

# **Monkstown Nursery School Policy for Dealing with Critical Incidents**

Reviewed Sept 2020

### Definition

A Critical Incident may be defined as an event or events, usually sudden, which involves the experience of significant personal distress to a level that can potentially overwhelm individuals. Some cases affecting schools are listed below: -

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

### Purpose

A Critical Incident has the potential to interfere with members of the school community and their ability to function either at the time of the incident or at a later date. As such, our policy is designed to provide a framework for action and should ensure such situations are managed in the best possible way.

### Ethos

We strive to have a coping, supportive and caring ethos in the school by:

- Maintaining a physically and psychologically safe school through the development of areas such as our positive behaviour policy, anti-bullying policy, fire drills, equipment and building checks.
- Planning for personal, Social and Emotional Development and a preventative education, covering such areas as communication skills, personal safety, self-esteem, decision making and coping skills.
- Implementing our Pastoral Care structures and reviewing their effectiveness.
- Developing links with outside agencies and procedures for referral.

### Implementation

A 'Crisis Team' comprised of the Principal and when possible the teacher and Chair of Governors will manage the following outlined procedures:-

The following steps for managing a critical incident are approximately in the order in which they should be implemented. The nature of each incident will dictate which steps are used and in what order.

#### 1. Obtain reliable information and assess the needs of the situation.

The principal will obtain accurate information and assess the danger posed by the critical incident.

- What happened, where and when?
- What is the extent of the injuries?
- What is the location of those injured and not injured?

- How many people are involved and what are their names?
- Is there a risk of further injury?
- What agencies have been contacted already?

On the basis of this assessment, a decision will be made to determine what action needs to be taken e.g. if evacuation of the building is necessary.

## 2. Contact appropriate agencies

- Emergency Services
- EA
- Chairman of Board of Governors if not already contacted
- Social Services
- Local Clergy

(See Appendix one: Critical Incidents Emergency Contact Numbers).

## 3. Convene a meeting with the Crisis Team

A list of possible topics covered follows:

- Agreeing a statement of facts for staff, pupils, parents and the media.
- Delegating responsibilities to the Crisis Team.
- Appointing someone to handle phone enquiries. This person should have clear guidance on the disclosure of information.
- Organising the timetable/routine for the day (Adhering to the normal school routine is important if this is possible)
- Organising a staff meeting, if appropriate.
- Organising the supervision of pupils during staff meetings.

## 4. Hold Staff meeting

All staff, including ancillary staff should be asked to attend. The areas, which might be covered, are listed below.

- An account of the known facts.
- Discussion with staff about how the facts will be shared with pupils.
- An outline of the routine for the day.
- Information for staff about which outside agencies have been contacted, or are involved and the support that will be put in place for both pupils and staff.

## 5. Inform parents/guardians

- Parents/guardians should be contacted as soon as possible. The first contact will need to be handled with great sensitivity. They should be given relevant and factual information. Support should be provided for parents who are on their own when they arrive at school.

- Where appropriate, the parents or family should be contacted and offered the school's sympathy or concern. In cases such as death, at least one staff representative should visit the home within 48 hours, if this is appropriate. Suitable school responses should also be discussed e.g. Attendance at the funeral, floral tributes, special school assembly etc.
- It may be necessary to inform parents of other children that their children may be upset. In this case, a letter will be sent to parents stating the facts and brief details of the incident. It is not appropriate at this point to disclose the names of those involved.

#### 6. Inform pupils

- The nature of the event will clearly have an influence on how pupils are informed. The suitability of the 'messenger' should also be considered bearing in mind that it is generally thought that support is best given by the adults known to the child.
- Pupils should be told factual information about the incident so that they know what has happened and to counter rumour. They should be allowed to ask questions and express their feelings.

#### 7. Dealing with the Media

The Principal will act as spokesperson. Pupils and staff should be discouraged from talking to the media. In the event of the principal being unavailable the Chairman of the Board of Governors will undertake this task.

#### 8. Staff at risk

- A critical incident places great burdens on staff who, not only have to deal with their own stress, but that of pupils and parents as well.
- The impact on staff will depend on their involvement in the incident and will vary according to their experience, training, coping skills, past trauma and current stresses.
- Staff colleagues should be mindful of each other, creating tolerance in respect of different reactions to stress, sharing information and ideas, keeping a watchful eye on each other and co-operating for the good of all staff.
- Some members of staff may need additional support and/or counselling.

#### 9. Pupils at risk

The school's pastoral care policy will take account of pupils' reactions to the incident. Pupils should be allowed to discuss the incident in class, e.g. in circle time. All teachers will be asked to be alert to pupils who may be at particular risk. Concerns regarding any of the following forms of behaviour should be reported to Mrs Wilson:

- Prolonged reaction to the bereavement.

- Outbursts of unexplained anger.
- Prolonged periods of withdrawal.
- Difficulty in expressing negative emotions.
- A pre-disposition to over-reaction.

Pupils may subsequently be referred for additional support.

#### 10. Closure

This may take a number of forms and will depend on the type of incident, e.g. establishing a memorial.

The Education Authority, in seeking to provide an effective response, has a procedure in place to ensure that appropriate support is available to assist schools.

The role of the Education Authority's Critical Incident Response Team is to enhance the school's pastoral care system by providing advice, support and resources to allow the school staff to successfully manage a critical incident.

***When a critical incident happens schools can contact the Education Authority Critical Incident Response Team at 02837512515.***

The Critical Incident Response Team Coordinator will speak with the Principal to gather the facts of the situation; provide advice and guidance and arrange for member/s of the EA critical incident response team to be available in school for support, if required.



### Critical Incidents Emergency Contact Numbers

Contact	Name	Number
Emergency Services	Police	<b>02890259299</b> <b>101</b>
Chair of BOG	Mr D Thompson	C/O Mrs K Wilson
EA	Critical incidents team	<b>02837512515</b>
Social Services (Gateway)		<b>03001234333</b>
Minister		
Minister		
Minister		
Barnardos		<b>02890672366</b>
N.S.P.C.C.		<b>08001111</b> <b>08448920245</b>