

CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY

Scope

A whole school policy outlining actions and responsibilities in the event of a critical incident

Relationship to School Mission Vision and Aims

The aim of the policy is to plan for a critical incident in a safe environment where care for the wellbeing of the whole school community is paramount.

Rationale

A Critical Incident is any incident or sequence of events which overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of the school and is likely to be difficult or traumatic for members of the school community and which require support or other responses from Piper's Hill College.

The purpose of the policy is to :

- Maintain the normal functioning of the school insofar as is possible.
- Identify those at risk and/or in need of support
- Provide support for those who are traumatised or distressed.

Members of the Critical Incident Team:

School Principal
Deputy Principals
Staff Member/Year Head/Tutor
Career Guidance Counsellors
Home School Liaison Teacher
Representative of RE Dept
School Secretary

Role of the Principal

The school Principal with the assistance of the Deputy Principals will gather the facts of the critical incident from the appropriate agencies:

- The Gardai
- The Ambulance Service
- The Fire Brigade
- The Hospital
- The Local GP's

Significant information to be sought

- Who was involved in this incident?
- What exactly happened?
- What are the extent of the injuries?
- When did the incident happen?

- Where did the incident happen?

The School Principal will then convene the Critical Incident Team

- The Critical Incident Team will agree on a statement of the facts for staff, students, parents and media.
- If the incident occurs outside of school time the Principal with the assistance of the Deputy Principals will notify all staff members.
- The Principal and Deputy Principals will have an up to date list of all staff addresses and telephone numbers both in and outside school.
- The Principal and Deputy Principals will have access to contact details of all students at all times.

Responsibilities to be delegated

The Principal;

- The Principal with the assistance of the Deputy Principals will contact the parents of those involved in the incident.
- The Principal will contact the Department of Education and Skills Psychological Services for support and personnel where necessary.
- The Principal will inform the staff.
- The Principal will contact the Chairperson and Members of the Board of Management.
- If students have died in the incident, relatives and close friends of the deceased in the school need to be told first.
- The Principal will appoint the school secretary with a member of the Critical Incident Team and another member of staff to deal with phone calls.
- The Principal will inform Kildare & Wicklow Education Training Board.

The Deputy Principal and Allocation of Rooms;

- The Deputy Principals will organise the school timetable for the day.
- The Deputy Principals will set up a room whereby students who are closely associated with those affected by the incident can talk and be together. The Parents Room / Reflection Room would suit this purpose.
- The Deputy Principals with the help of the staff members and the Home School Liaison Teacher will set up another room for distressed parents waiting for further news of their son/daughter. The school library would suit for this purpose. Simple accurate information about the incident would be given to parents.
- The Deputy Principals will delegate members of the Critical Incident Team and other members of staff to work with the canteen staff in providing refreshments for all families and others who come to the school at this time. The canteen area will be used for this purpose.

Career Guidance Counsellors:

- The Career Guidance Counsellor and other members of the Pastoral Care Team will be available to meet students in the school who are suffering trauma because of the event.
- The Career Guidance Counsellor will meet with parents and be available to give advice and information with names and addresses and telephone numbers of supportive agencies.

The RE Teachers/HSCL/Deputy Principal:

- The RE teachers and Deputy Principal together with the Year Head(s) will organise a year group prayer services mid-morning, once all students have been notified.
- The Deputy Principal will liaise with local clergy if necessary.
- The HSCL teacher will be the link between the family and the church if funerals/religious ceremonies have to take place because of the incident.
- The HSCL teacher will visit the homes of the families of the students involved in the critical incident.

Meeting the Parents:

- The Principal, Deputy Principals, Home School Liaison Teacher and Counsellors will meet with parents who come to the school looking for further information.
- Parents will be in an area out of public view to allow them privacy.
- Parents may have to wait some time for updates. Members of the Critical Incident Team and other staff members will remain with the parents offering them as much support as possible or perhaps just being present.
- The Principal, Deputy Principals will liaise with the different hospitals dealing with the incident.

The Students:

- If the incident happens during a school day the Principal and Deputy Principal will inform the students.
- Members of the Critical Incident Team with the Pastoral Care Team will be ready to deal with reactions by setting up supports immediately for the students.
- Members of the Pastoral Care Team will be aware of very vulnerable students and will focus especially on these students.
- Students will be monitored over a period of time. Where there are signs of distress and unusual behaviour a referral may be made to NEPS/CAHMS

The Staff Members and The Critical Incident – Staff Care

Staff care is the joint responsibility of the following:

- School Management: By fulfilling their “duty of care” the management of the school acknowledges the impact of the trauma on the staff by offering support to the staff.
- Management can contact the Department of Education and Skills Psychological Service requesting support for members of staff.
- Staff support each other by listening in a caring way and by being a support to each other.

Dealing with the Media;

The Principal and the Deputy Principals will prepare a statement for the media which will include:

- A statement of sympathy to the families of those involved in the incident.
- The facts about the incident.
- What has been done already.
- What is happening at present in relation to the incident.
- What is going to be done in the next few days/weeks.
- Positive information about those who have been involved in the incident.

Interviews for Radio and Television;

For interviews the information should be kept simple, factual and brief. The task of dealing with interviews for TV or radio needs to be assigned to the Principals or Deputy Principals or someone who is fully aware of the facts of the incident and is competent to deal with media. The person being interviewed needs to be aware of the legal issues before the interview. The person being interviewed needs to deal with criticism rather than being defensive.

Dealing with Parents of the Whole School Community;

Even though some students or teachers may not be involved in the incident it is imperative that parents of all students are fully aware of the facts. The Principal with the assistance of the Deputy Principals will:

- Write to the parents of the whole school community.
- Express sympathy to the parents of those involved in the incident.
- Encourage parents to speak with their son/daughter about the incident.
- Explain to parents that there are services available to students who may be showing signs of trauma/shock/disbelief because of the incident.

Protocol should an incident occur in school during the school day

- All visitors to the school should sign in and out at the school reception

- Once school has begun admission to the building will require safety lock being released in main office
- In the event of a group eg HSE Public Health visiting the school, the team leader should make themselves known to the Principal/Deputy Principals and also identify other team members
- All phone calls to parents should only be made with the full knowledge of Principal/Deputy Principals
- Should a serious incident occur while students are in class an announcement will be made over the intercom requesting teachers keep their class in that room until advised otherwise. Alternatively they may be asked to evacuate the building as per fire drill procedure.
- Should an incident occur during a break, the bell will ring, tutors will be requested to bring their class to their registration room and keep them there until advised otherwise.
- The Principal will have overall responsibility for the duration and will contact emergency services. One Deputy Principal will liaise with staff the other will remain with the student/s who are ill or injured.
- The year head will visit each class to reassure and share relevant factual information with students, especially those close to the ill/injured.
- The Principal/Deputy Principals will share relevant factual information with the staff and reassure them.
- Parents will be contacted by email or text before the students get home to advise them of what has happened and reassure them.

EMERGENCY CONTACT LIST

Naas Garda Station	045 884300 or 045 884301
Fire Station	999
Ambulance	999 (ask for Naas Ambulance)
Naas General Hospital	045 849500
Tallaght Hospital	01 4142000
Our Lady's Hospital Crumlin	01 4096100
Temple Street Children's Hospital	01 8784200
Beaumont Hospital	01 8093000
St James's Hospital	01 4103000
James Connolly Hospital Blanchardstown	01 6465000
National Educational Psychological Services (N.E.P.S)	01 8892700
Kildare Suicide Bereavement Support Group	045 895629