

Lurgan Junior High School

Critical Incident Policy

Whole School

Definition:

A Critical Incident is any incident or a sequence of events which overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of the school and disrupts the smooth running of the school.

Rationale:

Even though tragedy and trauma are an integral part of everyone's life, coping with them is not easy. It is particularly difficult when it impacts on the pupils and staff within the school community.

The specific needs of the pupils following traumatic events must be recognised within the context of our school. In the event of a Critical Incident the school will make short term and long term plans in order to support the entire school community.

Aims:

To recognise which incidents are critical for the school community

To create a safe and secure school environment whereby the physical, social, emotional and psychological health of pupils and staff is prioritised

To create a positive, open, communicative climate where the needs of the staff and pupils are met in critical incident situations

To establish positive working relationships and dialogue with outside agencies, thus enabling full and effective collaboration in the event of a critical incident

Objectives:

To respond quickly and effectively to stabilise the situation

To ensure the welfare and safety of staff and pupils arranging for First Aid if necessary

To aim to restore school to full functioning but simultaneously accommodate crisis needs

To ensure Chair of Board of Governors, staff, parents and pupils are informed with the facts at the earliest opportunity and to keep them informed as incident unfolds

To promote active coping skills within the curriculum i.e. use of Circle Time

Procedures:

Stage 1

Gather the facts/ Assess danger / Take ACTION

- What needs to be done?
 - Is it our business?
 - Who is in charge? - The Police or Other
 - Emergency Services or The School
 - Who is involved? Is there a ripple effect?
 - Who needs to know?
 - How shall we tell them?
 - What can we do now?
 - What are our next steps?
1. If normal evacuation procedures are necessary, implement them with immediate effect. Ensure that staff and pupils know of alternative locations i.e. Super Value Car Park parallel to Gilford & Waringstown Roads or Nazarene Church Car Park if evacuation has to take place at other side of school
 2. Arrange for First Aid, if needed
 3. Establish a 'command' centre. Identify **WHO** is in charge and set regular briefing times.
 4. Where and when possible, notify the time and place of the debriefing to all relevant persons i.e. Principal to Vice Principals, Senior Management Team and E. O. in order that all personnel are contacted (through text messaging service – Principal to request Senior Executive Officer to contact all staff).

5. Notify Emergency Services/other relevant authorities/ Chair of BOG
6. Liaise with EA – see **Southern Region Critical Incident Response Team**

028 3751 2515

Stage 2

Co-ordinate School's response, meet with staff

1. Liaise, delegate, discuss intervention plan, and agree what other pupils will be told. Decide if this is to be through whole school assembly, year group assembly, Form Class (the smaller grouping might reduce the potential for creating a highly charged emotional climate). Have volunteers available if pupils become distressed.
2. Update details
3. Continue to liaise with Chair of Board of Governors and the Education Authority

Stage 3

Organise contact with pupils and parents – through Text Messaging (Principal to immediately contact Senior Executive Officer who will inform all parents).

Give the facts of the critical incident. Be aware of legalities and be respectful of privacy

1. Inform parents by 'phone' or 'in person' if their child is involved as soon as initial information is confirmed
2. Continue to liaise with Chair of BOG and Education Authority
3. Ensure a correct and consistent message is given
4. Provide sources of help for pupils and families encouraging communication between parents and school
5. Consider reactions of pupils & School Community
6. Confirm the School's Response Plan

Stage 4

Restore regular routine

1. Plan visits to injured and bereaved

2. Continue to liaise with Chair of BOG and Education Authority

Stage 5

Obtain updated factual information

1. Continue to inform staff, pupils and parents
2. The Principal to consult with the families affected to determine their wishes concerning public announcements and information for staff and pupils
3. Continue to liaise with Chair of BOG and Education Authority

Stage 6

Continue to monitor well being of pupils and staff

1. Organise assistance i.e. transport home for those who are distressed
2. Identify follow up support for at risk pupils and staff i.e. involvement with other professionals, if needed
3. Assess the need for debriefing of staff and pupils with expert help
4. Continue to liaise with Chair of BOG and EA

Stage 7

After 1 month, review the situation

1. If appropriate, and in consultation with parents arrange special assembly or other
2. Identify any behaviour changes in pupils and staff for the possibility of Post Traumatic Stress. Refer for support
3. Monitor progress of all hospitalised staff and pupils
4. Monitor physical and mental health of all volunteers / helpers

Stage 8

Review in the Longer Term

1. Monitor staff and pupils for delayed Post Traumatic Stress Disorder – and refer on
2. Provide support if necessary
3. Consider covering GRIEF as a topic in Personal Development
4. Plan for and be sensitive to anniversaries, date of inquest and other legal proceedings

The Role of the Teacher

(Extracts from Managing Loss and Trauma in Schools)

Pupils should be given opportunities to discuss the incident and express their thoughts and feelings in a secure environment.

The teacher needs to be aware of the importance of handling the discussion in a confident but sensitive manner

It is appropriate for the curriculum to be adjusted or adapted e.g. teachers should avoid presenting new material or developing new skills as concentration will be impaired for a while

Pupils should be encouraged to resume Sports and Extra Curricular Activities

Use opportunities which arise within ordinary class-work, where coping and support can be reinforced

Meeting with Individual Pupils

Take your cue from the pupil. When they feel like talking, you take time to listen. Perhaps you will have to arrange a time that is suitable for you both.

Don't be afraid of mentioning the deceased person or the incident. It is important to acknowledge what has happened.

Feelings must be acknowledged and discussed

Let the pupil know it is alright to laugh or cry. Reassure them that it is good to lighten the mood by remembering happier moments

It is fine to ask the pupil if they need help and /or support, to ask them what they need or even what would help at this time.

A Classroom Session Following a Critical Incident

This needs to be tailored to the level of the pupils. The process involves;

- Providing facts and dispelling rumours
- Sharing stories – pupils will feel less alone if they hear others' experiences. Give them opportunities to represent their feelings

e.g. through art, writing, conversation

- Empowerment – identify strategies the pupils can use to help manage their feelings e.g. talking to their families and friends, getting enough sleep, exercise
- Closure – close by focussing on the future e.g. writing cards or letters, organising a special assembly, providing a memorial

Links with other Policies

c/r First Aid and Injury Policy
Fire Drill and Evacuation Procedure
Personal Development – Year 8, 9 and 10
Religious Education

Critical Incident Support Personnel

Organisation	Name	Telephone Number
Police, Fire and Ambulance		999
Craigavon Area Hospital		028 38 344444
Doctor's Surgery		028 38 324591
Social Services		028 38 311035
Chairperson of Board of Governors	Mr. McKay	028 38 882440
EA(Emergency out of hours)		028 3851 2345
EA Health and Safety Officer		028 3751 2429
EA Transport Section		028 3751 2268
EA Maintenance Officer		028 3751 2299
EA Communications Officer	Mr. Richard Bullick	028 3741 5356
EA Staff Welfare Manager	Mrs. Marian Ferguson	028 3751 2559
EA Critical Incident Response Team	Ms. Cathy Bell (Adviser)	028 3751 2397
	Mrs. Valerie George (Executive Officer)	028 3751 2515
EA Educational Psychologist	Mrs. Sally Finlay	028 3835 1480
Education Welfare Officer	Mrs Kellie Lappin	028 3832 6801
REACH Team	Mr Rick Preston	028 38