

**ASSUMPTION GRAMMAR  
SCHOOL**

**CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY**

**March 2009**

## **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.

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 of the school community.

## **EXAMPLES OF CRITICAL INCIDENTS**

A critical incident is likely to involve death or serious injury to one or more members of the school community and, or, their families either at school, journeying to or from school, participating in a school related activity, at home or in some other context.

### *In School:*

- The death of a student or member of staff through natural causes
- An accident involving a student or member of staff
- A deliberate act of violence such as knifing or the use of a firearm
- A school fire or an explosion in a laboratory

### *Out of School:*

- Deaths or injuries through accidents
- Suicide
- Civil disturbances

## **PURPOSE**

- 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 (*see Appendix 1*)
- To have in place a Critical Incident Management Plan, the details of which are familiar to all relevant parties (*see Appendix 2*)

- 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

### ***GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING A CRITICAL INCIDENT***

- The Principal will take charge of the school's response. In the case of the Principal being unavailable, the members of the Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) will take charge. 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 or Vice Principal(s) (*see Appendix 3*)
- All contacts from the media will be dealt with by the Principal or Vice Principal(s)
- Secretarial staff taking incoming calls 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 dealt with

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **MEMBERS OF THE CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM**

- Principal
  - Vice Principals
  - Senior Teachers
  - Bursar
  - Chair of Board of Governors or other member in his/her absence
- (Other members of staff may be additional 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 the incident.)*

## **APPENDIX 2**

### **CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT PLAN**

#### *Preventative Strategies*

- Regular review of relevant policies e.g. Health and Safety
- First Aid training
- Fire Drills
- PSE Programme

#### *Preparation for the Eventuality of a Critical Incident*

- A Critical Incident Report Booklet will be drafted
- Members of the CIMT will have ready access to pupil, staff and governor contact details
- Members of the CIMT will have a register of emergency services and relevant outside agencies ( *See Critical Incident Report Booklet*)
- Relevant members of the secretarial staff will have a register of emergency services and relevant outside agencies ( *See Critical Incident Report Booklet*)
- In the case of the site having to be evacuated, venues to which pupils will be taken will be identified (*see Appendix 4*)
- Opportunities to explore sensitive issues such as tragedy and death will be built into the PSE and pastoral programmes

*In the Event of a Critical Incident:*

*Initial Response*

- The Principal should be contacted first (if not available one of the Vice Principals)
- The Principal (or Vice Principal) 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 (*See Appendix 5*)
- 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 PSE and pastoral programmes will be reviewed
- Staff will be mindful of anniversaries and other special dates

***The use of appropriate outside agencies 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.***

**STAFF TRAINING**

<b><i>NAME</i></b>	<b><i>COURSE</i></b>	<b><i>VENUE AND DATE</i></b>
Mrs Lewis	Launch of 'Critical Incidents in Schools' Folder	Ballynahinch Market House April 08
Mrs Feron	Critical Incidents- Preparation, Intervention, Self Care	SEELB 18.09.08
Mrs Devlin	Critical Incidents- Developing an Appropriate Response	SEELB - 10.03.09

## **USEFUL RESOURCES**

Critical Incident Management Booklet – Gayle Nixon BEELB

Critical Incidents in Schools - Produced by Teachers, Board and Trust  
Representatives and Independent Social Workers

Exemplar School Documents and Policies

Critical Incident Management Plan – SELB

Supporting Bereaved Children In Our Changing Society – Barbara Monroe

Relevant School Policies

## APPENDIX 3

### SAMPLE ANNOUNCEMENTS

After a known fatality...

We are taking this time to think about ....., a Year 12 who died last night in a road traffic accident. .... was travelling with her family to ..... We do not know any details about the accident at this time except that the rest of the family is safe and no one is injured seriously.

.....'s funeral is being held at ..... on ..... A funeral is a special time to remember a person who has died. The school will let your families know about the specific time and address of the funeral in a written note which will be sent home tomorrow.

Let's take a moment of silence to think of ....., to remember all the good things about her, and to say goodbye. In our silence we will express our loving thoughts.

After a suspected suicide...

A tragedy has happened. ....., a Year 8 pupil, has died suddenly. Details of .....'s premature death will not be released to protect the privacy of family members. You will be given information about funeral arrangements as soon as possible.

This kind of tragic news is hard to accept. You may experience many feelings within the next few days. Everyone deals with loss differently. It is important to respect the way others grieve. Counsellors are available in ..... Feel free to arrange to go and talk to the counsellors. They want to listen to your feelings and concerns.

## Sample Press Release 1

Date

### **School grieves sudden death of pupil**

As reported by the PSNI, a pupil at ..... School died tragically on ..... The circumstances of .....’s death are not known at this time and an investigation is currently ongoing.

This is a tragic loss to .....’s family and to our school community. To assist in supporting our staff and pupils through this time of grief, additional trained staff from the ELB’s Critical Incident Response Team have been assigned to the school to provide support. A letter has been sent by the school to parents, informing them of this incident and providing information on the support services available through the school.

A special assembly to remember ..... has been arranged for .....

Contact: ..... Principal, ..... School at .....

## Sample Press Release 2

### **For Immediate Release**

#### **Historic school destroyed by fire**

..... School was destroyed by fire in the early hours of Saturday morning. Fire and Rescue Service and the PSNI responded to a 999 call reporting the blaze at 3 am on Saturday. There were no injuries reported. The cause of the fire is under investigation. Damage is estimated at £..... million.

“It is a tragedy to have lost this school, not only for our students and their families, but for our community.” ..... Chairperson of the Board of Governors said:” Schools are much more than a place of learning. They are where our communities meet – for special events, to vote and

play. .... School, in particular, was a landmark in our community with historical building designation." ..... School was built in 1906 and has undergone substantial renovations in recent years,

Arrangements have been made to house ..... School's pupils at ..... for the remainder of this school year, with the addition of temporary classrooms at ..... All parents were contacted by telephone on Sunday.

To assist in supporting our staff and pupils through this time of shock and loss, additional trained staff from the ELB's Critical Incident Response Team have been assigned to the school to provide support.

Contact: ....., Chairperson of BOG, ..... School at .....

## **PRO FORMA LETTER (for parents)**

'With great regret, we have learnt of the death/deaths of ..... and we extend our deepest sympathy to the family circle.

## **PREPARED STATEMENT FOR MEDIA**

We are sorry to learn of the tragic.....of .....

We hope at this time the school would be given the privacy needed to support our pupils at this difficult time, etc

NB: If the Principal wishes to comment about the pupil, they may want to gain permission from the family to include:

Sporting achievements

Musical talents

Academic success

Personal attributes

## SAMPLE LETTER TO PARENTS

Date:

Dear Parent/ Carer

It is with great sadness that I have to tell you of the sudden death of NAME, (a pupil in Year XX/ a Year XX Teacher/ Learning Support Assistant, etc). The children were told this morning by their class teacher/ Principal at assembly.

NAME died of (an asthma attack, meningitis etc) and the children have been assured this is something that does not happen very often. Your child may or may not want to talk about it but it is likely that he/ she will need extra love and support from you in the days ahead. This does not mean that anything is wrong with him/ her. It only means that this traumatic event has been too powerful for him/ her to deal with on his/ her own. He/ she may be feeling anxious. Take time to listen to your child and try to provide a predictable routine for him/ her at home. Avoid too many absences to start with.

We have enclosed an information leaflet for you which may be useful at this time.

Trained staff from the ELB's Critical Incident Response Team are helping to support us through this difficult time. It is sometimes necessary for a member of the team to speak to a class or individual pupils who may be distressed. He/ she will be guided by the Principal/ class teacher in this. If you do not wish your child to receive such support from the team please contact us immediately.

We are deeply saddened by this great loss but are trying, for the children's sake, to keep the school environment as normal as possible. Our thoughts are with NAME's family at this tragic time and the school community sends them sincerest sympathy and support.

NAME's funeral is on DAY/ DATE at TIME am/pm at (Name of Church or Crematorium). We are in touch with the family regarding their wishes for the school's representation at the Service.

## **APPENDIX 4**

**In the event of having to evacuate the school premises the following emergency areas have been arranged:**

<b>Years 8, 9 and 10</b>	<b>Ballynahinch Leisure Centre</b>
<b>Years 11 and 12</b>	<b>Parish Centre</b>
<b>Years 13 and 14</b>	<b>St Patrick's Primary School</b>

Form Teachers, Year Heads and Heads of Section will supervise the evacuation of their respective areas and ensure a safe and orderly passage to the above areas.

### **RESPONSIBLE FOR REGISTERS, LATE BOOK, LIST OF CLASSES OUT OF SCHOOL, LIST OF PUPILS OUT OF SCHOOL (PERMISSION SLIPS)**

<b>Years 8, 9 and 10</b>	<b>Mrs R Loughran</b>
<b>Years 11 and 12</b>	<b>Mrs M Murray</b>
<b>Years 13 and 14</b>	<b>Mrs E Crainey</b>

## **APPENDIX 5**

### **Procedures for Critical Incident Management**

#### **Principal**

- Seeks clarification
- Summons the CIMT to inform of incident
- Prepares relevant statements/letters

#### **Bursar**

- Liaises with relevant staff
- Ensures phone lines are operative
- Calls emergency services if appropriate
- Ensures health and safety measures are in place

#### **Vice Principal (Curricular)**

- Convenes and informs staff
- Arranges staff cover if appropriate

#### **Vice Principal (Pastoral)**

- Contacts external agencies
- Contacts relevant parents

#### **Heads of Section**

- Ensures the physical and emotional wellbeing of pupils

# Critical Incident Report Booklet

Information received from: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact details: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Name of person informed: \_\_\_\_\_

Information passed to: \_\_\_\_\_

(Name of person with overall responsibility)

Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Details of incident received so far:-**



**Staff members on Critical Incident Response Team:-**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Mobile number</b>
Mr McBride	07920187177
Mr McQuade	07920187117
Mrs Colhoun	07776424748
Mrs Devlin	07776424747
Mr Breen	07704670795
Mrs Lewis	07894709250
Dr Murphy	07725320531
Canon McCrory	07879606988

**Essential Tasks - Checklist**

**Stage 1**

*Central Information Point is the Principal's Office*

**1. Hold a meeting of CIMT to assess the ongoing danger**

Done:  Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Allocate roles to staff members**

<b>Role</b>	<b>Person responsible</b>	<b>Mobile number</b>	<b>Alterations</b>
Phone calls	Mrs Devlin	07776424747	
Staff briefing & debriefing	Mrs Colhoun	07776424748	
Pupils	Mr Breen Mrs Lewis Dr Murphy	07704670795 07894709250 07725320531	
Parents	Mrs Devlin	07776424747	
Media	Mr McBride	07920187177	
Practical arrangements (eg staff cover)	Mrs Colhoun	07776424748	
Secretarial Staff/ Emergency Services/Health and Safety	Mr McQuade	07920187117	

Done:  Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**3. Inform key people and seek support as appropriate:**

<u>List of key contacts.</u>	<u>Phone number</u>	<u>Done</u>
Chair of Governors	028 97562410/07879606988	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fire/Ambulance/Police	999	<input type="checkbox"/>
Police (Ballynahinch)	028 97562222	<input type="checkbox"/>
Doctor/Health Centre	028 97562929	<input type="checkbox"/>
Downe Hospital	028 44613311	<input type="checkbox"/>
Father Murray	028 92692218	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fr Loughran	028 97561432/07855741888	<input type="checkbox"/>
CEO SEELB	028 90566200	<input type="checkbox"/>
Crisis/Bereavement Service SEELB	028 90566875	<input type="checkbox"/>
Contact Youth	028 90320092	<input type="checkbox"/>
CRUSE	028 90323986	<input type="checkbox"/>
Childline	028 90327773	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youthline	0808 8088000	<input type="checkbox"/>
Relate Teen	028 90326709	<input type="checkbox"/>
Samaritans	08457 909090	<input type="checkbox"/>
Child Death Helpline	0800 282986	<input type="checkbox"/>
Staffcare Services	0500 127079	<input type="checkbox"/>
NSPCC	028 90351135	<input type="checkbox"/>
DENI	028 91279279	<input type="checkbox"/>
BBC (Radio Ulster)	028 90338000	<input type="checkbox"/>
UTV	028 90328122	<input type="checkbox"/>
Downtown Radio	028 91615555	<input type="checkbox"/>
Translink Downpatrick	028 44612384	<input type="checkbox"/>
Newcastle	028 43722296	<input type="checkbox"/>
Educational Psychologist	028 90566921	<input type="checkbox"/>
Education Welfare Officer	028 44613511	<input type="checkbox"/>
School Nurse	028 97563510	<input type="checkbox"/>
Care Call	028 90245821	<input type="checkbox"/>

**4. Brief all staff.**

Think - Clear information

Advice regarding how to inform & support pupils

Team working & practical arrangements

Support for staff

Done:

By: \_\_\_\_\_

Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**5. Inform all pupils.**

Think - Clear language (no euphemisms)  
Dispel rumour  
Offer support  
Age appropriate

Are there pupils more closely affected who need to be informed separately or in a small group?

Done:  By: \_\_\_\_\_

Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**6. Make contact with parents as appropriate.**

Think - by phone  
by letter  
visit to home ?

Done:  By: \_\_\_\_\_

How ? \_\_\_\_\_

Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**7. Contact with Media (if appropriate).**

Think - prepared statement  
measured tone

Done:  By: \_\_\_\_\_

How ? \_\_\_\_\_

Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**8. Debrief staff at the end of Stage 1.**

Think - thank staff  
advise about self-care  
info about next day

Done:  By: \_\_\_\_\_

Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**9. Meeting of CIMT**

Done:  Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Essential Tasks - Checklist**

**Stage 2**

- 1. Record any further information/details/contacts that have come to light since yesterday -**

Done:  By: \_\_\_\_\_

Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Plan for cover / flexible timetable / appropriate rooms/ refreshments etc as necessary.**

**3. Brief staff on morning of Stage 2**

Think - Practical arrangements  
Support for pupils  
Self-care

Done:  By: \_\_\_\_\_

Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**4. Pupils**

- Providing further information (as appropriate).
- Showing care and support.
- Providing comforting routine and predictability.
- Allowing pupils some involvement / outlet.
- e.g. cards / drawings / poems / ceremonies.

**Details of action taken:-**

<b>Pupil/Group of Pupils</b>	<b>Action Taken</b>	<b>By Whom</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Date</b>

Person responsible \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## 5. Parents

- Providing further information (as appropriate) eg. letter /meetings etc

### Details of action taken:-

Person responsible \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## 6. Debriefing staff at end of Stage 2.

- Think - Ongoing practical arrangements  
Longer term monitoring of pupils who may be at risk.  
More detailed self-care advice.

Done:  By: \_\_\_\_\_

Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## 7. Debriefing CIMT at end of Stage 2.

Done:  Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Essential Tasks – Checklists

### Longer Term Actions

1. Funerals ,services, rituals and ceremonies (e.g. memory books, art work, school event, planting tree)
2. Re-establishment of feelings of safety and predictability among school community.
3. Ongoing support of pupils and staff.
4. School support for families affected by the incident.
5. Ongoing monitoring of children who may be having difficulties – providing support and referring on as necessary.

<u>Potential Referral Agencies</u>	<u>Telephone number</u>
Contact Youth	028 9032 0092
Educational Psychology	028 90566921
Education Welfare	028 44613511
G.P (through Parent)	
In School Counsellors	

#### Details of referrals made as a direct result of this incident:-

Name of child	Referred to	Referred by	Date of referral	Outcome

Name of child	Referred to	Referred by	Date of referral	Outcome

Person responsible for the above referrals:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ (probably SENCO)

6. Ongoing support of staff on stress/bereavement coping, through meetings/talks/referral to staff support agencies.

**Details of action taken:-**

Person responsible \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

7. Anticipate events / anniversaries / reminders that may be difficult or upsetting in the future and plan to support staff and pupils.

**Details of action taken:-**

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for recording the details of action taken. The box is currently blank.

# REFLECTION

(To be completed 6 weeks after the event)

Details of key lessons learned through management of this event.

Completed by: \_\_\_\_\_ Status: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_  
*(For the Board of Governors)*

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_  
*(Principal)*

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_