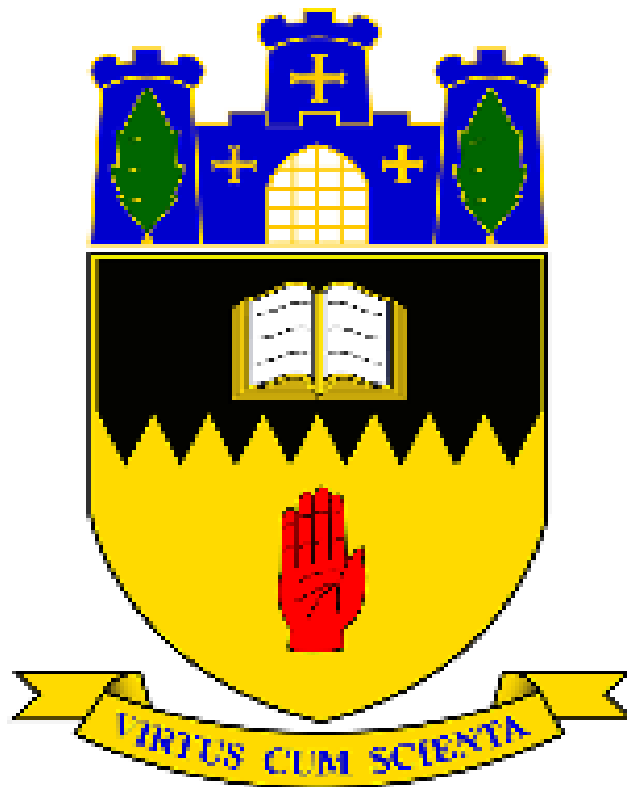


# COOKSTOWN HIGH SCHOOL



## Critical Incident Policy and Procedures

## POLICY DETAILS

<b>Policy Title:</b>	Critical Incident Policy and Procedures
<b>Target Audience:</b>	School Stakeholders
<b>Policy Lead:</b>	Principal
<b>Policy Developed by:</b>	Principal / Senior Leadership Team and Health and Safety Sub-committee
<b>Those Consulted:</b>	Staff and Governors
<b>Consultation Period:</b>	4 weeks
<b>Ratified by Board of Governors on:</b>	February 2020
<b>Implementation Date:</b>	February 2021
<b>Review Date:</b>	February 2022
<b>Principal:</b>	Miss G Evans
<b>Chair of Board of Governors:</b>	Mrs L Dripps

## RECORD OF POLICY REVIEWS & AMENDMENTS

DATE OF REVIEW	AMENDMENTS	APPROVED BY

## **CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

1.1 A critical incident may be defined as *“any sudden and unexpected incident or sequence of events which causes trauma within a school community and which overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of that school.”*

1.2 The School’s strategy for dealing with a critical incident has been developed following consideration of;

- The role of the Principal, Senior leadership Team and Governors
- The role of a Critical Incident Management Team
- Procedures for dealing with different critical incidents
- The role of external support agencies
- The professional development of staff

1.3 The Department of Education has stated that experience would indicate that schools which have a Critical Incident Management Plan in place tend to provide the best support to pupils, staff and their families and return to normality sooner, while continuing to be alert to those who may be vulnerable.

### **2. METHODOLOGY**

2.1 In fulfilling their duties and responsibilities the Principal and Board of Governors will adopt the Department of Education (DE) publication – *A Guide to Managing Critical Incidents in School*.

2.2 The DE publication – *A Guide to Managing Critical Incidents in School* is available on the Education Authority website at <http://www.eani.org.uk/schools/health-and-safety/guidance-documents>)

### **3. CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT PLAN**

3.1 The Plan will balance the twin objectives of managing the incident and meeting the needs of the whole school community.

3.2 The Plan includes the key tasks which the School will address throughout the various stages of a critical incident and these tasks include;

- How we will respond to a critical incident
- Essential tasks, contingency arrangements and staff deployment
- Clear lines of communication
- A resource contact list for external agencies
- Support for staff and pupils
- Procedures for dealing with the media
- Consideration of the importance of memorials

3.3 The School will use the guidance contained within Appendix 3 of the DE publication – A Guide to Managing Critical Incidents as the template for its own plan. (<http://www.deni.gov.uk>)

3.4 The School has established an Incident Management Framework which includes;

- A designated area for the Critical Incident Management Team
- Designated facilities for incident management support
- A central information point with appropriate staff
- Contact details for key people and support from external agencies
- A cascade system for contact and communication with key people
- The use of designated telephone lines for important messages
- Designated rooms and trained staff to deal with visitors
- Arrangements for preparing statements and dealing with the media
- Log keeping and record management

3.5 The plan includes appropriate training for the Senior Leadership Team.

#### **4. IMMEDIATE ACTION**

4.1 The School will assess the risk or threat associated with any critical incident and take immediate action in accordance with existing policy and guidance. This may involve;

- Initiating emergency evacuation of the school
- Action to prevent harm and/or the escalation of an incident
- The provision of first aid
- Calling the emergency services

4.2 Where the critical incident has occurred outside school premises then an impact assessment will be conducted to assess what immediate action needs to be taken.

4.3 The School will gather factual information regarding the critical incident, including details of the people involved and the nature and severity of the incident. It is important that this information is obtained from appropriate sources and subject to confirmation, for example;

- Family involved
- Police or other emergency services
- Medical staff
- Statutory agencies

4.4 Following the initial assessment of risk and information gathering, the School will mobilise its Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) and implement the Critical Incident Management Plan. The School senior leadership team (SLT) will receive training in how to mobilise the CIMT and implement the Critical Incident Management Plan.

4.5 The immediate tasks of the CIMT will include;

- Allocating roles to staff members
- Contacting the parents of the pupil/s directly involved in an incident
- Informing key people such as EA Critical Incident Team.
- Agreeing on the school routine for that day
- Establishing a central information point (CIP)
- Establishing a dedicated telephone line to CIP
- Implement a school visitor logging system
- Set up a warm, quiet recovery room with drinks, tissues, seating
- Ascertain the wishes of families in terms of staff/pupil briefings
- Agree a strategy for media requests, including EA advice.

4.6 When details of the incident have been confirmed, a briefing will be arranged for staff to;

- Make a brief statement of factual information
- Outline the school's response and plan of action
- Allow staff to ask questions and provide a response
- Outline staff responsibility for monitoring pupil and staff welfare
- Identify vulnerable staff and pupils who may be at risk
- Clarify specific responsibilities of staff in the action plan
- Advise staff on procedures for dealing with media enquiries
- Advise staff about the need for confidentiality
- Advise staff on agreed procedure for informing pupils and parents
- Inform staff of the support services available
- Advise staff of practical arrangements like cover, flexible timetable
- Advise staff of the time and place of the next briefing

4.7 When details of the incident have been confirmed and when staff have been briefed, the school will inform pupils about the incident. The School will;

- Provide an accurate and agreed statement to Form groups/classes
- Make the announcement to all groups simultaneously if possible
- Use clear language with age-appropriate factual information
- Identify vulnerable pupils
- Advise all pupils of the support available
- Answer any appropriate questions and dispel rumours
- Allow time for pupils to discuss their feelings
- Inform pupils who are absent by the most appropriate means
- Consider the needs of SEN pupils when informing them

4.8 The School will inform parents/carers, not directly affected by the incident, as soon as reasonably practicable after staff and pupils have been briefed. The School will use the most appropriate method of communication in the particular circumstances and this may involve;

- Telephone call
- Home visit
- Letter

## **5. VULNERABLE PUPILS**

5.1 The Department of Education (DE) has defined vulnerable pupils as those;

- Close friends and relatives of those involved in the incident
- Pupils with a history of self-harm
- Pupils who have experienced recent bereavement or separation
- Pupils with mental health difficulties
- Pupils with a history of substance abuse
- Pupils with child protection needs
- Pupils with learning, communication or sensory difficulties

- Pupils who have difficulty talking about their feelings
- Pupils experiencing serious family difficulties including mental/physical illness.

5.2 The School will apply the DE guidance relating to identifying and supporting vulnerable pupils.

## **6. SUPPORTING PUPILS**

6.1 In order to provide the most appropriate support to pupils, the School will apply the guidance within the DE publication – A Guide to Managing Critical Incidents, *Appendix 10 – “How staff can support pupils at a time of crisis”* and *Appendix 11 “Responding to pupils questions about a sudden death.”*

6.2 The School will also seek and apply the advice of the EA Critical Incident Support Team.

## **7. SUPPORTING STAFF**

7.1 The School acknowledges that staff may find the impact of a critical incident distressing and that this impact may vary depending on a range of factors including degree of involvement in the critical incident, past experience, training, appropriate coping mechanisms and current stresses. These factors will be actively considered when deploying staff and monitoring their wellbeing.

7.2 Consideration will also be given to the provision of appropriate opportunities for staff, individually and in groups, to discuss their own reactions to what has happened and to suggest options to support both staff and pupils.



- 7.3 The most immediate informal support may come from close friends and colleagues within the school community. However, the school will consider more formal support in terms of cover arrangements to enable staff to take time out and providing advice relating to external support.
- 7.4 The school will seek and apply the advice of the EA Critical Incident Support Team about supporting staff in general and arranging confidential external support where necessary.

## **8. ASSISTING STATUTORY INVESTIGATIONS**

- 8.1 The School acknowledges its legal and moral obligations to assist any investigations or enquiries from statutory agencies and will ensure that any request for information, meetings or interviews are dealt with quickly, sensitively and appropriately.
- 8.2 The School will ensure that any relevant records relating to the critical incident, those involved and the subsequent management of the incident are secured and made available to those who are entitled to have access to them in compliance with the law.

## **9. AFTER THE INCIDENT**

- 9.1 The details provided in sections 1-8 of this document have focused on the School's preparations and immediate response during a critical incident.
- 9.2 It is acknowledged that the management of a critical incident does not end following the immediate response and there are significant potential issues to be addressed after the incident. The School Critical Incident Plan will involve the application of the procedures detailed within DE

publication – A Guide to Managing Critical Incidents – ‘After the Incident’ – paragraphs 79-93 inclusive.

- 9.3 The Paragraphs 79-93 provide detailed arrangements for supporting pupils, staff, bereaved families and sensitive issues relating to memorials and commemorations. It is not possible to reproduce it in full in this policy document, but it is an integral part of the School’s Critical Incident Management Plan document folder.