

BALLYCLARE SECONDARY SCHOOL

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 our school community and which overwhelms the daily running of the school and normal support mechanisms which are in place. It may affect pupils, staff, parents and governors and may relate directly to the safety of our school community or may involve an incident beyond the school premises.

As a critical incident will probably have a distressing impact upon the school, our aim is to ensure that our school strategies and procedures are in place to provide support, both short and long term, to protect the physical and emotional wellbeing to every member of Ballyclare Secondary School.

The School understands that this Critical Incident Policy and Plan will not cover every aspect of recovery from a critical incident and occurrences may arise which cannot be foreseen or considered. The critical incident may occur at any time during or out of school hours so it is vital that the incident policy is easy to understand and can be put into immediate effect.

Key Points to aid the implementation of this policy:

- That it is adhered to
- That key personnel clearly understand their roles and responsibilities and are fully competent to carry them out
- That all members of the community work together to aid recovery
- That consideration and sensitivity is shown by all
- That pupils, staff and parents are protected from press intrusion
- That normal routines are to be resumed as quickly as possible
- There is a realisation that this is an ongoing process of recovery

The Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) will have the same membership as the school's safeguarding team for Child Protection and has the responsibility for ensuring that procedures are followed during distressing times and high levels of anxiety. If the incident involves legal action, a specified response to the incident should be known and is able to be verified by more than one person.

Members of the Critical Incidents Management Team - CIMT

Principal – Mrs K Bell

Head of Pastoral Care and Pupil Welfare – Mr A Nicholl

Deputy Designated Teacher for Child Protection – Mrs S Flanagan

Designated Governor for Child Protection – Mr R Thompson

Chair of Board of Governors – Rev J H MacConnell

School Nurse – Ms J McShane

Other members of staff may be co-opted 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 engaging in dealing with an incident

Aims of the Critical Incidents Policy

1. To maintain a duty of care
2. To minimise disruption to the school community
3. To facilitate the speedy resumption of normal working practices

Objectives

- To ensure that a swift and appropriate response occurs which aims to reduce the distress caused by the critical incident
- To ensure that the welfare of pupils and staff is paramount
- To have in place a Critical Incident Management Team, the membership of which is known to all relevant parties. This team will have the same membership as the school Safeguarding Team for Child Protection to provide a consistent approach
- To have in place a Critical Incident Management Plan, the details of which are understood by all relevant parties
- 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 term and medium term to all those affected directly or indirectly by the incident

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 and from school, participating in a school related activity, at home or in some other context.

In school this may involve:

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

Out of school this may involve:

- Deaths or injuries through accidents
- Suicide
- Civil disturbance

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 the next of kin of those directly involved if required
- A short simple statement of facts will be prepared by the Principal (Appendix 2)
- All contacts with the media will be dealt with by the Principal (Appendix 3)
- 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 managed

APPENDIX 1

CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT PLAN

In the Event of a Critical Incident

Initial Response

- The Principal should be contacted first (if not available the Head of Pastoral Care & Pupil Welfare)
- The Principal (or Head of Pastoral Care and Pupil Welfare) 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 (Appendix 4)
- 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/carers
- Actions taken will be reviewed and policies amended if appropriate
- The PSHE 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.

Preventative Strategies

- Regular review of relevant strategies
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Health and Safety
- First Aid Training
- Fire Drills
- PSHE Programme

All members of the Critical Incident Management Team must:

- Have a copy of the Critical Incident policy at home and at school
- Be aware of the roles of each part of the plan to enable the school to react swiftly and correctly
- Have contact numbers of each other for 24 hour contact
- In the event of a school trip/visit, have access to a list of names for staff and pupils
- Have a register of emergency services and relevant outside agencies

Relevant members of secretarial staff will have a register of emergency services and relevant outside agencies

Emergency evacuation drills are familiar to all members of staff and the school community and practiced regularly

Opportunities to explore sensitive issues such as tragedy and death will be built into the PSHE and Pastoral Programmes

APPENDIX 2

SAMPLE ANNOUCEMENTS

After a Known Fatality

We are taking this time to think about, a Year 12 pupil 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 are safe and no one is seriously injured.

.....'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 later today/tomorrow.

Let us take a moment to think of, to remember all the good things about her, and to say goodbye. In our silence we will think of her and her family at this sad time.

After a Known Suicide

A tragedy has happened to, 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 ways others grieve. Counsellors are available in Rooms 119 and 120. Feel free to seek teacher permission to speak to the counsellors. They will take time to listen to your feelings and concerns.

Let us take a moment to think of, to remember all the good things about her, and to say goodbye. In our silence we will think of her and her family at this sad time.

APPENDIX 3

RELEASE OF INFORMATION TO THE PRESS

Sample Press Release

Date

“School Grieves Sudden Death of Pupil”

As reported by the PSNI, a pupil at Ballyclare Secondary School die tragically on

.....

The circumstances of’s death are not known at this time and an investigation in 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 NEELB’s Critical Incident Response Team have been assigned to the school to provide support.

A letter has been sent by 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 Further details can be obtained by contacting the Principal, Mrs K Bell, Ballyclare Secondary School at 028 93322610.

Prepared Statement for Media

We are sorry to learn of the tragic death of

We hope that at this time the school would be given the privacy needed to support our staff and pupils at this difficult time.

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

APPENDIX 4

SAMPLE LETTER TO PARENTS

Date

Dear Parent/Carer

It is with great sadness that I have to tell you of the sudden death of, (a pupil in Year ?/Teacher/Learning Support Assistant/Technician/Member of ancillary staff).

The children were told this morning by their class teacher/Principal at assembly.

..... died of an asthma attack/meningitis etc and the children have been assured that 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 some extra support in the days ahead as they try to come to terms with this traumatic event. It is important to take time to listen to your child and try to maintain a normal routine at home. Avoid too many absences from school if at all possible.

We have enclosed an information leaflet for you which may be useful at this time. Trained staff from NEELB 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 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 's family at this tragic time and the school community sends them sincerest sympathy and support.

..... 's funeral will be held on at in Church.

We are in touch with the family regarding their wishes for the school's representation at the Service.

Yours sincerely

Mrs K Bell
Principal

APPENDIX 5

PROCEDURES FOR CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT

Principal

- Seeks clarification
- Calls emergency services if appropriate
- Summons the CIMT to inform them of incident
- Prepares relevant statement/letters

Vice Principal

- Convenes and informs staff
- Arranges staff cover if appropriate
- Contacts external agencies
- Contacts relevant parents
- Supports the physical and emotional wellbeing of pupils

CIMT

- Liaise with Building Supervisors to ensure access for essential personnel
- Ensure Health and Safety measures are in place

Office Staff

- Ensure phone lines are operative and where possible kept clear for communication

School Nurse

- Liaise with school first aiders to offer first aid as appropriate

APPENDIX 6

When the fire alarm signs:

1. Line up the class inside the room.
2. Lead (do not send) the class quickly to the assembly point at the far side of the gravel pitches. All personal belongings should be left in the classroom. Emergency exit arrows are positioned near the door in every room.
3. Do not lock doors. Appointed teachers will check that the school is completely cleared and close all doors after them.
4. Should an exit route be blocked, teachers should carefully appraise the situation and exit all pupils via the nearest safe route.
5. Class teachers should keep a careful eye on members of their class to ensure they reach the assembly point. Pupils should then line up in registration group.
6. Registration teachers should check their class. Class registers and teacher cover/attendance information sheets will be taken to the assembly point by office staff.
7. Should any person(s) be found to be missing the registration teacher will inform the year teacher who will immediately inform the Vice Principal – School Improvement and Organisation, who will take appropriate action.
8. When the emergency/practice comes to an end pupils will be dismissed back to the room they left when the alarm sounded by the Vice Principals. Pupils will continue with the lesson they left or collect their belongings and move on to appropriate timetabled classes.
9. The order to return to class will be given by the Principal

During the lunch break, evacuation of the building will be under the direction of the Principal, Vice Principals and supervisory assistants. However, teachers are asked to report to the assembly point as soon as possible, directing those pupils who they meet on the way. Appointed teachers should ensure that allocated areas are clear.

Should the alarm sound when pupil are not in class or moving between classes they should walk in an orderly fashion to the nearest exit and proceed to the assembly point at the back of the gravel pitches.

When the emergency/practice is over pupils will report to their appropriate timetabled class.

Registration teachers should, at the earliest opportunity, discuss the emergency evacuation procedure with their classes. This will be reinforced in an assembly early in the school year.

Subject teachers should, early in the school year, inform all their classes of the emergency exit route from their classroom.