



**Culmore Primary School**  
**Critical Incident Policy**

## **Introduction**

### **Rationale**

#### **CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT STRATEGY**

“A critical incident can be defined as any sudden and unexpected incident or sequence of events which cause trauma within a school community and which overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of that school.”

Critical Incidents happen and it is therefore important that we have a plan in place to best respond and manage a traumatic situation should it occur. Critical incident management is an integral part of normal school management practice. We consider a critical incident to be any event which causes trauma to our school community and overwhelms our normal coping mechanisms.

#### **ACCESSIBILITY**

All teachers will be given a copy of this policy to be retained in their class file, accessible daily and to substitute teachers if necessary. A copy will be held by office staff.

Parents will be informed and will be able to access it on the school website. T

The School Governors will be made familiar with the main principles.

#### **PRINCIPLES OF CRISIS MANAGEMENT**

- We will respond quickly but with fore-thought to stabilise the situation.
- We will use our plan but not follow it blindly if a situation dictates a deviation would better support pupils and staff.
- We will first make safe, then move to restore calm.
- We will maintain basic school structures and continuity
- We will aim for full functioning but accommodate crisis needs.
- We will assess needs and ensure people get appropriate help.
- We will be sensible and pro-active-not simply ‘wait and see’.
- We will anticipate and prevent any preventable stress and problems.
- We will promote healthy active coping and discourage ‘wallowing’ and rumours.
- We will review and learn.

## **AIMS**

- To indicate what may be classed as CRITICAL INCIDENT
- To guide and inform responses.
- To create a communicative and open climate to meet needs of staff and pupils in a critical incident situation.
- To create a safe school environment where the physical, social and psychological health of pupils and staff are prioritised.
- To outline, monitor and review management plans for dealing with critical incidents.
- To promote coping skills within the curriculum.
- To establish positive working relationships with external agencies which allow effective collaboration in times of a critical incident.

## **What types of critical incident could affect our school?**

(This is not an exhaustive list but outlines some possible critical incidents)

- 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 certainty over return timescale;

## **IMPLEMENTATION AND KEY AREAS FOR CONSIDERATION**

Roles and responsibilities The Critical Incident Team has responsibility for ensuring the procedures are properly addressed and that a precise response is known by more than one person The Critical Incident Team will comprise of:

- Principal
- Senior Management Team
- Chair of Governors
- School Secretary
- Others may be co-opted as necessary in light of the nature of the emergency.
- It will be the role of the Principal (or in her absence, Mrs McMenemy, other senior teacher), to ensure that the Critical incident Management Strategy is implemented.

### **Principal/Team Leader**

- Confirm that a major incident has occurred e.g. death;
- Mobilise the School Critical Incident Team;
- Convene a meeting to brief staff or prepare a statement to notify staff;
- Prepare a statement for pupils, staff and parents – Appendix 1,2 3 (advice leaflet also included)
- Brief Critical Incident Team members, who have specific role
- Liaise with Media – Appendix 4
- Liaise with family of deceased
- Liaise with other parents
- Liaise with External Agencies
- Convene regular meetings with Critical Incident Team
- Liaise with family/families regarding the involvement of the school in funeral arrangements
- Keep school, staff and pupils updated, as appropriate
- Compile initial reports –Appendix 5

## **CRITICAL INCIDENT TEAM MEMBERS**

- Offer immediate, emotional and practical support to staff and pupils for 2 – 5 days following the incident.
- Support teachers in the classroom as they work with bereaved pupils. Appendix 6.
- Offer advice and support to Principal/Senior Management Team.
- Carry out the specific tasks assigned to them by the Team Leader.
- Keep notes on any contact.

## **PROCEDURES COMMUNICATION**

The following information will be available on and off site and held in school by each member of the Critical Incident Team:

- Telephone and Mobile Numbers of all staff – Cascade telephone system Appendix 7.
- Names of Key Holders.
- Significant medical information relating to pupils and staff on school outings.
- Telephone Numbers of Board of Governors.
- Contact List of all Critical Incident Support Personnel. Key Actions – Appendix 8.
- Contact the Principal and all members of Critical Incident Team.
- Assess that all other children are safe.
- Build a profile of the incident e.g. who is most affected and how they are affected (see initial reports, running records).
- Check to see if any individual or group needs immediate attention.
- Assess immediate practical needs. Communications.
- An agreed factual statement should be provided with reassurance of action being taken at the incident site.
- When talking to relatives use language and tone that alleviates anxiety.
- Contact with families directly affected should be done quickly and sensitively.
- Agree who will talk to relatives and the media.
- It is vital that all adults in contact with children are kept well informed and feel secure in handling comments and questions.
- A schedule for updating them should be arranged e.g. break time, dinner time, end of school day.
- All staff should be cautioned against talking to the media or responding to questions from reporters. See appendix 4

## **WELFARE**

- Pupil and staff welfare will be considered throughout any procedures.
- Critical Incidents will be approached on the basis of the response needed in the view of the Critical Incident Team and any other External Agents.

Links with other school policies - This Critical incident Management Strategy will be informed by a range of other relevant school policies and in particular:

- Safeguarding
- E-Safety
- Staff Welfare
- Health and Safety Guidance and Risk Assessments
- Special Needs
- This Critical Incident Management Strategy will be supported by a range classroom strategies and approaches to Teaching and Learning:
- PDMU (Personal Development and Mutual Understanding)
- Assemblies
- Displays
- Competitions
- Visits by external groups/ agencies
- Ensure that all staff are made aware of plan and receive training as part of SDP.

## **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Where identified and appropriate, in-service training which supports this Critical Incident Strategy will be made available to the relevant members of the school staff including teachers, learning and support staff and Governors. All teachers will be consulted on the Critical Incident Strategy and will be made aware of the guidance available in the DE ESAGS guidance 'iMatter- A Guide to Managing Critical Incidents in Schools'.

## **MONITORING AND EVALUATION THIS STRATEGY WILL BE REVIEWED:**

- Post-incident (6 weeks) and including any relevant immediate de-briefing and subsequent policy amendment.
- Annually by the Board of Governors.

**APPENDIX 1**

To: All Staff

From: Mrs Clare McMenamin, Principal

I have just been informed of **(an accident/incident)** involving **(name of pupil or staff member)**. It saddens me to announce that *(name of pupil/staff member)* has died.

As more information becomes available, I will pass it on to you. In the meantime I would ask that students remain in their classrooms and follow their current timetable.

If any pupils feel they need additional support, *(members of the pastoral team, critical incident team, EA – Western Region Critical Incident Team)* will be available in **(venue)** at **(agreed time)**.

## **APPENDIX 2**

To: All Pupils

From: Mrs Clare McMenemy (Principal)

Today I have heard the sad news that ***(name of child/staff member)*** has died. The whole school is very shocked by this news and would offer our sympathy to ***(name of child/staff member)*** family and friends.

This is a very sad time for all of us and we may feel shocked, angry, tearful or numb. At the moment we would like you to stay in your classroom, however, if you feel you need to talk to someone about this news, the school (pastoral team/critical incident team) will be available in ***(venue)*** at ***(agreed times)***.



### **APPENDIX 3**

Dear Parents,

I am writing to inform you that today we received the sad news that one of ***(our pupils/member of staff)*** has died.

As you will be aware this is a difficult time for the whole school community and our (critical incident team/EA Western Region critical incident team) are available to help staff and pupils cope with their reaction to this loss. However your child may wish to talk to you about some of the thoughts or feelings they are experiencing and I have enclosed an information leaflet which may guide you at this time.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Clare McMEnamin

PRINCIPAL

#### **APPENDIX 4**

- Provide nothing but the facts – Avoid speculation or opinion – it can be inaccurate and upsetting to those involved in the critical incident.
- Express - the need to reduce and prevent further stress - the need to stabilize the situation - normal functioning of the school and its individual members - individuals will get the help they need.
- Give a prepared statement rather than an interview and anticipate the worst possible questions. Write it down as it gives you time to think about what you want to say rather than responding in an ad hoc manner.
- Immediately correct any incorrect or misleading information – by interrupting if necessary.
- Offer a written statement which could include an expression of school's grief and what the school has done so far e.g. contact with parents, clergy, EA Western Region support staff etc.
- Do not apportion blame or liability to anyone even in 'off the record' conversations.
- Remember to praise and thank any person, or service, that have helped during the incident.
- Remember that there are no 'off the record' conversations and that all contact with the press should be treated with caution.
- Report on positive developments following the event. Following a tragic situation, it is important to give the Press information.

## ***APPENDIX 5***

## ***APPENDIX 6***

## ***APPENDIX 7***

***APPENDIX 8***

***APPENDIX 9***