

Critical Incident Policy

of Boherbue Comprehensive School

Definition of a Critical Incident:

"A critical incident is any incident or sequence of events which overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school and disrupts the running of the school".

Critical Incidents include but are not limited to:

- 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.
- Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism etc.
- A physical attack on staff member(s) or student(s) or intrusion into the school.
- The disappearance of a member of the school community.
- An accident or tragedy in the wider community.

Aim of Critical Incident Plan:

Boherbue Comprehensive School aims to protect the well being of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times as outlined in our mission statement.

We recognise that critical incidents can greatly affect people and that coordinated and systematic procedures are necessary to facilitate the provision of a rapid and appropriate response at the time of the incident as well as post-incident support. The aim of the critical incident plan is to ensure that management and staff will react effectively and promptly to maintain control of the situation. The plan will also assist the school community to return to normal as quickly as possible and limit the effects of the incident on staff and students.

We acknowledge the complex nature of traumatic events/ bereavement which may have far reaching consequences, and can affect attitude, performance and the ability to cope. It is, therefore, important for the school to have clear supportive strategies in place for our students and staff.

Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT):

The Critical Incident Management Team comprises:

- Principal
- Deputy Principal
- Chaplain
- Guidance Counsellor
- Student Council Liaison Teacher

(This list is interchangeable depending on the circumstances of the Critical Incident.)

Support Services Team:

- School Administrative Staff
- Caretakers
- Relevant teachers with expertise, e.g. First Aid, Bereavement Support
- Other professionals and support services
- Other staff members concerned.

Key Administrative Tasks

- **Student Addresses and Phone Numbers:** Updated list of addresses and phone numbers of students to be maintained by administrative staff on the Complete Management Information System (CMIS).
- **Staff Addresses and Phone Numbers:** Available from Principal, Deputy Principal and Administrative staff.
- **Training and Staff Development:** The management will afford staff members with opportunities to attend information / training courses in First Aid, Suicide, Bereavement etc.
- **Foreign Tours and other School Trips:** Organising staff are responsible for compiling a list of all students and staff involved in the trip, a list of mobile phone numbers for accompanying teachers and any medical information on students involved.
- **The Media:** The Principal will liaise with the media and will also prepare a Media statement.
- **Health & Safety:** Safe School Evacuation Procedures as outlined in Health and Safety Statement. Regular fire drills.
- Management to ensure that new staff members are made aware of the Critical Incident School Policy.
- Year Heads to ensure that staff members are aware of pupils who may be in emotional distress / affected by trauma / critical incidents and in need of special consideration.

Roles and Responsibilities:

Role of School Management:

- To confirm the event and to clarify facts surrounding event.
- To alert members of the Critical Incident Management Team to the crisis and to convene a meeting of the team.
- To coordinate / delegate tasks of Critical Incident Management Team members.
- To make contact with family to express sympathy.
- To visit the home of the bereaved / injured.
- To ensure provision of ongoing support to staff and students.
- To facilitate any appropriate memorial events.
- To prepare a Public / Media Statement with Critical Incident Management Team.
- To outline specific services available in school.
- To put referral procedures in place.

Role of Critical Incident Management Team Members:

- Critical Incident Management Team will establish a staff chain of communication to disseminate relevant information.
- The Critical Incident Management Team will ensure that new staff are made aware of the Critical Incident School Policy.
- In case of bereavement, to clarify funeral arrangements.
- To liaise with other relevant support agencies, e.g. NEPs, Counsellors, etc.
- To brief and advise staff members.

Chaplaincy and Counselling Role:

- To address immediate needs of staff.
- To monitor class / students most affected and to facilitate ongoing support to vulnerable students.
- Visit home, if appropriate.
- Make contact with local clergy and to assist with prayer or memorial services.
- Consult with family around involvement of school in, e.g., funeral service.
- Be available as personal and spiritual support to staff.
- Provide follow-up support to family.
- Work in partnership with religious education team.
- Involve as appropriate family in school liturgies / memorial services.
- Link family with community support groups, e.g. IRD Bereavement Support Group.

Action Plan:

SHORT-TERM ACTIONS (Day 1)

- Immediate contact with family / families. It is important to obtain accurate information about the incident.
- Convene a meeting with Critical Management Team.
- Contact appropriate agencies, e.g. emergency services, medical services, H.S.E., NEPS, BOM, DES / Schools Inspectorate.
- The Chaplain / Principal will liaise with the family to extend sympathy and clarify the family's wishes regarding the school's involvement.
- Ensure that a quiet place can be made available for students / staff, e.g. Prayer Room and counselling service.
- Organise timetable / routine for the day. (Adhering to the normal school routine is important, if this is possible.)
- Class teachers to take note of any absentees who might need to be contacted, list of friends, etc., or any other relevant information and give to the Student Liaison person.
- Arrange a home visit by two staff representatives.

MEDIUM-TERM ACTIONS (24-72 HOURS)

- Attendance and participation at funeral to be decided - in accordance with parents' wishes and school management decisions.
- Involvement of students / staff in liturgy if agreed by bereaved family.
- Preparation of students / staff attending funeral.
- Facilitation of student / staff responses, e.g. sympathy cards, flowers, book of condolences, etc.
- Ritual / service within the school.
- Arrange support for individual students, groups of students, and parents, if necessary.
- Plan for the re-integration of students and staff, e.g. siblings, close relative, etc.

LONG TERM ACTIONS

- To monitor students for signs of continuing distress.
- To inform new staff members of Critical Incident Policy and where appropriate to ensure they are aware of pupils affected by any recent incident / student in distress.
- Update and amend school records.
- To review and evaluate Critical Incident Policy as appropriate.

CONTACTING STAFF IF CRITICAL INCIDENT OCCURS OVER WEEKEND:

- In the event of the death of a colleague, Principal / Deputy Principal will contact staff by phone.
- In the event of the death of a student, the Critical Incident Management Team needs to be informed immediately. Other staff will be informed on Monday.

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 2nd April, 2009.

Emergency Telephone Numbers

Ambulance Emergency	999 / 112 (Mobiles)
G. P. - Dr. Leader	029-76003
SouthDoc (Out of Hours)	1850-335999
Gardaí	Kanturk 029-20680
Priest	Presbytery Boherbue 029-76151
N.E.P.S	021-4536379
Hospitals	Mallow General Hospital 022-30300
Suicide Helpline	1800-742745
Suicide Bereavement Support Service	087-7986944
CAMHS	022-44970
State Exams Commission	0906-442789 / 90 / 92
IRD Bereavement Counselling Services	029-60633