

St. Brendan's National School

Critical Incident Policy

School Ethos

St. Brendan's aims to promote a caring, coping and supportive ethos in its school. This would include a physically and psychologically safe school with a clear anti bullying policy.

Through the S.P.H.E programme the school aims to promote self-esteem confidence in decision making and coping strategies.

Defining a Critical Incident

A critical incident is defined as an event which:-

- a.) Is sudden or unexpected
- b.) Disrupts the running of the school
- c.) Causes hurt or trauma to staff and/or pupils

Such events might include:-

- a.) Sudden death of a member of the school community
- b.) An Accident involving pupils or staff
- c.) A physical attack on staff or students or a violent intrusion into the school
- d.) Serious damage to the school building
- e.) An accident/tragedy in the wider community

Critical Incident Response Team

The team will consist of the following:-

The Principal	Mr. Mulvey
The Deputy Principal	Ms. Meehan
Special Duties Teacher	Ms Lundy
Special Duties Teacher	Ms Doyle
Staff Member	Class Teacher involved

Key tasks in the Critical Incident Management Process

- a.) Maintaining an up to date list of contact numbers including

- parents and guardians, emergency services (including local doctors) and staff.
- b.) Compiling emergency information for school trips including lists of staff and pupils involved, mobile numbers of accompanying teachers and up to date medical information on participants.
 - c.) Identifying roles to be fulfilled at the time of the incident including liaising with support agencies, parents, distressed visitors and the media
 - d.) Maintaining internal care and communication with staff and pupils
 - e.) Maintaining administration and services such as telephone, rooms for counselling etc. letters and phone calls etc.

Procedures to be followed in the event of a Critical Incident (24hrs)

1. Gather accurate information about the incident.
2. Contact the appropriate agencies
3. Convene a meeting of the critical incident team, who should:-
 - Agree a statement of facts, if possible in writing
 - Delegate responsibilities
 - Appoint someone to handle phone enquiries and deal with the media
 - Ensure a phone line stays open
 - Organize a timetable
 - Organize a staff meeting
 - Organize supervision of pupils
 - Decide in any outside professionals to be invited to staff meeting
4. Hold a staff meeting where all staff should attend.
This should cover the following areas:-
 - An account of the facts as known
 - An opportunity for staff to express views and feeling
 - Discuss how facts will be shared with pupils
 - Outline daily routine
 - Information for staff on outside agencies who are of help
 - Identify vulnerable students
 - Distribute relevant handout material
5. Inform Parents/Guardian's
 - Agree who should share information with Parents and how it should be done
 - Make a list of parents
 - Give them relevant factual information

- Set a room aside for distressed parent/pupils (resource rooms)
 - Send a brief letter to parents of children not involved to outline incident
 - Inform the children as a whole on a “need to know basis” and in small groups
6. Contact the bereaved family
 7. Prepare to deal with the media:-
 - Prepare a written statement including facts, what has already been done, what will be done and positive comments about the deceased if this is the case
 - Assign a member of the team to handle television interviews (Mr. Mulvey) keeping what you say simple, factual and brief
 - Brief staff and students on dealing with the media

Medium Term Actions (24 – 72hrs)

- Review events, reconvene CIT and staff if necessary
- Arrange support for students, staff, parents if necessary
- Plan visits to injured (if appropriate) and re-integration of students and staff
- Liaise with family regarding funerals (if appropriate) and attendance of same
- Closure of school if necessary

Longer Term Actions

Monitor students for signs of continuing distress, eg.

- Uncharacteristic behaviour
- Deterioration in academic performance
- Physical symptoms – weight loss etc.
- Absenteeism

Evaluate and formalize critical incident plans

Decide on how to deal with anniversaries

Resources included in this Policy

- Classroom session following a critical incident
- Stages of grief
- Children’s grief – symptoms and ways to help
- Guidelines for pupils (handout for parents)
- Emergency contact list
- Useful contact Numbers

- Sample letters to parents

Resource Documents

1. How teachers can support students following a critical incident
2. A classroom session following a critical incident
3. Grief and stages of grief and children's understanding of grief
4. The range of normal reactions to a critical incident
5. Guidelines for input with pupils in coping with their reactions to critical incident
6. Guidelines for meeting with parents