



Critical Incident Policy

What is a Critical Incident?

"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"

Examples:

- Death, major illness/outbreak of disease (foot and mouth)
- Criminal incidents (e.g. Dunblane shooting, shooting at First Communion in Ballymun)
- Major accidents, serious injury (e.g. Navan bus crash)
- Suicide
- Civil unrest, war (refugees may be traumatized by events that happened elsewhere)
- Fire, natural and technological disaster (e.g. school ceiling collapsing in Cork) see also Fire Policy
- Disappearance of student from home or school (e.g. Middleton incident in Cork)
- Unauthorized removal of pupil from school or home
- Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism etc.

Critical Incidents Management Team:

Leadership Role: Principal and Deputy Principal

Communication Role: Secretary (phone), Principal (media)

Pupil Liaison/Counselling Role: Deputy Principal and Post Holders

Chaplaincy Role: Board Chairperson

Family Liaison Role: Deputy Principal and Principal

Parents' Association Reps

Board of Management Rep

National Educational Psychological Services

Health & Safety Rep

The first-named person has the responsibility as defined.

The second-named person assists and only assumes responsibility in the absence of the first-named.



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Roles and Responsibilities

Leadership Role:

Intervention

- Confirm the event
- Activate the C.I. response team
- Express sympathy to family
- Clarify facts surrounding event
- Make contact with other relevant agencies
- Decide how news will be communicated to different groups (staff, pupils, outside school)

After the Event/Postvention

- Ensure provision of ongoing support to staff and pupils
- Facilitate any appropriate memorial events
- Review plan

Communication Role:

Intervention

- With team prepare a public statement.
- Organise designated room to address media promptly
- Address media
- Ensure telephone line free for outgoing and important incoming calls
- Liaison with relevant outside support agencies

After the Event/Postvention

- Review and evaluate effectiveness of communication response

Student Liaison/Counselling Role:

Intervention

- Outline specific services available in school
- Put in place clear referral procedures
- Address immediate needs of staff and pupils
- Information
- Counselling for staff and pupils

After the Event/Postvention

- Ongoing support to vulnerable students
- Monitor class most affected
- Refer on, as appropriate
- Review and evaluate plan

Chaplaincy Role:

Intervention

- Visit home, if appropriate
- Assist with prayer services
- Make contact with local clergy
- Be available as personal and spiritual support to staff



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After the Event/Postvention

- Provide follow-up support to family in conjunction with Home School Community Liaison
- Work in partnership with religious education team
- Review and evaluate plan.

Family Liaison Role:

Intervention

- Coordinate contact with families (following first contact by Principal)
- Consult with family around involvement of school e.g. funeral service
- Assist with all communication dealing with parents of any pupil affected by critical incident

After the Event/Postvention

- Provide ongoing support to bereaved family
- Involve as appropriate family in school liturgies/memorial services.
- Offer to link family with community support groups
- Review and evaluate plan.

Action Plan

Summary Checklist for Principal

1. Gather the facts – Who? What? When? and Where?
2. Contact appropriate agencies
3. Convene the Critical Incident Management Team
4. Organize for the supervision of students
5. Inform staff
6. Agree on a statement of the facts & consult with BOM as to statement
7. Identify high risk pupils
8. Appoint someone to deal with phone enquiries
9. Organize timetable for the day.

MAINTAIN THE NORMAL SCHOOL ROUTINE WHEN AT ALL POSSIBLE

10. Inform parents/guardians
11. Inform pupils
12. Make contact with the bereaved family
13. Organize support
14. Respond to the media.

Critical Incident Management Team

1. Paul O'Donnell
2. Lorna Gerrard
3. Darina Sheridan/Joann Johnson/Debbie Connor/Sean Flanagan
4. Fr. Deegan
5. David Powell
6. David O'Connell
7. Shona Dunne
8. NEPS Psychologist



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SHORT-TERM ACTIONS (Day 1)

- Contact the emergency services if appropriate
- Immediate contact with family/families
- Consult with the family regarding appropriate support from the school, (e.g. funeral service)
- Ensure that a quiet place can be made for pupils/staff
- Rooms will made be made available as follows:
- Prayer room: Day chapel in Church if school unavailable
- Individual meetings: Office or Parochial House if school unavailable
- Parents: Hall or old school at Church if school unavailable

Media Briefing

- Designate a spokesperson: Principal
- Prepare a brief statement: Staff
- Protect the family's privacy
- Gather accurate information
- It is important to obtain accurate information about the incident.
 1. What happened, where and when?
 2. What is the extent of the injuries?
 3. How many are involved and what are their names (only release names after parents notified & agreement)
 4. Is there a risk of further injury?
 5. What agencies have been contacted already?
- Contact appropriate agencies
 1. Emergency services/Gardaí/Priest
 2. Medical services
 3. H.S.E. Psychology Departments/Community Care Services
 4. NEPS
 5. BOM
 6. Department of Education and Skills/Schools Inspector
 7. Health and Safety Authority/Health and Safety Officer/Emergency Parents Team
- Convene a meeting with Key Staff/Critical Management Team (8.30 a.m.)
 1. Organize a staff meeting, if appropriate. (9.00 a.m.)
 2. Organize timetable/routine for the day. (Adhering to the normal school routine is important, if this is possible).
 3. Class teachers to take note of any absentees who might need to be contacted, list of friends etc, or any other relevant information and give to the Pupil Liaison person.
 4. Arrange supervision of students
- Liaise with the family regarding funeral arrangements/memorial service
 1. The Chaplain/ Principal will liaise with the family, to extend sympathy and clarify the family's wishes regarding the school's involvement in funeral/memorial service
 2. Arrange a home visit by two staff representatives within 24 hours, if appropriate. (Principal and/or Deputy and Class teacher)
 3. Have regard for different religious traditions and faiths.

MEDIUM-TERM ACTIONS (24-72 HOURS)

- Preparation of pupils/staff attending funeral.
- Involvement of pupils/staff in liturgy if agreed by bereaved family
- Facilitation of pupils'/staffs' responses, e.g. sympathy cards, flowers, book of condolences, etc.
- Ritual within the school



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- Review the events of the first 24 hours
 1. Reconvene Key Staff/Critical Incident Management Team. (8.30 a.m.)
 2. Decide arrangements for support meetings for parents/students/staff
 3. Decide on mechanism for feedback from teachers on vulnerable students
 4. Have review of Critical Incident Management Team meeting. (3.00 p.m.)
 5. Establish contact with absent staff and pupils
- Arrange support for individual students, groups of students, and parents, if necessary
 1. Hold support/information meeting for parents/pupils, if necessary, in order to clarify what has happened
 2. Give any teacher who feels uncomfortable with involvement in support meetings the choice of opting out
 3. Arrange, in consultation, with outside agencies, individual or group debriefings or support meetings with parental permission
- Plan for the re-integration of pupils and staff e.g. absentees, injured, siblings, close relative etc.
 1. Pupil Liaison person to liaise with above on their return to school
 2. Plan visits to injured
 3. Family Liaison person and Class Teacher and Principal to visit home/hospital
 4. Attendance and participation at funeral/memorial service to be decided
 5. Decide this in accordance with parents' wishes and school management decisions and in consultation with close school friends
 6. School closure (request a decision on this from school management).

LONGER TERM ACTIONS

- Monitor students for signs of continuing distress
- If, over a prolonged period of time, a pupil continues to display the following, he/she may need assistance from the Health Service Executive:
 1. Uncharacteristic behavior
 2. Deterioration in academic performance
 3. Physical symptoms — e.g. weight loss/gain, lack of attention to appearance, tiredness, restlessness
 4. Inappropriate emotional reactions
 5. Increased absenteeism.
- Evaluate response to incident and amend Critical Incident Management Plan appropriately:
 1. What went well?
 2. Where were the gaps?
 3. What was most/least helpful?
 4. Have all necessary onward referrals to support services been made?
 5. Is there any unfinished business?
- Formalize the Critical Incident Plan for the future:
 1. Consult with NEPS Psychologist
- Inform new staff/new school pupils affected by Critical Incidents where appropriate:
 1. Ensure that new staff is aware of the school policy and procedures in this area.
 2. Ensure they are aware of which pupils were affected in any recent incident and in what way.
 3. 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 but only with consent of parents.
- Decide on appropriate ways to deal with anniversaries (be sensitive to special days and events):
 1. Anniversaries may trigger emotional responses in students/staff and they may need additional support at this time.
 2. Acknowledge the anniversary with the family
 3. Be sensitive to significant days like birthdays, Christmas, Mother's Day, and Father's Day.
- Plan a school memorial service
- Care of deceased person's possessions. What are the parent's wishes?



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- Staff de-briefing and counselling
- Review incident – what went well – what could we do better
- Update and amend school records

Signed on behalf of the Board of Management

Chairperson: _____ Date: _____



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