

St Michael's PS
Dunnamanagh



Critical Incident Policy

Signature of Chairperson of Board of Governors: _____

Signature of Principal: _____

Date approved: _____

Updated on: 22nd June 2020

Review Due: June 2023

The aim of this policy is to lessen the effect of a critical incident on the staff, students and parents at St Michael's Primary School. It is anticipated that by adopting the procedures outlined in this policy it will be possible to provide a more secure environment for everyone associated with the School.

What is a critical incident?

A critical incident is one which arises suddenly. Critical incidents may occur in school or out of school, but both types will have a major impact on staff and students. An incident might be designated as critical where the result is likely to be serious disruption to the running of the School, or where there is likely to be significant public and/or media attention on the School.

There can, of course, be no rigid formula for responding to incidents, but broadly speaking, it has been assumed that where damage to premises is the focus, the Education Authority (EA) Western Region and the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS) will take the leading role in managing the crisis in collaboration with the school and other agencies. Where the crisis is related to people, such as in the event of a death or serious injury, the assumption is that the School is likely to take the lead, with the support of the EA and CCMS as necessary.

Examples of critical incidents

- A serious accident to a child or adult
- The death of a student, member of staff or family member through natural causes
- Violence or assault within school
- A school fire or explosion
- Destruction of part of the school building
- Abduction of a student
- A student or students absconding
- An illness such as meningitis or Corona virus within the school or the local community
- An accident to a student or staff while out of school on a visit or swimming etc.
- Death or injuries on a school journey
- Civil disturbances

Support Agencies and Personnel A list of significant contacts and telephone numbers is included as an Appendix A to this document.

Practice within school

Individual class teachers have an important role to play in managing critical incidents and may well be the best people to deal with the students in their classes. The main role of specialist agencies is one of support, empowerment and to support students who cannot be helped by the teachers within the School alone. In times of crises, teachers must react as they feel is appropriate and there can be no easy formula for dealing with critical incidents but by ensuring good communication within School a crisis may be managed more effectively.

By outlining the appropriate actions to be taken in the event of a critical incident, the School aims to reduce the effect.

Critical Incidents Team

A central component of this policy is the identification of the composition, roles and responsibilities of the Critical Incidents Team.

The role of the team is to review and direct the handling of the incident and the response and recovery process in order to:

- ensure the safety and security of students, staff, other users of the premises and visitors;
- minimize the loss to the School in physical, human and financial terms;
- manage an incident to minimize disruption to regular operations;
- liaise with appropriate agencies, including the Media.

The Critical Incidents Team will comprise of the following personnel:

- **Principal: Mrs J Carlin**
- **Chair of Governors: Fr Mc Devitt**
- **The School's Designated Child Protection Officer: Mrs K Carlin**
- **School Secretary: Mrs Rosemary Boggs (nominated contact)**

Procedures during an incident

1. The Principal and Designated Teacher for Child Protection, must be informed of any critical incident as soon as possible.
2. As soon as an incident is confirmed, the Critical Incidents Team will meet to decide strategies.
3. The rest of the staff will be informed as soon as possible, preferably at a specially convened staff meeting.
4. All staff should share the same information.
5. Students will be told information simply and sensitively
6. The School will try, as far as possible, to keep to the normal routine.

ACTION PLAN

Major incidents require the following procedure:-

1. The Principal will convene the Critical Incidents Team.
2. The nominated contact for Critical Incidents Team will use the up to date list of students' next of kin (record files) and contact parents of affected children.
3. Principal will Inform immediately the appropriate Officers in CCMS and EA.
4. School should not release any statements but refer enquiries to CCMS/ EA
5. Ensure that staff know that only one member of critical incident team will deal with enquiries to school relating to the incident. **No other member of staff should give information relating to the incident. No social media comments by staff**

6. Collect, record and convey as much *accurate* information as possible.
7. Record all actions - Appendix B
8. Keep all staff updated
9. Provide a room for staff to convene during critical time
10. Provide a room for critical incident support officers
11. Counselling for staff.
12. Counselling for pupils.
13. Refusal of access to press/television on school premises.

EXAMPLES OF CRITICAL INCIDENTS AND PROCEDURES

Examples of Critical Incidents and Procedures

1. Bereavement

In all cases of bereavement, the Principal should ascertain what specific information the family would like to be shared with staff and students. The wishes of the family should be respected.

2. The sudden death of a staff member – In school

- Notify the Principal and order an ambulance
- Remove the pupils from the classroom and organise supervision of them
- Principal notifies all staff
- Principal contacts the immediate family
- The Critical incident team meet to implement plans for pupils, staff and community
- Principal notifies parents

3. The sudden death of a pupil – In school

- Remove the other pupils from the classroom
- A member of staff remain with class to help pupils deal with their reactions
- Principal to be notified if not on premises
- Principal notifies parents, EA and CCMS
- Principal notifies other principals if siblings attend other schools
- All staff must be notified and given the same information
- Critical Incident team meet that day to plan action

The sudden death of a Pupil- Outside of School

- Critical Incident Team meet to plan action
- All staff to be notified and given the same information
- Principal notifies EA and CCMS
- Principal notify other principals if siblings attend other schools.

4. Sudden death of a Pupil's Parent (during the school day)

- Principal liaises with family
- Critical Incident Team meet to plan action

Strategies for dealing with other pupils

- All teachers should receive pertinent information
- Staff plan concrete ways to help pupils express their grief eg sending a card, buying a wreath

- Principal will communicate the same accurate information of the death to all staff

5. Bus Incident

If this happens in the morning on the way to school, the following procedure is to be followed;

- The Principal will be informed and will investigate the situation and parents informed
- The Principal will go to the scene and liaise with school to provide for other pupils at the scene.
- If the accident happens in the afternoon the same procedure will apply.

6. Intruder on school Grounds

An intruder is defined as someone who is not authorised to be on school property and who refuses to leave school property when requested to do so. It is most likely that such people will be noticed by the building supervisor/secretary who will alert the Principal. The following procedure should then be followed:

- Contact the police
- Staff will be informed immediately
- The safety of pupils will be ensured by keeping them in the safest location. If pupils are in the classroom they should remain there with the teacher and with the door locked. If it happens at lunchtime or breaktime they should go back to their classrooms and remain there with their teacher or supervisor
- All exterior doors should be locked, all classroom windows should be closed and pupils kept away from them.
- All doors to remain locked until the all clear is given.*

7. School Trips

Although the school takes all steps to ensure all actions are carefully planned and risk assessments are carried out for all trips, there are occasions when unforeseen events occur. The following procedure should be followed if a critical incident occurs on a school trip.

1. There must always be more than one member of staff on a visit on a ratio 1:10
2. Staff should have school mobile phone, contact telephone numbers and a first aid kit
3. The lead teacher must establish the nature and extent of the emergency.
4. The lead teacher must make sure all members of the party are accounted for and are safe
5. If there are injuries, immediately establish their extent as far as possible and administer appropriate first aid.
6. Call Emergency services if required
7. The Principal should be informed immediately of the extent of the incident and the action taken.
8. Wherever possible, a member of staff from the party should supervise throughout and arrange an early return to school.
9. If any member of the party require hospital treatment, an adult should accompany them.
10. All contact is to be controlled by the Principal. The Principal or Chair of Governors will control all contact with parents and the media. No pupil to be allowed access to the telephone. However, where possible, the lead teacher will make all efforts to enable the pupil(s) affected to talk directly with their parents/guardian in a private setting.

Monitoring and Review

This policy will be monitored by the Principal and Board of Governors and reviewed every three years.

Appendix A:**LIST OF USEFUL CONTACTS**

This list should be reviewed each school term and updated if necessary. It is important that all members of the school's Critical Incident Management Team have a copy of this list at home as Critical Incidents can occur during weekends and school holidays.

Organisation	Name	Phone	Mobile	Email
Principal				
Senior Teacher				
Chair of Board of Governors				
Caretaker/ Key holder				
EA Critical Incident Response Team Leader				
EA Chief Executive				
CCMS				
Link Officer				
Local Police				
Local Fire and Rescue Service				
Local Hospital				
Nearest Doctor's Surgery				
School Nurse				
EA Emergency Out of Hours				
EA Health and Safety Officer				
EA Transport Section				
EA Maintenance Officer				
EA Communications Officer				
Educational Psychologist				
Education Welfare Officer				
Social Services				
Local Team Counselling Services (pupils)				
Staff Support and Welfare				
Media Contacts				
Local Health and Care Trust				

Contact List:

Updated _____ (date)

by _____ (name)

Updated _____ (date)

by _____ (name)

Updated _____ (date)

by _____ (name)

Appendix B:

CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT GUIDE

This Guide can be used as a prompt for discussions when preparing a school's Critical Incident Management Plan and as a running record during the course of an incident.

The guide divided into 3 sections - Initial Report, Day 1 and Day 2 is a set of recording sheets represented as a sequence of events that need to be considered and recorded. It can be adapted to suit different types of critical incidents and is available at www.deni.gov.uk

The record should be completed with discretion, sensitivity and respect for confidentiality. It should be shared and stored in accordance with Data Protection and Child Protection Policies.

This guide is provided at: <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/de/appendix-3.pdf> .

ANNOUNCEMENTS TO PUPILS

ADVICE FOR TEACHERS

Remember announcements should be simple, straightforward and sincere. The following examples provide a suggested structure and are not intended to be adhered to rigidly. After the announcement pupils should be assured that they will have the opportunity to talk about the critical incident.

1. Fatality After A Road Traffic Accident

We are taking this time to think about _____, a Year 10 pupil who died last night in a road traffic accident. _____ was travelling with her family to _____ when the accident occurred. We do not know any further details about the accident at this time except that the rest of the family is safe.

_____’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 funeral arrangements in a letter 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.

2. After A Sudden Death

Sadly a tragedy has happened in our school community. _____, a Year 12 pupil has died suddenly. We want to respect the family’s need for privacy at this time but 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 and it is important to respect the way others grieve. We want to listen to your feelings and concerns so support staffs are available in _____. Feel free to arrange to go there and talk to someone.

BREAKING THE NEWS TO PUPILS

ADVICE FOR TEACHERS

- Before telling the pupils about an incident consideration needs to be given to issuing the “Information sheet for Pupils” and allowing time for discussion.
- If the incident involves the disappearance or sudden death of a pupil or member of staff it is important to consider the wishes of “the family” and remember their right to privacy.
- Teachers should relay the information, agreed at the staff briefing, to pupils at schools - preferably at the same time.
- Relaying the information to vulnerable pupils and pupils absent from school also needs to be considered. Any “news” should contain appropriate language and factual information only with clear, concise, “bite size” explanations delivered in a calm manner.

REMEMBER

- Be patient - you may have to repeat the information many times. Be honest, specific and straightforward - it is acceptable to say you do not have all the answers. Be available for the pupil. Monitor initial reactions.
- Allow time for pupils to discuss their feelings. Provide reassurance and information about the school support which is available. Inform pupils of a designated area should they be unable to stay in class. Monitor ongoing and developing reactions. Refer on for additional support if in doubt.
- Share your own feelings, if appropriate; acknowledge the pupil’s feelings: if necessary, use pictures and social stories to aid understanding.
- Be prepared that a pupil may come back and ask more questions.
- Be proactive: if you can, have information ready for possible questions. Assure pupils they will be kept updated.

HOW SCHOOL STAFF CAN SUPPORT PUPILS AT A TIME OF CRISIS

INFORMATION FOR STAFF

Pupils will react to a critical incident in a variety of ways; no two reactions are the same. Their own personality, their family support and their life experiences will influence their responses. Here are some common reactions.

THINKING	FEELINGS
Disbelief Confused Inability to take in information Talking: repeating what they have experienced/heard Nightmares Thinking that they cannot cope Lack of concentration Spending a lot of time thinking of what has happened	Anger Fear Sadness Frightened Irritable Overwhelmed Guilty Worried Easily upset
BEHAVIOURS PHYSICAL	COMPLAINTS
Panic Anxiety Crying Regression Withdrawal Aggression/argumentative	Cold and shivery Unable to rest or settle Hyper-vigilant Feeling sick/knot in stomach Loss of appetite Feel tired all the time

Adults often wish to shield children from pain and distress.

Experience and research have shown, however, that children and young pupil are best supported by having the incident acknowledged in an appropriate way rather than ignored. It is important to be available and receptive to pupils, to listen to them, to empathise with them and assure them that their emotions are normal.

It is normal for adults to be upset. It is appropriate for children and young people to see this as it can help them to understand their own emotions.

Staff working directly with pupils can show that they are upset, but not out of control. It is important to maintain a safe, secure and predictable environment for the pupils in their care. Staff should remember that they are modelling a response for children and young people and helping them to develop coping skills.

RESPONDING TO PUPILS' QUESTIONS FOLLOWING A SUDDEN DEATH

INFORMATION FOR STAFF

1. It can be very difficult to respond to questions from children following a sudden death especially when the member of staff is also shocked and bereaved. Many factors will influence a pupil's idea of death - their developmental stage, their experiences, their ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds, and their personal way of seeing things.
2. It is useful to agree a 'script' for all staff. The advantages of this are that staff will have a form of words to use so they are not caught unawares and that pupils get to hear a reassuring message over and over again. This is particularly reassuring and helpful to young pupils or pupils with special needs when processing the information.
3. Some questions will reveal that children feel insecure about whether the adults in their lives will be around to look after them. Reassure them that even though nobody knows the future, they can be sure that there will always be reliable adults to look after them.
4. It is not unusual for young children to ask the same question again and again. Repeating questions and getting answers helps the child understand and adjust to the loss of someone loved.
5. Sometimes children become very interested in physical details. Keep the reply very simple and factual. Repeat it as often as necessary and do not be drawn into giving further details. Be careful not to use euphemisms such as 'sleep' or 'went way' for death. Keep it simple, factual and clear. Younger children find it difficult to understand the permanence of death. Euphemisms will only make it worse.
6. When answering questions about death tell a pupil only what he or she is capable of understanding. There is no need to be evasive, but modify explanations to what the pupil can comprehend; use language the pupil can understand; and what is said is important, but the manner in which it is said has even greater significance. Be aware of voice tone. Try to answer the questions in a matter-of-fact way without too much emotion.

Suggested Answers to Certain Questions

Question: **Why did _____ die?**

Answer: "There are some things we understand and some things we don't understand. We do/don't know exactly why _____ died. The doctors have told us the reason was _____."

Question: **Why Do People Die?**

Answer: Dying is a natural part of life. All living things like plants, animals, and people are special parts of the natural world. Nature almost always gives us long, healthy lives. Like all things in nature, after many years people grow old and reach the end of life. This is called death.

Question: **Is Death Like Sleeping?**

Answer: No. Dying is not like sleeping at all. People sleep to rest and stay healthy. Sleep gives hard working parts of our body time to build up strength again. Think of how good you feel after you sleep. You feel so good because your body is rested and ready for another day. When someone dies, their body stops working. It is not resting anymore. Its job is over.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR REACTIONS

INFORMATION FOR PUPILS

You have experienced an incident which has been very upsetting for you. Even though this event is over, you may still be experiencing some reactions to it. This is normal. It is unlikely that you have experienced anything like this before and so you may never have been faced with such reactions.

Your reaction may last a few days, a few weeks or longer. Your parents, teachers and friends can help you cope with this and get rid of some of these feelings and reactions. Sometimes this might be a bit more difficult and you might need more help. This does not mean that anything is wrong with you. It only means that the event is just too powerful for you to deal with on your own. Here are some reactions you might experience.

THINKING	FEELINGS
Confused Nightmares/bad dreams Poor concentration Restless Not interested in what is going on Spending a lot of time thinking about what happened	Worried Guilty Angry Sad Easily upset Cross Overwhelmed
BEHAVIOURS	PHYSICAL COMPLAINTS
Loss of appetite Being very quiet Agitated Being quarrelsome/arguing	Feeling tired all the time Unable to rest or settle Feeling sick/knot in tummy Cold and shivery

REMEMBER

1. Your reactions are normal.
2. They should lessen in time, normally over the next few weeks.
3. If you have any concerns tell your parent or a teacher.
4. People love you and care about you. Let them help.
5. Dreams or other thoughts about the traumatic event will get less over time. They are normal reactions to what you experienced. They are signs that your mind is trying to understand what happened.

LETTER TO PARENTS

Date:

Dear Parent

It is with great sadness that I have to tell you of the sudden death of _____ use caution if naming a pupil (a pupil in Year ____/a Year ____ Teacher). The pupils were told this morning by their Principal/class/form teacher.

_____ died of (an asthma attack, meningitis etc) and the pupils have been reassured 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 education and library boards' 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 to 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 pupils' 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 is on _____ at _____ am/pm at _____. We are in touch with the family regarding their wishes for the school's representation at the Service.

If you require further clarification or have any concerns please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

PRINCIPAL

UNDERSTANDING YOUR CHILD'S REACTIONS AND HOW YOU CAN HELP**INFORMATION FOR PARENTS**

When a child or young person experiences a traumatic incident it can be very upsetting for them and for you. Even though the event is over your child may still be experiencing reactions to it. It is normal for children and young people to be upset after such a happening. It is unlikely that they have experienced such an event before and so their reaction may be challenging for you.

Their reaction may last a few days, a few weeks or longer. Reassurance, understanding and support from you, along with their teachers and their friends can help them to cope.

Here are some common reactions to a traumatic incident. You might have noticed some of these.

THINKING	FEELINGS
Confused Nightmares/bad dreams Poor concentration Restless Not interested in what is going on Spending a lot of time thinking about what happened Thinking that they cannot cope	Worried Guilty Anxious Fearful Easily upset Cross Panicky Overwhelmed
BEHAVIOURS	PHYSICAL COMPLAINTS
Loss of appetite Being very quiet Nervous Being quarrelsome/arguing	Feeling tired all the time Unable to rest or settle Feeling sick/knot in tummy Cold and shivery

REMEMBER

1. These are normal reactions.
2. The reactions should lessen in time normally over the next few weeks.
3. If you continue to have concerns some more specialist help may be needed. Talk to your doctor about this.

PRESS STATEMENTS

INFORMATION FOR STAFF

1. Schools are under no obligation to speak to the press. If however, schools feel it is necessary to issue press statements the following guidance may be useful. Remember that support and guidance are available from the education and library boards' and Council for Catholic Maintained Schools Communications Officers. They will act on behalf of schools they are responsible for when asked.
2. Press statements can be issued and updated as new and accurate information becomes available. Explain that the whole school has been deeply shocked and that all available resources and support services have been gathered. Outline what steps are being taken to provide support for students and staff in an effort to get things back to 'normal' as soon as possible.
3. Press statements should include:
 - a. Facts about the incident, what has been done and what is planned.
 - b. Information regarding the implementation of the school's critical incident management plan and the fact that the situation is under control.
 - c. Affirmation of the principles of critical incident management in order to reduce and prevent further stress; stabilise the situation; normalise and promote the functioning of the school, its staff and pupils; and ensure everyone receives the help they need.

MEDIA INTERVIEWS

INFORMATION FOR STAFF

1. It can be difficult to manage media interviews especially when a school is dealing with a critical incident. A school should think carefully before agreeing to any interview(s). Advice should be sought from Communications Officers. It is important in advance of a media interview to ascertain the main focus of the message, for example, is it about providing public reassurance or is it about clarifying public misunderstanding.
2. Schools should have a 'one spokesperson' practice. The spokesperson should be well briefed on the details and expectations of the interviewer. Briefing should include the most likely questions that may be asked. Negative lines of questioning and difficult questions should be anticipated and appropriate responses prepared. If media deadlines cannot be met it is essential to say so and to keep to new deadlines if agreed.
3. Before making a media statement. The school's spokesperson should:
 - a. liaise with the Chair of the Board of Governors and/or relevant education and EA/Council for Catholic Maintained Schools Communications Officers in order to identify two or three key messages to be highlighted;
 - b. write these down before the interview and refine for accuracy, clarity, simplicity and impact;
 - c. keep spoken comments simple, factual and short so that key points such as what has been done so far, are not edited out;
 - d. take time to respond to questions and seek clarification if necessary;
 - e. be aware of legal issues, particularly the language/terminology used;
 - f. avoid making comments which imply blame or fault for any part of the incident, as there could be significant legal implications;
 - g. remember that official enquiries are likely to follow serious incidents. Media comments on the public record may have a bearing on such proceedings;
 - h. avoid 'off the record' comments at all times;
 - i. express concern and the school's grief, restricting answers to facts and accentuating the positive developments following the event.

Appendix L:

PUPILS RETURNING TO SCHOOL AFTER BEREAVEMENT

INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

Returning to school after bereavement can be difficult for a bereaved pupil. It can also be difficult for peers and staff to know how best to support the pupil. The circumstances of the bereavement and the age and developmental stage of the pupil will determine the approach used by teachers.

The following advice may be helpful in planning a positive return to school

1. Speak to the bereaved pupil. Check how he/she feels about coming back to school and what he/she may want to happen. Discuss the support that will be available. Speak to the parents to find out what they may want.
2. Discuss with class peers how they feel and how they can support the pupil. Discuss normal grief reactions. Encourage them to share their feelings and experiences of bereavement and how they coped. They may have sent cards or messages.
3. Ask a group of friends to be supportive during the first days following the return to school.
4. Consider a phased return. Plan for the day of the return of the pupil with a key member of staff taking the lead. When the pupil comes back to school it is important to acknowledge the loss. You may wish to say something like "I am/we are sorry that _____ died. I/We know you are sad and I/we want to support you at this time".
5. Consider giving the pupil age appropriate information on normal bereavement responses and grief reactions.
6. Allow for possible changes in emotions, behaviours, concentration, and work levels. All teachers need to be made aware.
7. Allow for "time out" when the pupil wants to be in a quiet place or to talk with a school counsellor, pastoral care teacher or another member of staff.
8. Carry on normal routines with normal approaches to discipline, with sensitivity.

Once a pupil returns to school following bereavement complete a record of this and place on pupil's file - see Appendix M.

CONFIDENTIAL

SCHOOL RECORD ON A PUPIL WHO HAS EXPERIENCED
LOSS/BEREAVEMENT

This document should be treated as confidential and its content shared and stored in accordance with Data Protection and Child Protection Policies.

Name: _____ DOB: _____ Age: _____

Faith/culture: _____ Key Support Person: _____

IMPORTANT INFORMATION: (to include relationship of pupil to deceased, nature of bereavement, illness, accident, sudden death)

FAMILY DETAILS: (names, ages, relationships, school etc)

SIGNIFICANT DATES: (anniversary, birthday, child's/young person's birthday etc)

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS BY STAFF:

Signed: _____ Date: _____

CONFIDENTIAL

Appendix N:**CONFIDENTIAL****PASTORAL CARE TRANSFER INFORMATION**

This form should be completed and sent to the receiving school when a pupil is transferring from one school to another. It should be treated as confidential and its content shared and stored in accordance with Data Protection and Child Protection Policies regarding sensitive and confidential information.

NAME OF PUPIL:		
SCHOOL ATTENDED:		
PARENTAL CONTACT:		
Name:		
Number:		
CLASS TEACHER'S NAME:		
NATURE OF NEED:		
Medical	Educational	Personal/social/emotional
Background Information:		
Summary of action taken by school date:		

Action to be taken:

Completed by:
Designation:
Date:

CONFIDENTIAL