procedures are in place to protect the physical and emotional wellbeing of every member of the school community.

EXAMPLES OF CRITICAL INCIDENTS

A critical incident is likely to involve death or serious injury to one or more members of the school community and, or, their families either at school, journeying to or from school, participating in a school related activity, at home or in some other context.

In School:

- The death of a student or member of staff through natural causes
- An accident involving a student or member of staff
- A deliberate act of violence such as knifing or the use of a firearm
- A school fire or an explosion in a laboratory

Out of School:

- Deaths or injuries through accidents
- Suicide
- Civil disturbances

PURPOSE

- To ensure that swift and appropriate action is taken in the case of the school being made aware that a critical incident has occurred
- To ensure that the welfare of pupils and staff is paramount
- To ensure that the school responds in a sensitive, consistent and effective manner which reduces confusion, panic and extreme emotion
- To have in place a Critical Incident Management Team, the membership of which is known to all relevant parties (see Appendix 1)
- To have in place a Critical Incident Management Plan, the details of which are familiar to all relevant parties (see Appendix 2)
- To maintain normality, as far as possible, in parts of the school which are not affected and to restore normality as soon as possible to the parts which are affected
- To have immediate access to all relevant contact details (including outside agencies)
- To offer sensitive, non-intrusive support in the short and medium term to all those affected directly or indirectly by the incident

GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING A CRITICAL INCIDENT

- The Principal will take charge of the school's response. In the case of the Principal being unavailable, the members of the Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) will take charge. The Principal's office will be the central liaison point.
- The CIMT will assess immediate practical needs.
- The CIMT will contact next of kin of those directly involved if required.
- A short simple statement of facts will be prepared by the Principal or Vice Principal(s) (see Appendix 3).
- All contacts from the media will be dealt with by the Principal or Vice Principal(s).
- Secretarial staff taking incoming calls will use a statement agreed by the CIMT.
- When necessary, all members of staff will be informed and will be guided in relation to informing pupils.
- The CIMT will determine the involvement of parents if appropriate.
- Short and long term support will be offered to those affected.
- There will be an evaluation of the way in which the incident was dealt with.

This policy was last reviewed by Leadership Team: December 2016

Due to be Reviewed: December 2018

APPENDIX 1

MEMBERS OF THE CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM

- Principal
- Vice Principals
- Senior Teachers
- School Business Manager
- SLT Volunteers
- Chair of Board of Governors or other member in his absence

(Other members of staff may be additional members of the CIMT as and when required)

APPENDIX 2 CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT PLAN

Preventative Strategies

- Regular review of relevant policies, Health and Safety Policy
- First Aid training
- Fire Drills
- PSE Programme Preparation for the Eventuality of a Critical Incident
- A Critical Incident Report Booklet will be drafted
- Members of the CIMT will have ready access to pupil, staff and governor contact details
- Members of the CIMT will have a register of emergency services and relevant outside agencies (See Critical Incident Report Booklet)
- Relevant members of the secretarial staff will have a register of emergency services and relevant outside agencies (See Critical Incident Report Booklet)
- In the case of the site having to be evacuated, venues to which pupils will be taken will be identified (see Appendix 4)
- Opportunities to explore sensitive issues such as tragedy and death will be built into the PSE and pastoral programmes

In the Event of a Critical Incident:

Initial Response

- The Principal should be contacted first (if not available one of the Vice Principals)
- The Principal (or Vice Principal) should seek to clarify from relevant sources the nature and circumstances of the incident
- The CIMT will meet at the earliest opportunity and agree on procedures for managing the critical incident (See Appendix 5)
- If the incident is on site, health and safety measures will be put in place and the emergency services contacted

Longer Term Issues

- School structures and routines will be re-established
- Supportive strategies for pupils and staff will be implemented
- There will be ongoing contact with parents
- Actions taken will be reviewed and policies amended if appropriate
- The PSE and pastoral programmes will be reviewed
- Staff will be mindful of anniversaries and other special dates

The use of appropriate outside agencies is crucial to providing long-term support as is the use of appropriately trained members of staff who are known to those in need of help.

STAFF TRAINING

NAME	COURSE	VENUE AND DATE
Mrs McNulty		Education Authority, Omagh Technology Centre (Sept 14/Mar 15)

APPENDIX 3

After a sudden death ...

We are taking this time to think about, a Year 12 who died last night in a road traffic accident. was travelling with her family to We do not know any details about the accident at this time except that the rest of the family is safe and no one is injured seriously.

.....'s funeral is being held at on A funeral is a special time to remember a person who has died. The school will let your families know about the specific time and address of the funeral in a written note which will be sent home tomorrow.

Let's take a moment of silence to think of, to remember all the good things about her, and to say goodbye. In our silence we will express our loving thoughts.

After a suspected suicide...

A tragedy has happened., a Year 8 pupil, has died suddenly. Details of 's premature death will not be released to protect the privacy of family members. You will be given information about funeral arrangements as soon as possible.

This kind of tragic news is hard to accept. You may experience many feelings within the next few days. Everyone deals with loss differently. It is important to respect the way others grieve.

Counsellors are available in Feel free to arrange to go and talk to the counsellors. They want to listen to your feelings and concerns.

SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE 1

Date

School grieves sudden death of pupil

As reported by the PSNI, a pupil at School died tragically on

The circumstances of 's death are not known at this time and an investigation is currently ongoing.

This is a tragic loss to 's family and to our school community. To assist in supporting our staff and pupils through this time of grief, additional trained staff from the EA's Critical Incident Response Team have been assigned to the school to provide support. A letter has been sent by the school to parents, informing them of this incident and providing information on the support services available through the school.

A special assembly to remember has been arranged for

Contact: Principal, School at

SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE 2

For Immediate Release

Historic school destroyed by fire

..... School was destroyed by fire in the early hours of Saturday morning. Fire and Rescue Service and the PSNI responded to a 999 call reporting the blaze at 3 am on Saturday. There were no injuries reported. The cause of the fire is under investigation. Damage is estimated at £..... million.

"It is a tragedy to have lost this school, not only for our students and their families, but for our community." Chairperson of the Board of Governors said:" Schools are much more than a place of learning. They are where our communities meet – for special events, to vote and play. School, in particular, was a landmark in our community with historical building designation."

Arrangements have been made to house School's pupils at for the remainder of this school year, with the addition of temporary classrooms at

All parents were contacted by telephone on Sunday.

To assist in supporting our staff and pupils through this time of shock and loss, additional trained staff from the EA's Critical Incident Response Team have been assigned to the school to provide support.

Contact:, Chairperson of BOG, School at

PRO FORMA LETTER (for parents)

'With great regret, we have learnt of the death/deaths of and we extend our deepest sympathy to the family circle.

PREPARED STATEMENT FOR MEDIA

We are sorry to learn of the tragic.....of We hope at this time the school would be given the privacy needed to support our pupils at this difficult time, etc

NB: If the Principal wishes to comment about the pupil, they may want to gain permission from the family to include:

Sporting achievements Musical talents Academic success Personal attributes

SAMPLE LETTER TO PARENTS

Date:

Dear Parent/ Guardian

It is with great sadness that I have to tell you of the sudden death of NAME, (a pupil in Year XX/ a Year XX Teacher/ Learning Support Assistant, etc). The children were told this morning by their class teacher/ Principal at assembly.

NAME died of (an asthma attack, meningitis etc) and the children have been assured this is something that does not happen very often. Your child may or may not want to talk about it but it is likely that he/ she will need extra love and support from you in the days ahead. This does not mean that anything is wrong with him/ her. It only means that this traumatic event has been too powerful for him/ her to deal with on his/ her own. He/ she may be feeling anxious. Take time to listen to your child and try to provide a predictable routine for him/ her at home. Avoid too many absences to start with.

We have enclosed an information leaflet for you which may be useful at this time.

Trained staff from the EA's Critical Incident Response Team are helping to support us through this difficult time. It is sometimes necessary for a member of the team to speak to a class or individual pupils who may be distressed. He/ she will be guided by the Principal/ class teacher in this. If you do not wish your child to receive such support from the team please contact us immediately.

We are deeply saddened by this great loss but are trying, for the children's sake, to keep the school environment as normal as possible. Our thoughts are with NAME's family at this tragic time and the school community sends them sincerest sympathy and support.

NAME's funeral is on DAY/ DATE at TIME am/pm at (Name of Church). We are in touch with the family regarding their wishes for the school's representation at the Service.

APPENDIX 4

In the event of having to evacuate the school premises the following emergency areas have been arranged:

(see Emergency Drill procedures)

APPENDIX 5

PROCEDURES FOR CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT

Critical Incident Team

- Seeks clarification
- Summons the CIMT to inform of incident
- Prepares relevant statements/letters
- Liaises with relevant staff
- Ensures phone lines are operative
- Calls emergency services if appropriate
- Ensures health and safety measures are in place

Vice Principal (Curricular)

- Convenes and informs staff
- Arranges staff cover if appropriate

Vice Principal (Pastoral)

- Contacts external agencies
- Contacts relevant parents

Year Heads

- Ensure the physical and emotional wellbeing of pupils

CRITICAL INCIDENT REPORT BOOKLET

Information received from: _____

Contact details: _____

Name of person informed: _____

Information passed to: _____

(Name of person with overall responsibility)

Time: _____ Date: _____

Details of incident received so far: -

Unconfirmed reports:

Details of people known to be involved: -

Name	Involvement	Known/Suspected	Contact Details

Staff members on Critical Incident Response Team:

Name	Mobile Number
Mrs M Mulhern	07714616195
Mr J Devine	07712677741
Mrs K Crilly	07729708448
Mr J Lafferty	00353863912945
Mrs I McNulty	07999701560
Mrs C Currie	07751151061
Mrs A McAllister	07731481811
Ms C McDaid	07971898493
Mrs B O'Driscoll (IFM)	07917264520

CENTRAL INFORMATION POINT IS THE PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE

1. Meeting of CIMT to assess the ongoing danger

Time: _____ Date: _____

2. Allocate roles to staff members

Role	Person responsible	Mobile Number
Phone calls		..
Staff briefing & debriefing		..
Pupils		
Parents		..
Media	.	
Practical arrangements (e.g. staff cover)	.	
Secretarial Staff/ Emergency Services/Health and Safety	.	

Completed By: _____ : Time: _____ Date: _____

3. Inform key people and seek support as appropriate:

List of key contacts.

Mr Ciaran O'Neill (Chair of BoG)	07970449613
Fire	(999) 02871 264321
Ambulance	(999)
Police	02871 367337
Health Centre	
Doctor	
Education Authority (Western Region)	02882 411411
CCMS	02871 261931
DENI	02891 279000
IFM (Betty O'Driscoll)	07917264520
Counselling Service (Family Works)	02891 821721
Childline	08001111
Samaritans	08457909090
Educational Psychologist	02871 864780
Educational Welfare Officer	02871 272300
Care Call	02890 245821
McGonigle's Bus Service	00353866003030
Translink	02871 262261
Radio Foyle	02871 378600

4. Brief all staff

- Clear information
- Advice regarding how to inform & support pupils
- Team working & practical arrangements
- Support for staff

Completed By: _____ Time: _____
Date: _____

5. Inform all pupils

- Clear language
- Dispel rumour
- Offer support
- Age appropriate

Are there pupils more closely affected who need to be informed separately or in a small group?

Completed By: _____
Time: _____ Date: _____

6. Make contact with parents as appropriate

By phone, by letter, visit to home?

Completed By: _____
How? _____
Time: _____ Date: _____

7. Contact with Media (if appropriate)

Prepared statement

Completed By: _____
How? _____
Time: _____ Date: _____

8. Debrief staff

- Thank
- Advise about self-care
- Information about next day

Completed By: _____
Time: _____ Date: _____

9. Meeting of CIMT

Completed Time: _____ Date: _____

ESSENTIAL TASKS – CHECKLIST

1. Record any further information/details/contacts that have come to light since yesterday

Completed By: _____

Time: _____

Date: _____

2. Plan for cover / flexible timetable / appropriate rooms/ refreshments etc as necessary

3. Brief staff on morning of Stage 2

Practical arrangements support for pupils

Completed By: _____

Time: _____

Date: _____

4. Pupils

- Providing further information (as appropriate).
- Showing care and support.
- Providing comforting routine and predictability.
- Allowing pupils some involvement / outlet.
e.g. cards / drawings / poems / ceremonies.

Details of action taken:

Pupil/Group of Pupils	Action Taken	By Whom	Time	Date

Person responsible _____ Date: _____

5. Parents

- Provide further information (as appropriate) e.g. letter/meetings etc.

Details of action taken: -

. Person responsible _____ Date: _____

6. Debriefing staff

- Ongoing practical arrangements
- Longer term monitoring of pupils who may be at risk.
- More detailed self-care advice.

Completed By: _____

Time: _____

Date: _____

7. Debriefing CIMT

Done: Time: _____ Date: _____

ESSENTIAL TASKS – CHECKLISTS

Longer Term Actions

1. Funerals, services, rituals and ceremonies (e.g. memory books, art work, school event, planting tree)
2. Re-establishment of feelings of safety and predictability among school community.
3. Ongoing support of pupils and staff.
4. School support for families affected by the incident.
5. Ongoing monitoring of children who may be having difficulties – providing support and referring on as necessary.

Potential Referral Agencies	Telephone number
Counselling Service	02891 821721
Educational Psychologist	02871 864780
Education Welfare	02871 272300
G.P (through Parent)	
In School Counsellors	

Details of referrals made as a direct result of this incident:

Name of child	Referred to	Referred by	Date of referral	Outcome

Person responsible for the above referrals: Name: _____

6. Ongoing support of staff on stress/bereavement coping, through meetings/talks/referral to staff support agencies.

Details of action taken:

Person responsible _____

Date: _____

7. Anticipate events / anniversaries / reminders that may be difficult or upsetting in the future and plan to support staff and pupils.

Details of action taken: -

Person responsible _____

Date: _____

REFLECTION

(To be completed 6 weeks after the event)

Details of key lessons learned through management of this event.

Completed by: _____ Status: _____

Date: _____

Signed: _____

Signed _____ (For the Board of Governors)

Date: _____

Signed: _____ (Principal)

Date: _____