

Our Lady of Lourdes School Ballymoney

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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.

DEFINITION — what is a critical incident?

"An event or events, usually sudden, which involve the experience of significant personal distress to a level which potentially overwhelms normal responses, procedures, and coping strategies and which is likely to have emotional and organizational consequences"

EXAMPLES

In school:

- the death of a student or a member of staff through natural causes, such as illness.
- a traffic 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 disturbance.



PURPOSE

The purpose of the policy is to:

- ensure that swift and appropriate action is taken in the case of the school being made aware that a critical incident has occurred.
- ensure that the welfare of pupils and staff is paramount
- ensure that the school responds in a sensitive, consistent and effective manner which reduces confusion, panic and extreme emotion
- have in place a Critical Incident Management Team, the membership of which is known to all relevant parties
- have in place a Critical Incident Management Plan, the details of which are familiar to all relevant parties
- 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
- have immediate access to all relevant contact details (including outside agencies)
- 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 Assistant Principal (see Appendix 3)
- All contacts from the media will be dealt with by the Principal or Assistant Principal
- Secretarial staff - Mrs. G, Mc Lean, 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



EFFECTS

The effects of a critical or traumatic incident on a child can be wide ranging and can impinge upon his or her family, other children [particularly those close to the child or the incident, or who may be emotionally vulnerable themselves] and upon the staff in the school.

On children

The potential effects of a traumatic incident upon children are significant. They might include:

- recurrent dreams of the event
- feeling as if the event is recurring
- sleep disturbance
- guilt about surviving
- diminished interest in significant activities
- feelings of detachment
- exaggerated startle response
- memory impairment
- trouble concentrating
- disturbing images
- and memories of the event
- avoidance of activities which recall the event

The reactions of the child will be influenced by his or her developmental stage and may range from separation anxiety in the very young, apparent indifference in young children, to feelings of guilt or revenge in older children.

The effects upon the school community of a traumatic event, whether occurring at the school, or involving students away from the school environment, can be profound, disruptive and long lasting. The immediate impact may involve shock, particularly to those who witnessed the event, disruption of the timetable, new responsibilities for staff in supporting children and informing their parents, and communication difficulties. After the event there may be continuing need to support and monitor students who have been affected and to support staff. The consequences for a school may last for a year or more and involve the students, staff and governors.



Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)

- Principal – Miss E Gillan
- Assistant Principal – Mrs. M Buckley
- SLT Members – Mrs. Delargy Mr. Stewart,
- Chair of the Board of Governors – Mr. M Hasson
- Other Board of Governor Members – Mr. J Donaghy
- Secretary – Mrs. G Mc Lean
- Building Supervisor – Mr. B Mc Garry

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

One/two members of staff may be asked to take responsibility for the normal running of the school whilst the CIMT is engaged in dealing with the incident.



CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT PLAN

Preventative Strategies

- Regular review of relevant policies e.g. Health and Safety
- First Aid training
- Fire Drills – see Appendix 2
- PSE Programme

Preparation for the Eventuality of a Critical Incident

All members of the Critical Incident Management team must:

- have a copy of the Critical Incident Kit and Policy at home and at school, including a copy of the DENI Publication 'A Guide to Managing Critical Incidents in School'
- be aware of the roles of each part of the plan to enable the school to react swiftly and accordingly
- 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
- Relevant members of the secretarial staff will have a register of emergency services and relevant outside agencies
- In the case of the site having to be evacuated, venues to which pupils will be taken will be identified
- 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 Assistant Principal)
- The Principal (or Assistant 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
- 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



Appendix I: SAMPLE ANNOUNCEMENTS

After a known fatality

We are taking this time to think about, a Year ... 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 ... 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 Room - feel free to arrange to go and talk to the counsellors. They want to listen to your feelings and concerns.



Sample Press Release I

School grieves sudden death of pupil

As reported by the PSNI, a pupil at School died tragically on The circumstances of 's death is 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 ELB'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, at School



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.School, in particular, was a, Landmark in our community with historical building

designation..... School was built in and has undergone substantial renovations in recent years, Arrangements have been made to houseSchool 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 Team

Response Team have been assigned to the school to provide support. Contact: , Chairperson of BOG,School



SAMPLE LETTER TO PARENTS

Date:

Dear Parent/Carer

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

(Name) died of [for example, an asthma attack, meningitis] 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 staffs from the Education Authority, 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.



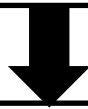
Appendix 2 - Fire Evacuation Policy

In the event of a fire (or a fire drill) in the school, the signal to evacuate the building will be the continuous uninterrupted sounding of the fire alarm.

Step 1: In the event of a fire (or fire drill) in the school the signal to evacuate the building will be the continuous uninterrupted sounding of the fire alarm



Step 2: All pupils will leave the building as quickly as possible by the nearest door or emergency exit and proceed directly to the "Visitor's Car Park" which is situated next to the Graveyard. Do not use lifts.



Step 3: Teachers will then check their class rolls and report to the Principal and the Secretary.



Step 4: The Principal will take overall responsibility for the situation and it is important to listen carefully to and follow any instructions she may have.



Step 5: If it is possible to do so safely appropriately trained staff will try to extinguish the fire

Step 6: No one should return to the building until it is safe to do so and they are instructed by the Principal or the Fire Brigade.



Class Teachers

- Lead all pupils in an orderly fashion to the Year 9/10 yard at the side of the building via the nearest safe exit.
- Get pupils to line up in Form classes by the signs for each class.

Form Teachers

- Bring registration book to Year 9/10 yard.
- Collect class lists from Secretary.
- Take register of Form class pupils present in the Year 9/10 Yard.
- Report any missing pupils directly to the Secretary.

Secretary

- Bring class lists to the Year 9/10 yard.
- Bring sign in/ sign out book to the Year 9/10 Yard.
- Bring list of staff to the Year 9/10 Yard.
- Report to Form teachers any pupils who have signed in/ out.

Caretaker

- When all pupils and teachers have evacuated take one last sweep of building before exiting.
- Liaise with Fire Brigade.

Classroom Assistants

- Stay with assigned pupil/ class during evacuation procedure.

Ancillary Staff

- Report to Assistant Principal Mrs M Buckley.

Principal Miss E Gillan

- Take a register of all staff members using the staff list.
- Allow pupils and staff to return to the school building after advice from the Fire Service and when it is safe to do so.



APPENDIX 3

PROCEDURES FOR CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT

Principal (Miss E Gillan)

- Seeks clarification
- Summons the CIMT to inform of incident
- Prepares relevant statements/letters

Secretary (Mrs. G Mc Lean) assisted by Mr. Stewart

- Liaises with relevant staff
- Ensures phone lines are operative
- Calls emergency services if appropriate

Assistant Principal (Mrs. M Buckley)

- Convenes and informs staff
- Arranges staff cover if appropriate
- Contacts external agencies
- Contacts relevant parents

Heads of Pastoral Care (Mrs. Delargy Miss Coyles Mr. Forrest)

- Contacts external agencies - EA / Social Services / consulting
- Contacts relevant parents
- Supports the physical and emotional wellbeing of pupils
- Arranges staff line if necessary & appropriate

Heads of Year

- Ensures the physical and emotional wellbeing of pupils

Staff members on Critical Incident Response Team

Miss E Gillan
Mrs. M Buckley
Mrs. B Delargy
Mr. S Stewart



Essential Tasks – Checklist

Stage I

Central Information Point is the Principal's Office

1. Hold a meeting of CIMT to assess the on-going danger

Done:

☐

Time: _____

Date: _____

2. Allocate roles to staff members

Role	Person Responsible
Phone calls	Mrs G Mc Lean
Staff Briefing and debriefing	Miss Gillan
Pupils	Heads of Pastoral Care & Year Head Team
Parents	Mrs B Delargy & Mr S Stewart
Media	Miss Gillan & Mr M Hasson
Practical Arrangements (e.g. Staff Cover)	Mrs M Buckley
Secretarial Staff/ Emergencies Services/ Health and Safety	Mr Stewart & Mr B Mc Garry/ Mrs G Mc Lean

Done:

☐

Time: _____

Date: _____



3 Inform key people and seek support as appropriate

- Fire/ Ambulance/ Police 999
- Police Ballymoney
- Doctor/Health Centre Ballymoney: 028 2766 0300
- Causeway Hospital 028 7032 7032

- NEELB —Crisis Bereavement Service 028 9056 6875
- Care Call 028 90245821
- New Life 028 9039 1630
- CRUSE 028 2563 0900
- Child Line 028 9032 7773
- Youth Line 0808 808 8000
- Relate Teen 028 9032 6709
- Samaritans 08457 909090
- Child Death Helpline 0800 282986
- Staff care Services 0500 127079
- NSPCC 028 9035 1135
- RPS 075 30797716
- DENI 028 9127 9279
- BBC (Radio Ulster) 028 9033 8000
- UTV 028 9032 8122
- Trans link – Main office 028 90 66 6630
- Care Call 028 90245821

4. Brief all staff

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

Done:



Time: _____

Date: _____



5. Inform all pupils.

- Think - Clear language (no euphemisms)
- Dispel rumour
- Offer support
- Age appropriate
- Are there pupils more closely affected who need to be informed separately or in a small group?

Done: ☐ Time: _____ Date: _____

6. Make contact with parents as appropriate.

Think –

- by phone
- by letter
- by visit to home?

Done: ☐ By _____

How?

Time: _____ Date: _____

7. Contact with Media (if appropriate).

Think - prepared statement measured tone

Done: ☐ By _____

How?



Time: _____

Date: _____

8. Debrief staff at the end of Stage 1.

- Think - thank staff
- advise about self-care
- information about next day

Done: ☐

Time: _____

Date: _____

9. Meeting of CIMT

Done: ☐

Time: _____ **Date:** _____



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Stage 2

Record any further information/details/contacts that have come to light since the incident or the day after -

Done:

☐

By _____



Time: _____

Date: _____

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

3. Brief staff on morning of Stage 2

- Think - Practical arrangements
- Support for pupils
- Self-care

Done



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.

Person Responsible _____

Date _____

Pupils/Group of Pupils or Staff	Action Taken	By Whom	Time	Date



5. Parents

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

Details of action taken: -

6. Debriefing staff at end of Stage 2.

- Think – On-going practical arrangements
- Longer term monitoring of pupils who may be at risk.
- More detailed self-care advice.

Done: ☐ By: _____

Time: _____ Date: _____

7. Debriefing CIMT at end of Stage 2.

Done: ☐

Time: _____ Date: _____



Longer Term Actions

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

Potential Referral Services	Telephone Numbers
Care Call	
Education Welfare	
Counselling Services in School	
GP through parent	

Details of Referral made as a direct result of this incident

Name of Child /Staff member	Referred to	Referred by	Date of Referral	Out come

Person responsible for the above referrals:

Miss E Gillan – Principal and SLT
Mrs M Buckley
Mrs B Delargy
Mr S Stewart



6. On-going 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: -



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REFLECTION

(To be completed 6 weeks after the event)

Details of key lessons learned through management of this event.

Completed by _____

Date _____



Critical Incident Report Form

Details of the incident			
Date of Incident			
People involved			
Details of people involved			
Information received from			
Contact Details			
Time / Date of Information Received			
Responsible person			



Signed: _____

(For the Board of Governors)

Date: _____

Signed: _____
(Principal)

Date: _____



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School Poem

You're **unique** and **one of a kind**
Your life can be what you want
Take the days just one at a time
Count your blessings not your troubles
You'll make it through whatever comes along
Don't put limits on yourself
So many dreams are waiting to be realised
Decisions are too important to leave to chance
Reach for your **peak**, your **goal**, your **prize**
The longer one carries a problem the heavier it gets
Live a life of serenity not a life of regret
Remember that a **little love** goes a long way
A lot goes forever
Remember that **friendship** is a wise investment
Life's treasures are people....together
Realise that it is **never too late**
Do ordinary things in an extraordinary way
Have **health and happiness**
Take the time to **wish upon a star**
And don't forget – for even a day
How very **special** you are

Castle Street, Ballymoney, County Antrim BT53 6JX
Tel: 028 2766 2050 / 028 2766 5079
www.ourladyoflourdesballymoney.com