

St. Patrick's High School



Critical Incidents Policy

Latest Review: *March 2019*

Next Review: *March 2020*

Person Responsible: *Dr F Moore*

ADOPTED BY THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Date of meeting: 11th April 2019

Signed: 

Mission Statement

As a Catholic School in partnership with parents and the community, the school seeks to provide children of all abilities with a secure, caring, stimulating and happy environment where high values of work, personal integrity and learning can be achieved and where all pupils are encouraged to develop their talents and character and to contribute positively to home, school, church and society.

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Acronyms used in this policy:

CIMP	Critical Incident Management Plan
CIMT	Critical Incident Management Team
EA	Education Authority
EA CIRT	Education Authority Response Team
CCMS	Catholic Council for Maintained Schools
SLT	Senior Leadership Team

CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY

1. Rationale

While every effort will be made to avoid the occurrence of emergencies by striving to ensure that staff and pupils adhere to school policies and procedures on Health and Safety, critical incidents may occur in any school. By its very definition, a critical incident is one that has not been foreseen. The nature of the incident may affect pupils/parents and/or staff and governors; it may relate directly to the safety of the school premises; it may involve an incident away from the school.

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 could overwhelm its normal coping mechanism.

(DENI 'A Guide to Managing Critical Incidents in Schools', Para 2: 2014)

The Critical Incident may affect students, staff, parents and governors, may relate directly to the safety of the school community or may involve an incident beyond the school premises. A Critical Incident is therefore an emergency affecting pupils, personnel or property, requiring immediate responsive action.

As this may be beyond what could be reasonably expected from the school's own management team during the day to day running of the school, external support and advice may be required.

The Board of Governors and staff of St Patrick's High School Keady have drawn up a Critical Incident Management Plan (CIMP) and established a Critical Incidents Management Team (CIMT) to steer the development and implementation of the plan. The Critical Incident Management Team will meet on a termly basis to discuss the Plan and ensure that it is fit for purpose including considering the recent experiences of other schools. Key contact details should always be reviewed on a termly basis. There must be a formal review of the Critical Incident Management Plan annually

Examples of critical incidents could include:

- The death of a member of the school community through sudden death, accident, terminal illness or suicide;
- An accident involving pupils or staff on or off the school premises;
- A physical attack on staff member(s) or student(s) or intrusion into the school;
- Abduction of a pupil;
- Disappearance of a pupil or member of staff;
- Hostage situation;
- Serious damage to the school building/property through fire, flood, vandalism etc;
- Groups of students and staff who witness sudden death, severe injury or disaster on school premises, whilst traveling to or from school, or on school excursions;
- Major vandalism or damage of school property e.g. fire, natural or community disaster;
- Unusual or unfavourable media attention;
- Possible student reaction to critical incident;

- An accident/tragedy in the wider community;
- Immediate evacuation of the school with no likelihood of return for a number of hours;
- Disturbance during the examination period.

The effects of a critical incident on a pupil or staff member can be wide-ranging and can impinge upon his or her family, particularly if the pupil is close to those at the centre of the crisis or the incident. A critical incident can also impact on the wider community including pupils and staff from other schools.

Clarity of thought and purpose may be difficult to attain in the face of immediate responsive action. Therefore, this policy sets out the precise procedures to be followed to manage the aftermath of a critical incident.

1.1 Aims of the Critical Incident Management Strategy

- To recognise which incidents may be critical to the school community;
- To respond to a critical incident in an informed manner.
- Create a positive, open, communicative climate where the needs of staff and pupils are met in critical incident situations;
- To create a safe school environment whereby the physical, social and psychological health of pupils and staff is prioritised thus ensuring that the welfare of pupils and staff is recognised as paramount;
- To enable the school to respond sensitively yet effectively and consistently to a critical incident;
- To have in place a Critical Incident Management Team, the membership of which is known to all concerned;
- To have in place a Critical Incident Management Plan, the content of which is understood by all concerned;
- To outline, monitor and review the management plans for dealing with different emergencies
- To offer sensitive, non-intrusive support in the short and medium term to all those affected directly or indirectly by what has happened;
- To promote active coping skills within the curriculum;
- To establish positive working relationships and dialogue with outside agencies, thus enabling full and effective collaboration in the event of a critical incident.;
- To maintain the normal running of any parts of the school that are not affected;
- To return the whole school to normal as soon as possible;
- To have at hand a register of all relevant contact details, including those of relevant outside agencies.

2. Critical Incident Management

Critical Incident Management can be divided into three main sections:

2.1 Critical Incident Prevention

- Assess the school's vulnerability to a critical incident situation.
- Establish a school critical incident response team to review procedures and to establish

- strategies for coping with a critical incident.
- Develop plans to manage critical incident/s.
- Review plans with staff members.

2.2 Critical Incident Action

Attempt to define the type and extent of the critical incident as soon as possible.

Key tasks will include

- Responding to any inevitable risk or threat e.g. evacuation or first aid
- Notifying emergency services or other relevant authorities
- Mobilising the *Critical Incident Management Team*
- Agreeing the school routine for that day
- Informing staff
- Establishing a dedicated telephone line
- Setting up recovery/designated room
- Informing pupils and parents
- Preparing /adapting media statement
- Assessing the initial impact of the critical incident on staff and pupils
- Follow established critical incident planning guidelines.
- Communicate accurately, in a timely fashion and on an ongoing basis.
- Critical incident team members will be relieved of their normal school duties to focus on the incident.

2.3 Post Critical Incident Activities

- Evaluate the actual cause of the critical incident and take necessary steps to prevent a recurrence.
- Provide support to those affected by the critical incident.
- Re-evaluate the situation with staff, pupils, Board of Governors, community representatives to check if further interventions are required.
- Document the incident and strategies used to deal with the crisis.
- Evaluate the entire process and procedures used to determine if modifications are needed in the event of a similar crisis.

To ensure St Patrick’s High School is ready to respond and manage any Critical Incident, we have:

- Agreed a *Critical Incident Management Strategy*;
- Identified a *Critical Incident Management Team* and;
- Developed a *Critical Incident Management Plan*.

3. St Patrick's High School Critical Incident Management Plan and Strategy

St Patrick's High School guidelines for managing a critical incident follow procedures as laid down in the DENI publication *'A Guide to Managing Critical Incidents in Schools'* (January 2014) and *Immediate Actions following a Critical Incident* (Education Authority, October 2018).

Critical Incident Management Team [CIMT]

A CIMT has been established and will meet termly and after an incident to review and, if necessary, update the policy and plan. Each member of the team has a dedicated critical incident folder. This contains a copy of the policy and materials particular to their role, to be used in the event of an incident.

In the event of a critical incident occurring outside of school hours or term time, members of the CIMT will be contacted and arrange to meet. There may be a delay in contacting staff until details are confirmed. At times, it may be more appropriate for the Principal and Vice Principals to meet in the first instance to establish facts before contacting relevant members of the CIMT. As the compilation of the CIMT will depend on the nature of the critical incident, not all members of staff may be involved in each incident. In addition, other staff may be co-opted onto the team depending on the incident.

The Critical Incident Management Book (appendices) will be retained securely by the Principal.

Roles and Responsibilities

The CIMT will be assigned to address key roles on the basis of critical incident

The key roles covered are as follows:

Team Leader: Principal

- Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting;
- Co-ordinates the tasks of the team;
- Liaises with the Board of Governors;
- Liaises with the family;
- Confirmation of the event should be clarified with the relevant personnel eg. Parish Priest and/or the PSNI.

In the absence of the team leader, the Vice-Principal(s) will assume the lead.

PSNI liaison: Principal/Vice-Principals

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

Staff liaison: Principal/Vice-Principals/SLT (Staff Health and Welfare)

- CIMT, using line of referral, informs all staff;

- 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 students;
- 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;
- Advises them of the availability of Staff Care Services and provides contact details.

Student liaison: Members of Senior Leadership Team/Designated Child Protection Officers

- Alerts other staff to vulnerable students (appropriately);
- Provides materials for students (from their critical incident folder);
- Keeps records of students seen by external agency staff;
- Looks after setting up and supervision of ‘quiet’ room where agreed e.g. the Library or Study Centre or appropriate classrooms/offices.

Community/Agency Liaison

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

Parent liaison Principal/Vice-Principals

- 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);
- Where appropriate, posts information on school website.

Media liaison Principal

Information relating to the Critical Incident will be communicated to the school and local community. Consistency in relation to the information communicated is essential. The Principal

- Will deal with all information requests from the community or media before its release;
- Will draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews (as agreed by school management);
- Where appropriate, may liaise with Legal Services, relevant teacher unions and/or EA Communications Officer;
- The Principal is the only person who should release any information to the media;
- The Principal will make any public statements;

- News media will not be permitted on to the school property without the Principal’s approval.

(The news media does not have legal access to school property without such consent. This applies to television, radio, print media and photographers).

Administrator - Office Staff will maintain up-to-date telephone numbers of:

- a) Parents or guardians
 - b) Teachers
 - c) Emergency services;
- Takes telephone calls and notes those that need to be responded to;
 - Ensures that templates are on the school system in advance and ready for adaptation;
 - Prepares and sends out letters, emails and faxes;
 - Photocopies materials needed;
 - Maintains records of all correspondence;
 - Compiles running record from all information obtained by CIMT;
 - Co-ordinates support for office and reprographics;

Record keeping

In the event of an incident *Appendix 2* will be completed regularly throughout the incident as a record of the actions and procedures undertaken. All members of the CIMT will keep a written record, in a designated notebook, to be forwarded to the Principal.

Confidentiality

The management and staff of St Patrick’s have a responsibility to protect the privacy 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:

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- the Staff Room - to meet the staff;
- the Vice Principals’ Offices – for meetings with parents;
- the Assembly or Sports Hall – for meetings with students;
- the Senior Teachers’ Offices;
- the Principal’s office for media (if required);
- Senior Teachers’ Offices for other visitors;
- The Sports Hall for parents to be located;
- *Rooms for counselling provision – Committee Room, VP offices*

[Immediate, short and medium term actions are detailed in *Appendices*]

(a) As preventative strategies:

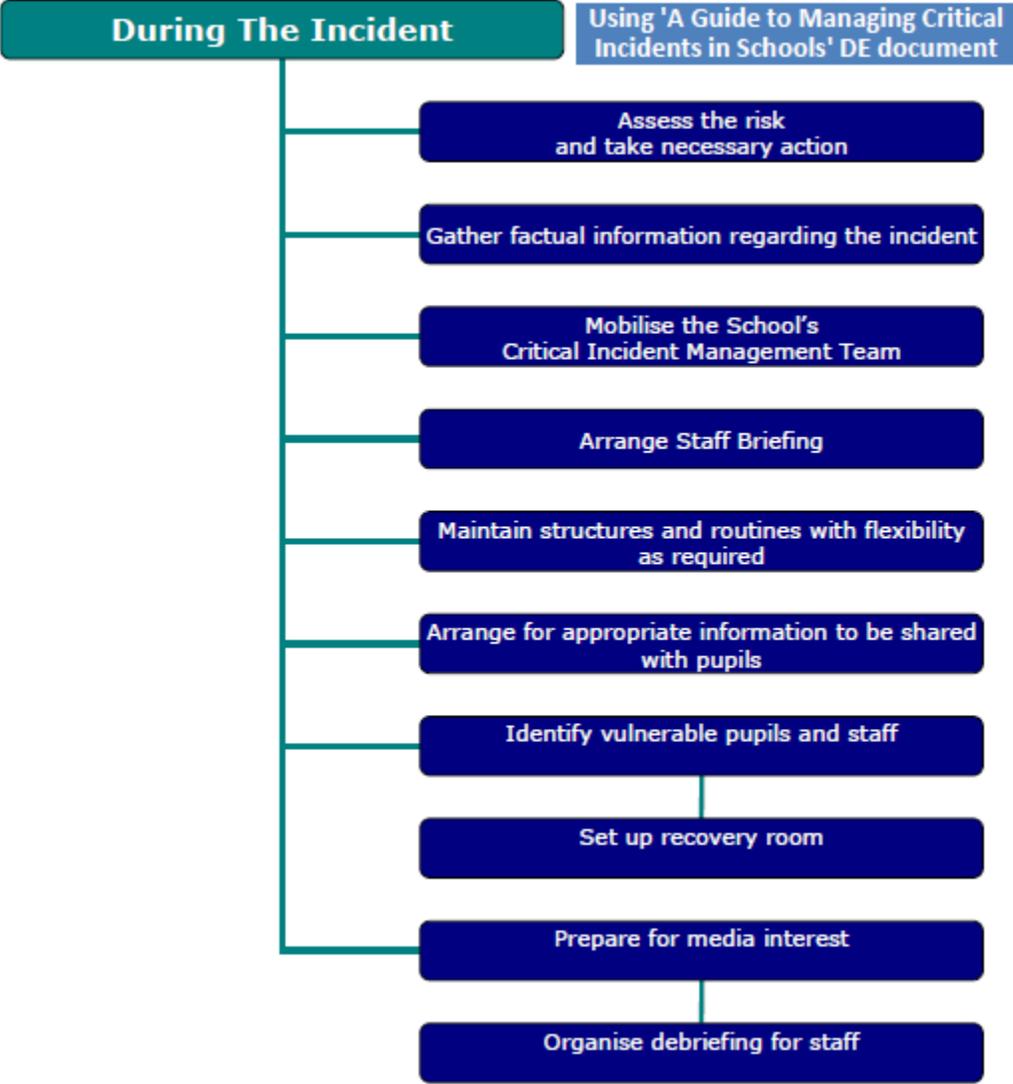
- The school’s Health and Safety policies and procedures will be kept under continual review;
- The school will continue to add to its number of those trained in First Aid procedures;
- Where appropriate, ‘drills’ will replicate simulated incidents, such as a fire on school premises.

(b) In preparation for the eventuality of a critical incident:

- Each member of the Critical Incident Management Team will have ready access to all pupil, staff and governor contact details;
- As part of the School Trips and Educational Visits Policy, each member of the Critical Incident Management Team will have a copy of the contact details of participating pupils and staff, including mobile phone contacts;
- A current register of appropriate outside agencies, including emergency services, will be held by each member of the Critical Incident Management Team;
- The register of appropriate outside agencies, including emergency services, will be kept on hand by relevant members of the school’s secretarial staff
- A phone line will be designated for out-going calls;
- A critical incident reporting form will be devised, to ensure efficient, effective recording of the incident;
- Members of the secretarial staff will be given appropriate training, as those most likely to be contacted initially by the public;
- Locations will be decided upon for carrying out meetings (with parents, pupils, media and so on);
- Staff will receive training in the means of supporting those going through trauma such as loss, change and bereavement;
- Strategies to cope with loss, change and bereavement will be included in the Pastoral Development Programme for pupils;
- The Critical Incident Policy will be reviewed regularly and amended as necessary by the Critical Incident Management Team.

(c) In the event of a critical incident, the school will implement a stepped approach as detailed in the Education Authority Guidance document: Immediate Action for Schools Following a Critical Incident (Education Authority Oct 2018).

Immediate Action for Schools Following a Critical Incident (Education Authority Oct 2018)



Critical Incident Management Plan

Immediate Detailed Actions for St Patrick's High School, Keady

Key actions

No two incidents are alike, the CIMT will assess needs first and use the guidelines flexibly and in relation to the information available.

During the Incident
Step 1: Assess the danger and take appropriate action
<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Respond to any inevitable risk or threat e.g. initiate agreed school evacuation procedures if necessary, arrange for first aid.– Notify emergency services/other relevant authorities and EA Critical Incident Response Team.– The Principal's office will be the central information point and the Principal will liaise with the EA CIRT and emergency services.– Maintain school routines where possible. It may be useful to continue certain curriculum activities at intervals during the days following the critical incident. Sustaining the normal routine, with timetable flexibility to allow students and staff to access support from the EA's Critical Incident Response Teams and external agencies, will maintain a sense of continuity and stability for the whole school community.
Step 2: Gather factual information regarding the incident
<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Gather factual information regarding the incidents – details of those involved.– Seek confirmation of facts from appropriate source(s) e.g. PSNI, family, hospital etc.– Brief office staff regarding incident and confidentiality and keep a written log of all telephone calls and actions taken.– Liaise with Chairperson of the Board of Governors. Create a calm, purposeful environment.
Step 3: Once confirmed, initiate the use of the DE Guide – A Guide to Managing Critical Incidents in School
Step 4: Mobilise the School's Critical Incident Response Team
<ul style="list-style-type: none">– The Principal, or Vice-Principal(s) in her absence, will take charge of the school's response and convene the Critical Incident Management (CIMT);– If the critical incident is out of hours, use of the pre-prepared telephone tree will be used to contact the CIMT;– The Critical Incident Management Team will make an assessment of immediate practical needs, if any;– The Principal's Office will be used as the central liaison point for all discussion and dissemination of information;– If necessary, separate venue(s) in the school will be designated as a meeting point(s) for pupils/parents/staff outside agencies; <p>Any communication about the incident will follow the guidelines set out in the Policy.</p>

- Secretarial staff taking in-coming phone calls will avoid making any comment, directing all enquiries to a member of the Critical Incident Management Team, who will respond by using the agreed statement. No additional comments will be made.

Step 5: Allocate immediate tasks for School's Critical Incident Management Team

- The Principal will allocate roles and tasks to the CIMT, discuss intervention plan, agree how and what other students will be told, prepare statement for staff to read to students and identify possible support (*see Appendix 5 and 6*).
- A short, simple statement of facts will be prepared by the Principal including:
 - What happened;
 - Why it happened (if known);
 - What is being done by the school (as relevant);
 - Expressions of sympathy and concern (as relevant);
- Immediate tasks for the School's Critical Incident Management Team include:
 - Allocate roles to staff members e.g. Critical Incident Coordinator etc ;*
 - Contact the parents of pupil/s directly involved in the incident; → Inform relevant key people and seek support as appropriate e.g. staff, BOGs, EA Critical Incident Team, CCMS, Local Clergy etc.;*
 - Agree the school routine for the day;*
 - Establish a central information point;*
 - Set up dedicated telephone line and logging system;*
 - Set up school visitor logging system;*
 - Set up a warm, quiet recovery room with drinks, tissues, suitable seating;*
 - Contact impacted family/families to determine their wishes regarding public announcements and staff/pupil briefings;*
 - For media enquiry support contact the EA Communications and CCMS. Prepare draft statement(s)*

Throughout the Incident, the CIMT:

- Collect, record, verify and update details- time, place, those involved etc (*see Appendix 2*).
- Principal continues to liaise with the Chairperson of the Board of Governors.

Prepare Initial Media Statement

Prepare media statement (*see Appendix 14 and 15*). Before making a statement:

- A check will be carried out with the police, ambulance, and fire and rescue service;
- The relevant Education Authorities Schools' Communications Officer and CCMS are contacted for advice on the statement;
- An accurate, factual report is prepared as background to any questions;
- No other staff should make comment or provide comment on the incident;
- News media should not be permitted on school property without the prior approval of the Principal. This applies to television, radio, print media and photographers.
- Students should also be advised about dealing with contact from or with the media. Students should also be encouraged not to comment about the incident on social networking sites (this should be included in statement which is read to students).
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Step 6: Briefing Staff when the Incident is Confirmed

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. A formal staff briefing should take place as soon as possible after the circumstances of the incident are known with a time set for formal debriefing at the end of the school day(s).

- The Principal or Team Leader will brief staff on the situation. A formal staff briefing will take place as soon as possible after the circumstances of the incident are known with a formal debriefing at the end of the school day(s);
- Absent teachers will also be briefed on the situation by phone;
- Staff will receive factual information on what has occurred, how the incident will be handled and how they can contribute to the school's response;
- A formal statement will be prepared for staff to share with pupils. This will be discussed with teachers. When making the agreed announcement teachers should pass on the facts that are known, never speculate on the cause or causes of the incident and be truthful when questions cannot be answered;
- Staff will be kept updated on developments during the course of the day during morning breaks and/or lunch-time using the staff room. Staff will be provided with a timetable of events.

Format of Briefing

The initial briefing should:

- Respond to any inevitable risk/threat e.g. evacuation or first aid;
- 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 student and staff welfare;
- Identify vulnerable staff and students 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 students;
- Advise staff on the agreed procedure for informing parents;
- Inform staff of the support services that are available;
- Reassure staff and students that they will be supported; and
- Advise staff of time/place of next briefing

Step 7: Arrange for Appropriate **Information** to be shared with Students

It is important to inform students of a critical incident as soon as possible once confirmed. Delaying a formal announcement may make the situation worse, as rumour can add another aspect to handling the critical incident and students may feel that a delay shows a lack of concern or sensitivity by the school staff and could undermine the credibility of information given later. Consideration will be given to the range of different groups among the students and how they are to be informed. Young children and those with special educational needs will be informed in a way which is appropriate, using language and methods of communication already familiar to them.

- Students will be informed in small groups e.g. close friends, class group, and year group

preferably in their regular classroom setting/form class to reduce the potential for creating a highly charged emotional atmosphere. As many students will likely be in shock a smaller group setting will also act as a 'safe space'. The best person to communicate this difficult news will normally be the Form Teacher or the Year Head. If any member of staff feels they are unable to perform this task they should inform the Principal and another member of staff will be designated to inform students.

- Teachers will be given a carefully worded announcement to read aloud in classrooms.
- Where there has been a death, it is important that the bereaved family's right to privacy is respected. In this instance the announcement made to students will usually include a statement of condolence and will be sensitive to the different religions and cultures present in the school community. The announcement will also advise students of the support arrangements to be put in place and how these can be accessed.
- Teachers should be aware that young people's understanding of death will depend on their cognitive and developmental stage. *Appendix 7* provides information for teachers 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. These issues are dealt with in *Appendix 8*.
- Teachers, where possible, will make the announcement simultaneously to ensure that students attending school hear about it at the same time. The Head of Year or another member of staff where possible will be present for support.

Identifying Vulnerable individuals/groups – Before making any announcement, teachers should be mindful of vulnerable students in the group as the critical incident may act as a trigger for an extreme response by some students who are vulnerable even though they are not directly involved. The Pastoral Team and Form Teachers will identify vulnerable students and the compiled list will be given to CIMT and CIRT. These students will be monitored and appropriate support put in place.

Vulnerable students include:

- Those recently bereaved;*
- Close friends and relatives of those affected;*
- Students with a history of self-harm or suicidal behaviour;*
- Students who have experienced recent bereavement or separation;*
- Students with mental health difficulties;*
- Students with a history of substance abuse;*
- Students with child protection needs;*
- Students with learning, communication or sensory difficulties;*
- Non-communicative students who have difficulty talking about their feelings;*
- Students experiencing serious family difficulties including mental/physical illness;*
- Those with English as an additional language;*

Students with SEN and those deemed vulnerable will be spoken to in a small group in the Learning Resource Centre room. Classroom Assistants/SENCo will be present.

After the announcement, teachers will allow sufficient time for students to begin to discuss their feelings. This will require pupils remaining in Form Rooms with their Form Teacher/Head of Year. It is important that teachers should have a listening, supportive and containing role and that

they should remain calm and listen to the students (*see Appendix 9 and 10*).

A member of SLT will accompany the student to the designated counsellor. The student will return to the office and a member of SLT will accompany them back to class. Staff will be kept informed throughout the day of students who accessed support.

Students Absent from School

Students who are absent from school due to illness, work experience, educational trips or suspension will also be informed. This is of particular importance if a student has died and the absent student is in the same class or is a known friend. In such a case, early contact will be made with the student's parent by the Form Teacher. Support will be put in place by the Form Teacher and Year Head for the student's return to school.

Support for Student and Staff: Set up support Centres and/or Recovery Rooms

Support for Students

A designated area/areas will be provided for students should they wish to come out of class eg; Assembly/Sports Hall, Study Centre etc in the school (provide fluids, tissues, comfortable chairs, support personnel). There, they will be facilitated to talk about their feelings to someone, for example, a member of the school's pastoral care team or a member of the EA's Critical Incident Support Team or school counsellor supporting the school. For those students who are particularly distressed the suggested information contained in *Appendix 11* can be used as part of the support arrangements. Consideration may need to be given for these students to go home. Arrangements will be made directly with parents to ensure that the students are supported at home.

Support for Staff

Staff must be well supported during a crisis. The impact of a critical incident on all staff may be distressing and some may have difficulty coping. The extent of this impact will depend on staff involvement in the incident and the particular circumstances pertaining to it. The impact will also vary according to staff experience and training, coping skills, past trauma history and current stresses.

- Sources of help may include the provision of opportunities for staff, as individuals or in groups, to discuss their own reactions to what has happened, to assess the climate of the school and to share their observations on the monitoring of vulnerable students. Staff will be kept informed to enable them to understand the importance of their role and to be supported themselves.
- Experienced advisers from the EA, the Board of Governors and relevant clergy/faith workers will also be available to provide support for staff.
- The needs of all staff will be monitored and appropriate support provided through the school's formal and informal systems.
- Staff Inspire Counsellor to be contacted regarding support for staff by Principal.

Support within School

Informal support in school may be available through staff, colleagues and friends who can help each other and, if appropriate, alert someone in the Senior Leadership Team, if not already involved.

More formal support may include, for example, providing cover arrangements for staff who are

temporarily unable to carry out their normal duties, arranging for staff to have time out if necessary and advising staff of external support that may be available to them.

External Support

In the immediate aftermath of a critical incident the school community needs the type of support described in this document. This should be calm reassurance by familiar adults and could be described as emotional first aid. The school can be supported in providing this by the EA's Critical Incident Response Team in conjunction with the Independent Counselling Service for Schools, *Familyworks Schools' Counselling Service*. In the longer term, if required, staff may benefit from counselling support such as that provided by the employing authority i.e. Inspire or other community based counselling services.

Step 8: Inform parents

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

- Parents of students directly involved will be telephoned or visited by a member of the CIMT. If the death of a student has occurred, one has to be mindful of the bereaved parents' needs. It is important for the Principal or another school representative to make contact with the parents as soon as possible to express sympathy, liaise over messages of condolence from staff/students and to discuss funeral arrangements. School will take into account the wishes of the family before sending school representatives including students to a funeral and be sensitive to different religious practices and cultures.
- Other parents may also need to be informed; this is likely to be done most effectively by letter which will be sent by email and which may also be posted on the school website as the media and/or children with mobile phones may have reached them first with inaccurate information (*see Appendix 12*). *Appendix 14* gives practical and constructive suggestions on how parents can support their children. The CIMT will consider issuing the information sheet at *Appendix 14* along with the letter to parents.
- The letter issued will give the facts of the critical incident and ensure that only accurate information is shared. Consideration will also be given to the needs of parents whose first language is not English.
- Where the critical incident requires all parents to be contacted as a matter of urgency, the school's website, and local media will be used.
- Provide sources of help for students and families see *Appendix 13* and encourage communication between parents and school. Parents will be informed by letter, and on the school website how to access support, both within the school and externally.

It is important to restore the school to regular routine as soon as practicable while noting the following.

Plan visits to injured and bereaved, ensuring a member of the SLT remains on site;

- Plan rituals and assemblies

Assisting Statutory Investigations

A critical incident, in particular, the sudden death of a student can trigger an investigation that may involve a number of statutory agencies.

The sudden death of a student is an extremely difficult and emotionally charged time for all concerned. Staff should be aware that alongside a coroner's inquest there may be other officially established reviews or inquiries into the student's death and the circumstances surrounding it.

It is important that the school anticipates being asked to contribute information about the student to any such review or inquiry and ensure that all relevant records are secured. The purpose of such reviews is not to inquire into how a child died or who is culpable; it is to learn from the experience on how best to protect children in the future and if there are ways of improving the practice of all professionals working with children particularly in relation to multi-disciplinary and inter-agency working.

Obtain updated factual information

- Continue to inform staff, students and parents.
- Principal consults with the families affected to determine their wishes concerning public announcements and information for school staff and students.
 - Continue to liaise with Chair, Board of Governors.

Continue to monitor well-being of students and staff

- Organise assistance, such as transport home, for staff or students who are distressed. Try to ensure that they are not alone on the evening after such an incident.
- Identify at risk students and staff and arrange for follow-up support, involvement with other professionals, referrals as necessary.
- Assess the need for debriefing of staff and students with expert help.
- Arrange for support of Critical Incident Response Team.
- Continue to liaise with Chair, Board of Governors.

Spiritual Provision

The school Chaplain will provide support via:

- Mass/Prayer Service in school simultaneous to Funeral Mass which reflects the Funeral Mass to support the school community.
- Eucharistic Adoration Day held, involving parishioners and students.
- Special intentions prayer-book in Oratory.
- Acknowledgement of support in parish bulletin.
- Liaison with Parish Priest of student(s) involved.

AFTER THE INCIDENT

The aim of the work carried out in school during the weeks, months and sometimes years following a critical incident is to help its immediate and broader community cope with and recover from the critical incident. A return to normal routine requires careful and sensitive planning, timing and implementation. Staff should continue to monitor students' emotional well-being and be attentive to students with ongoing difficulties.

Support for Students

Returning to school for some students may be very difficult and every attempt should be made to provide as much continuity as possible. Actions to support Students returning to school may include:

- Arranging a home visit to discuss plans for returning to school even on a phased basis;
- Helping arrange a rota of support from school friends;
- Arranging for school work to be sent home where appropriate;
- Briefing staff and students on how best to support individuals returning to school;
- Arranging support for temporary or permanent mobility difficulties or disfigurement;
- Planning support for emotional needs e.g. leaving class when distressed;
- Depending on time of year, support put in place over the Summer.

Appendix 15 deals with planning a positive return for a bereaved student.

A record should be kept of a student who has been affected by bereavement (see *Appendix 16*). When a student affected by a critical incident moves school, the receiving school should always be informed, see *Appendix 17*.

Students who continue to show signs of significant distress after a number of weeks and who are finding the return to normal school routine difficult may require a referral for specialist intervention from the Form Tutor or HoY. If required, a support plan should be implemented by the Form Tutor, HoY and Pastoral Team for individual students or a group of students returning to school after a long absence or those considered at risk. If there are any safeguarding concerns, the Designated Teacher or a Deputy Designated Teacher will liaise with external agencies for appropriate guidance and reassurance. The support plans for these vulnerable students will become an integral part of the school's pastoral care arrangements.

Teachers may have to cope with the continuing impact of the critical incident and with issues as they arise during teaching and learning. The classroom provides opportunities to deal with these issues in a more extensive way. It would be unwise to focus obsessively on the critical incident, yet issues arising from the event should not be avoided by staff. Some students' ability to concentrate is significantly affected after a critical incident and if public examinations are imminent for students, the Form Teacher will inform the Exams Officer, who will ensure the examining boards will be made aware of the situation.

Support for Bereaved Families

The family of a student who has died will require support for a long time after the tragic event. Family members may be at the same school and have difficulty in adjusting to their loss. Parents' permission should be sought if the school wish to remember the student in services etc.

The return of personal belongings and/or school work to the family, perhaps in a 'memory folder' or 'memory box' needs to be handled sensitively. The belongings should be kept securely until parents or designated person(s) remove them. Schools should also consider what to do when events arise that would have involved the deceased student, for example, award ceremonies. These decisions will be based upon what is deemed appropriate by the CIMT and family. The management of public examination results and the return of controlled assessments also require careful consideration. Staff should take due cognisance of the circumstances and all decisions should be in line with family wishes.

Support for Staff

Some staff may need support in the longer term. The strain on staff of leading a school through a critical incident can be profoundly disturbing and may not be identified until after the crisis. Staff, both teaching and non-teaching, can often underestimate the impact on them and may not recognise that they are experiencing difficulty. The Critical Incident Management Team will ensure that staff are directed to sources of support.

Memorials and Commemorations

Holding a special assembly is a way of celebrating the life and achievement of the student or colleague and gives the school a corporate means of thanksgiving and farewell. The wishes of the bereaved family will be taken into consideration and school will be mindful of different religious faiths and accepted practices. Significant dates such as anniversaries or celebrations may revive deep feelings among students and staff and need careful handling if new problems are not to be created. Additional support for students and staff may be required at this time. In addition, it is important to take account of any long-term legal processes, for example, a court case or an inquest, possible media interest and any related public events which may be unsettling for the school.

Review of Critical Incident Management Plan

A review should be carried out within six weeks of a critical incident (see *Appendix 2*). This review will be undertaken in collaboration with those support agencies involved and include consultation with the school community to evaluate the effectiveness of the Plan and to make necessary modifications if required.

The review will address the following questions:

- What went well?
- What was most/least helpful?
- Were there any gaps?
- Have all necessary referrals to support services been made?
- Is there any unfinished business?
- Have all records relevant to the Critical Incident been secured by the Principal?
- Are there any identified training needs?
- Does the Plan need to be reviewed/changed/updated?

The Critical Incident Management Team will meet on a termly basis to discuss the Plan and ensure that it is fit for purpose. It will also consider the recent experiences of other schools.

There will be a formal review of the Critical Incident Management Plan annually by the CIMT.

4. Policy Consultation and Arrangements for Monitoring and Review

Staff and governors were consulted in the preparation of this policy. The policy will be reviewed annually and made available to parents via the school's app and website. Paper copies are available from the school on request.