

St Patrick's & St Brigid's College

Critical Incident Policy



Adopted On:
Review Date:

Introduction

St. Patrick's & St. Brigid's College aims to protect the well-being of its pupils and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times.

The Board of Governors, through the Critical Incident Management Team has ratified a Critical Incident Management Plan (CIMP) as an element of the school's policies within the Pastoral Care arrangements.

A Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) has been established to steer the development and implementation of the plan.

Definition

The Governors and staff of St. Patrick's & St. Brigid's College recognise a critical incident to be "an incident or sequence of events that overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school". Critical incidents may involve one or more pupils or staff members, or members of our local community.

Types of incidents might include:

- The death of a member of the school community through accident, violence, suspected suicide or other unexpected death
- An intrusion into the school
- An accident involving members of the school community
- An accident/tragedy in the wider community
- Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism, etc.
- The disappearance of a member of the school community.

Aim

The aim of the CIMP is to help our school management and staff to react quickly and effectively in the event of an incident, to enable us to maintain a sense of control and to ensure that appropriate support is offered to pupils and staff. Our plan should help ensure that the effects on the pupils and staff will be limited. It should enable us to effect a return to normality as soon as possible.

Creation of a coping supportive and caring ethos in the school

Our curriculum and pastoral care arrangements aim to help and support both staff and pupils, thus preparing them to cope with a range of life events. These include measures to address both the physical and emotional needs of the school community.

Physical Needs

- Evacuation plan formulated
- Regular fire drills occur
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
- Public access doors are locked during school hours
- School doors are security locked during class time
- Rules of the playground are agreed and known by the school community

Emotional Needs

The Governors and staff of St. Patrick's & St. Brigid's College aim to use available programmes and resources to address the personal and social development of pupils, to enhance a sense of safety and security in the school and to provide opportunities for reflection and discussion. Further details can be found within other relevant policies such as Pastoral Care, Child Protection and Anti-bullying.

- Key staff in St. Patrick's & St. Brigid's College will access training from the EA directly if a place on the training becomes available. Training was previously cascaded from a member of staff who received training.
- Staff are familiar with the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures.
- Emotional health and well-being is an integral part of the school curriculum
- The school may use a range of external agencies for support.
- Inputs to pupils by external providers are carefully considered in the light of criteria about pupil safety, the appropriateness of the content, and the expertise of the providers.
- The school has a clear policy on anti-bullying and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy.
- There is a comprehensive Pastoral Care System in place in the school.
- Pupils who are identified as being at risk are referred to the designated teacher or the deputy designated teacher, concerns are explored and the appropriate level of assistance and support is provided. Parents are informed if appropriate, and where necessary, a referral is made to an appropriate agency.
- Members of staff are informed about how to access support for themselves.

Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)

A CIMT has been re-established in line with best practice. Members bring a wealth of experience and expertise to the team and were selected on a voluntary basis and will retain their roles for at least one school year. The members of the team will meet biannually and after an incident to review and, if necessary, update the policy and plan. Each member of staff has access to a copy of the policy in the Staff Folder named Policies which is to be used in the event of an incident.

St. Patrick's & St. Brigid's College CIMP

Roles

The key roles covered are as follows:

- Team Leader – Principal
- PSNI liaison – Principal
- Staff liaison – Vice Principal
- Pupil liaison – HOY
- Parent liaison – Staff Governor
- Community liaison – Assistant Principal
- Media liaison – Principal
- Administrator – Office Staff
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If and when a critical incident is declared the following staff will oversee the normal business throughout the school:

- A Mellon
- Ms Devlin
- One member of office staff
- Building Supervisor-Mr Tarr

Record keeping

In the event of an incident Booklet 2 will be completed regularly throughout the incident as a record of the actions and procedures undertaken.

Office staff will have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters, photocopying materials etc.

Confidentiality

The management and staff of St. Patrick's & St. Brigid's College have a responsibility to protect the privacy and good name of the people involved in any incident and will be sensitive to the consequences of any public statements.

Critical incident rooms

In the event of a critical incident the following rooms will be used:

- The Main Hall - to meet the staff
- HE1 and/or HE2 - for meetings with pupils
- The Music Room- for parents
- The Principal's office for media/PSNI (if required)
- Pastoral Hub-the Welcome Room for other visitors

[Immediate, short and medium term actions are detailed in appendix 3]

Consultation and communication regarding the plan

- All staff were consulted and their views canvassed in the preparation of this policy and plan. A sample of Parents were also consulted and their comments requested by the draft policy being made available
- An review of the school's current arrangements was completed in preparation for formulating the policy and plan
- All staff have access to the Critical Incident Policy in the Staff folder on the C2K system
- All new and temporary staff (as appropriate) will be informed of the details of the plan by the APPC
- Resource packs will be available for teachers and support staff for supporting children in class from pupil personal development services.
- The plan will be reviewed and, if necessary, updated annually and after an incident

References

The Education Authority CIMT consulted resource documents prior to delivering School INSET. These resources included:

- SELB Critical Incident Response Manual & Resources Disk
- Document draft: Every School a Good School - A guide to Managing Critical Incidents in Schools DE – PEHAW Work Stream
- Protecting Life in Schools – DE - PEHAW Work Stream
- Community Response Plan - Protect Life Strategy
- When Tragedy Strikes: Guidelines for Effective Critical Incident Management in Schools (INTO/Ulster Teachers Union 2000)
- Responding to Critical Incidents; Guidelines for Schools (NEPS 2007)
- Winstonswish Foundation, help for grieving children and their families.
www.winstonswish.org.uk
- A national charity committed to improving the mental health of all children and young people. www.youngminds.org.uk
- **The Childhood Bereavement Network** (CBN) is a multi-professional federation of organisations and individuals working with bereaved children and young people.
www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk
- **Cruse Bereavement Care** exists to promote the well-being of bereaved people and to enable anyone bereaved by death to understand their grief and cope with their loss.
www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk

Appendix 1

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES OF CRITICAL INCIDENT TEAM MEMBERS

Team leader

- Principal
- Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting
- Coordinates the tasks of the team
- Liaises with the Board of Governors
- Liaises with the bereaved family

In the absence of the team leader, the Vice Principal will assume the lead.

PSNI liaison

- Principal
- Liaises with the PSNI
- Ensures that information about deaths or other developments is checked out for accuracy before being shared

Staff liaison

- Vice Principal
- Leads briefing meetings for staff on the facts as known, gives staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions, outlines the routine for the day
- Advises staff on the procedures for identification of vulnerable pupils
- Refers staff to materials from their critical incident folders
- Keeps staff updated as the day progresses
- Is alert to vulnerable staff members and makes contact with them individually
- Advises them of the availability of Staff Care Services and gives them the contact number.

Pupil liaison

- HOY
- Alerts other staff to vulnerable pupils (appropriately)
- Provides materials for pupils (from their critical incident folder)
- Keeps records of pupils seen by external agency staff
- Looks after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room where agreed

Community/agency liaison

- Mr Rainey
- Maintains up to date lists of relevant contact numbers such as emergency support services and other external contacts and resources
- Liaises with agencies in the community for support and onward referral
- Coordinates the involvement of agencies
- Reminds agency staff to wear name/visitor badges
- Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies

Parent liaison

- Staff Governor
- Arranges parent meetings, if held
- May facilitate such meetings, and manage 'questions and answers'

- Ensures that sample letters are typed up, on the school's system and ready for adaptation
- Sets up room for meetings with parents
- Maintains a record of parents seen
- Meets with individual parents
- Provides appropriate materials for parents (from their critical incident folder)

Media liaison

- Principal
- Will draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews (as agreed by school management). Will consult Communications Officer EA.
- Where appropriate, may liaise with the EA Legal Services and relevant teacher unions.

Administrator

- Executive Officer
- Maintains up to date telephone numbers of
 - Parents or guardians
 - Teachers
 - Emergency services
- Takes telephone calls and notes those that need to be responded to
- Ensures that templates are on the schools system in advance and ready for adaptation
- Prepares and sends out letters, emails and faxes
- Photocopies materials needed
- Maintains records of all correspondence