

**Moyne Community School
Critical Incident Management Policy**

Scope of the Policy

Critical Incidents occur from time to time. Due to their gravity and sudden nature, they produce emotional reactions among the school community and the local community. It is very important for the long term healing process, that such incidents are handled in a sensitive, caring and organised manner. This policy applies to all critical incidents that happen within the school or that involve a member of the school community either directly or indirectly. It involves the engagement of all school polices, processes and programmes in the development of the appropriate structures, roles and resources to support the school community in dealing with a critical incident.

Rationale:

- The Board of Management has a statutory obligation to ensure that a policy is in place that reflects the principles, values and the educational philosophy of the School
- The Department of Education and Science requires schools to have a written policy on Critical incidents
- In order to fulfil this obligation, members of the school community have been involved in the development and review of this policy
- This policy is one aspect of a comprehensive approach to the health and safety of all members of the school community and is supported by other policies: Pastoral Care

Links to the Mission Statement

This policy is linked to the school Mission Statement, which states,
'Moyne Community School offers holistic education, upholding the Christian values and traditions of the communities from which the school evolved. We are committed to enabling students and staff to develop their full potential within the school's formal and informal curriculum, in a friendly, safe and caring environment.'

What is a Critical Incident?

Any incident that overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school could be considered a critical incident.

Examples

- Any incident where a traumatic death occurs or is perceived to have occurred
- Death of a student or staff member
- Suicide
- Child killed in front of others crossing the road
- Bus crash on school trip: Multiple injuries /deaths.
- Disappearance of a member of the school community
- Hostage situation / physical attack

The Critical Incident Management Team

Principal
Deputy Principal
Guidance Counsellors
Chaplain
Teacher

Management Responsibilities:

Leadership / Family Liaison / Communication

- Confirm the incident has occurred. Get accurate information
- In a case where the incident has occurred within the school day or during school activities, it is vital that accurate accounts of what happened are recorded immediately or at the earliest possible opportunity. Where appropriate witness accounts should be taken and kept.
- If tragedy occurs over a weekend / holidays a system of informing staff needs to be in place
- If it is the death of a colleague the Principal or Deputy Principal should contact all members of staff.
- If it is the death of a student, the Critical Incident Team needs to be informed immediately by the Principal/ Deputy Principal. Other staff can be informed later

- Ensure family knows who the contact person within the school is.
- Consult with family on school involvement with funeral in case of death (Family wishes to be respected)
- Prepare an announcement for staff / students.
- Plan a staff meeting if required.
- Prepare statement and distribute procedures to roll call teachers on breaking the news.
- Designate a suitable person for dealing with telephone enquiries from anxious parents. This person will work from a prepared statement.
- Have written and / or oral response to enquiries prepared.
- Prepare media statement.
- Discourage any student or staff from dealing with the media.
- Make decisions on who should attend funeral in case of a death.
- Should the school be closed on the day of the funeral in the case of a death? (Notification to DES, parents, buses, possible visiting speakers, of closure)

Intervention Responsibilities: Pastoral Responsibilities

- Set up crisis team room in the school.
- Outline services available to affected students during the first hours (access to counselling and chaplaincy). Where it is considered necessary, additional counselling resources may be requested from the Guidance Counsellors in nearby schools and from NEPS.
- Assist teacher of the class affected in breaking the news.
- Have guidelines for staff in dealing with students in distress: i.e. information on grief responses, identifying those in need of counselling and support.
- Take time with the most affected students in the Crisis Response Room.
- Organise a Year Group prayer service for mid morning, once all students have been notified.
- Contact parents where some students request to go home.
- Encourage those who feel able to return to class.
- Meet and support any distressed parents and staff
- In the case of a death liaise with family re any possible school involvement in the funeral arrangements.

Sample Media Statement in case of a Death

-No Interviews with Media

It is with profound sadness that the Management, staff and students of Moyne Community School have learned of the tragic death of.....

Our sincerest sympathy is extended to -----'s family

Our school has put in place support for our students and parents.
We appeal to the media to show restraint and respect at this difficult time.

Critical Incident Response:

Step by Step

- The Principal, having confirmed the incident, makes contact with the family.
- Critical Incident Response Team meets as early as possible to plan strategy, keeping in mind the guidelines above.
- Key tasks are distributed as per management and pastoral responsibilities.
- Have all guidelines for teachers ready.
- Have all written and oral statements ready for communication within the school.
- Have a notice at entrances to the school for staff to report to the staff room at 9.00 a.m.
- Meet staff (Bring staff roll to meeting and note any absences or late arrivals to ensure that all members of staff hear the news)
- Crisis Response Team outlines to staff the plan for the day and the support available.
- Decide on location of Crisis Response Room.
- Class Teachers break news to classes as per written guidelines
- Deputy Principal to make alternative arrangements for classes normally using Crisis Response Room.
- Deputy Principal to make sure that Guidance Counsellors and Chaplain are freed from class.
- Plan another update staff meeting later.
- Clarify funeral arrangements for staff where appropriate and if available.
- Crisis Team meets to plan procedures for school involvement in removal and funeral where appropriate and in accordance with the wishes of the family

- Encourage questions, but make them aware that you don't know all the answers at this time. Refuse to be drawn into speculation as what you say may be taken out of context or misrepresented and may be very hurtful to people already suffering
- Expect tears and outbursts.
- Let them know that you will support them.
- Let them know who else is available to support them
- If a student insists on leaving the room he/ she will be accompanied to a designated room and supervised.
- Don't be afraid to let them know that you are also upset by the news.
- Allow them time to mingle and talk.
- Explain how they can support one another.
- Be attentive to identifying those that are not coping well with the news.
- You may have to remind students again who is there to help, as little information is assimilated once in shock.
- Let them know where the Critical Incident Team will be.
- Refreshments, also boxes of Kleenex should be made available
- A short prayer for the deceased may be said.
- If the students appear ready, a Year group assembly may be held later in the day.
- Some students may be able to continue to go to class.
- Some will need to stay with the Critical Incident Team for the morning.
- Encourage students to stay in school to support their friends.
- Some may need to go home (only if parents come and collect them)
- Those who go to class may not be able to concentrate on the work of the class.
- Subject teachers will need to make allowances for distress and lack of concentration.

Common Reactions on hearing Traumatic News:

Emotional and Physical	Mental and Behavioural
Shock	Confusion
Fear	Blame
Guilt	Poor Concentration
Grief	Disorientation
Tears	Withdrawn
Panic	Restlessness
Denial	Let Down
Anxiety	Uncertainty
Depression	
Anger	
Emotional Outbursts	

Overwhelmed Nausea Fainting Pain Dizziness Weakness Palpitations Breathing Difficulties	
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How to help someone who has suffered loss.

- Show genuine care and concern
- Be available
- Listen
- Allow them express their feelings.
- Encourage talking as much as they want to.
- Talk about the person they have lost.
- Reassure them that there was nothing they could have done.

Critical Incident Management Aftercare

- The aim of the school community should be to return to normality and routine as soon as possible
- There should be On- going counselling and support for those who need it.
- They should be given a safe space to express their feelings of loss, anger, confusion etc.
- The counsellors and Chaplain will continue to support those deeply affected.

Review of Procedures

- Critical Incident Management Team meets to assess the Critical Incident Plan and check if adjustments need to be made.
- All school records should be updated.

