



# Critical Incident Policy

<b>Review of Policy</b>	October 2021
<b>Ratification of Policy by the Board of Governors</b>	November 2021
<b>Next Review Date</b>	October 2023

## Rationale

A critical incident can be defined as a sudden, unexpected and tragic event or sequence of events which causes trauma and confusion within a school community and which overwhelms its normal coping mechanism. It may affect pupils, staff, parents and governors, may relate directly to the safety of the school community or may involve an incident beyond the school premises.

## What types of critical incidents can affect a school?

Incidents that have affected schools:

- Sudden death of pupil or member of staff;
- Disappearance of a pupil or member of staff;
- Death or injury of a pupil or staff member on a school outing;
- Severe injury to pupil or staff member as a result of road traffic accident;
- Serious assault on pupil or staff member in school;
- Violent/disturbed intruder on school premises during school day;
- Serious damage to school building or property through fire, flood or vandalism;
- Civil disturbance in local community;
- Pupil with contagious illness;
- Immediate evacuation of the school with no likelihood of return for a number of hours.

As a critical incident is likely to have a severe impact upon the school, both in the short and long term, our aim is to ensure that school strategies and procedures are in place to protect the physical and emotional wellbeing of every member in our school community at St. Mary's PS, Cabragh.

The Critical Incident Policy and Plan cannot cover every aspect of recovery from a critical incident. Occurrences may arise which cannot be foreseen or considered.

The critical incident may occur during the school day, during the evening, during the school holidays or on a school trip.

It is important that:

- the Critical Incident Policy is easily understood and can turn into action immediately.
- that designated personnel understand their tasks and are competent to carry them out;
- that other people do not take unilateral actions;
- that consideration and sensitivity is shown by all;
- that pupils, staff and parents are protected from press intrusion;
- that normal routines be resumed as soon as possible;
- there is a realisation that total recovery may take a long time.

## Aims of the Critical Incident Policy

- To maintain a duty of care.
- To minimise educational and administrative disruption within school.
- To enable normal working to be resumed in the shortest possible time.

## Objectives

- To ensure that swift and appropriate action is taken in the case of the school being made aware that a critical incident has occurred.
- To ensure that the welfare of pupils and staff is paramount.
- To ensure that the school responds in a sensitive, consistent and effective manner which reduces confusion, panic and extreme emotion.
- To have in place a Critical Incident Management Team, the membership of which is known to all relevant parties.
- To have in place a Critical Incident Management Plan, the details of which are familiar to all relevant parties.
- To maintain normality, as far as possible, in parts of the school which are not affected and to restore normality as soon as possible to the parts which are affected.
- To have immediate access to all relevant contact details (including outside agencies).
- To offer sensitive, non-intrusive support in the short and medium term to all those affected directly or indirectly by the incident.

## Members of the Critical Incident Management Team

The Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) has responsibility for ensuring that procedures are properly addressed at times of high emotion. If the incident involves legal action, a precise response to the incident should be known and is able to be verified by more than one person.

Principal (Team Leader)	Mrs Louise Quinn
Senior Leadership Team	Mrs Ellis Kelly Mrs Marie Poacher
Chair of the Board of Governors	Rev. Fr. Patrick Hannigan (or the Vice Chairperson [Mrs Rosina O'Neill] in his absence)
Secretary	Mrs Paula O'Neill
Member of non-teaching staff	Mrs Claire McKillion

Other members of the Senior Leadership Team or other Governors may be co-opted members of the CIMT as and when required.

One/two members of staff may be asked to take responsibility for the normal running of the school whilst the CIMT is engaged in dealing with an incident.

**All members of the Critical Incident Management Team must:**

- have a copy of the Critical Incident Policy at home and at school;
- be aware of the roles of each part of the plan to enable the school to react swiftly and accordingly;
- have contact numbers for each other for 24-hour contact;
- in the event of a school trip /visit, have access to a list of names for staff and pupils;
- have a register of emergency services and relevant outside agencies.

**Procedures for Critical Incident Management - Key Roles**

**Principal**

- Seeks clarification
- Calls emergency services if appropriate
- Summons the CIMT to inform of incident
- Prepares relevant statements/letters for the media, parents, pupils and office staff
- Convenes and informs staff
- Ensures health and safety measures are in place

**Senior Leadership Team**

- Contacts external agencies - EANI / social services / consulting
- Contacts relevant parents
- Supports the physical and emotional wellbeing of pupils
- Arranges staff support if necessary and appropriate
- Arranges staff cover if necessary and appropriate
- Liaises with the Building Supervisor to ensure access for essential personnel

**Secretary**

- Ensures the 'Register of Emergency Services and Relevant Outside Agencies' is to hand
- Ensures phone lines are operative
- Follows the agreed script for responding to enquiries

## **Guidelines for managing a Critical Incident**

- The Principal, as Team Leader of the Critical Incident Management Team, will take charge of the school's response.
- In the case of the Principal being unavailable, the Senior Leadership Team will take charge, supported by members of the CIMT.
- The Principal's office will be the central liaison point.
- The CIMT will assess immediate practical needs.
- The CIMT will contact next of kin of those directly involved if required.
- A short simple statement of facts will be prepared by the Principal.
- All contacts from the media will be dealt with by the Principal.
- The Secretary will take incoming calls and will use a statement agreed by the CIMT.
- When necessary, all members of staff will be informed and will be guided in relation to informing pupils.
- The CIMT will determine the involvement of parents, if appropriate.
- Short and long term support will be offered to those affected.
- There will be an evaluation of the way in which the incident was managed.

## **In the Event of a Critical Incident:**

### **Initial Response**

- The Principal should be contacted first (if not available, a member of the Senior Leadership Team ).
- The Principal (or a Senior Leader in her absence) should seek to clarify from relevant sources the nature and circumstances of the incident.
- The CIMT will meet at the earliest opportunity and agree on procedures for managing the critical incident.
- If the incident is on site, health and safety measures will be put in place and the emergency services contacted.

### **Longer Term Issues**

- School structures and routines will be re-established.
- Supportive strategies for pupils and staff will be implemented.
- There will be ongoing contact with parents.
- Actions taken will be reviewed and policies amended if appropriate.
- The Personal Development and Mutual Understanding (PDMU) and pastoral programmes will be reviewed.
- Staff will be mindful of anniversaries and other special dates.

The use of appropriate outside agencies/personnel, including the school's identified EA Educational Psychologist, is crucial to providing long term support as is the use of appropriately trained members of staff who are known to those in need of help.

**This policy is linked to other School Policies including:**

- Pastoral Care
- Child Protection and Safeguarding
- E-Safety
- Health and Safety
- Special Educational Needs

### **Preventative Strategies**

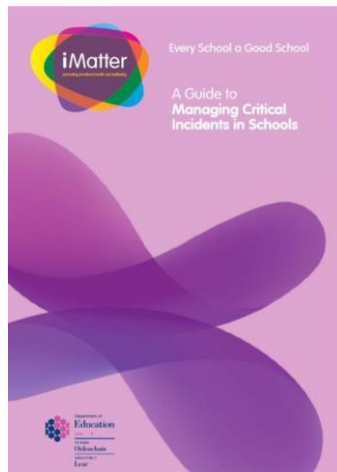
- Regular review of relevant policies e.g. Child Protection, Health and Safety etc.
- First Aid training
- Emergency Evacuation Fire Drills termly
- Curriculum opportunities to explore sensitive issues, such as tragedy and death, through Religious Education, PDMU and pastoral programmes
- Circle Time
- Assemblies

### **Professional Development**

The Principal will be supported by the Senior Leadership Team in identifying and securing relevant training needs for staff.

This policy follows guidance from the Department of Education, ‘**A Guide to Managing Critical Incidents in Schools**’ (as shown).

The school will access the ‘**Critical Incident Management Guide**’ templates found therein in managing a critical incident and will link with representatives from the Catholic Council for Maintained Schools and the Education Authority, as needed.



Education Authority ‘Managing a Critical Incident’ Critical Incident Line: **028 3751 2515**

This number is used by the Principal (CIMT Team Leader) to report a critical incident that has occurred during the day and out of hours.

## **Monitoring and Review**

This Policy will be reviewed every two years or post a critical incident, should the need arise.