



CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY

Scope

This policy pertains to the whole school community.

Our School community provides a caring, happy and safe environment, which strives to foster a love of life long learning.

We endeavour to develop each person's academic, physical, moral, cultural and spiritual potential based on mutual respect, fairness and honesty.

We want our students to emerge as confident, adaptable, responsible and caring citizens.

With this policy in place, we are providing a caring, safe and supportive environment showing respect to the whole school community, so that all those involved will emerge from any critical incident relating to the school knowing that there are structures in place that will have and will continue to help them.

A Critical Incident Management Policy is necessary to put a set of procedures in place so that we can respond as a school community in a caring a supportive way in the event of a Critical Incident occurring.

Goals/Objectives

- ❑ To identify the vulnerable and manage the students at risk
- ❑ To define individual roles and responsibilities
- ❑ To outline step by step guidelines
- ❑ To establish lines of communication both within and without of the school
- ❑ To plan the de-briefing process
- ❑ To provide after-care service.
- ❑ To facilitate self-care and support for team.

The Content of the Policy

1. The Definition of a Critical Incident
2. The Critical Incident Team - Who are they?
3. Definition of situations requiring Intervention and Responsibilities
4. Breaking News to School Community
5. Composition of sample statement for media and letter to parents
6. Communication with staff and student body should incident happen in holiday time or at weekend
7. To formulate a plan for trips away
 - (a) In foreign country where students are together for trip
 - (b) In foreign country where students are separated for trip eg staying with families
 - (c) In Ireland – overnight
 - (d) In Ireland – day trips.
8. Review at the end of the Incident.

What is a Critical Incident

A Critical Incident is any incident where death occurs and could occur. This may result in serious injury or trauma. This incident impinges on the staff or student body, the effects of which are outside the scope of the normal school psychological and pastoral/social care system.

For example in a school this could be:

- Suicide
- Attempted suicide
- Murder
- Attempted murder
- A child killed in front of others crossing the road
- Bus crash on a school trip or travelling to or from school where there are multiple injuries or deaths
- Disappearance of a member of the school community
- Kidnap
- Sexual Assault /Rape
- A physical assault of a staff member
- Serious injury or death of a person on school property
- A criminal incident occurring during school time.
- Incidents external to the school which might affect pupils e.g. a local tragedy.

The Critical Incident Management Team

The Critical Incident Management Team should include the Principal, Deputy Principal, Guidance Counsellor, Counsellor, Chaplain and others who would like to be involved.

Critical Situations requiring Intervention (as above)

- Any of the School Community at risk
- Traumatic Death
- Suicidal Behaviour
- Care for friends
- Parents
- Care for Staff
- Care for Self

Breaking the News to Students – Guidelines for Teachers

- Only if incident is confirmed by the family, can it be relayed as such to the students.
- The Class of the student who has died should be the first to be told with the Chaplain, Counsellor and Tutor present.
- Other classes to be told by their Tutors
- Not every class if going to be traumatised as some students may not even know the deceased. But it is important to acknowledge the loss for the whole school community.
- Tell the class you have sad news and it is difficult for you to do this.
- Let them know the name of the person the news is about.
- Let them know the facts – rumours should be prevented as far as possible.
- Encourage questions

- Let the class know of common reactions tragic news
- The common reaction is shock.
- Expect outbursts and tears
- Don't allow a student to leave the class in a distressed state unless they have supervision somewhere else in the building.
- Let them know that you support them
- Let them know who else is available to support them
- Don't be afraid to let them know that you are also upset by the news
- Allow them time to mingle and talk to one another in groups.
- Explain who they can support one another
- Be attentive to identifying those who are not coping well with the news.
- Let them know where the Crisis Response Team will be
- Arrange to have refreshments ready (also boxes of tissues)
- A short prayer or time of reflection for the deceased may be appropriate.
- If the students appear ready, A Year Group Assembly may be held later in the day.
- Some students may be able to continue and go to class, and may want to.
- Some will need to stay with the Crisis Response Team for the morning
- Encourage students to stay in school to support their friends.
- Some may need to go home – only if parents can collect them
- Those who go to class may not be able to concentrate on the work of the class.
- Subject Teachers will need to make allowances for them to talk in groups.

Sample Statement for the Media and letter to parents.

It is with profound sadness that the Management, staff and students of St. Colmcille's Community School, have learned of the tragic death of

Our sincerest sympathy is extended to the family of N.....

On hearing the tragic news, the School Trauma Plan was put into immediate operation. The Crisis Response team convened a meeting to ensure that students affected by this loss as cared for adequately. Procedures are in place to ensure that all in the School Community affected by this loss are given all the help they need to cope at this time.

The School is offering Counselling and support for students and parents affected by this tragedy. Prayer services have been held with each class in the college. Students will attend and participate in the funeral service in consultation with the wishes of the family.

Our prayers and support are with everyone affected by this tragedy.

Communication

Communicate with staff and student community should an incident happen at the weekend or in the holiday period.

- If it is the death of a colleague, a system of informing staff needs to be in place.
- If it is the death of a student, the Crisis Team need to be informed immediately. Other staff will be informed on Monday.
- If it is the death of a student, a system of informing the class members needs to be in place.

Roles and Responsibilities

Principal

- Confirms the death
- Makes contact with the family
- Clarify funeral arrangements
- Brief Staff at meeting

Deputy Principal

- Facilitates team – eg. Covers classes
- Makes rooms available
- Notice for Staff to report to Staff room
- Written and oral statements prepared

The Crisis Team

- Meet and plan strategy
- Distribute key tasks
- Guidelines for teachers ready
- Outline plan for day and support available
- Update staff
- School involvement
- Stay in contact over days debriefing

Class Teachers/Tutors

- Break news to the class
- Stay with class for as long as necessary

It would be our aim that the school runs as normal, as soon as possible.

Immediate

1. The safety of pupils/staff – must be the immediate concern of the Principal or Acting Principal
2. Arrangements may be considered for the assembly of a Crisis Response Team in certain circumstances
3. Information: - to affected pupils – to pupils/staff/parents
4. Involvement of outside agencies – NEPS, Gardai, Health services, Clergy, Counsellors. Addresses and contact details should be readily available
5. Visits to affected parents/families
6. Inform the Chair of the Board of Management

Medium Term

1. Reports to Board of Management and DES
2. Support for affected pupils/staff/families
3. Provision of appropriate materials for use by teachers.
4. Organisation of appropriate events (eg. Funeral Services)
5. Access to appropriate counselling services.
6. Legal and financial consequences.
7. External relations – press, local authority, gardai, parents in general
8. Role of school bodies – Board of Management, Parents Association, Student Council.
9. Continuity and restoration of normal school routine.

Long Term

1. Lessons learned and documented
2. Effect on the interaction of staff and pupils
3. Acknowledgement of any part played by the school in the incident.
4. Appropriate memorials
5. Long-term counselling needs of individuals.
6. Long-term effect on the educational progress.

Whilst the procedures outlined in this policy document assume the critical incident involves a death, the structure of response to any other critical incident would be the same. The school recognises that minor amendments may be required to meet the needs of different critical incident situations and circumstances as they arise.

Review and Evaluation

As part of its Development Planning St. Colmcille's Community School will monitor, review and evaluate this Policy and all related work and procedure on an ongoing basis to ensure legal compliance and the maintenance of best practices

Critical Incident Procedures for Staff

(This document is an appendix to the Critical Incident Policy)

STEP ONE:

- Assess the situation – What has happened?

STEP TWO:

- Notify the Principal or Deputy Principal, who will come to the scene and manage the school's response to the incident.
- The contacting of emergency services, parents, siblings and friends will be organized by the Principal or designated person.

STEP THREE:

- While waiting for assistance:
 - Remain calm
 - Avoid moving an injured person, until a medical assessment has been made. However, in some situations you may need to move them without delay.
 - Do not give anything to eat or drink
 - Clear the area of unnecessary personnel but do not remain on your own, if possible.

STEP FOUR:

- Fill in a report as soon as possible.

SCHOOL EMERGENCY CONTACT SHEET

(in the event of a critical incident)

In the event of a critical incident the **Principal/Deputy Principal** should be notified immediately.

The contacting of parents, siblings, friends or any of the services listed below will be organised by the Principal/Deputy Principal.

Contact	Name	Telephone
School Doctor	Dr. William O' Brien	4934321
	Dr. Alan Byrne	4936711
Fire Brigade		999
Gardai	Rathfarnham Station	6666500
Hospital Emergency Dept.	Tallaght Hospital	4142000
Local Clergy	Parish Priest	4941204
Educational Services		
(i) <i>Educational Psychologist</i>	Brid Clancy	087 650 1714 8892739 (Office)
Other numbers as appropriate		
(i)		
(ii)		
(iii)		

This list was updated on: _____

Adapted from: Wise before the Event p.57