

Critical Incident Policy

Introduction:

This policy was formulated by the staff of Convent of Mercy N.S. in consultation with B.O.M., parent representatives, PDST advisor and pupil's representative.

Rationale:

We at Convent of Mercy N.S. 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.

Examples of Critical Incidents are:

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.
- Parental separation.

Critical Incident Management Team:

- Board of Management ChairpersonAlan Traynor
- Principal.....Celine Clarke
- Deputy PrincipalKaren Gilroy
- Post HolderAntionette Drumm
- Mainstream TeacherSinéad Mc Kernan
- SecretaryMrs Gráinne Dolan
- Board of Management as a whole

Procedures to be followed in the event of critical incidents:

Short term actions:

1. Gather accurate information about the incident
2. Contact appropriate agencies:
 - Emergency services
 - Medical services
 - Health Board Psychology Departments/Community Care Services
 - NEPS
 - BOM
 - DES/School Inspector
3. 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.
4. Arrange Supervision of Students.
5. 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.
6. Organise timetable for the day. N.B. As far as possible maintain normal routines.
7. 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.

8. 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.

9. Make contact with the bereaved family.

10. 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

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

Medium Term Actions: (24-72 hours)

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/students/ staff.
- Decide on mechanism for feedback from teachers re 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 are 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.
3. Plan for the reintegration of students and staff. (e.g. absentees, injured, siblings, close relatives etc.)
 4. Plan visits to injured.
 5. Liaise with the family regarding funeral arrangements/memorial service.
 6. Attendance and participation at funeral/memorial service.
 7. School closure.

Longer Term Action:

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.

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4. Decide on appropriate ways to deal with anniversaries. (Be sensitive to special days and events)

PROCEDURES FOR EMERGENCY CLOSURES

Any decision to close the Convent of Mercy N.S., Belturbet in the event of a weather alert or some other emergency, such as a major failure of an essential utility, has serious implications. The decision to close the school for these reasons is likely to be a rare

occurrence. Any decision to close the school will normally be taken by the principal in consultation with the chairperson of the BOM, or in the absence of the chairperson, with senior members of the teaching staff. The decision will normally be taken before 2.00 p.m. on the day preceding the school closure; the children will be told; an email/note will be sent home to each family informing parents of the closure decision and, if possible, its duration. A mobile text will also be sent to all mobile numbers given on application forms. A sign stating that the school is closed will be placed on all main entrance doors. In periods of harsh winter weather parents should be alert for these communications. Obviously, no children should attend school for the duration of the closure. Information on the reopening of the school will be sent by email/text message to all email addresses/mobile numbers which are given on application forms. Information will also be available from the parish secretary. The local radio stations will also be informed.

Parental contact numbers and staff contact numbers made out on spreadsheet.

Signed:- Alan Traynor
Chairperson BoM

Date:- 13th February 2023

Signed:- Celine Clarke
Principal

Date:- 13th February 2023

Summary Checklist for Principals

- ❖ Gather the facts - Who? What? When? and Where?
- ❖ Contact appropriate agencies
- ❖ Convene the Critical Incident Management Team
- ❖ Organise for the supervision of students
- ❖ Inform staff
- ❖ Agree on a statement of the facts
- ❖ Identify high risk students
- ❖ Appoint someone to deal with phone enquiries
- ❖ Organise timetable for the day

MAINTAIN THE NORMAL SCHOOL ROUTINE WHEN AT ALL POSSIBLE

- ❖ Inform parents/guardians
- ❖ Inform students
- ❖ Make contact with the bereaved family
- ❖ Organise support
- ❖ Respond to the media