

# **MONAGHAN MODEL SCHOOL**

## **Title: Critical Incident Policy**

Last Updated Nov. 16 2022

### **Part 1.**

#### Introduction:

This policy was formulated by the staff of Monaghan Model School in conjunction with the PDST facilitator, in July 2008, reviewed and amended in November 2012, November 2017 and again most recently in October 2022. The policy was written with the aid of the 'Responding to Critical Incidents' resource (NEPS Guidelines and Resource Materials for Schools). Reference is made to this resource throughout this policy.

#### Rationale:

We in the Model School decided to formulate this policy as it is a priority area identified by the staff.

#### Vision Statement:

Every effort will be made by all members of staff to ensure an effective response to all crisis situations. We will have effective emergency plans in place before a critical incident occurs.

#### Aim:

The aim of this Critical Incidents Policy is to ensure that the school copes more effectively in the aftermath of a critical incident.

#### Definition:

A critical incident is any incident or sequence of events which overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of the school and disrupts the running of the school.

Some crises which affect the running of the school are listed below:

- The death of a member of the school community through sudden death, accident, terminal illness or suicide.
- An accident involving pupils or staff on or off the school premises.
- A physical attack on staff member(s) or student(s) or intrusion into the school.
- Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood vandalism etc.
- The disappearance of a member of the school community.

- An accident/tragedy in the wider community.
- In exceptional circumstances parental separation may fall into this category

## **Critical Incidents Management Team:**

***Leadership Role: Mrs Alanna Porter***

***Communication Role: Mrs Rhonda Stewart & Mrs Gayle Berry***

***Student Liaison/ Counselling Role: Mrs Lorna Kelso, Ms Ellen Keenan, Mrs Joanne Marshall***

***Chaplaincy Role: Rev. Ian Berry & Rev Alan McQuade***

***Family Liaison Role: Mrs. Alanna Porter, Mrs Rhonda Stewart & class teacher if relevant***

***Parents Association Liaison: Mrs Suzanne Graham***

***B.O.M. Rep: Mr Malachy Smyth***

***N.E.P.S: Cavan Regional Office***

***Garda Liaison: Mr Raymond Lalor***

***Community Liaison: Mrs Hilary Workman***

***Media Liaison: Principal, Chairperson & Deputy Principal***

The first-named person has the responsibility as defined.

The second-named person assists and only assumes responsibility on the absence of the first-named.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

### **Leadership Role: (Mrs. Alanna Porter) Section 4 (Responding to Critical Incidents)**

#### Intervention

- Confirm the event
- Alert the Critical Incident response team
- Express sympathy to family
- Clarify facts surrounding event
- Make contact with other relevant agencies
- 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: (Mrs Rhonda Stewart)**

#### Intervention

- With Team, prepare a public statement for delivery by Principal or other designated person
- Organise a designated room to address media promptly
- 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: (Mrs. Lorna Kelso)**

### Intervention

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

### Postvention

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

## **Chaplaincy Role: ( Rev. Ian Berry & Rev Alan McQuade )**

### 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 with Home School Community Liaison
- Work in partnership with Critical Incident team
- Review and Evaluate Plan

## **Suggested Action Plan Guidelines in the event of critical incidents: Section 4 (Pgs 20-28)**

### **Short term actions:**

1. Gather accurate information about the incident
2. Immediate contact with family/families if appropriate
3. Contact appropriate agencies:
  - Emergency services
  - Medical services
  - Health Board Psychology Departments/Community Care Services
  - National Educational Psychological Service
  - Board of Management
  - Department of Education & Science /School Inspector
  - Teacher Union as appropriate

- Church Press Officer: Presbyterian: Mark Smith 0044 2890417292/7297 C of I :[paul.harron@ireland.anglican.org](mailto:paul.harron@ireland.anglican.org) & [peter.cheney@ireland.anglican.org](mailto:peter.cheney@ireland.anglican.org) 048 90828881/2/0

4. Convene a meeting with Critical Incident Management Team to discuss possible topics to be covered.
  - Agreeing a statement of the facts for staff, students, parents and the media. If possible there should be a written version of this.
  - Delegating responsibilities to the Critical Incident Management Team.
  - Appointing someone to handle phone enquiries and to deal with the media.
  - Ensuring that a phone line remains open and available for enquiries.
  - Organising the timetable/routine for the day. (Adhering to the normal school routine is important if this is possible).
  - Organising a staff meeting, if appropriate.
  - Organising the supervision of students during any staff meetings.
  - Deciding whether an outside professional be invited to the staff meeting.
5. Arrange Supervision of Students in the playground if necessary
6. Hold Staff Meeting. – All staff should be asked to attend. The areas which should be covered are:
  - An account of facts as known.
  - Opportunity for staff members to express their views and feelings.
  - Discussion with the staff about how the facts will be shared with the pupils.
  - Outline of the routine for the day.
  - Information for staff about which outside agencies have been contacted, or are involved, and the supports that will be put in place for both students and staff.
  - A procedure for identifying vulnerable students.
  - Distribution of relevant handout materials.
7. Organise timetable for the day. **N.B.** As far as possible maintain normal routines.
8. Inform Parents/Guardians of: *Children Directly Involved*.
  - Parents/guardians should be contacted as soon as possible, and this first contact will need to be handled with great sensitivity.
  - Agree who should share information with parents and how this should be done.
  - Make a list of parents/guardians who have been contacted and those who still need to be told to avoid duplication of messages.
  - Give parents/guardians relevant and factual information.
  - Set a room aside for distressed students to meet their parents/guardians.

- Provide support to parents who are on their own when they arrive at the school.
- Give telephone numbers for enquiries.

*Children Not Directly Involved:* The parents of other children will be contacted and will be informed of the incident and of the fact that their child may be upset. This could be by way of a note in a sealed envelope.

9. Inform the Pupils.

- Before meeting with pupils to inform them of a critical incident, careful preparation will be undertaken.
- Consideration will be given to the age of the pupils and the group size.
- The information will be given to the pupils by a person i.e. teacher, who is known to them and who they can trust.
- Any outside “expert” may help the “messenger” by providing them with ongoing advice and support as they manage it
- The nature of the event will clearly have influence on how pupils are informed.

10. Make contact with the bereaved family.

11. Dealing with the media.

- Prepare a written statement to include:
  - The facts about the incident
  - What has been done already
  - What is going to be done
  - Positive information or comments about the deceased person

12. Organise the reunion of students with parents if necessary.

**Medium Term Actions:** (24-72 hours) **Section 5 Page 29**

1. Review the events of the first 24 hours.

- Reconvene key staff/Critical Incident Management Team
- Briefly check out how each person on this team is coping
- Decide arrangements for support meetings for parents/student/staff.
- Decide on mechanism for feedback from teachers and vulnerable students
- Have review staff meeting with all staff if necessary. Ensure all staff are kept up to date on any developments.
- Be sensitive as to how all staff is coping on a personal and professional level.
- Establish contact with absent staff and pupils.
- Update media, if necessary.

2. Arrange support for individual pupils, groups of pupils and parents, if necessary.
  - Provide a suitable room.
  - Hold support/information meeting for parents/students in order to clarify what has happened.
  - Offer advice and reassurance. Inform them about support services and provide relevant handouts.
  - Give any teacher who feels uncomfortable with involvement in support meetings the choice of opting out.
  - Arrange, in consultation with the outside agencies, individual or group debriefings or support meetings with parental permission.
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3. Plan for the reintegration of students and staff. (e.g. absentees, injured, siblings, close relatives etc.)
4. Plan visits to injured.
5. Liase with the family regarding funeral arrangements/memorial service.
6. Attendance and participation at funeral/memorial service.
7. School closure.

**Longer Term Action: Section 5 Pages 30-31**

1. Monitor pupils for signs of continuing distress.

If, over a prolonged period of time, a pupil continues to display the following, he/she may need assistance from the Health Board:

- Uncharacteristic behaviour
  - Deterioration in academic performance
  - Physical symptoms – e.g. weight loss/gain, lack of concentration, tiredness, restlessness
  - Inappropriate emotional reactions
  - Increased absenteeism
2. Evaluate response to incident and amend the Critical Incident Management Plan appropriately.
  3. Formalise the Critical Incident Policy for the future.
  4. Decide on appropriate ways to deal with anniversaries. (Be sensitive to special days and events)

Ratified by Board of Management: 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2018

Reviewed and amended in October 2022