

Critical Incident Policy

"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 of a critical incident are;

- The death of a member of the school community, through sudden death, accident, suicide or terminal illness
- A serious accident or tragedy in the school community
- Serious damage to the school through fire, flooding vandalism etc.
- The disappearance of a member of the school community
- A physical attack on a staff member or student
- Intrusion into the school.

Aim of Plan:

The aim of the Critical Incident Plan is that in the event of such an incident as outlined above, the plan will help staff and management to react quickly and effectively and to maintain control of the situation. The plan will also help the school to return to normality as soon as possible and limit the effects of the incident on staff and students.

Critical Incidents Management Team:

Leadership Role: Brenda Watts (Acting Principal)

Communication Role: Caroline Dunne (Acting Deputy Principal)

Family Liaison Role: Florence Guilfoyle

Student Liaison/ Counselling Role: Pádraig Seery

Chaplaincy Role: Fr. Brendan Corrigan

B.O.M. Chairperson : Geraldine Fennell

Parents Council Chairperson: Cara Guilfoyle

N.E.P.S Psychologist : Advisory Role

Please see appendix 1 for list of important numbers

Roles and Responsibilities

Leadership Role:

Intervention

- Confirm the event
- Activate the Critical Incident response team
- Express sympathy to family
- Clarify facts surrounding event
- Make contact with other relevant agencies

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- Decide how news will be communicated to different groups (staff, pupils, outside school)

Postvention

- Ensure provision of ongoing support to staff and students
- Facilitate any appropriate memorial events
- Review Plan

Communication Role:

Intervention

- With Team, prepare a public statement. (if appropriate)
- Organise a designated room to address media promptly (if necessary)
- Ensure telephone lines are free for outgoing and important incoming calls
- Liaise with relevant outside support agencies

Postvention

- Review and evaluate effectiveness of communication response

Student Liaison/ Counseling Role:

Intervention

- Outline specific services available in school
- Put in place clear referral procedures
- Address immediate needs of staff
- Provide information
- Provide counseling

Postvention

- Provide ongoing support to vulnerable students
- Monitor class most affected
- Refer on, as appropriate
- Review and evaluate Plan

Chaplaincy Role:

Intervention

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

Postvention

- Provide follow-up support to families in conjunction
- Work in partnership with Critical Incident team
- Review and Evaluate Plan

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Family Liaison Role:

Intervention

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

Postvention

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

Action plan

SHORT-TERM ACTIONS (Day 1)

- 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 students/staff.
- Rooms will be made available as follows:
 - Prayer room: Room
 - Individual Meetings:
 - Parents: Room

Media Briefing (if appropriate)

- Designate a spokesperson.
- Prepare a brief statement. (Team)
- 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 are the extent of the injuries?
 3. How many are involved and what are their names?
 4. Is there a risk of further injury?
 5. What agencies have been contacted already?
- Contact appropriate agencies
 1. Emergency services
 2. Medical services
 3. H.S.E. Psychology Departments/Community Care Services
 4. NEPS
 5. BOM
 6. DES/Schools Inspector.
- Convene a meeting with Key Staff/Critical Management Team
 1. Organize a staff meeting, if appropriate.
 2. Ensure any absent staff members are kept informed.
 3. Organize timetable/routine for the day. (Adhering to the normal school routine is important, if this is possible).

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4. 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 Student Liaison person.
5. 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 staff representatives within 24 hours, if appropriate.
 3. Have regard for different religious traditions and faiths.

MEDIUM-TERM ACTIONS (24-72 HOURS)

- Preparation of students/staff attending funeral.
- Involvement of students/staff in liturgy if agreed by bereaved family.
- Facilitation of students'/staffs' responses, e.g. Sympathy cards, flowers, book of condolences, etc.
- Ritual within the school.
- Review the events of the first 24 hours
 1. Reconvene Key Staff/Critical Incident Management Team.
 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.
 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/students, 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.
 4. Plan for the re-integration of students and staff e.g. absentees, injured, siblings, close relative etc)
 5. Student Liaison person to liaise with above on their return to school.
- Plan visits to injured
 1. Family Liaison person + Class Teacher + Principal to visit home/hospital.
 2. Attendance and participation at funeral/memorial service (To be decided)
 3. Decide this in accordance with parents' wishes and school management decisions and in consultation with close school friends.
- School closure (if appropriate)
- 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 student continues to display the following, he/she may need assistance from the Health Board. Constant communication with family is essential.

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1. Uncharacteristic behaviour
 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?
 - Formalise 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 are 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, the Principal should brief the Principal of the new school.
 - 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?
 - Update and amend school records.

Appendix 1 USEFUL CONTACT NUMBERS

LOCAL NUMBERS	
Gardaí	9332102
Parochial House	9332155
Doctors Clinic	9332444
Public Health Nurse	9332267
Tullamore General Hospital	9321501
Allianz Insurance	01 6133966
Library	9333148
Chris Coffey(Electrical)	0876724827
Ollie Cummins (electrical)	0879292209
Frank Groome	0876166586
ESB	1850 372372
Brendan Buggy (bus hire)	087 2680924 or 9331457
Frank Mee (minibus)	087 9054472 or 9332551
Mullingar Arts Centre	044 9347777
Aura Swimming Pool	05729398
Carrolls Shop	9332685
Department of Education (Athlone)	09064 74621
Dept of Ed (Tullamore)	9321363
Athlone Education Centre	09064 20400
I.N.T.O.	1850 8722533

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SCHOOL NUMBERS	
Secondary School	9332292 (Fax 9332737)
Ballinagore N.S.	9332165
Castletown Geoghegan N.S.	044 9226255
Durrow N.S.	9332433
Moate N.S.	09064 81740
Banagher N.S.	0509 51834
Rahugh N.S.	044 9223584
Tyrrellspass N.S.	044 9223298
Milltownpass NS	044 9222512
Streamstown N.S.	044 9226901
Horseleap N.S.	05793 35282

Scoil an Chlochair 057 9332338, 9333558,

Personnel Numbers	
Geraldine Fennell	086 170 2000
Brenda Watts	086 7933591 (school mobile)

This document was ratified by the Board of Management on May 24th 2010 and updated on 09-02-2016, 12-10-21 and 20-09-2023

This policy was reviewed at the BOM meeting on the 20th of September 2023.

Signed:

Chairperson of Board of Management

Date:

20/9/23

Signed:

Principal/Secretary to the B.O.M

Date:

20/9/23

Date of next review: September 2025