



Our Lady Queen of Peace P.S.



Critical Incident Policy

Our School is a Rights Respecting school and Articles 6, 32 and 36 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) underlines our Critical Incidents Policy:

“Every child has the right to life. Governments must do all they can to make sure that children survive and develop to their full potential” A6

“Governments must protect children from work that is dangerous or might harm their health and education” A32

“Governments must protect children from all other forms of bad treatment” A36

Ratified by Board of Governors on 27 September 2017



Our Lady Queen of Peace Primary School

Critical Incidents

Emergency Contact numbers

Contact	Name	Number
Police	Woodburn Police Station	90650222 or 101
Fire		999
Ambulance		999
Chair of BOG	Fr R Sheehan	90616300
SEELB/CCMS	SEELB	90566200
	CCMS Ms Anne McDermot	90426972
Behaviour Support Team		Helpline 90564245
School Psychologist	Deborah McGinn	90566922
School EWO	Bob Booth	02892680679
SEELB OFFICER		
Child Protection	Colum Bol	90566434
Social Services	Gateway	90602705
Critical Response	Stewartstown Health Centre	
Local Hospital	Royal Victoria Hospital For Sick Children	90240503
	Lagan Valley	02892665141
Local Clergy	Our Lady Queen Of Peace	07739223347



Principal	Cathal O'Doherty	07808931523
Designated Teacher/DDTs	Mr Kilpatrick (DT) Mrs Sweeney and Mrs Brophy (Nursery) (DDTs)	07714739397
Caretaker/keyholder	Saul Fox	07816290847
Board critical incident Response team leader	Colum Bol Alison Casey	90566434 90566274
Nearest Doc Surgery	Stewartstown Road Health Centre	90602705
School Nurse	Claire Massey	02892665181
Board's Emergency out of Hours	Helpdesk	07736213080 90566248
Board's Health and Safety Officer	Brendan O'Reilly	90564000 Ext 4162
Board's Transport section	Helen Delargy	02890566572
Board Maintenance Officer	John Hamilton	90566252
Board Communication Officer	John Martin	90564000 Ext 4333
Counselling Service	Barnardos Viola	07887998405
CCMS	Riona Brady	02892013014
SEN Co-ordinator	Mrs Clenaghan	07483235043
Nursery School	Freda Brophy	90617367
P.S. Secretary	Mairead Mills	90613050





Our Lady Queen of Peace Primary School Checklist For Action

Task	Time	Who
1. Obtain factual information (Who/what/when/where)		
2. Contact BELB/CCMS		
3. Inform Staff		
4.		
4. Convene the crisis response team		
5. Contact families		
6. SMT meet with support personnel		
7. Call staff meeting to give information		
8. Inform pupils (in small groups where possible)		
9. Arrange debriefing meeting for staff/ pupils involved		
10. Identify high risk pupils and staff		
11. Promote discussion in classes		



12. Identify the need for group or individual support		
13. Organise Support		



Critical Incident Policy

Policy Aims:

- To recognise which incidents are critical for Our Lady Queen of Peace Primary School. A27
- To develop an understanding of trauma and its impact on pupils and staff. A36
- To enable Our Lady Queen of Peace Primary School to respond to critical incidents in an informed manner. A6

Definition of Critical Incident:

A critical incident is not necessarily an event which attracts large media attention and many fatalities.

It is an event or events, usually sudden which involves the experience of significant personal distress to a level that can potentially overwhelm individuals.

Examples of Critical Incidents:

In School

Death by natural causes

Traffic Accident

A deliberate act of violence

A school Fire



Out -break of Disease

Disappearance of a child from school

Out of School

Deaths or injuries on school journeys

Tragedies involving children from many schools

Civil disturbances involving bomb etc.

Suicide

Sexual, physical, psychological abuse

Disappearance of a child from home

- How will we the staff and pupils of Our Lady Queen of Peace Primary School manage a Critical Incident?

The Critical Management Team will proactively instigate the school's Critical Management Plan. This plan manages and meets the needs of our staff and pupils.

Critical Incident Management plan:

(See Appendix 1)



Implementing the Critical Incident Plan

- The Team Leader (Mr O 'Doherty) will find the facts of the incident and assess its significance for the school.
- A staff briefing session will be led by Mr O Doherty (Team Leader).
- Key contacts will be notified immediately of the incident that has occurred. See(Appendix 2)
- Pupils will be, as soon as possible/simultaneously informed, by the class teacher in an appropriate, factual way to prevent secondary trauma. Vulnerable pupils and those pupils with special needs will be informed sensitively. Mr Kilpatrick (DT) alongside the deputy designated teacher will relay to staff the best approach to take.
NOTE: All staff will relay the same carefully worded announcement.
- Sensitivity will be shown by all staff, in particular in relation to Death or Bereavement.
- Normal routine will be restored as soon as possible. Flexibility in the school day will be offered in order to allow staff and pupils to avail of support from SEELB.crit and others e.g Parish Priest, Barnardos. This will enable stability to commence for the whole school.
- Pupils who suffer distress will be supported in school by teaching staff, and/or our Barnardos counsellor.
- Pupils and or staff who have been absent on the day of the incident will be informed. In this instance, a pupil's or staff's return to school in these circumstances will be treated sensitively.
- Parents will be informed via home visits (by a member /members of the CIMT), especially those children who have been directly involved in the incident.6y
- In the case of a death of a pupil, Mr O'Doherty and Mr Kilpatrick will make representation with the parents as soon as possible. Mr O' Doherty will liaise with the staff re messages of condolence.
- Any letter sent to parents will give a factual account of the incident.



- Staff will be supported informally through colleagues' staff, Pastoral Care Team, Mr O'Doherty and Fr. Sheehan (school chaplain and Chair of the Board of Governors).

After the Incident

The following will be put in place:

- Continued support will be continued via home visits, school work sent home, where needed. On-going briefing of staff on how to support friends and colleagues when they return to school/work will be encouraged.
- Arrangements will be put in place to support the needs of a pupil or member of staff who has a temporary or permanent disability.
- Specialist support will be sought if a pupil displays significant distress after a number of weeks.
- Pupils who have suffered bereavement will avail of our school's counselling service – Barnardos Time for Me
Support for bereaved parents and families will be given in whatever way is required:- Attendance at funeral services, mementos belonging to the pupil give to parents, photographs of the pupil who has died, inclusion of the pupil's name at assemblies ,celebrations and assemblies and anniversaries.
A memorial in the form of a plaque perhaps could be installed in a special place in the school.



Review of Critical Incident Management Plan

This will take place 6 weeks after the critical incident, in collaboration with all the school community and the support agencies which have been accessed.

The Critical Incident team will meet on a termly basis to evaluate the effectiveness of the plan, to ensure it is fit for purpose.

Annually there will be a formal review of the Critical Incident Management plan.

Media Management:

Any Statements to the media will be arranged by CCMS School officer and SEELB.

Assisting Statutory Investigations

The CIMT will where required, facilitate enquiries by outside agencies – Police, Coroner etc.



Appendix 1

Critical Incident Management Plan

We Our Lady Queen of Peace CIMT have considered the following aims as part of our Critical Incident Management plan:

- It is an integral part of our school's pastoral care system via its links to other school policies :Pastoral Care, Child Protection, Health and Safety, Special Needs, E-Safety.
- We will recognise incidents which may be critical to the school community-death, serious accident, sudden illness, Fire, explosion etc.
- We will respond in an informed manner.
- We will create a positive, open communicative climate where the needs of pupils and staff are met.
- We will prioritise the health:-physical, social and psychological wellbeing of pupils and staff.
- We will use cross curricular links to promote coping skills; Circle time, .P.D.M.U, Assemblies, R.E.
- We will outline, monitor and review the management plans for dealing with different situations.
- We will continue to promote working relationships and dialogue with outside agencies thus enabling full and effective collaboration in the event of a critical incident.
- We will ensure staff training is made available.
- We will review our strategy post incident, and annually.



Critical Incident Management Team: Appendix 2

Mr O' Doherty-Principal

Mr Kilpatrick - Designated Teacher

Mrs Sweeney – Deputy Designated Teacher

Mrs Brophy- Deputy Designated Teacher (Nursery Unit)

Mrs Downey-S.L.T.

Mrs Bergin- S.L.T.

Mrs Bleakley – S.L.T.



Appendix 3

Central Point / points of Contact within the school:

Main Car Park dependent upon the incident and the circumstances.

Media Management:

SEELB and CCMS will operate media management

Prepared statement

Arrangements to apply during school Holidays:

Caretaker Mr Saul Fox, Chair of the Board of Governors ,Mr O'Doherty will be notified and available in the event of an incident. In the absence of Mr O'Doherty Mrs Bleakley and/or Mr Kilpatrick will represent.

Contact with parents:

This will be achieved via home visits ,telephone –in some instances text through text local.



Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Appendix 4

PTSD in children

For PTSD to be present an individual must experience an event outside the normal range of usual human experience and which would be “markedly distressing to anyone.”

PTSD in children for example:

- An event posing a serious threat to one’s life or well being
- An event which presents the possibility of serious threat or harm to loved ones
- Sudden destruction of one’s environment
- Witnessing someone being killed or injured as the result of violence

Specific Symptoms of PTSD:

The individual re-experiences the event in some way -

- Recurrent or intrusive recollections of the event
- Recurrent dreams of the event
- Acting or feeling as if the event were recurring
- Intense distress at reminders of the event

The individual persistently avoids stimuli associated with the event and experiences a general numbing of emotion

- Avoidance of thoughts/feelings/activities/situations
- Inability to remember aspects of the event
- Markedly reduced interest in significant activities
- Restricted range of affect
- Sense of foreshortened future



Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

The individual experiences symptoms of increased arousal

- Difficulty sleeping
- Irritability or outbursts of anger
- Difficulty concentrating
- Hyper vigilance
- Exaggerated startle response

Possible indicators of PTSD

Pupils
Crying
Thumb sucking
Loss of bowel or bladder control
Fear of being left alone or of strangers
Irritability
Confusion
Clinging
Immobility

Vulnerability Factors for PTSD

- Existence of an older trauma
- Experience of abuse
- Existing emotional or psychiatric problems
- Special needs/low ability



- Lack of family support
- Children who are less confident and less socially skilled.

Protective Factors against PTSD

- High ability
- Good social skills
- High self esteem
- Supportive family
- Gender?
- Personality?



Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

Helpful Strategies for Children who have PTSD

- Talking about the traumatic incident to family, peers, teachers, other professionals
- Re-establish and maintain routines
- Eat healthy meals, exercise and get enough sleep
- Know what is “normal” after a disaster
- Redefine Priorities

Helpful Strategies for Children

- Talk to children about their feelings; set a good example by talking about your own feelings
- Children need
 - frequent attention
 - a lot of reassurance
 - physical safety and comfort
 - temporary relaxation of expectations

Helpful Strategies for Adults

- Be available for the person
- Above all, don't be afraid to listen to the person; don't feel that there are “taboo” subjects
- Answer any questions honestly; say “I don't know” when you don't know the answer

Some Definite “Don'ts”

- Don't advise the young person or their family not to worry or to be sad
- Don't tell them what they *should feel or do*



- Don't say that you know how they *feel* - you don't
- Don't say "You should be feeling better now"
- Don't say "at least you're still alive"
- Don't hide your feelings or encourage the family to hide their feelings from the child
- Be aware that in school, behaviour and work will suffer, as will concentration and motivation



Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

Classroom management following a crisis 1

- Normal routine should be established as soon as possible although pupils should be given an opportunity to discuss the incident and express their feelings and emotions. Pupils should not be discouraged from expressing themselves appropriately or asking questions

Classroom management following crisis 2

Classroom debriefing ought to be arranged to

- Establish the facts and dispel rumours
- Share stories - art will be helpful
- Share feelings
- Empowerment
- Closure

Classroom management following crisis 3

- It is appropriate for the curriculum to be adjusted and adapted. Teachers should avoid presentation of new materials
- Routine “busy” work might be more appropriate for a classroom dealing with a crisis

Classroom management following crisis 4

- Encourage resumption of extracurricular activities



Classroom management following crisis 5

- For younger children or those with special needs, availability of toys that encourage play re - enactment of their experiences and observations during the crisis can help integrate these experiences

Classroom management following crisis 6

- For those who can't or won't talk, don't force them. Suggest others they can talk to.



Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

Creating a curriculum for coping

- Evidence from previous critical incidents suggest that those who have thought and felt through the issues involved around serious injury and bereavement are better able to cope if it happens to them

Staff

How are staff affected?

- The impact of staff will depend on their involvement in the incident and will vary according to their experience and training, coping skills, past trauma and current stresses. A critical incident places great burdens on individuals and the whole system, especially if there is a high media attention and staff numbers are reduced. Not only do teachers have to deal with their own stress, they also have to deal with the stress of many pupils and parents. The work is physically and emotionally draining. Principals and teachers will be exhausted by the many duties they have to undertake including, attending funerals, identifying bodies, meeting public dignitaries, fund raising and visiting the injured and bereaved.
- Those including managers and principals, who feel responsible or who may be blamed for an incident or how they respond to one particularly vulnerable to stress, partly because they often deny how it impacts on them. School administrative and support staff are placed under usual stress as they have to deal with calls from distressed parents.

How can you tell if staff are affected?

- Symptoms may not be “clinical” but they make life miserable for staff, their family and colleagues. Teachers may be hypersensitive to any remark, feel burned out, cynical, anxious and depressed. They may displace anger onto others, especially the “system”, the Principal and school authorities. After many incidents, even smaller scale events, there is evidence of staff absenteeism, breakdown, illness, resignation and loss of motivation.



Who is responsible for staff care?

This is the joint responsibility of:

- **MANAGEMENT:** by fulfilling their “Duty of Care” to staff and pupils through creating ethos in school, pre - trauma, staff in-career development, effective management of the incident, providing resources, acknowledging the impact on staff and setting up staff support and information sharing systems.
- **STAFF COLLEAGUES:** being mindful of each other, creating tolerance of different reactions to stress, sharing information and ideas, keeping a watchful eye on each other, co-operating for the good of all staff.
- **YOURSELF:** dealing with existing personal issues and needs, acquiring knowledge and skills on the subject, knowing limits and valuing one’s own contribution to the well-being of the staff group and pupils.

Who Can Offer Support?

Seeking support and back-up for decisions is good management. People under stress are not always capable of judging their own stress levels and their perceptions can be distorted by the re-triggering of personal issues and anxieties.

Support is available from the following:

- Unions
- Board of Management/Governors;
- Education and Health advisors/Inspectors/Educational Psychologists/Employee Assistance Officers/Welfare Officers;
- Other school principals and staff;
- Health Boards;
- Mental Health agencies;
- Peer support groups;
- School crisis management consultants; and
- Private counsellors and therapists.



Checklists

By going through the checklists, the school will realise what it is already doing well and what needs attentions.

SAFETY PROCEDURES

- Check regularly that buildings, playground equipment, fire exits, burglar/fire alarms, etc are in good and safe condition. If repairs have to be undertaken, see that they are attended to promptly.
- Ensure systems are in place to admit visitors to the school, monitoring of entrances and exits, type of information required from a caller to the school before access is granted, extra vigilance of strangers or irregular events around the school.
- Act promptly if you suspect anything out of the ordinary.
- Ensure systems are in place for school evacuation.
- Know what is happening in the community.
- Ensure procedures are in place for dropping off and collection of children at peak times. Regular monitoring of these procedures is crucial.

PROCEDURAL CHECKS

Prepare, practise and maintain:

- Health and Safety procedures, fire drills, procedures to deal with bomb threats etc.
- Child protection procedures.
- Procedures for dealing with bullying and discrimination (race, gender, disability, age, religion).
- School trips and fieldwork safety guidelines and procedures.
- Critical incident management procedures from rescue through to recovery.
- Contact address lists and telephone numbers for staff and pupils.

SOCIAL SAFETY

- Create an atmosphere where children, parents and staff feel they are personally safe, emotionally and behaviourally. Check different religious beliefs about death.
- Create shared understandings between parents, staff and pupils about values and codes of behaviour.
- Create and practise respect and inclusiveness for all members of the school community.
- Create consistency but act with flexibility, according to the circumstances.



- Create open lines of communication using external and internal resources.
- Be clear about boundaries, what is negotiable and what is not. Be aware of consequences of actions.
- Keep an eye on the needs of different classes and the staff team.
- Build healthy, positive links between home, school and community.
- Do not avoid difficulties - deal with them at an early stage and avoid problems developing.
- Create a spirit of inquiry - teachers should not be expected to know everything, children and parents can find answers too.