



St. Mary's Primary School

Critical Incident Policy

Policy reviewed by staff— March 2022

Policy reviewed and ratified by Governors-

Signature of Chair_____

MISSION STATEMENT

We in St. Mary's Primary School, value the uniqueness of each person, made in the image and likeness of God as expressed through the Gospels.

Our mission is to recognise, nurture and extend the gifts and talents of each individual and provide a high standard of teaching and learning opportunities ensuring excellence and enjoyment for all. We provide an inclusive, caring and safe environment in which all children can grow in confidence and develop self-esteem, resilience and independence.

We strive to achieve this by working in partnership with the child, parents, governors and wider community, to create an atmosphere of mutual respect and understanding.

RATIONALE – What is a Critical Incident?

A critical incident can 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. (*A Guide to managing Critical Incidents in schools*)

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 THAT CAN AFFECT A SCHOOL

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.

Incidents that have affected schools:

- 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;
- 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 contagious illness;
- Immediate evacuation of the school with no likelihood of return for a number of hours.

PURPOSE OF THIS POLICY

- To manage the incident and meet the needs of the whole school community
- 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 create a positive, open, communicative climate where the needs of staff and pupils are met in critical incident situations
- To ensure that the school responds in a sensitive, consistent and effective manner which reduces confusion, panic and extreme emotion
- To create a safe school environment whereby the physical, social and psychological health of pupils and staff is prioritised
- To have in place a Critical Incident Management Team, the membership of which is known to all relevant parties
- To have in place a Critical Incident Management Plan, the details of which are familiar to all relevant parties (see Appendix 1)
- 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.

CREATING A CRITICAL INCIDENT ETHOS

Critical incidents do happen and it is important that a school has a strategy in place to best respond and manage any traumatic situation should it occur.

The following procedures help us to create a safeguarding ethos and this Critical Incident Plan is an integral part of our school's pastoral care system.

- Check regularly that buildings, playground equipment, fire exits, burglar/fire alarms etc are in good and safe condition. If repairs have to be undertaken, see that they are attended to promptly.
- Ensure systems are in place to admit visitors to the school, monitoring of entrances and exits, type of information required from a caller to the school before access is granted, extra vigilance of strangers or irregular events around the school.
- Act promptly if you suspect anything is out of the ordinary.
- Ensure systems are in place for school evacuation.
- In the case of the site having to be evacuated, a venue to which pupils will be taken to will be identified (see Appendix 2)
- Know what is happening in the community.
- Regular review of relevant policies e.g. Health and Safety and Safeguarding
- School trips and fieldwork risk assessment procedures

- First Aid training
- Opportunities to explore sensitive issues such as tragedy and death will be built into the PDMU and pastoral programmes
- Preparation for the Eventuality of a Critical Incident
- A Critical Incident Report Booklet is drafted
- Members of the CIMT have ready access to pupil, staff and governor contact details
- Relevant members of staff (CIMT) have a register of emergency services and relevant outside agencies (See Critical Incident Report Booklet Appendix 3)

MEMBERS OF THE CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM

- Principal Mrs Martin
- Senior Teacher Mrs Hagan
- Chair of Board of Governors or other member in her absence – Mrs Christine Clark
- Non-teaching staff member – Mrs Williams (secretary)

(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.)

IN THE EVENT OF A CRITICAL INCIDENT IN SCHOOL:

INITIAL RESPONSE

- The Principal should be contacted first (if not available the Senior Teacher)
- The Principal (or Senior Teacher) 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. The Principal's office will be the central liaison point.
- If the incident is on site, health and safety measures will be put in place and the emergency services contacted
- Respond to any inevitable risk or threat e.g. evacuation or first aid
- Notify the other relevant authorities and agreed parties- (Emergency Services, CCMS, Chair of Governors & EA)
- Agree the school routine for the day
- Inform staff
- Establish a dedicated telephone line
- Set up designated recovery room
- Inform pupils and parents
- Prepare/adapt a media statement

- Prepare statement/letter to other families
- Assess initial impact of the critical incident on staff and pupils
- Develop a plan for after the Incident.

BRIEFING SESSION FOR STAFF

It is essential that staff receive factual information on what has occurred, how the incident will be handled and how they can contribute to the school's response. At the end of the day staff should be formally debriefed and any absent teachers should be briefed on the situation.

THE INITIAL BRIEFING TO STAFF SHOULD

- give a brief statement of factual information;
- outline the school's response and proposed plan of action;
- allow staff to ask questions and to get a response;
- outline staff responsibility for monitoring pupil and staff welfare;
- Identify vulnerable staff and pupils who may be at risk;
- clarify specific responsibilities for staff;
- advise staff on procedure for dealing with media enquiries;
- advise staff on agreed procedure for informing pupils and parents;
- inform staff of the support services that are available;
- reassure staff and pupils that they will be supported; and
- advise staff of time/place of next briefing and debriefing session

BREAKING THE NEWS TO PUPILS

It is important to inform pupils of a critical incident as soon as possible. Be aware of the range of different groups and ages of pupils and ensure they are informed using appropriate language and methods of communication with which they are familiar. Use small groupings e.g. in a classroom setting. The information pupils are to be told will be agreed. (see Appendix 5)

Teachers will use a carefully worded announcement to read aloud in the classrooms.

If a death has occurred, it is important that the bereaved family's right to privacy is respected and will include a statement of condolence as well as support arrangements to be put in place and how these can be accessed. Staff should be aware that young people's understanding of death will depend on their cognitive and developmental stage.

(Appendix 8 provides information on the concept and common reactions to death in various age ranges)

In the case of a suspected suicide there are a number of issues that need to be considered. (Appendix 9 sets out further guidance to staff)

SUPPORTING PUPILS

- School structures and routines will be re-established as soon as possible
- Supportive strategies / programmes for pupils and staff will be implemented
- There will be on-going contact with parents
- Actions taken will be reviewed and policies amended if appropriate
- The PDMU and pastoral programmes will be reviewed
- Staff will be mindful of anniversaries and other special dates.

INFORMING PARENTS

When a critical incident occurs, parents must be informed. The type of critical incident will determine the nature of contact with parents and the urgency with which this is done.

Parents of pupils directly involved will be telephoned or visited. If the death of a pupil has occurred, one will be mindful of the bereaved parents' needs.

Other parents also need to be informed. (Appendix 7) Where the critical incident requires all parents to be contacted as a matter of urgency social media will be used and staff will contact parents of children within their class allocation.

MEDIA MANAGEMENT

INFORMATION FOR STAFF

1. Schools are under no obligation to speak to the press. If, however school feel it is necessary to issue press statements support and guidance will be sought from the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools Communications Officers and the Education Authority.
2. Press statements can be issued and updated as new and accurate information becomes available. If this is deemed appropriate, we will explain that the whole school has been deeply shocked and that all available resources and support services have been gathered. We will 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:
 - Facts about the incident, what has been done and what is planned.
 - Information regarding the implementation of the school's critical incident management plan and the fact that the situation is under control.
 - 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. (Appendix 6)

MEDIA INTERVIEWS

INFORMATION FOR STAFF

1. It can be difficult to manage media interviews especially when a school is dealing with a critical incident. Advice will 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. St Mary's PS will adopt a 'one spokesperson' practice. The spokesperson 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.

Before making a media statement. The school's spokesperson will:

- **liaise with the Chair of the Board of Governors and/or relevant Education Authority/Council for Catholic Maintained Schools Communications Officers in order to identify two or three key messages to be highlighted;**
- write these down before the interview and refine for accuracy, clarity, simplicity and impact;
- keep spoken comments simple, factual and short so that key points such as what has been done so far, are not edited out;
- be aware that interviews, if not live, may be edited and comments taken out of context;
- take time to respond to questions and seek clarification if necessary;
- be aware of legal issues, particularly the language/terminology used;
- avoid making comments which imply blame or fault for any part of the incident, as there could be significant legal implications;
- remember that official enquiries are likely to follow serious incidents. Media comments on the public record may have a bearing on such proceedings;
- avoid 'off the record' comments at all times;
- express concern and the school's grief, restricting answers to facts and
- accentuating the positive developments following the event.

SUPPORT FOR STAFF

The impact of a critical incident on staff may be distressing. The extent of this impact will depend on a number of issues. In addition to support arrangements for all staff provided within our school ethos, external sources of help will be made known to all. (Appendix 12)

AFTER A CRITICAL INCIDENT

Returning to school for some pupils after a critical incident may be very difficult. Suitable arrangements to support a pupil or pupils returning to school may include;

- arranging a home visit to discuss plans for returning to school;
- arranging for school work to be sent home where appropriate;
- briefing staff and pupils on the best way to support individuals returning to school;
- arranging support for temporary or permanent mobility difficulties;
- planning support for emotional needs.

Six weeks after the incident a review of procedures will be undertaken. This review will be documented, signed and dated.

Reflection

- Details of key lessons learned through management of this incident:
- What went well?
- What was most/least helpful?
- Were there any gaps?
- Have all necessary referrals to support services been made?
- Are there any identified training needs?
- Does the policy need to be reviewed/changed/updated?
- Is there any unfinished business?

STAFF TRAINING

The Critical Incident Management Team will meet termly to discuss the plan and ensure it is fit for purpose.

The Critical Incident Policy and Procedures will formally be reviewed annually. The Principal, who will manage the Critical Incident, will attend any relevant updated training.

A critical incident can happen during weekends or during school hours, so a copy of all information will be held at home if such an incident arises.

USEFUL RESOURCES

- Critical Incident Management Booklet – Gayle Nixon EA
- Critical Incidents in Schools - Produced by Teachers, Board and Trust
- Representatives and Independent Social Workers
- Exemplar School Documents and Policies
- Critical Incident Management Plan
- Supporting Bereaved Children in Our Changing Society – Barbara Monroe
- Relevant School Policies.

APPENDICES

- Appendix 1** Critical Incident Management Plan
- Appendix 2** Evacuation Plan
- Appendix 3** Critical Incident Report Booklet
- Appendix 4** Record Keeping for ongoing support for pupils and staff
- Appendix 5** Sample announcements- for pupils
- Appendix 6** Sample Press Statements
- Appendix 7** Sample letter to Parents
- Appendix 8** Children and Young People’s Understanding of Death
- Appendix 9** Death by suspected suicide- Information for Staff
- Appendix 10** Supporting a return to school following a Bereavement
- Appendix 11** Guidelines for Parents
- Appendix 12** Useful Contact Details

APPENDIX 1

CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT PLAN

This plan will be followed in conjunction with the Guide to Managing Critical Incidents in Schools- DENI

<u>PERSONNEL</u>		
PRINCIPAL/SENIOR TEACHER	SECRETARY	TEACHERS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Seeks clarification• Summons the CIMT to inform of incident• Prepares relevant statements/letters• Liaises with relevant staff• Ensures health and safety measures are in place• Convenes and informs staff• Contacts relevant parents• Arranges staff cover if appropriate – or delegates a teacher to arrange this	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensures phone lines are operative• Calls emergency services if appropriate• Contacts external agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure the physical and emotional wellbeing of pupils

CRITICAL INCIDENT CHECK LIST

TASK	PERSON/PEOPLE INVOLVED	DONE
Obtain facts and information		
Call the emergency services using 999		
Brief the CIMT, Allocate roles and responsibilities		
Set up an Incident Management Room		
Set up dedicated phone line		
Ensure register of all children is maintained		
Contact local authority for advice		
Contact Chair of Governors		
Contact outside Professionals, health and safety reps		
Contact families affected (How)		
Inform rest of school staff and children as appropriate		
Prepare statement/ letter to other families		
Prepare to deal with the media		
Retain any relevant equipment		
Arrange pupil / staff support		
Debrief staff- End of Day Session		
Meeting of CIMT- Developing Plan for Day 2		

Further Checklists for Day 2 are available from Managing a Critical Incident -DENI (P54)

APPENDIX 2

EVACUATION PLAN

In the event of having to evacuate the school premises the following emergency area has been arranged:

Children in Pre School will exit the school through Door 2

Children in Foundation Stage will exit the school through Door 1

Children in Stay and Play room will exit the school through Door 3

Children on ground floor in room 1 will exit the school through the Main Entrance.

Children on ground floor in room 2 will exit the school through Door 4

Children on ground floor in ICT room will exit the school through Door 4

Children on upper floor in room 2 and Learning Support room will exit the school through the upstairs Fire Exit

Children on upper floor and in room 1 will descend the main stairs and exit the school through the Main Entrance.

In the event that the nominated escape route is blocked, children will evacuate the school from the nearest available exit.

- Children will be escorted to the Main Playground.

Teachers and staff will supervise the evacuation of their respective classes, check areas and ensure a safe and orderly passage to the **MAIN PLAYGROUND**.

The secretary will be responsible for registers and list of classes out of school, list of pupils out of school (permission slips).

In the event that the children are going to be evacuated for an extended period of time, the teachers and staff will escort the children to St Mary's Parish Hall.

APPENDIX 3

CRITICAL INCIDENT REPORT BOOKLET

INITIAL REPORT

Date: _____

Time: _____

Information received from: _____

Contact details: _____

Name of person informed: _____

Information passed to: _____

(Name of person with overall responsibility)

Details of incident received so far:

Unconfirmed reports:

Details of people known to be involved:

Name	Pupil / Member Of staff or local community	Involvement - describe	Known/ Suspected	Contact details

IMMEDIATE ACTION

Critical Incident Team Management Informed _____ Time _____ Date

Arrange meeting of Critical Incident Management Team _____ Time _____ Date

APPENDIX 4

ONGOING SUPPORT FOR PUPILS AND STAFF MOST AFFECTED

1.Details of Pupil Referrals made as a direct result of this incident:

<u>Name of Child</u>	<u>Referred to</u>	<u>Referred by</u>
<u>Date of Referral</u>	<u>Outcome</u>	
<u>Name of Child</u>	<u>Referred to</u>	<u>Referred by</u>
<u>Date of Referral</u>	<u>Outcome</u>	

2.Details of ongoing support for staff directly involved and those most affected following Critical Incident.

<p>Details of actions taken:</p>
<p>Person responsible: _____ Date: _____</p>

APPENDIX 5

SAMPLE ANNOUNCEMENTS

ANNOUNCEMENTS TO PUPILS

ADVICE FOR TEACHERS (*Full guidance P69- A guide to Managing a Critical Incident.*)

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 staff are available in _____. Feel free to arrange to go there and talk to someone.

3. 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.

APPENDIX 6

SAMPLE PRESS STATEMENTS

1. 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

2. 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.” School was built in 1906 and has undergone substantial renovations in recent years.

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

PREPARED STATEMENT FOR MEDIA

We are sorry to learn of the tragic death 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

APPENDIX 7

SAMPLE LETTER TO PARENTS

INFORMING PARENTS OF A SUDDEN DEATH LETTER

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 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 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

APPENDIX 8

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S UNDERSTANDING OF DEATH

INFORMATION FOR STAFF

Children and young people's understanding of death will depend on their cognitive and developmental stage. They will revisit the loss as they mature, reach significant milestones and become more able to talk about their experiences and questions in relation to death. Children and young people with learning difficulties will progress through the developmental stages at a slower pace or indeed may remain at an early stage in their understanding of death.

Children and young people do experience similar feelings to adults following a death but often express their feelings differently depending on their development age.

Age	Concept of Death	Possible Reactions
2 to 5 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Death seen as reversible• May feel they have caused the death• Magical thinking - make up fantasies to fill gaps in knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fears abandonment and separation• Loud protest• Despair• Indignant at changes in patterns or routine• Sleep problems• May revert to "baby" behaviours
5 to 11 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• More exposure to death and understanding of death as permanent	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Withdrawal, sadness, loneliness, depression• Anger, guilt, temper tantrums, nightmares• Behaviour, learning or school problems• Perfect child, brave and in control• May become preoccupied with death
Over 11 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Death permanent• Denial - it can't happen	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Withdrawal, sadness, depression, loneliness• Anger, rejection, guilt• Joking, sarcasm• Dependence or regressing to younger age• Insecurity, low self-esteem

There is no right or wrong way to grieve. It is important to allow children and young people to grieve in their own way and their own time. They may seesaw in and out of grief, needing time to play and have fun as well as to cry.

APPENDIX 9

DEATH BY SUSPECTED SUICIDE STAFF GUIDELINES

INFORMATION FOR STAFF

1. The term suicide should not be used by a school until it is determined by the Coroner's Office. Where an inquest is required it may be a considerable period of time after the death.
2. When providing support for vulnerable pupils, it would be prudent to make a working assumption of suicide, if all reasonable indicators suggest that this might be the case. Pupils and members of the community may be inclined to describe a death as a suicide before this has been established. Phrases such as 'tragic event' or 'sudden death' should be used by the school when talking to pupils.
3. In the aftermath of a sudden death within the school community pupils' vulnerability may increase. Teachers should realise that some pupils may develop suicide ideation and/or self-harm. Staff need to be proactive in identifying and monitoring these pupils. Pupils considered to be 'at risk' should be immediately referred to the Designated Teacher for Child Protection who will then notify parents and advise them of the referral pathway to obtain support for their child. This will include the child's doctor and the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services.
4. Schools should maintain contact with parents to ensure that appropriate action has been taken to protect and support the pupil. Careful records should be kept and securely stored as set out in the school's data protection guidelines. Action must also be taken to identify other 'at risk' groups in the school, including close friends and relatives and to direct them to appropriate support. Information for parents can be found at Appendix 12. At any time, parents, school staff or pupils can contact the "Lifeline 24/7" crisis response helpline service (Tel: 0808 808 8000).
5. Where there appears to be an emerging cluster of perceived suicides in a school or a number of schools in close proximity, the EA's Critical Incident Response Teams will liaise with the relevant Health and Social Care Trusts. This coordinated response will ensure an appropriate community response to the situation while minimising sensationalism and avoiding the glamorising of suicidal behaviour.
6. As with any death, schools may wish to remember the person who has died and to pay tribute to their memory. When an apparent suicide has occurred, schools should be careful to remember the person without condoning the means of death. It is important that events are reported in a sensitive and measured way so that other vulnerable young people are not put at risk. The language used is very important.

7. Schools should remember to be vigilant around the time of the inquest, court cases and the anniversary of a death and access any support services as may be required.

YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

You have two major responsibilities:

1. To respond with empathy and in a non-judgemental way to the pupil in need.
2. To follow the usual safeguarding procedures with an appropriate referral to ensure the pupil's safety.

RESPONDING TO A DISTRESSED PUPIL

- **Listen.** It can be very difficult for a young person to disclose distress so it is essential that he/she is given time and attention. Privacy is also important.
- **Take it seriously.** Disclosures of distress should never be minimised. The young person should be taken seriously but the adult should not express alarm. The young person needs to feel safe and have confidence in adults.
- **Accept the possibility of suicidal thoughts.** These feelings are real and should not be dismissed.
- **Do NOT promise confidentiality.** Ensure that the young person knows that the information will be handled sensitively but that it must be shared with others to safeguard them.
- **Show a caring attitude.** It is acceptable to express care for the young person and a commitment to their well-being.
- **Be open.** If suicidal intent is suspected, it is appropriate to ask the young person whether they are thinking of harming themselves and have any plans.
- **Supervise closely.** Keep the pupil with you until you can deliver them to the care of the Designated Teacher for Child Protection (or appropriate alternative). Sometimes it is more helpful for the teacher to whom the pupil expressed their distress to be the one who stays with him or her while the designated teacher makes safeguarding arrangements.

RESPONSE TO SUICIDE IDEATION DISCLOSURE

The Designated Teacher for Child Protection (or appropriate alternative) should ensure that the pupil is safeguarded by doing the following:

- **Continue to supervise closely.** The pupil should not be left unsupervised at this stage.
- **Contact parents.** Parents should be advised of the content of the disclosure, the school's concern and asked to take the child or young person to the doctor for an 'emergency mental state assessment' and potential referral to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services.
- **Safely hand over the young person into the care of parents.** Parents should be advised to supervise very closely.
- **Contact the young person's doctor.** It may be helpful if schools also contact the doctor directly to inform him/her of the concerns.
- **If the above is not possible.** If the school cannot safely deliver the young person into the care of parents, or has concerns that appropriate support will not be sought/provided, it is possible for school staff to bring a child or young person directly to an Accident and Emergency Department acting in loco parentis.
- **Follow-up.** The Designated Teacher (or other member of staff) should remain in contact with parents and plan to support the young person upon return to school. In planning to support the young person the school should consider seeking medical/psychiatric advice.

*Further advice for staff on responding to pupils' questions following a sudden death is available from
Guidance on managing a Critical Incident P 81*

APPENDIX 10

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 the class teacher will complete a record of this and place on pupil's file.

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: <i>(to include relationship of pupil to deceased, nature of bereavement, illness, accident, sudden death)</i>
FAMILY DETAILS: <i>(names, ages, relationships, school etc)</i>
SIGNIFICANT DATES: <i>(anniversary, birthday, child's/young person's birthday etc)</i>
ADDITIONAL COMMENTS BY STAFF:

APPENDIX 11

INFORMATION FOR PARENTS – HOW TO HELP YOUR CHILD

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.

It is important that you are strong enough to bear whatever your child wants to talk about and to answer their questions .

Do	Do Not
Take time to listen and answer questions.	Try to hide your own sadness or grief but try not to overwhelm them with such.
Be honest in your explanations and in showing your own sadness or grief.	Tell your child not to worry or be sad. They cannot control their feelings.
Let them know their feelings are important.	Feel like you have to have all the answers or get it right all the time.
Give plenty of reassurance and affection. Let them know you love them and will be there for them.	Be surprised at your child's ability to set grief aside and alternate between sadness and happiness. Time with friends and playmates enables them to release anxiety about incidents over which they have no control.
Keep to routines and patterns as much as possible.	
Be aware that changes such as clinging or aggressive behaviour or physical problems may be an expression of grief.	
Take things one day at a time.	

APPENDIX 12

ESSENTIAL TASKS – CHECKLIST PHONE NUMBERS

ORGANISATION	PHONE
Principal- Mrs Fiona Martin	07766235609
Senior Teacher – Mrs Orla Hagan	07969425069
School Secretary- Mrs Donna Williams	07742159457
Chair of Governors- Christine Clark	07762349941
Fire/Ambulance/Police	999
Police (Ballynahinch)	028 97562222
Doctor/Health Centre	028 44830230
Downe Hospital	028 44613311
Fr Brendan Smyth –	028 44828211
CCMS –	028 90426972
Key holders – (1) Mr Paul Sharvin (2) Mrs Fiona Martin	07849451034 07766235609
CEO EA south Eastern Board -Gavin Boyd	02890694964
Critical Incident Response Team Education Authority	028 90566200
Board’s Maintenance Officer Eugene Doyle	02890566249 07803832464
Board’s Emergency out of Hours	
Educational Psychologist	028 90566921
Education Welfare Officer	028 44613511
DENI	028 91279279
Social Services- Local Team	02844613511
Lisburn (Down) Health and Social Care Trust	029 92602204
Translink Downpatrick	028 44612384
BBC (Radio Ulster)	028 90338000
UTV	028 90328122
Crisis/Bereavement Service EA	028 90566875
Counselling 4 Youth	028 90731571
CRUSE	028 90323986
Childline	028 90327773
Youthline	0808 8088000
Samaritans	08457 909090
Child Death Helpline	0800 282986
Carecall	02890245821
NSPCC	028 90351135
Care Call	028 90245821