

Critical Incidents policy



Ratified by _____

on _____

The aim of this policy is to lessen the effect of a critical incident on the staff, students and parents/guardians/carers at St. Caireall's Primary School. It is anticipated that by adopting the procedures outlined in this policy it will be possible to provide a more secure environment for everyone associated with the School.

What is a critical incident?

A critical incident is one which arises suddenly. Critical incidents may occur in school or out of school, but both types will have a major impact on staff and students. An incident might be designated as critical where the result is likely to be serious disruption to the running of the School, or where there is likely to be significant public and/or media attention on the School.

There can, of course, be no rigid formula for responding to incidents, but broadly speaking, it has been assumed that where damage to premises is the focus, The Education Authority (EA) Western Region and the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS) will take the leading role in managing the crisis in collaboration with the school and other agencies. Where the crisis is related to people, such as in the event of a death or serious injury, the assumption is that the School is likely to take the lead, with the support of the EA, as necessary.

Examples of in-school critical incidents

- A serious accident to a child or adult
- The death of a student or member of staff through natural causes, such as an illness
- A traffic accident involving a student or staff member
- Violence or assault within school
- A school fire or explosion
- Destruction of part of the school building
- Abduction of a student
- A student or students absconding
- An illness such as meningitis within the school or the local community

Examples of out-of-school critical incidents

- An accident to a student or staff while out of school on a visit or swimming etc.
- Death or injuries on a school journey
- Tragedies involving children from many schools, e.g. the tragedy at Hillsborough Football Ground

- Civil disturbances

Support Agencies and Personnel A list of significant contacts and telephone numbers is included as an appendix to this document.

Practice within school

Individual class teachers have an important role to play in managing critical incidents and may well be the best people to deal with the students in their classes. The main role of specialist agencies is one of support, empowerment and to support students who cannot be helped by the teachers within the School alone. In times of crises, teachers must react as they feel is appropriate and there can be no easy formula for dealing with critical incidents but by ensuring good communication within School a crisis may be managed more effectively.

By outlining the appropriate actions to be taken in the event of a critical incident, the School aims to reduce the effect.

Critical Incidents Team

A central component of this policy is the identification of the composition, roles and responsibilities of the Critical Incidents Team.

The role of the team is to review and direct the handling of the incident and the response and recovery process in order to:

- ensure the safety and security of students, staff, other users of the premises and visitors;
- minimize the loss to the school in physical, human and financial terms;
- manage an incident to minimize disruption to regular operations;
- liaise with appropriate agencies, including the Media.

The Critical Incidents Team will comprise of the following personnel:

- **Principal: Mrs Mairead Mc Hugh**
- **Chair of Governors: Mr Danny Mc Sorley**
- **The School's Designated Child Protection Officer: Mrs Mairead Mc Hugh**

School Secretary: Mrs Ann Byrne

The Critical Incidents Team will, dependent upon the nature of the incident itself, be concerned with any of the following issues:

- adequate assessment of hazards and situations which may require emergency action;

- analysis of requirements to address these hazards; establishment of liaison with all relevant emergency services; development of an effective management plan;
- dissemination of planned procedures;
- organisation of practice drills to test the plan;
- regular review of this plan;
- assisting the Principal with all aspects of the implementation of the plan;
- arranging staff development activities, where necessary.

Procedures during an incident

1. The Principal, Vice-Principal or Designated Teacher for Child Protection, must be informed of any critical incident as soon as possible.
2. As soon as an incident is confirmed, the Critical Incidents Team will meet to decide strategies.
3. The rest of the staff will be informed as soon as possible, preferably at a specially convened staff meeting.
4. All staff should share the same information.
5. Students will be told information simply and sensitively, without fabrication, preferably in smaller group situations.
6. The School will try, as far as possible, to keep to the normal routine.

ACTION PLAN

Major incidents require the following procedures:-

1. Set up a communication network.

2. Convene the Critical Incidents Team.
3. Inform immediately the appropriate Officers in CCMS and EA.
4. Collect, record and convey as much accurate information as possible.
5. Identify two telephonists to staff:
 - a) school phone for incoming calls
 - b) fax phone for outgoing information/staff use.
6. Office area to be used for enquiries
7. Use the up to date list of students' next of kin (record files) and contact parents of affected children
8. Record all actions
9. Principal, alone, to act as 'press officer'
10. Refusal of access to press/television on school premises

Action Plan Timing

Action

Obtain factual information at the start
 Senior staff meeting with support personnel
 Advise EA and CCMS
 Convene the Critical Incidents Team
 Contact families
 Call a staff meeting to give information
 Inform students in small groups
 Arrange a debriefing meeting for staff involved
 Arrange debriefing for students directly involved
 Identify high risk students and staff
 Promote discussion in classes
 Identify the need for group or individual treatment
 Organise counselling
 Mark anniversary (discreetly)

Timescale

Within hours
 Within hours
 Within hours
 Within hours
 Immediately
 Same day if possible
 Same day if possible
 Same day if possible
 Same day if possible
 Following day
 Following days and weeks
 Over days and weeks
 As required
 Annually

Critical Incident Management Plan in the event of a crisis in school, during school time (Main Plan)

| Priority | Task | Responsible |
|------------------|---|--|
| Immediate | | |
| 1. | Secure the physical safety of the pupils, staff and other adults involved as far as is possible | Person in charge at scene |
| 2. | Raise the alarm | Person in charge at scene |
| 3. | Call the emergency services as required | Office staff |
| 4. | Obtain factual information about incident | Head teacher |
| 5. | Initiate emergency procedures | Head teacher |
| 6. | Provide first aid if qualified person/s available | |
| ASAP | | |
| 7. | Release management team | I/c staff cover/HT |
| 8. | Notify LEA | Office staff |
| 9. | Notify chairman of governors | Office staff |
| 10. | Commence log of events | HT/Man team |
| 11. | Arrange use of telephones / set-up emergency line | Man team |
| 12. | Inform other staff if possible | Man team |
| 13. | Staff to secure key points / entrances & exits | Man team |
| 14. | Contact families directly involved | Man team/office |
| 15. | Arrange quiet area to receive families | Man team/office |
| 16. | LEA team arrive to support | |
| 17. | Chair / Vice Chair arrive to support | |
| | Same day (if possible) | should give information and instructions if any) |
| 18. | Inform other parents using telephone tree (message) | HT/Man team |
| 19. | Staff meeting if possible to brief staff | HT/Man team |
| 20. | Inform other pupils in classes or groups | Man team/Staff |
| 21. | Inform the media | LEA press officer |
| 22. | Answer enquiries (and in subsequent days) | Man team/Office |
| 23. | Arrange debriefing of staff involved in incident. | LEA press officer |
| | Subsequent days | Man team |
| 24. | Debrief children involved in the incident, with support team if appropriate (as soon as is possible allowing for their health and well being) | |
| 25. | Identify pupils and staff requiring additional support and organise care | Man team with prof advice |
| 26. | Promote discussion in classes | HT/Man team |
| 27. | Consider any long term implications and forward plan if possible (enquiries/funerals/anniversaries etc) | HT/Man team |
| 28. | Produce a written record of events avoiding admissions of liability. | Head teacher |