

Critical Incident Management Policy

Aughnacloy Primary School



Article 1

Everyone under the age of 18 has all the rights of the Convention

Article 3

The best interests of the child must be a top priority

This policy sets out the procedures to be followed to ensure the safety and protection of the whole school community in the event of a critical incident.

DEFINITION

A critical incident may be defined as any sudden and unexpected incident or sequence of events which causes trauma within a school community and which overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of that school.

Critical Incident Management Strategy – Aims

- 1. Recognise which incidents may be critical for the school community.*
- 2. Respond to a critical incident in an informed manner.*
- 3. Create a positive, open, communicative climate where the needs of staff and pupils are met in critical incident situations.*
- 4. Create a safe school environment whereby the physical, social and psychological health of pupils and staff is prioritised.*
- 5. Outline, monitor and review the procedural guide and Management Team for dealing with different emergencies.*
- 6. Promote active coping skills within the curriculum.*
- 7. Establish positive working relationships and dialogue with outside agencies, thus enabling full and effective collaboration in the event of a critical incident.*

What types of critical incident could affect our school? (This is not an exhaustive list but outlines some possible critical incidents)

- Sudden death of pupil or member of staff;*
- Disappearance of a pupil or member of staff;*
- Death or injury of a pupil or staff member on a school outing;*
- Severe injury to pupil or staff member as a result of road traffic accident;*
- Serious assault on pupil or staff member in school;*
- Serious incident on the school premises (e.g. Show /PTA Event)*

- Serious incident on a school trip (day or residential)
- Violent/disturbed intruder on school premises during school day;
- Serious damage to school building or property through fire, flood or vandalism;
- Civil disturbance in local community;
- Pupil with major illness;
- Immediate evacuation of the school with no certainty over return timescale;

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, EA 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, as necessary.

Every school is unique and has a distinct ethos and culture. These guidelines have been drawn up to assist the Principal and school staff in responding to and managing a traumatic situation should it occur. They are not comprehensive, but hopefully will assist in the management of a critical incident.

The Intervention Team

- A central component of this policy is the identification of the composition, roles and responsibilities of the Intervention 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;

- Minimise the loss to the School in physical, human and financial terms;
- Manage an incident to minimise disruption to regular operations;
- Liaise with appropriate agencies, including the Media.

The Intervention Team will comprise the following personnel:

- Principal – Mrs Clarke (Key Member). She is the first point of contact and is responsible for liaising with all parties concerned and affected.
- Chair of Governors – Mr Gary Lee
- The School's designated Child Protection Officer – Mrs Karen Moore
(Deputises in the absence of the Principal).
- Building Supervisor – Mrs Doreen Little
- School Secretary – Mrs Donne Millar. Principal will brief secretary on information to be released. She is to keep records of all phone calls made and information given.

The Intervention Team will, dependent upon the nature of the incident itself, be concerned with any of the following issues:

- Adequate assessment of hazards and situations which may require emergency action;
- Analysis of requirements to address these hazards;
- Establishment of liaison with all relevant emergency services;
- Development of an effective management plan;
- Dissemination of planned procedures;
- Organisation of practice drills to test the plan;
- Regular review of this plan;
- Assisting the Principal with all aspects of the implementation of the plan;
- Arranging staff development activities, where necessary.

Immediate Steps in the event of a Critical Incident (Death)

The Principal and Intervention Team should take time to work out what steps will be appropriate in their particular circumstances and should aim to implement these steps efficiently and sensitively. Obtain as much factual information about the death as possible. This step is important as it will determine what is to be told to the staff, pupils and parents and how it should be told. Having factual information concerning the tragedy will prove useful in countering misinformation among pupils and parents concerning the manner of the death, which can contribute to an atmosphere of hysteria. At all stages, the right to privacy for the deceased family must be respected. Great care should be taken not to use the term 'suicide' until it has been established categorically that the death was as a result of suicide.

The following are steps to consider immediately upon hearing of a Critical Incident:

- The Principal must be informed of any critical incident as soon as possible.
- As soon as an incident is confirmed, the Intervention Team will meet to decide strategies in the Principal's Office (Central Information Point) or alternative depending on the situation.
- The rest of the staff will be informed as soon as possible, preferably at a specially convened staff meeting.
- All staff should share the same information.
- Students will be told information simply and sensitively, without fabrication, preferably in smaller group situations. e.g. siblings, close friends, class group etc
- The School will try, as far as possible, to keep to the normal routine.
- The office landline will be used for incoming calls which will be answered by Mrs Millar (secretary). The school meals landline will

be used for outgoing calls to made by members of the Intervention Team.

Steps to follow during the critical incident:

1. Decide on the school routine for the period up to the burial of the deceased.

The Principal and members of the school staff should discuss and decide on a routine for the school to follow during the period up to the burial.

This routine will reflect the decision taken concerning:

- closure of the school;
- participation of pupils in church services;
- procedure for informing pupils, parents and the wide school community;
- the role of the Pastoral Care Co-ordinator
- the role of the class teacher (if the death is that of a student);
- arrangements for external assistance for the pupils from the Pupil and Personal Development Services;
- the role of other relevant school staff, Chairperson or Vice Chairperson of Board of Governors;
- procedures for responding to pupils and staff who may be very disturbed by the death;
- procedures for responding to media enquiries.

2. Decide on whether the school will remain open or closed

Whether the school will remain open or will close as a mark of respect to the bereaved family will depend on the judgement of the Principal and Chairperson of the Board of Governors following consultation with the school staff. If the decision is to close the school, it is advisable to

do so **ONLY** after informing the pupils of the death and of the routine which the school will follow over the coming days. Parents should be formally notified of the school closure (see appendix 1 for sample letter).

3. Decide on the arrangements for the participation of pupils in church services.

The presence of pupils at a service and burial may be inappropriate for primary school children as well as being quite upsetting for individual pupils. Pupils may contribute to the church service through the purchase of a wreath and at a later stage, take part in a special service organised by the school.

4. Decide on how the school community should be informed of the death.

The school community should be informed of the death at the earliest possible opportunity. Many pupils and teachers will already have heard the news of the death prior to coming to school. The Principal (Designated teacher for Child Protection in the absence of the Principal) should inform as many teachers and staff as possible upon their arrival at the school and then proceed to address the pupils. The Principal should be prepared to spend a reasonable amount of time with the staff and students to allow them to react to the news of the death. It would be useful if the class teacher, Chairperson of the Board of Governors and a representative from the PPDS be available if anyone wishes to speak to them individually.

5. Decide on a strategy for dealing with the media

It is likely that the local media will be interested in the sudden death of a young person in particular. It is advisable that Principals and school staff are prepared for every eventuality and accordingly devise a strategy for handling media enquiries. Such a strategy is essential to protect the privacy of the bereaved family and to ensure that this trauma is not added to by speculative media stories. It is also important that the school and members of the teaching staff do not become embroiled in media commentary concerning the death of the young person. It is recommended that a simple statement be prepared, expressing the sorrow of the entire school community at the sudden death of one of their members and extending sympathy to the bereaved family.

This statement should be adhered to and not elaborated on in all communications with the media and should be familiar to every member of the school staff. It may also be necessary to advise students that innocent remarks to the media concerning the death of their peer could be misconstrued and could lead to considerable distress for individual students and for the bereaved family.

6. Consider the counselling services which may be required in the school.

Consideration should be given to counselling services which may be required by pupils and school staff in the aftermath of the pupil's death. The Principal should discuss this matter with the Pupil and Personal Development Advisor and the Chairperson of the Board of Governors.

7. Visit the family of the deceased.

As leader of the school community, it is appropriate that the Principal visit the family of the deceased member of staff/student at the earliest opportunity. Principals should be prepared for the fact that this visit will be difficult as the family of the member of staff/parents of the student will inevitably be distressed. None the less, it is important that the Principal and some members of the school staff visit the home of the deceased and that they offer to participate in the church services and the burial.

8. Issues for Consideration in the Long Term

In the weeks following the death, a concentrated effort should be made by the Principal and the teaching staff to return to the normal school routine. At the same time, it may be appropriate to decide to initiate a review of aspects of school policies and that all staff are given encouragement to contribute to the review process.

9. Review of school's response to Critical Incident

The Principal and staff should meet to analyse their response in the aftermath of the death. Consideration should be given to monitoring and assisting the staff and pupils who are considered to be particularly affected by the death.

10. Personal Development and Mutual Understanding

The pupils will continue with the PD&MU programme providing them with information and by developing their self esteem and their sense of self worth so that they are empowered to make decisions which will contribute to their long term physical and mental health. Advice will be available from the Pupil and Personal Development Services on issues such as mental health.

11. Review of home-school community relationships

The development of good communications with parents and responding to the needs of a local community are increasingly part of the school's role. In the aftermath of a tragic event, such as the sudden unexpected death of a student or staff member, it is important to consider the school's relationship with the broader community particularly in terms of the quality of its communications with parents and the degree of familiarity of parents with the school services and policies. Parents also need to be reassured that the school is a caring place where the teachers are responsive to pupils needs and are concerned about pupil welfare in the broadest sense.

12. Review of extra-curricular activities and pupils mentor systems

The range of pupils' skills and talents in the school is enormous. All pupils are given the opportunity to develop their skills and talents both inside and outside the classroom. The quality of the school's extra curricular provision can have a significant impact on the quality of the overall learning environment, on staff – pupil relationships and on pupil morale and motivation. Pupils participation in extra curricular activities enhances their self-esteem and their sense of engagement in the overall life of the school. The school council will be developed over the coming years as a form of a parallel pastoral care system for pupils and also as a means for developing pupils' leadership skills.

The Critical Incident Policy will be amended and updated on a regular basis to meet the needs of an ever changing and developing school.

Appendix 1 Letter to parents informing them of the death

Aughnacloy Primary School
1 Carnteel Road
AUGHNACLOY
Co-Tyrone

BT696DU

Dear parents

I am writing to inform you that today we received the news that one of our pupils/member of staff has sadly died.

As you will be aware, this is a difficult time for the whole school community. The school's Intervention Team and Education Authority are available to help staff and pupils cope with their reaction to this loss.

Your child may wish to talk to you about some of the feelings or thoughts they are experiencing. If you would like any advice or assistance, please contact myself (02885557316), the Chairperson of the Board of Governors (Mr Gary Lee 02885557361) or the Pupil and Personal Development Services at the Education Authority (02837 512200).

Yours sincerely,

J. Clarke (Mrs)

Name	Role	Supported by	Deputised by
Jane Clarke	Principal – Overall Incident Management	All staff and relevant agencies	Karen Moore Leanne Kyle
Karen Moore	DDTCP Senior Leadership Team	Child Protection Team EA (Southern Region) Child Protection (EA) EWO Social services Gateway PSNI Ed Psych	Leanne Kyle Gary Lee
Leanne Kyle	Senior Leadership Team	Child Protection Team EA (Southern Region) Child Protection (EA) EWO Social services Gateway PSNI Ed Psych	Board of Governors
Gary Lee	Chair of Governors	All governors and staff EA (Southern Region)	Trevor Law
Trevor Law	Vice-Chair of Governors	All governors and staff EA (Southern Region)	Margaret Nicholson
Donne Millar	Administration – distribution of communications	Jane Clarke EA (Southern Region) C2K	Jane Clarke Senior Leadership Team
Doreen Little	Building Supervisor – Security	Jane Clarke	

Procedural Guide for dealing with a Critical Incident

<i>INCIDENT</i>	<i>INITIAL ACTION</i>	<i>INFORM/INVOLVE ASAP</i>	<i>MANAGEMENT OF/Approval Requests</i>
<i>Sudden death of staff</i>	<p>Initiate Emergency Service Response – 999</p> <p>Arrange appropriate care and safe relocation of any pupils in immediate vicinity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principal • SLT • Next of Kin • Chair of Governors • EA (Southern Region) • Staff Welfare 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Press/Media Release • School Closure
<i>Sudden death of pupil</i>	<p>Initiate Emergency Service Response – 999</p> <p>Arrange appropriate care and safe relocation of any pupils in immediate vicinity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principal • SLT • Next of Kin • Chair of Governors • EA (Southern Region) • Staff Welfare • Ed Psych 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Press/Media Release • School Closure
<i>Assault/Aggressive incident on school grounds</i>	<p>Initiate Emergency Service Response – 999</p> <p>Arrange appropriate care and safe relocation of any pupils in immediate vicinity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principal • SLT • DTCP/DDTCP • Chair of Governors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Press/Media Release • School Closure • Further intervention beyond emergency intervention with involved parties
<i>Major accident/Injury to pupil/staff/parent on school grounds</i>	<p>Initiate Emergency Service Response – 999</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principal • SLT • DTCP/DDTCP • Chair of Governors • Next of Kin 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole school communication • Press/Media release • School closure

	Arrange appropriate care and safe relocation of any pupils in immediate vicinity		
Major Incident/Accident off school grounds, e.g. trip	Initiate Emergency Service Response – 999 Arrange appropriate care and safe relocation of any pupils in immediate vicinity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principal • SLT • DTCP/DDTCP • Chair of Governors • Next of Kin 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole school communication • Press/Media release • School closure
Emergency Evacuation Situation	Instigate emergency evacuation plan Initiate Emergency Service Response – 999	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole school communication • Press/Media release • School closure
Discovery of outbreak of major contagious illness or similar	Immediate advice from School Health Team CAH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principal • SLT • DTCP/DDTCP • Chair of Governors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole school communication • Press/Media release • School closure

CRITICAL INCIDENT RESPONSE TEAM FOR ALL INCIDENTS EA

028 3751 2515

CARECALL for Staff - 0808800002

Links with School Policies A copy of this Policy and the DENI publication *Every School a Good School – A guide to Managing Critical Incidents in Schools* is located in the School Office.

SUPPORT AGENCIES & CONTACTS

- EA, Critical Incident Line: 028 3751 2515 (BOTH SCHOOL HOURS AND OUT OF HOURS)
- Education Authority Press Officer: Frances Byrne, 028 9041 3162
- Education Authority HR : 028 3751 2200
- Social Services, Gateway Team: 0300 1234 333
- ☐PSNI: 028 9065 0222 or 999 or 101

ADDITIONAL CONTACTS

- ✓ Family Works Counselling: 02891821721
- ✓ INSPIRE 24/7 Confidential Telephone Counselling Service for staff: 0808 800 0002

Staff with Current First-Aid Training

The following members of staff have been trained in Emergency First Aid Miss Kyle, Mr Mills, Mr Graham, Mrs Wallace, Mrs Millar.

EA ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE AND PROFORMAS

🕒 <http://www.eani.org.uk/schools/managing-a-critical-incident>

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT INFORMATION

- www.winstonswish.org.uk
- www.childhoodbereavementwork.org.uk
- www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk
- www.barnardos.org.uk/bereavementservice

LINKS TO OTHER POLICIES:

- *Child Protection Policy*
- *Health & Safety Policy*
- *Pastoral Care Policy*