



# Critical Incident Policy & Plan

Implementation Date – March 2019

Review Date – March 2021

Chair of Board of Governors: \_\_\_\_\_

Principal: \_\_\_\_\_

## Introduction

St. Mary's Primary School aims to protect the wellbeing of its pupils and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times.

The Governors and staff of St. Mary's Primary School recognise a critical incident to be "an incident or sequence of events that overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school". Critical incidents may involve one or more pupils or staff members, or members of our local community.

Types of incidents might include:

- The death of a member of the school community
- An intrusion into the school
- An accident involving members of the school community
- An accident/tragedy in the wider community
- Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism, etc
- The disappearance of a member of the school community.

## Aim

The aim of the CIM Plan is to help school management and staff to react quickly and effectively in the event of an incident, to enable us to maintain a sense of control and to ensure that appropriate support is offered to pupils and staff. Having a good plan should also help ensure that the effects on the pupils and staff will be limited. It should enable us to effect a return to normality as soon as possible.

### **Creation of a coping supportive and caring ethos in the school**

Our curriculum and pastoral care arrangements aim to help and support both staff and pupils, thus preparing them to cope with a range of life events. These include measures to address both the physical and emotional needs of the school community.

### **Physical Needs**

- Evacuation plan formulated
- Regular fire drills occur
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
- School access gates are closed during school hours (9.15-3.15)
- School door is closed & a code is required for entry
- Rules of the playground are agreed and known by the school community

## **Emotional Needs**

The Governors and staff of St. Mary's aim to use available programmes and resources to address the personal and social development of pupils, to enhance a sense of safety and security in the school and to provide opportunities for reflection and discussion. Further details can be found within other relevant policies such as Pastoral Care, Child Protection and Anti-bullying.

- Consultation has taken place with the whole school community as the Policy and Plan have been developed
- Staff have accessed training from the EA Southern Area & EA Pupil Personal Development Team as the policy has been developed.
- Staff are familiar with the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures
- Books and resources on difficulties affecting the primary school pupil are available
- Emotional health and well-being is an integral part of the school curriculum
- The school may use a range of external agencies for support
- Inputs to pupils by external providers are carefully considered in the light of criteria about pupil safety, the appropriateness of the content, and the expertise of the providers.
- The school has a clear policy on anti-bullying and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy.
- There is a comprehensive Pastoral Care System in place in the school.
- Pupils who are identified as being at risk are referred to the designated staff member, concerns are explored and the appropriate level of assistance and support is provided. Parents are informed, and where appropriate, a referral is made to an appropriate agency.
- Members of staff are informed about how to access support for themselves.

A CIMT has been established in line with best practice. Members bring a wealth of experience and expertise to the team and were selected on a voluntary basis and will retain their roles for at least one school year. The members of the team will meet every two years and after an incident to review and, if necessary, update the policy and plan. The Pastoral Care folder contains a copy of the policy to be used in the event of an incident.

### **Preparation of CIMP Roles**

The key roles covered are as follows:

- Team Leader - Ailis Cullinan-Keown
- PSNI liaison - Audrey Boyd
- Staff liaison - Kelly Marie Mc Rory
- Pupil liaison - Kelly Marie Mc Rory
- Parent liaison - Ailis Cullinan-Keown
- Community liaison - Louise Stewart/Fr B. Gallagher
- Media liaison - Ailis Cullinan-Keown/ Louise Stewart/Fr B. Gallagher
- Administrator - Louise Noble (school hours) Audrey Boyd (after school hours)

[For key responsibilities of each role see appendix 1]

### **Record keeping**

In the event of an incident each member of the team will keep records of phone calls made and received, letters sent and received, meetings held, persons met, interventions used, material used etc.

Mrs Cullinan-Keown will have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters, photocopying materials etc.

### **Confidentiality**

The management and staff of St. Mary's have a responsibility to protect the privacy and good name of the people involved in any incident and will be sensitive to the consequences of any public statements.

### **Critical incident rooms**

In the event of a critical incident the following rooms will be used:

- the Staff Room - to meet the staff
- the main hall- for meetings with pupils
- the main hall (if required: after school hours) - for parents
- the Principal's office for media (if required)
- the P1,2 Room for other visitors

[Immediate, short and medium term actions are detailed in appendix 2]

## Consultation and communication regarding the plan

### **Review and Research**

The CIMT has consulted resource documents provided to schools as well as publications listed in the resources section of this book.

These include:

-When Tragedy Strikes: *Guidelines for Effective Critical Incident Management in Schools* (INTO/Ulster Teachers Union 2000)

-Responding to Critical Incidents; *Guidelines for Schools* (NEPS 2007)

-A national charity committed to improving the mental health of all children and young people. [www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)

-The Childhood Bereavement Network (CBN) is a multi-professional federation of organisations and individuals working with bereaved children and young people. [www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk](http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk)

-Cruse Bereavement Care exists to promote the well-being of bereaved people and to enable anyone bereaved by death to understand their grief and cope with their loss. [www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk](http://www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk)

## KEY RESPONSIBILITIES OF CRITICAL INCIDENT TEAM MEMBERS (Appendix 1)

### **Team leader**

- Usually the Principal, Mrs Cullinan-Keown
  - Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting
  - Coordinates the tasks of the team
  - Liaises with the Board of Governors
  - Liaises with the bereaved family
- In the absence of the team leader, DT Miss Mc Rory will assume the lead.

### **PSNI liaison**

- Liaises with the PSNI
- Ensures that information about deaths or other developments is checked out for accuracy before being shared

### **Staff liaison**

- Leads briefing meetings for staff on the facts as known, gives staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions, outlines the routine for the day
- Advises staff on the procedures for identification of vulnerable pupils
- Refers staff to materials from their critical incident folders
- Keeps staff updated as the day progresses
- Is alert to vulnerable staff members and makes contact with them individually
- Advises them of the availability of Staff Care Services and gives them the contact number.

### **Pupil liaison**

- Alerts other staff to vulnerable pupils (appropriately)
- Provides materials for pupils (from their critical incident folder)
- Keeps records of pupils seen by external agency staff
- Looks after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room where agreed

### **Community/agency liaison**

- Maintains up to date lists of relevant contact numbers such as emergency support services and other external contacts and resources
- Liaises with agencies in the community for support and onward referral
- Coordinates the involvement of agencies
- Reminds agency staff to wear name/visitor badges
- Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies

### **Parent liaison**

- Arranges parent meetings, if held
- May facilitate such meetings, and manage 'questions and answers'
- Ensures that sample letters are typed up, on the school's system and ready for adaptation
- Sets up room for meetings with parents
- Maintains a record of parents seen
- Meets with individual parents
- Provides appropriate materials for parents (from their critical incident folder)

### **Media liaison**

- Will draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews (as agreed by school management). Will consult Communications Officer EA.
- Where appropriate, may liaise with the EA Legal Services and relevant teacher unions.

### **Administrator**

- Maintains up to date telephone numbers of
- Parents or guardians
- Teachers
- Emergency services
- Takes telephone calls and notes those that need to be responded to
- Ensures that templates are on the school's system in advance and ready for adaptation
- Prepares and sends out letters, emails and faxes
- Photocopies materials needed
- Maintains records of all correspondence

## **Immediate Actions for Schools Following a Critical Incident - Appendix 2 EA Critical Incident Response Team**

**1. Assess the risk and take necessary action (e.g. school evacuation/first aid/contact emergency services)**

**2. Gather factual information regarding the incident**

- Details of person/people involved
- Confirmation of facts from the source -family, Police, hospital

**3. Initiate the use of the DE Critical Incident Management Guide Records**

**4. Mobilise the School's Critical Incident Management Team**

**5. Allocate tasks to School's Critical Incident Management Team/SMT**

- Identify a school Critical Incident Coordinator
- Contact the parents of pupils directly involved in the incident
- Inform relevant key people and seek support as appropriate e.g. staff, BOG, EA Critical Incident Team, CCMS, Local Clergy etc
- Establish a central information point
- Set up dedicated phone line
- Calls and enquiries logged (see example of telephone log below)
- School visitors logged (see example of visitor log below)
- Contact impacted family/s to determine their wishes regarding public announcements and staff/pupil briefings
- Contact with the media (support available from ELB Communications Officer)

**6. Arrange staff briefing (when incident is confirmed)**

- Provide clear factual information and agree pupil briefing content
- Advise staff on how to inform and support pupils (in form groups/classes/small groups)
- Team working and practical arrangements e.g. cover, flexible timetabling, recovery rooms etc
- Identify vulnerable staff
- Remind staff regarding confidentiality - media contact and guidelines
- Critical Incident Staff Leaflet:

**7. Inform pupils (when incident is confirmed) with accurate and agreed statement;**

- Use clear language
- Provide age appropriate factual information

- Dispel rumours
- Offer support
- Identify vulnerable pupils
- Critical Incident Pupil Leaflet

**8. Maintain normal structures and routines with flexibility**

**9. Set up a warm, quiet and equipped recovery rooms with drinks, tissues, comfortable chairs etc.**