

#SUNCROFT NATIONAL SCHOOL

Policy Number: 40 - Critical Incident Policy REV:0

Critical Incidents Plan

The purpose of this plan is to enable staff to react quickly and effectively and to maintain a sense of control in the event of a critical incident. It may also ensure that normality returns as soon as possible and that the effects on students and staff are limited.

“A critical incident is any incident or sequence of events which overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school and disrupts the running of the school”. (NEPS 2003)

“While very few schools will experience a major crisis, most schools at some time or other experience traumatic situations such as the sudden death of a student or teacher due to an accident or illness”.

Scoil Bhríde takes a caring and supportive role in the development of the child and to this end has devised a Critical Incidents Policy to help cope with the unexpected, traumatic events that may happen during a child’s school life. This policy is driven by concern for the health and safety of the children in our care. Adults in charge of children, not withstanding existing school policies and procedures, will act in the best possible interest of the child. This policy outlines what we feel is best practice.

Aims:

- To put a framework in place within which to manage a critical incident;
- To define roles and responsibilities;
- To put resources in place;
- To put protocol in place for communications with outside support agencies;
- To put evacuation procedures in place;

Guidelines

The Critical Incident Management Team

Louise Carroll , Derry Enright (Chairperson BOM) Aishling Keane, Elaine Price, Vera Philips, Laura Lanigan

In the case of an accident or sudden illness involving a child during school hours

- each teacher will support the child as is necessary.
- If a child displays unusual or worrying physical systems and in the opinion of the teacher/teachers needs urgent medical attention (i.e. doctor) the child’s parents/guardians will be phoned. If it is not possible to contact parents/guardians the child’s doctor will be rung for advice and if necessary a teacher will bring child to doctor.

- The principal / D.P / secretary / staff member will phone parent/guardian/emergency services as is necessary.
- If a child needs to go to hospital in an ambulance the class teacher or designated person will travel with child. Parents will be informed as quickly as possible about what has happened and to what hospital child is going.

In the case of bereavement / tragedy or accident / incident in the wider community

gather accurate information;

- each teacher will support the child/children as is necessary;
- Principal/class teacher/designated person will gather children in class group or as whole school community and gently, calmly and with focus speak to children about what has happened. If possible aim to return children to normal school routine.
- Principal/D.P./Designated parson will contact NEPS (National Educational Psychological Service) for advice and possibly to set up counselling services.
- Principal to appoint someone to handle phone enquiries and to deal with the media if necessary.
- See attached appendix (Appendix 2) for Procedure to be followed in the event of Critical Incidents (taken from “Responding to Critical Incidents: Advice and Information Pack for Schools” devised by NEPS). All school staff and Critical Incident Management Team are to be familiar with what is in this appendix.
- See attached appendix (Appendix 3) for Resource Documents for use by schools in the event of a Critical #Incident (taken from same source as above). All school staff and Critical Incident Management Team are to be familiar with what is in this document.

In the Case of a School Emergency i.e. Fire

- Emergency services are to be rung immediately by secretary or principal.
- Children must be encouraged to quietly and calmly stand in a line by the classroom door.
- Class teacher will take with her/him the class roll-book or class list.
- Teacher will lead class to nearest and safest evacuation exit and proceed to agreed assembly point. In Scoil Bhríde N.S. this is at the school gate.
- Class teacher will call roll as children stand silently.
- Fire Drills are to take place annually.

List of Emergency Services to be posted near to school phones. Each teacher also will have a copy of this list. Numbers of parents/guardians children’s G.P.s will be kept in school office. These numbers will be reviewed and updated annually.

EMERGENCY CONTACT LIST

Garda:	Newbridge	431212
	Kilcullen	481212
	Kildare	521222
Ambulance:	999 or 112	
Fire Brigade:	999 or 112	
Central Fire Station:		
Hospital's: Naas	897221	
	Crumlin	01-4096100
	Tallaght	01-4142000
Local G.P.'s		
Dr. Adrian McGoldrick	Moorefield Medical Centre	486633
Dr. Bernard Healy	Moorefield Medical Centre	486633
Dr. Michael O'Connell	The Medical Centre	432464
Dr. Eamon Dillon	The Medical Centre	432464
Dr. Noel Caffrey	The Medical Centre	432464
Dr. Joe Crilly	910 The Crescent	433454
Dr. Esther Leddy	910 The Crescent	433454
Dr. Michael McDonnell	Moorefield Road	434885
Dr. Mary O' Doherty	Moorefield Road	434885
Dr. Brendan O' Shea	Station Road, N/B	432999
Dr. Donal Deeney	Roseberry Clinic	449516
Dr. H. Ramadam	923 The Crescent	449765
Dr. Gerard Caffrey	Brownstown, Curragh Camp	441633
Dr. Brian Dunne	Main Street, Kilcullen	481411
Dr. Cliona Ryan	Main Street, Kilcullen	481411
Dr. Michael Kelly	Main Street, Kilcullen	481818
Dr. Deirdre Collins	Main Street, Kilcullen	481818
Dr. Patricia Collins	Kildare Medical Centre	531261
Dr. Michael Collins	Kildare Medical Centre	531261
Dr. Daniel Mulvihill	Kildare Medical Centre	521361
Dr. Denis Dwyer	Tully Rd, Kildare	521337
Dr. Rosemary Spillane	Market Sq. Kildare	521361
K -Doc 1890 599362		
Heath Board /	Millennium Park	880400
Head Office	Poplar House	876001
Dentist	School Services	481056/481895
Health Centre	Henry Street	446350
School Inspector		
Chairperson BOM	Derry Enright	442487/087 2634588

Critical Incident Management Team:

Diarmuid O' Connor, Louise Carroll, Derry Enright (Chairperson BOM), Aishling Keane, Elaine Price, Vera Philips, Laura Lanigan

Clergy:

Priest Emergency Number

Parish Office 441586

Curragh Parish Office 441369

Kildare Parish Office 521352

Local Counselling Services:

N.E.P.S. Psychologist

Caitriona O'Riordan 087-9132230
848508

Rainbows Sheila Sullivan 434349
01-4734175

Kildare Youth Services/Counselling
Admin-Kathleen McGlynn 897893

Newbridge Suicide & Tragic Death
– Support Services 086-1699805

Kildare Bereavement Support Group 895629
086-8554852

Accord, Newbridge 435299
The Samaritans 3 McElwain Tce 435299
1850 609090

Useful Contact Numbers:

Childline 1800 666666

Barnardos 01-4530355

Parentline 1890 927277

Aware 01-6766166

1890 303302

National Suicide Bereavement Support Group 024-95561
Geraldine

The Bereavement Counselling Service 01-8391766

Victim Support Fintan O' Connor 818127

1850-661771

3.1 SHORT-TERM ACTIONS (1ST DAY)

A checklist is provided at the end of this section. The procedures to be followed will depend on the particular incident that has occurred and the particular arrangement in place in a school.

GATHER ACCURATE INFORMATION

It is important to obtain accurate information about the incident, otherwise rumours will take over and add to the distress to those involved.

- What happened, where and when?
- What is the extent of the injuries?
- What is the location of those injured and not injured?
- How many are involved and what are their names?
- Is there risk of further injury?
- What agencies have been contacted already?

CONTACT APPROPRIATE AGENCIES

(See Appendix 1 & 2 for further details)

Emergency Services.

Medical Services.

Health Board Psychology Departments/Community Care Services.

NEPS

BOM

DES/Schools Inspector.

CONVENE A MEETING WITH KEY STAFF/CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM

A list of possible topics to be covered follows;

- Agreeing a statement of the facts for staff, students, parents and the media. If possible there should be a written version of this.
- Delegating responsibilities to the Critical Incident Management Team.
- Appointing someone to handle phone enquiries and to deal with the media.
- Ensuring that a phone line remains open and available for enquiries.
- Organising the timetable/routine for the day. (Adhering to the normal school routine is important if this is possible).
- Organising a staff meeting, if appropriate.
- Deciding whether an outside professional be invited to the staff meeting.

ARRANGE SUPERVISION OF STUDENTS

HOLD STAFF MEETING

- All staff should be asked to attend, including auxiliary staff. The areas which might be covered are listed below.
- An account of the facts as known.
- An opportunity for staff to express their views and their feelings.
- Discussion with the staff about how the facts will be shared with the students. (There should be an agreed approach to this if possible).

- An outline of the routine for the day.
- Information for staff about which outside agencies have been contacted, or are involved and the supports that will be put in place for both students and staff.
- A procedure for identifying vulnerable students.
- Distribution of relevant handout material (see Resource Document in Section 4 of this pack).

ORGANISE TIMETABLE FOR THE DAY

AS FAR AS POSSIBLE MAINTAIN NORMAL ROUTINES

INFORM PARENTS/GUARDIANS

Children directly involved:

Parents/guardians should be contacted as soon as possible, and this first contact will need to be handled with great sensitivity. The steps involved are set out below.

- Agree who should share information with parents and how this should be done.
- Make a list of parents/guardians who have been contacted and those who still need to be told to avoid duplication of messages.
- Give parents/guardians relevant and factual information.
- Set a room aside for distressed students to meet their parents/guardians.
- Provide support to parents who are on their own when they arrive at the school.
- Give telephone numbers for enquiries.

Children not directly involved:

The parents of other children in the school should be informed of the incident and that their child may be upset.

Send a letter to parents stating the facts and brief details of the incident. It may not be appropriate at this point to disclose the names of those involved. (See Appendix 3 for sample letter).

Inform Students

Careful preparation is important when meeting students to inform them of a critical incident. Consideration should be given to the age of the pupils and the optimum group size. It is best to do it in class groups or sub-groups. The suitability of the ‘messenger’ should also be considered, remembering that it is generally thought that support is best given by the adults known to the child. Any outside ‘expert’ might help by assisting the people undertaking this task to prepare for it and by providing ongoing advice and support as they manage it. The nature of the event will clearly have an influence on how students are informed.

The key points/actions in the process are listed below.

- Give facts and avoid speculation. This will help to dispel rumours which can cause unnecessary stress.
- Allow pupils to ask questions, tell their story and express feelings.
- Help students realise that overwhelming emotions are natural and normal following a critical incident (See Resource Documents 4.3, 4.4 and 4.5 on reactions to grief and critical incident).

MAKE CONTACT WITH THE BEREAVED FAMILY

Dealing with the Media

Prepare a written statement to include:

- the facts about the incident.
- What has been done already.
- What is going to be done.
- Positive information or comments about the deceased person.

Some points to remember if you are asked to give a live interview:

- consider assigning the task to someone skilled or familiar with dealing with the media.
- Take some time to prepare.
- Remember that everything you say is on record and, therefore, keep it simple, factual and brief.
- Decline if you are not ready or think it inappropriate.

Consider setting aside a room for the media. This may help to control their access to staff and students.

Brief staff and students and advise them on dealing with the media.

Organise the reunion of students with their parents, if necessary

- inform students that their parents/guardians will be collecting them as soon as possible.
- Facilitate distressed students and their parents by providing a private room where they can meet following an accident. This could be a very emotional time.
- Where appropriate offer help with transport, especially for younger children.

3.3 LONGER TERM ACTIONS

Monitor students for signs of continuing distress.

A referral to the Health Board may be necessary. (See Resource Document 4.5 for Normal Reactions to a Critical Incident)

For example, if over a prolonged period of time, a student continues to display the following, he/she may need assistance from the Health Board.

- uncharacteristic behaviour
- deterioration in academic performance
- physical symptoms – e.g. weight loss/gain, lack of attention to appearance, tiredness, restlessness.
- Inappropriate emotional reactions.
- Increased absenteeism.

Evaluate response to incident and amend the Critical Incident Management Plan appropriately

- What went well?
- Where were the gaps?
- What was most/least helpful?
- Have all necessary onward referrals to support services been made?
- Is there any unfinished business?

Formalise the Critical Incident Plan for the future

- Consult with the NEPS psychologist and/or your local Health Board Critical Incidents Team about this.

Inform new staff/new school pupils affected by Critical Incidents where appropriate

- Ensure that new staff are aware of the school policy and procedures in this area.
- Ensure they are aware of which pupils were affected in any recent incident and in what way.
- When individual pupils or a class of pupils affected by an incident are transferring to a new school, it would be useful to brief the Principal of the new school.

Decide on appropriate ways to deal with anniversaries (be sensitive to special days and events)

- Anniversaries may trigger emotional responses in students/staff and they may need additional support at this time.
- Acknowledge the anniversary with the family and liaise on any proposed commemoration.
- Be sensitive to significant days like birthdays, Christmas, Mother's day, Father's Day.

3.2 MEDIUM-TERM ACTIONS (24-72 Hours)

Review the events of the first 24 hours

- Reconvene key staff/Critical Incident Management Team.
- Briefly check out how each person on this team is coping.
- Decide arrangements for support meetings for parents/students/staff.
- Decide on mechanism for feedback from teachers on vulnerable students.
- Have review staff meeting with all staff is necessary. Ensure all staff are kept up to date on any developments.
- Be sensitive as to how all staff are coping on a personal and professional level.
- Establish contact with absent staff and pupils.
- Update media, if necessary.

Arrange support for individual student, groups of students, and parents, if necessary

- Provide a suitable room.
- Hold support/information meeting for parents/students in order to clarify what has happened. Offer advice and reassurance. Inform them about support services and provide relevant handout. (See Resource Documents at Section 4).
- Give any teacher who feels uncomfortable with involvement in support meetings the choice of opting out.
- Arrange, in consultation with outside agencies, individual or group debriefings or support meetings with parental permission. See Appendix 4 for sample letter for parental consent.

Plan for the reintegration of student and staff (e.g. absentees, injured, siblings, close relatives, etc).

- Name key person(s) to visit home/hospital.

Liase with family regarding funeral arrangements/memorial service

- Designate staff member to liase with family, to extend sympathy and clarify the family's wishes regarding the school's involvement in funeral/memorial service.
- Arrange a home visit by two staff representatives within 24 hours, if appropriate.
- Have regard for different religious traditions and faiths.

Attendance and participation at funeral/memorial service

- Decide this in accordance with parents' wishes and school management decisions and in consultation with close school friends.

School Closure

- Request a decision on this from school management and school inspector.

A classroom session following a critical incident

(Adapted from Critical Incidents: Managing Loss and Trauma in Schools: A Wiltshire Psychological Service and School improvement and Support Information Booklet)

A classroom session is an important intervention following a critical incident that affects large numbers of students. Sessions containing up to 30 students can be effective. It is recommended that the classroom teacher take an active role, if possible. Students may feel safe and secure with their classroom teacher rather than being with an adult they do not know. Teachers may be able to lead these sessions and the NEPS psychologist can act as a co-facilitator. If the teacher feels uncomfortable with this role the psychologist may take more of an active role. Teachers should have the opportunity to opt out of this work if they wish.

A class teacher needs to be tailored to the developmental level of the class. The time required will vary depending on the class experience and age.

The process involves:

- providing facts and dispelling rumours
- sharing stories
- sharing thoughts and feelings
- normalisation of thoughts and feelings
- empowerment
- closure

Providing facts and dispelling rumours

State the facts clearly. Talk in concrete rather than abstract terms. Dispelling rumours help students understand the reality of the events. Helping students hear the facts is an important prerequisite for coming to terms with what has happened.

Sharing Stories

Students are asked to tell their story of the event. As a result they will feel less alone because of their common shared experiences. Helping them verbalise their experiences helps their recovery.

For those students who find it difficult to verbalise their experiences or for students with learning difficulties it may also be helpful to allow them to express their feelings and recount their experience in other ways. Writing stories or using art can be particularly helpful, especially for younger students. Give the students a choice as to how they want to represent their experiences. Have a box of tissues at hand.

Sharing thoughts and feelings

Help the students identify what they thought and felt at the time of the incident, or when they first heard of the incident. It may be helpful to share your own feelings, thoughts and fears that you experienced during the crises or just after hearing the news.

Normalisation of thoughts and feelings

Explain that their reactions are normal responses to abnormal circumstances. Let the students know that in time, for most people, the reactions or symptoms will go away. Inform the class that if the symptoms don't go away they need to seek help. Distribute handouts on reactions to grief to the students, if appropriate.

Empowerment

Help the students identify strategies that they can use to help manage symptoms. For example, talking to family and friends, getting enough sleep, exercise, etc. If appropriate, students can brainstorm ideas that might help prevent a similar situation happening again. Overall, it is important to help the students regain a sense of control.

Closure

End the session by focussing on the future. Depending on the nature of the incident, help the class/group decide what would bring about a sense of closure, for example, organising a memorial, writing cards or letters. Reiterate the message that their reactions are normal responses to abnormal circumstances. Tell students what further supports will be put in place if needed.