



Every School a Good School

A Guide to
**Managing Critical
Incidents in Schools**



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**A Guide to Managing
Critical Incidents in Schools**

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INTRODUCTION

Managing Critical Incidents in Schools

1. This guidance is intended to help schools be prepared for a critical incident and to ensure effective management in a difficult situation. Although it is not possible to prepare in detail for every situation it is essential to have a general plan to hand which outlines the steps that need to be taken.

What is a Critical Incident?

2. *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.*

Managing a Critical Incident

3. Experience has shown that schools which have a Critical Incident Management Plan in place will handle the situation better. They tend to provide the best support to pupils, staff and families and return to normality sooner while continuing to be alert to the vulnerability of all concerned.
4. Critical incidents happen when least expected. When a school is affected by a crisis, all staff have an important role to play in supporting the emotional health and wellbeing of their school community and in maintaining control of the situation in the school.
5. It is important that staff know that they have a significant role at this time, that they feel valued and that their contribution is acknowledged. It should be recognised that on occasion some members of staff, for various reasons, may not be in a position to take an active role in managing a critical incident.
6. The effects of a critical incident on a pupil or staff member can be wide-ranging and can impinge upon his or her family particularly if the pupil is close to those at the centre of the crisis or the incident. A critical incident can also impact on the wider community including pupils and staff from other schools.
7. The guidance is the result of careful consideration and schools are urged to give thought to it now. It is based on the cumulative experience of schools' staff in dealing with critical incidents and of personnel from external agencies who support schools' staff and pupils throughout such events.

8. Each school's response to a critical incident will differ according to the nature of the incident, specific circumstances and previous experiences in the management of a critical incident.
9. This guidance is structured in a sequence which coincides with the main phases of managing a critical incident.

Section One: Before the Incident

10. This section emphasises the importance of being proactive in preparing for critical incidents. It highlights the importance of having a Critical Incident Management Strategy and Critical Incident Management Plan and details the role of a school's Critical Incident Management Team. It also highlights the importance of a multi-agency and well co-ordinated response.

Section Two: During the Incident

11. This section describes action to be taken by a school when responding to a critical incident. It identifies important sources of support available to a school's Critical Incident Management Team and the essential tasks to be undertaken as part of a collaborative and well-managed response. Detailed advice is given with regard to staff briefings, breaking the news to pupils and contacts with parents*. This section also gives advice on managing the media, the importance of pupil and staff welfare and support available during a critical incident response. The need to identify vulnerable 'at risk' pupils is also highlighted.

Section Three: After the Incident

12. This section deals with the important work required to help the school and the broader community cope with and recover from a critical incident. It advises on monitoring and support arrangements necessary for pupils and staff. It also emphasises the need for ongoing vigilance and identification of those with delayed or complicated grief reactions and who may be 'at risk'. The section also advises on supporting families, memorials and commemorations and reviewing the school's Critical Incident Management Plan.

Section Four: Appendices with Resource Materials

13. This section contains publication references, resources and support service details that schools may find helpful. It also details the information sources used in developing this guidance.

* *In this document the term parent includes guardian and primary carer.*

Section 1

Before the Incident

BEFORE THE INCIDENT

Critical Incident Management Strategy

14. Schools should begin the process of preparation by developing a Critical Incident Management Strategy. This strategy should identify the areas which need to be considered to minimise the impact of critical incidents. The strategy should address the different actions necessary and the responses required to different types of critical incidents and have clear guidelines in place to react to any school related emergency. Appendix 1 provides a prompt based on the definition of a critical incident and types of critical incidents that have affected schools.
15. The strategy should be developed by a representative group with membership drawn from the Board of Governors and the school's Senior Management Team. This group should engage with the wider school community as part of the development process. Appendix 2 is a template which can be used as the basis for planning a strategy.
16. The key areas for consideration in the strategy are the:
 - role of the school Principal, the Senior Management Team and the Board of Governors;
 - establishment of a Critical Incident Management Team and individual members roles within the Team;
 - procedures for dealing with different critical incidents;
 - liaison with external support agencies; and
 - relevant professional development of staff.

Critical Incident Management Team

17. The composition of a school's Critical Incident Management Team will vary according to individual school circumstances. This Team should include members of the Senior Management Team including those responsible for pastoral care, special educational needs and child protection within the school. Non-teaching staff should be represented on the Team. The Board of Governors should be asked whether it wishes to be represented as experience has shown this to be a valuable addition.

18. A Team Leader must be identified within the Critical Incident Management Team. This position is likely to be held by the Principal, Vice-Principal or another member of the school's Senior Management Team and this person should co-ordinate the school's response to any critical incident. The task of this Team is to develop and maintain the Critical Incident Management Plan.

Critical Incident Management Plan

19. The Critical Incident Management Plan must balance the twin objectives of managing the incident and meeting the needs of the whole school community.
20. The Plan should identify the key tasks that need to be dealt with at various stages of a critical incident. These need to be grouped together according to their priority so that the essential tasks are dealt with first and others follow as required.

21. These key tasks will include:

- a school response depending on the nature of the incident;
- essential tasks, contingency arrangements and staff deployment;
- clear lines of communication;
- a resource contact list of external agencies eg education and library boards;
- support for staff and pupils;
- procedures for dealing with the media;
- plans for on-going support; and
- consideration of memorials or commemorations.


22. Appendix 3 provides a sample Critical Incident Management Guide to help keep a focus on the essential tasks in the immediate management of a specific incident. This is available in e-format at: <http://www.deni.gov.uk> and can be adapted to suit different incidents.
23. When developing the Plan it is important that schools designate a central point or points of contact within the school. Support for staff and pupils is also important.

A Central Information Point

24. The Plan will need to prescribe methods of contacting and communicating with key people including education and library board officers and support professionals. There should be a staffed information point in an easily accessible area to facilitate the exchange of accurate and relevant communication. Consideration should be given to a cascade system of telephone contacts, see Appendix 4. This allows school staff to disseminate information quickly, without placing the burden of work on one person.
25. Particular attention should be given to:
- how essential telephone lines can be kept clear to receive important messages whilst ensuring that key information is given out;
 - staff to receive incoming calls;
 - staff to deal with distressed parents by phone/in person;
 - use of a prepared statement; and
 - how to deal with the media.
26. A log of incoming and outgoing calls should be maintained to ensure that duplication is avoided.

Support for Staff and Pupils

27. The Critical Incident Response Teams from the education and library boards, together with the Independent Counselling Service for Schools, can if required provide initial support to the school community.
28. The Critical Incident Management Plan should include contact details for the local education and library board's Critical Incident Response Team, relevant personnel within Health and Social Care Trusts and other key agencies as necessary, for example, police and school chaplain. A sample list of useful contacts is found at Appendix 5. This list should include the names and current phone numbers of school staff including the Chair of the Board of Governors, counselling services and key holders. This list should be reviewed and updated termly. It is important that the members of the Critical Incident Management Team have a copy of this list at home, as critical incidents can occur outside of school hours and term-time.

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29. Schools need to be aware that, during a critical incident, offers of help and support will come from many sources; some will be welcome as part of the school's Critical Incident Management Plan and others, though well intentioned, may only serve to complicate that response. It is therefore important to give careful consideration to the benefits to be gained for the school community of accepting help from any source, other than those which had been planned. All contact with pupils by any agency or individuals should be governed by current child protection legislation and guidance for schools.

School Closure

30. Depending on the nature of the critical incident and its impact on the school it may be necessary to suspend the normal timetable for a period of time to permit an appropriate response. In very exceptional circumstances, such as a death on school premises, it may be necessary to close the school. Further advice on exceptional closures and the procedures to be followed are contained in the Department of Education's Circular, 2005/08, or any that replaces it. It can be accessed on the Department of Education website: <http://www.deni.gov.uk>

Critical Incidents during Weekends and School Holidays

31. The plan should include any necessary action and response required to potential critical incidents that may impact on the school during weekends and school holidays.

Section 2

During the Incident

DURING THE INCIDENT

Implementing the Critical Incident Management Plan

32. It is important to remember that no two incidents are alike. As soon as school authorities become aware of any incident that might have an impact on it, the Principal or Critical Incident Team Leader should find out the facts and assess its significance for the school. The Principal or Team Leader's decision will determine the response that will be implemented. The position can be reviewed as new information emerges.
33. The Critical Incident Management Guide at Appendix 3 provides a logical sequence of addressing the issues associated with a critical incident. This can be adapted to suit different situations. A copy can be downloaded at www.deni.gov.uk
34. When a critical incident occurs the school should inform key contacts of the incident that has taken place and keep them updated. These may include the emergency services, members of the school's Board of Governors, Council for Catholic Maintained Schools, the education and library board's Critical Incident Response Team and other relevant agencies who may have a role in providing support.
35. When implementing a Critical Incident Management Plan there are a number of immediate key tasks that need to be undertaken. The nature of the incident will determine an appropriate order for these tasks. The following checklist can be adapted for different types of critical incidents.
36. The key tasks will include:
 - responding to any inevitable risk or threat eg evacuation or first aid;
 - notifying the emergency services/other relevant authorities and agreed parties;
 - mobilising the Critical Incident Management Team;
 - agreeing the school routine for that day;
 - informing staff;
 - establishing a dedicated, telephone line;
 - setting-up recovery/designated room;
 - informing pupils and parents;
 - preparing/adapting a media statement; and
 - assessing initial impact of the critical incident on staff and pupils.

Normal School Routine

37. Schools should restore normal school routine as soon as practicable. It may be useful to continue certain curriculum activities at intervals during the days following the critical incident. Sustaining the normal routine, with timetable flexibility to allow pupils and staff to access support from the education and library boards' Critical Incident Response Teams and external agencies, will maintain a sense of continuity and stability for the whole school community.

Briefing Sessions for Staff

38. It is essential that staff receive factual information on what has occurred, how the incident will be handled and how they can contribute to the school's response. A formal staff briefing should take place as soon as possible after the circumstances of the incident are known with a time set for formal debriefing at the end of the school day(s). Absent teachers should also be briefed on the situation.
39. This information should be given by the Principal or Team Leader. Staff should be kept updated on developments during the course of the day and this can be done during morning breaks and/or lunchtime using the staff room.

40. The initial briefing should:
 - give a brief statement of factual information;
 - outline the school's response and proposed plan of action;
 - allow staff to ask questions and to get a response;
 - outline staff responsibility for monitoring pupil and staff welfare;
 - identify vulnerable staff and pupils who may be at risk;
 - clarify specific responsibilities for staff;
 - advise staff on procedure for dealing with media enquiries;
 - advise staff on agreed procedure for informing pupils and parents;
 - inform staff of the support services that are available;
 - reassure staff and pupils that they will be supported; and
 - advise staff of time/place of next briefing and debriefing session.

Breaking the News to Pupils

41. It is important to inform pupils of a critical incident as soon as possible. Delaying a formal announcement may make the situation worse, as rumour can add another aspect to handling the critical incident and pupils may feel that a delay shows a lack of concern or sensitivity by the school staff and could undermine the credibility of information given later.
42. Consideration should be given to the range of different groups among the pupils and how they are to be informed. Very young children and those with special educational needs must be informed in a way which is appropriate, using language and methods of communication already familiar to them.
43. To reduce the potential for creating a highly charged emotional atmosphere schools should consider informing pupils in small groups, for example, siblings, close friends, class group, and year group preferably in their regular classroom setting. Many pupils will likely be in shock so a small group setting will also act as a 'safe space'. The best person to communicate this difficult news will normally be the class/form teacher or the Head of Year. Staff should be able to decline this task if they feel unable to do it.
44. Before making the announcement of a critical incident attention needs to be given to what the pupils are to be told as well as how they are to be told. Appendix 6 provides sample announcements and Appendix 7 provides useful information on informing pupils. Teachers should be given a carefully worded announcement to read aloud in classrooms.
45. Where there has been a death it is important that the bereaved family's right to privacy is respected. In this instance the announcement made to pupils will usually include a statement of condolence and this should be sensitive to the different religions and cultures present in the school community. The announcement should also advise pupils of the support arrangements to be put in place and how these can be accessed.
46. Staff should be aware that young people's understanding of death will depend on their cognitive and developmental stage. Appendix 8 provides information on the concept and common reactions to death in various age ranges.
47. In the case of a suspected suicide there are a number of issues that need to be considered. These issues are dealt with at Appendix 9.

Making the Announcement to Pupils

48. Teachers should make the announcement simultaneously, where possible, to ensure that pupils attending school hear about it at the same time. Before making any announcement teachers should be mindful of vulnerable pupils in the group including those recently bereaved, those with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language. When making the agreed announcement teachers should pass on the facts that are known, never speculate on the cause or causes of the incident and be truthful when questions cannot be answered.
49. After the announcement teachers should always allow sufficient time for pupils to begin to discuss their feelings. Teachers do have a listening, supportive and containing role and should be encouraged to remain calm and to listen to the pupils.

Supporting Pupils

50. After making the announcement teachers should allow time for discussion. Allowing pupils to share experiences helps with recovery, Appendix 10 "How School Staff Can Support Pupils at A Time of Crisis" and Appendix 11 "Responding to Pupils Questions following A Sudden Death" provide useful guidelines and responses for teachers. There is also a need for on going monitoring of pupils while in class, corridors and schools grounds to ensure they are supported.
51. A school should always provide a designated area/areas for pupils should they wish to come out of class. There, they should be allowed to talk about their feelings to someone, for example, a member of the school's pastoral care team or a member of the education and library board's Critical Incident Support Team, a counsellor supporting the school or a school nurse. For those pupils that are particularly distressed the suggested information contained at Appendix 12 can be used as part of the support arrangements. Consideration may need to be given for these pupils to go home. Arrangements should be made directly with parents to ensure that the pupils are supported at home.
52. The Independent Counselling Service for Schools can provide support for pupils who are distressed.

Pupils Absent from School

53. Pupils who are absent from school due to illness, work experience, educational trips or suspension should also be informed. This is of particular importance if a pupil has died and the absent pupil is in the same class or is a known friend. In such a case, early contact should be made with the pupil's parent by the class or Form Teacher. A pupil's return to school in any of these circumstances requires sensitive management.


Vulnerable Pupils

54. Schools should acknowledge that the critical incident may act as a trigger for an extreme response by some pupils who are vulnerable even though they are not directly involved.

55. Vulnerable pupils include:

- close friends and relatives of those affected;
- pupils with a history of self harm or suicidal ideation;
- 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;
- non-communicative pupils who have difficulty talking about their feelings; and
- pupils experiencing serious family difficulties including mental/physical illness.

56. Pupils with special educational needs including pupils with learning and communication difficulties will require special consideration from staff. They may be at a different developmental level to their peers, which may affect their understanding of trauma and death. These pupils should be told the news separately if possible by using short simple sentences in language appropriate to their level of understanding. They may ask the same questions repeatedly and need extra patience and support. Non-verbal approaches such as pictures, drawings and



photographs may help them to explore and express their feelings and concerns. The school's Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator should be asked about the best approach for pupils with special needs.

Informing Parents

57. When a critical incident occurs, parents must be informed. The type of critical incident will determine the nature of contact with parents and the urgency with which this is done.
58. Parents of pupils directly involved should be telephoned or visited. If the death of a pupil has occurred, one has to be mindful of the bereaved parents' needs. It is important for the Principal or another school representative to make contact with the parents as soon as possible to express sympathy, liaise over messages of condolence from staff/pupils and to discuss funeral arrangements. Schools should always take into account the wishes of the family before sending school representatives including pupils to a funeral and be sensitive to different religious practices and cultures.
59. Other parents also need to be informed; this is likely to be done most effectively by letter. Appendix 13 provides a letter and Appendix 14 gives practical and constructive suggestions on how parents can support their children. Schools should consider issuing the information at Appendix 14 along with this letter.
60. When making contact with parents it is important that any letter issued should give the facts of the critical incident and ensure that only accurate information is shared. Schools should also consider the needs of parents whose first language is not English.
61. Schools also need to have a contingency plan where the critical incident requires all parents to be contacted as a matter of urgency.

Role of Parents

62. Parents can play a supportive role in helping pupils cope at a time of crisis. It is helpful for the school and parents to communicate shared messages when supporting the children. A unified approach will make things easier to manage and it is important that those with parental responsibility know how to access support both within the school and externally.

63. In all cases, giving parents some information on how young people react to a traumatic event will be helpful and reassuring, for example, pupils may be anxious, lack concentration and be restless or unable to sleep. Where there are vulnerable pupils, some parents may need to be contacted personally.

Media Management


64. While schools are under no obligation to speak to the media, co-operation with the media can make the difference between accurate and inaccurate reporting. Agreed necessary procedures must be in place to deal with the media before a critical incident occurs. It is important that a structured approach to media management is developed to ensure a positive and supportive response from the media. All education and library boards have a Communications Officer/Unit whose role it is to facilitate media communications for schools in their area.
65. Appendices 15 and 16 provide useful guidance on dealing with the media following a critical incident.
66. It is, however, strongly recommended that before making a statement:
- a check is carried out with the police, ambulance, and fire and rescue service;
 - the relevant education and library board Schools' Communications Officer is contacted for advice on the statement;
 - a decision is taken on whether all media enquiries and follow up enquiries are handled by the Principal or another designated member of the Critical Incident Management Team;
 - an accurate, factual report is prepared as background to any questions;
 - no other staff should make comment or provide comment on the incident;
 - news media should not be permitted on school property without the prior approval of the Principal. This applies to television, radio, print media and photographers.
67. Pupils should also be advised about dealing with contact from or with the media. Pupils should also be encouraged to use discretion when commenting about the incident on social networking sites.

Support for Staff

68. The impact of a critical incident on staff may be distressing and some may have difficulty coping. The extent of this impact will depend on staff involvement in the incident and the particular circumstances pertaining to it. The impact will also vary according to staff experience and training, coping skills, past trauma history and current stresses.
69. Sources of help and support need to be in place as an integral part of the Critical Incident Management Plan and not hastily arranged at times of tragedy. A school ethos that promotes a caring, supportive community is an important pre-requisite for helping all staff to feel valued and to cope at times of great stress. In addition to support arrangements for all staff from within the school, external sources of help should be identified and made known to all. Any counselling support should be considered within the framework of a whole school approach to managing a critical incident.
70. The needs of the Principal and other senior members of staff, who are expected to exercise sensitive and strong leadership during the incident, must also be provided for in the Plan. While this group of staff may be well supported from within the school, it is likely that support will also come from outside the school. Sources of help may include experienced advisers from the employing authorities, the Board of Governors and relevant clergy/faith workers.
71. During a crisis, consideration needs to be given to the provision of opportunities for staff, as individuals or in groups, to discuss their own reactions to what has happened, to assess the climate of the school and to share their observations on the monitoring of vulnerable pupils.
72. Staff must be well supported during a crisis. In order to support pupils effectively, staff need to be kept informed, to understand the importance of their role and to be supported themselves. The needs of all staff must be monitored and appropriate support provided.

Support within School

73. Informal support in school may be available through staff, colleagues and friends who can help each other and, if appropriate, someone in the Senior Management Team, if not already involved.

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74. More formal support may include, for example, providing cover arrangements for staff that are temporarily unable to carry out their normal duties, arranging for staff to have time out if necessary and advising staff of external support that may be available to them.

External Support

75. In the immediate aftermath of a critical incident the school community needs the type of support described in this document such as calm reassurance by familiar adults. The school can be supported in providing this by the education and library boards' Critical Incident Response Teams in conjunction with the Independent Counselling Service for Schools. In the longer term, however, staff may benefit from counselling support, such as that provided by the employing authority or other community based counselling services.

Assisting Statutory Investigations

76. Schools need to be aware that a critical incident, in particular, the sudden death of a pupil can trigger an investigation that may involve a number of statutory agencies.
77. The sudden death of a pupil is an extremely difficult and emotionally charged time for all concerned. Schools should be aware that alongside a coroner's inquest there may be other officially established reviews or inquiries into the pupil's death and the circumstances surrounding it.
78. It is important that schools anticipate being asked to contribute information about the pupil to any such review or inquiry and ensure that all relevant records are secured. It is important to stress that the purpose of such reviews is not to inquire into how a child died or who is culpable. It is to learn from the experience on how best to protect children in the future and if there are ways of improving the practice of all professionals working with children particularly in relation to multi-disciplinary and inter-agency working.

Section 3

After the Incident

AFTER THE INCIDENT

79. The aim of the work carried out in school during the weeks, months and sometimes years following a critical incident is to help its immediate and broader community cope with and recover from the critical incident. A return to normal routine requires careful and sensitive planning, timing and implementation. Staff should continue to monitor pupils' emotional wellbeing and be attentive to pupils with ongoing difficulties.


Support for Pupils

80. Returning to school for some pupils after a critical incident may be very difficult and every attempt should be made to provide as much continuity as possible. Suitable arrangements to support a pupil or pupils returning to school should be made.

These arrangements include:

- arranging a home visit to discuss plans for returning to school even on a phased basis;
- helping arrange a rota of support from school friends;
- arranging for school work to be sent home where appropriate;
- briefing staff and pupils on how best to support individuals returning to school;
- arranging support for temporary or permanent mobility difficulties or disfigurement; and
- planning support for emotional needs eg leaving class when distressed.

81. Appendix 17 deals with planning a positive return for a bereaved pupil.
82. A record should be kept of a pupil who has been affected by bereavement. Schools may find the suggested form at Appendix 18 useful. When a pupil affected by a critical incident moves school, the receiving school should always be informed, Appendix 19 provides a sample form.
83. Pupils who continue to show signs of significant distress after a number of weeks and who are finding the return to normal school routine difficult may require a referral for specialist intervention. Schools should also consider the



need for a support plan for individual pupils or a group of pupils returning to school after a long absence or those considered at risk. Safeguarding children is a multi-agency issue and can become a child protection issue where schools should liaise with external agencies for appropriate guidance and reassurance. The support plans for these vulnerable pupils should become an integral part of the schools' pastoral care arrangements.

84. Staff may have to cope with the continuing impact of the critical incident and with issues as they arise during teaching and learning. The classroom provides opportunities to deal with these issues in a more extensive way. It would be unwise to focus obsessively on the critical incident, yet issues arising from the event should not be avoided. Schools should remember that some pupils' ability to concentrate is significantly affected after a critical incident. If public examinations are imminent for pupils it is important to make the examining boards aware of the situation.

Support for Bereaved Families

85. The family of a pupil who has died will require support for a long time after the tragic event. Family members may be at the same school and have difficulty in adjusting to their loss. Parents may wish to have mementos of their child's involvement in the life of the school and to hear about his/her achievements.
86. The return of personal belongings and/or school work to the family, perhaps in a 'memory folder' or 'memory box' needs to be handled sensitively. Schools should also consider what to do when events arise that would have involved the deceased pupil, for example, award ceremonies. The management of public examination results and the return of coursework also requires careful consideration. It should be remembered that whatever precedent the school sets should be applied to similar incidents in the future and be in line with family wishes.

Support for Staff

87. Some staff may need support in the longer term. The strain on staff of leading a school through a critical incident can be profoundly disturbing and may not be identified until after the crisis. Staff, both teaching and non-teaching, can often underestimate the impact on them and may not recognise that they are experiencing difficulty. The Critical Incident Management Team must be alert to this possibility and ensure that staff are directed to sources of support.

Memorials and Commemorations

88. A school may wish to hold a memorial or commemoration. Holding a special assembly is a way of celebrating the life and achievement of the pupil or colleague and gives the school a corporate means of thanksgiving and farewell. The wishes of the bereaved family should always be taken into consideration and schools should be mindful of different religious faiths and accepted practices.
89. Significant dates such as anniversaries or celebrations may revive deep feelings among pupils and staff and need careful handling if new problems are not to be created. Additional support for pupils and staff may be required at this time. In addition, it is important to take account of any long-term legal processes, for example, a court case or an inquest, possible media interest and any related public events which may be unsettling for the school.

Review of Critical Incident Management Plan

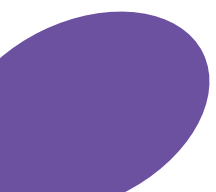
90. A review should be carried out within six weeks of a critical incident. This review should be undertaken in collaboration with those support agencies involved and should include consultation with the school community to evaluate the effectiveness of the Plan and to make necessary modifications if required.
91. The review should address the following questions:
 - What went well?
 - What was most/least helpful?
 - Were there any gaps?
 - Have all necessary referrals to support services been made?
 - Is there any unfinished business?
 - Have all records relevant to the Critical Incident been secured?
 - Are there any identified training needs?
 - Does the Plan need to be reviewed/changed/updated?
92. The Critical Incident Management Team should meet on a termly basis to discuss the Plan and ensure that it is fit for purpose including considering the recent experiences of other schools. Key contact details should always be reviewed on a termly basis.
93. There must be a formal review of the Critical Incident Management Plan annually.

Section 4

Appendices with Resource Materials

LIST OF APPENDICES AND RESOURCE MATERIALS

Appendix 1	Definition of A Critical Incident and Types of Critical Incidents That Can Affect a School
Appendix 2	Critical Incident Management Strategy Planning Tool
Appendix 3	Critical Incident Management Guide
Appendix 4	Cascade Telephone System
Appendix 5	List of Useful Contacts
Appendix 6	Announcements to Pupils - Advice for Teachers
Appendix 7	Breaking the News to Pupils - Advice for Teachers
Appendix 8	Children and Young People's Understanding of Death - Information for Staff
Appendix 9	Death by Suspected Suicide - Information for Staff
Appendix 10	How to Support Pupils at a Time of Crisis - Information for Staff
Appendix 11	Responding to Pupils' Questions Following a Sudden Death - Information for Staff
Appendix 12	Understanding Your Reactions - Information for Pupils
Appendix 13	Informing Parents of a Sudden Death - Letter to Parents
Appendix 14	Understanding Your Child's Reactions and How You Can Help - Information for Parents
Appendix 15	Press Statements - Information for Staff
Appendix 16	Media Interviews - Information for Staff
Appendix 17	Pupils Returning to School After Bereavement - Information for Teachers
Appendix 18	School Record of a Pupil Who Has Experienced Loss/Bereavement
Appendix 19	Pastoral Care Transfer Information Form
Appendix 20	Publications, Resources and Support Services
Appendix 21	References Which Have Informed the Development of This Document



DEFINITION OF A CRITICAL INCIDENT AND TYPES OF CRITICAL INCIDENTS THAT CAN AFFECT A SCHOOL

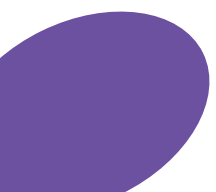
What is a Critical Incident?

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.

What types of critical incidents can affect a school?

Incidents that have affected schools:

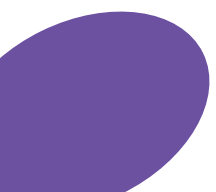
- Sudden death of pupil or member of staff;
- Disappearance of a pupil or member of staff;
- Death or injury of a pupil or staff member on a school outing;
- Severe injury to pupil or staff member as a result of road traffic accident;
- Serious assault on pupil or staff member in school;
- Violent/disturbed intruder on school premises during school day;
- Serious damage to school building or property through fire, flood or vandalism;
- Civil disturbance in local community;
- Pupil with contagious illness;
- Immediate evacuation of the school with no likelihood of return for a number of hours.



CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT STRATEGY PLANNING TOOL

Critical Incidents do happen and it is important that a school has a Strategy in place to best respond and manage any traumatic situation should it occur. This Strategy should identify the key areas that need to be considered to assist a school in the development of a Plan for management of Critical Incidents. A Critical Incident Management Plan should be an integral part of a school's pastoral care system and development plans. This planning tool is to help you identify key issues that should be considered.

<p>Aims of the Strategy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognise which incidents may be critical for the school community. • Respond to a critical incident in an informed manner. • Create a positive, open, communicative climate where the needs of staff and pupils are met in critical incident situations. • Create a safe school environment whereby the physical, social and psychological health of pupils and staff is prioritised. • Outline, monitor and review the management plans for dealing with different emergencies. • Promote active coping skills within the curriculum. • Establish positive working relationships and dialogue with outside agencies, thus enabling full and effective collaboration in the event of a critical incident.
<p>Implementation Key Areas for Consideration</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define roles and responsibilities for all staff – identify the Critical Incident Management Team. • Identify support personnel for Critical Incident Management Team. • Consider procedures for dealing with different Critical Incidents. • Consider staff and pupil welfare. • Plan contact with parents. • Plan links with relevant agencies. • Decide on media management. • Consider arrangements to apply during school holidays. • Consider religious and cultural issues for the school community.
<p>Links with School Policies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pastoral Care • Child Protection • Internet/mobile phone use • Health and Safety • Special Needs
<p>Curricular Links/ Support</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal Development/Personal Development and Mutual Understanding • Circle Time • Assemblies
<p>Professional Development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and secure relevant training needs for staff.
<p>Monitoring/ Review of Strategy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review post incident, termly and annually.

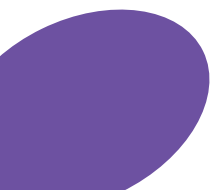


CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT GUIDE

This Guide can be used as a prompt for discussions when preparing a school's Critical Incident Management Plan and as a running record during the course of an incident.

The guide divided into 3 sections - Initial Report, Day 1 and Day 2 is a set of recording sheets represented as a sequence of events that need to be considered and recorded. It can be adapted to suit different types of critical incidents and is available at www.deni.gov.uk

The record should be completed with discretion, sensitivity and respect for confidentiality. It should be shared and stored in accordance with Data Protection and Child Protection Policies.



CONFIDENTIAL

Initial Report

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Initial Report

Date: _____ Time: _____

Information received from: _____

Contact details: _____

Name of person informed: _____

Information passed to: _____
(Name of person with overall responsibility)

Time: _____ Date: _____

Facts of incident received so far: Brief Description of the Incident on (Date)

Unconfirmed reports:

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Details of individuals known to be involved

Name	Pupil/Member of Staff or Local Community	Involvement	Known/Suspected	Contact Details

IMMEDIATE ACTION

Critical Incident Team Management Informed _____ (Time) _____ (Date)

Name of Person: _____

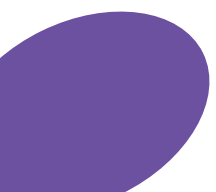
Arrange Meeting of Critical Incident Management Team

_____ (Time) _____ (Date)

Name of Person: _____

_____ (Time) _____ (Date)

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Day 1: Running Record

DAY 1

1. Assess the ongoing danger and take necessary action eg evacuation/first aid/emergency services

Done: Time: _____ Date: _____

Name of Person: _____

2. Allocate roles to staff members

Lead Roles	Person Responsible	Mobile Number
Establish central information point		
Set up dedicated phone line		
Arrange staff briefing and debriefing (set regular times)		
Inform pupils		
Inform parents		
Manage Media (prepared statement)		
Arrange staff support		
Set up recovery room		

Done: Time: _____ Date: _____

Person responsible: _____

3. Establish a central information point

Done: Time: _____ Date: _____

Person responsible: _____

4. Set up dedicated phone line

Done: Time: _____ Date: _____

Person responsible: _____

5. Inform key people and seek support as appropriate/link with other relevant agencies

List of Key Contacts (name)	Phone Number	Done
Principal/Vice-Principal		<input type="checkbox"/>
Education and Library Board's Critical Incident Response Team		<input type="checkbox"/>
Chair of Board of Governors		<input type="checkbox"/>
Council for Catholic Maintained Schools		<input type="checkbox"/>
Local Clergy/Faith Workers		<input type="checkbox"/>
Local Police		<input type="checkbox"/>
Fire Brigade		<input type="checkbox"/>
Hospital		<input type="checkbox"/>
Designated Medical Officer		<input type="checkbox"/>
Communications Officer		<input type="checkbox"/>
School Nurse		<input type="checkbox"/>
Educational Psychologist		<input type="checkbox"/>
Educational Welfare Officer		<input type="checkbox"/>
Counselling Services		<input type="checkbox"/>
Key Holders		<input type="checkbox"/>

Done: Person responsible: _____

Time: _____ Date: _____

6. Brief all staff

Remember: Clear factual information
Advice on how to inform & support pupils
Team working and practical arrangements (eg cover, flexible timetable, recovery room)
Support for staff
Identify vulnerable staff
Inform absent staff
Set time for debrief session

Done: Person responsible: _____

Time: _____ Date: _____

7. Inform all pupils

Remember: Clear language (no euphemisms)
Dispel rumour
Offer support
Age appropriate factual information
Assurances regarding updated information
Identify vulnerable pupils
Inform absent pupils

Done: Person responsible: _____

Time: _____ Date: _____

8. Inform all parents

Remember: Appropriate format eg by phone, letter, home visit.

Done: Person responsible: _____

How? _____

Time: _____ Date: _____

9. Contact with Media (if appropriate)

Remember: Consult with Communications Officer
Return media calls
Use prepared statement
Use measured tone
Emphasise school pastoral care support as appropriate

Done: Person responsible: _____

How? _____

Time: _____ Date: _____

10. Debrief staff – End of day session

Remember: Thank staff
Advise about self-care
Information about next day
Time to chat/reflect, tea and buns
Next day arrangements

Done: Person responsible: _____

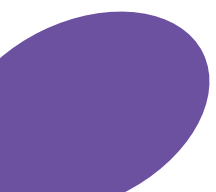
Time: _____ Date: _____

11. Meeting of Critical Incident Management Team (End of day session)

Remember: Support and debrief team
Plan Day 2 – morning briefing for staff
Arrange next meeting of Team

Done: Person responsible: _____

Time: _____ Date: _____



Day 2: Running Record

DAY 2

1. Record any further information/details since previous day

Done: Person responsible: _____

Time: _____ Date: _____

2. Maintain central information point

Done: Person responsible: _____

3. Maintain dedicated phone line

Done: Person responsible: _____

4. Deal with staff cover/flexible timetable/allocate appropriate rooms etc as necessary

Done: Person responsible: _____

5. Briefing Staff – Morning session

Think: Practical arrangements
Support for pupils
Self-care
Time of debriefing session

Done: Person responsible: _____

Time: _____ Date: _____

6. Pupils

- Providing further information (as appropriate)
- Showing care and support
- Providing comforting routine and predictability
- Allowing pupils some involvement/outlet eg cards/drawings/poems/ceremonies
- Recovery room
- Refer vulnerable pupils for further action

Details of action taken or any follow up action required should be recorded separately.

7. Parents

Provide further information (as appropriate) eg letter/meetings etc

Details of action taken:

Person responsible: _____ Date: _____

8. Consideration of memorial services

Remember: Times/dates
Staff involved
Information to parents

Done: Person responsible: _____ Date: _____

9. Debriefing staff – end of Day 2 session

Remember: Ongoing practical arrangements
Longer term monitoring of pupils who may be at risk more
detailed self-care advice
Time to reflect, chat, tea and buns

Done: Person responsible: _____

Time: _____ Date: _____

10. Meeting of Critical Incident Management Team end Day 2

Remember: Support and debrief team
Plan Day 3 – morning briefing, staff cover etc, if required
Discuss need for longer term actions these will include:

- Memorials, services and ceremonies (eg memory books, art work, school event, planting tree)
- Re-establishment of feelings of safety and predictability among school community
- Ongoing support of pupils' emotional coping (eg circle time, Personal Development and Mutual Understanding)
- School support for contact with families affected by the incident
- Ongoing monitoring of children who may be having difficulties – providing support and referring on as necessary
- Ongoing support for staff directly involved and those most affected

Done: Person responsible: _____

Time: _____ Date: _____

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Details of Pupils and Staff Requiring Ongoing Support

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Ongoing support for pupils and staff most affected

Potential Referral Agencies	Telephone Number
Family doctor (through GP)	
Other Counselling Agencies	
Educational Welfare	
Other Education and Welfare Services	
Schools' Counselling Service	

1. Details of Pupil Referrals for support following Critical Incident

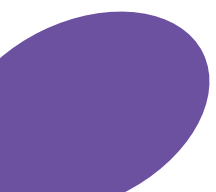
Name of Child	Referred to	Referred by
Date of Referral	Outcome	
Name of Child	Referred to	Referred by
Date of Referral	Outcome	

Person responsible: _____ Date: _____

2. Details of ongoing support for staff directly involved and those most affected following Critical Incident

Details of action taken:

Person responsible: _____ *Date:* _____





Review

Management of Incident

(To be completed 6 weeks after the incident.)



Reflection

Details of key lessons learned through management of this incident:

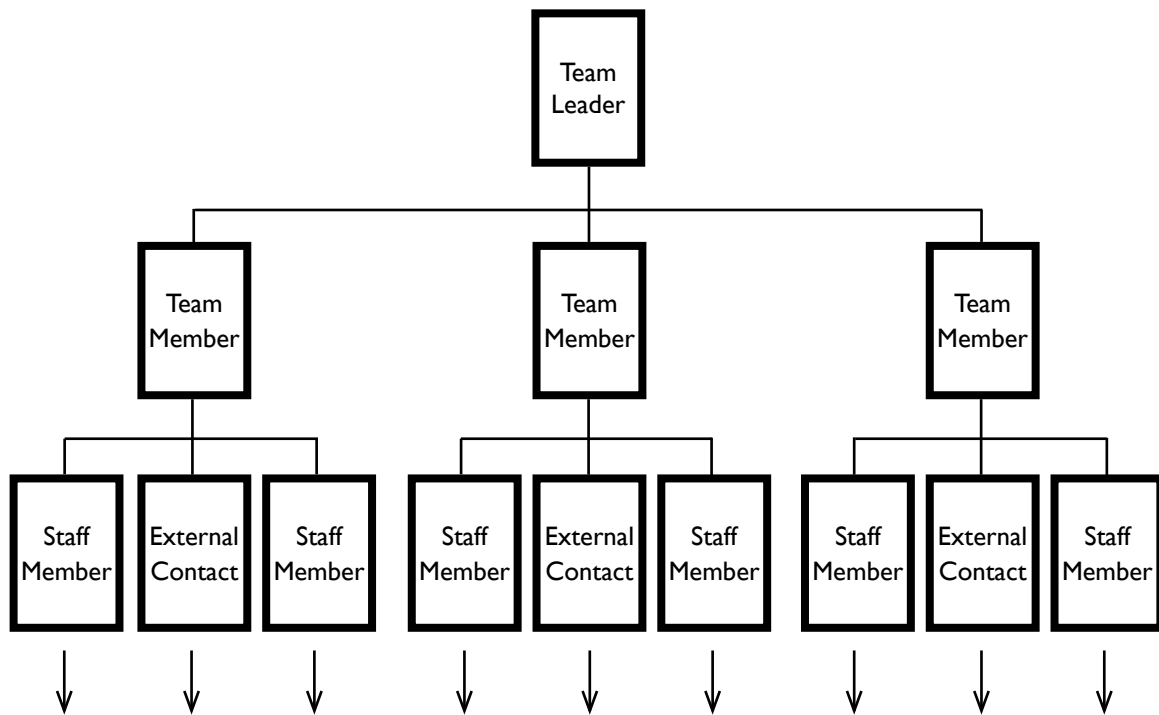
- What went well?
- What was most/least helpful?
- Were there any gaps?
- Have all necessary referrals to support services been made?
- Are there any identified training needs?
- Does the policy need to be reviewed/changed/updated?
- Is there any unfinished business?

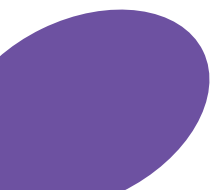
Completed by: _____ Position: _____

Date: _____

CASCADE TELEPHONE SYSTEM

In the event of a Critical Incident:
Team Leader contacts each Team Member;
Team Members will contact Staff Members and External Contacts;
Staff Members will make contact in line with agreed arrangements.



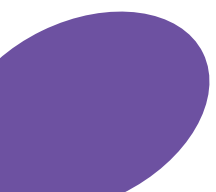


LIST OF USEFUL CONTACTS

This list should be reviewed each school term and updated if necessary. It is important that all members of the school's Critical Incident Management Team have a copy of this list at home as Critical Incidents can occur during weekends and school holidays.

Organisation	Name	Phone	Fax	Email
Principal				
Vice-Principal				
Head of Pastoral Care				
Chair of Board of Governors				
Caretaker/Key holders				
Board Critical Incident Response Team Leader				
Board's Chief Executive				
CCMS				
Local Police				
Local Fire and Rescue Service				
Local Hospital				
Nearest Doctor's Surgery				
School Nurse				
Board's Emergency Out of Hours				
Board's Health and Safety Officer				
Board's Transport Section				
Board's Maintenance Officer				
Board's Communications Officer				
Educational Psychologist				
Education Welfare Officer				
Social Services – Local Team				
Counselling Services (pupils)				
Local Church or Clergy/Faith Workers (staff)				
Media Contacts				
Local Health and Care Trust				
Staff Support and Welfare				

Contact List: Updated _____ (date) by _____ (name)
 Updated _____ (date) by _____ (name)
 Updated _____ (date) by _____ (name)



ANNOUNCEMENTS TO PUPILS

ADVICE FOR TEACHERS

Remember announcements should be simple, straightforward and sincere. The following examples provide a suggested structure and are not intended to be adhered to rigidly. After the announcement pupils should be assured that they will have the opportunity to talk about the critical incident.

1. Fatality After A Road Traffic Accident

We are taking this time to think about _____, a Year 10 pupil who died last night in a road traffic accident. _____ was travelling with her family to _____ when the accident occurred. We do not know any further details about the accident at this time except that the rest of the family is safe.

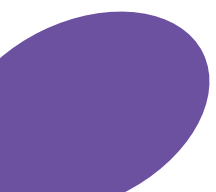
_____’s funeral is being held at _____ on _____. A funeral is a special time to remember a person who has died. The school will let your families know about the funeral arrangements in a letter which will be sent home tomorrow.

Let’s take a moment of silence to think of _____, to remember all the good things about her and to say goodbye. In our silence we will express our loving thoughts.

2. After A Sudden Death

Sadly a tragedy has happened in our school community. _____, a Year 12 pupil has died suddenly. We want to respect the family’s need for privacy at this time but you will be given information about funeral arrangements as soon as possible.

This kind of tragic news is hard to accept. You may experience many feelings within the next few days. Everyone deals with loss differently and it is important to respect the way others grieve. We want to listen to your feelings and concerns so support staff are available in _____. Feel free to arrange to go there and talk to someone.



BREAKING THE NEWS TO PUPILS

ADVICE FOR TEACHERS

Before telling the pupils about an incident consideration needs to be given to issuing the "Information sheet for Pupils" and allowing time for discussion.

If the incident involves the disappearance or sudden death of a pupil or member of staff it is important to consider the wishes of "the family" and remember their right to privacy.

Teachers should relay the information, agreed at the staff briefing, to pupils at schools - preferably at the same time. Relaying the information to vulnerable pupils and pupils absent from school also needs to be considered. Any "news" should contain appropriate language and factual information only with clear, concise, "bite size" explanations delivered in a calm manner.

REMEMBER

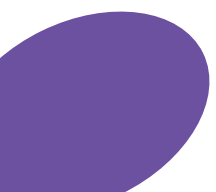
Be patient - you may have to repeat the information many times. Be honest, specific and straightforward - it is acceptable to say you do not have all the answers. Be available for the pupil. Monitor initial reactions.

Allow time for pupils to discuss their feelings. Provide reassurance and information about the school support which is available. Inform pupils of a designated area should they be unable to stay in class. Monitor ongoing and developing reactions. Refer on for additional support if in doubt.

Share your own feelings, if appropriate; acknowledge the pupil's feelings: if necessary, use pictures and social stories to aid understanding.

Be prepared that a pupil may come back and ask more questions.

Be proactive: if you can, have information ready for possible questions. Assure pupils they will be kept updated.



CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S UNDERSTANDING OF DEATH

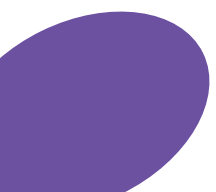
INFORMATION FOR STAFF

Children and young people's understanding of death will depend on their cognitive and developmental stage. They will revisit the loss as they mature, reach significant milestones and become more able to talk about their experiences and questions in relation to death. Children and young people with learning difficulties will progress through the developmental stages at a slower pace or indeed may remain at an early stage in their understanding of death.

Children and young people do experience similar feelings to adults following a death but often express their feelings differently depending on their development age.

Age	Concept of Death	Possible Reactions
2 to 5 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Death seen as reversible • May feel they have caused the death • Magical thinking - make up fantasies to fill gaps in knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fears abandonment and separation • Loud protest • Despair • Indignant at changes in patterns or routine • Sleep problems • May revert to "baby" behaviours
5 to 11 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More exposure to death and understanding of death as permanent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Withdrawal, sadness, loneliness, depression • Anger, guilt, temper tantrums, nightmares • Behaviour, learning or school problems • Perfect child, brave and in control • May become preoccupied with death
Over 11 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Death permanent • Denial - it can't happen 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Withdrawal, sadness, depression, loneliness • Anger, rejection, guilt • Joking, sarcasm • Dependence or regressing to younger age • Insecurity, low self-esteem

There is no right or wrong way to grieve. It is important to allow children and young people to grieve in their own way and their own time. They may seesaw in and out of grief, needing time to play and have fun as well as to cry.



DEATH BY SUSPECTED SUICIDE

INFORMATION FOR STAFF

1. The term suicide should not be used by a school until it is determined by the Coroner's Office. Where an inquest is required it may be a considerable period of time after the death.
2. When providing support for vulnerable pupils, it would be prudent to make a working assumption of suicide, if all reasonable indicators suggest that this might be the case. Pupils and members of the community may be inclined to describe a death as a suicide before this has been established. Phrases such as 'tragic event' or 'sudden death' should be used by the school when talking to pupils.
3. In the aftermath of a sudden death within the school community pupils' vulnerability may increase. Teachers should realise that some pupils may develop suicide ideation and/or self harm. Staff need to be proactive in identifying and monitoring these pupils. Pupils considered to be 'at risk' should be immediately referred to the Designated Teacher for Child Protection who will then notify parents and advise them of the referral pathway to obtain support for their child. This will include the child's doctor and the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services.
4. Schools should maintain contact with parents to ensure that appropriate action has been taken to protect and support the pupil. Careful records should be kept and securely stored as set out in the school's data protection guidelines. Action must also be taken to identify other at risk groups in the school, including close friends and relatives and to direct them to appropriate support. Information for parents can be found at Appendix 14. At any time parents, school staff or pupils can contact the "Lifeline 24/7" crisis response helpline service (Tel: 0808 808 8000).
5. Where there appears to be an emerging cluster of perceived suicides in a school or a number of schools in close proximity, the education and library board's Critical Incident Response Teams will liaise with the relevant Health and Social Care Trusts. This coordinated response will ensure an appropriate community response to the situation while minimising sensationalism and avoiding the glamorising of suicidal behaviour.
6. As with any death, schools may wish to remember the person who has died and to pay tribute to their memory. When an apparent suicide has occurred, schools should be careful to remember the person without condoning the means of death. It is important that events are reported in a sensitive and measured way so that other vulnerable young people are not put at risk. The language used is very important.
7. Schools should remember to be vigilant around the time of the inquest, court cases and the anniversary of a death and access any support services as may be required.

GUIDELINES FOR STAFF

Your Responsibilities

You have two major responsibilities:

1. To respond with empathy and in a non-judgemental way to the pupil in need.
2. To follow the usual safeguarding procedures with an appropriate referral to ensure the pupil's safety.

Responding to a Distressed Pupil

- **Listen.** It can be very difficult for a young person to disclose distress so it is essential that he/she is given time and attention. Privacy is also important.
- **Take it seriously.** Disclosures of distress should never be minimised. The young person should be taken seriously but the adult should not express alarm. The young person needs to feel safe and have confidence in adults.
- **Accept the possibility of suicidal thoughts.** These feelings are real and should not be dismissed.
- **Do NOT promise confidentiality.** Ensure that the young person knows that the information will be handled sensitively but that it must be shared with others to safeguard them.
- **Show a caring attitude.** It is acceptable to express care for the young person and a commitment to their well-being.
- **Be open.** If suicidal intent is suspected it is appropriate to ask the young person whether they are thinking of harming themselves and have any plans.
- **Supervise closely.** Keep the pupil with you until you can deliver them to the care of the Designated Teacher for Child Protection (or appropriate alternative). Sometimes it is more helpful for the teacher to whom the pupil expressed their distress to be the one who stays with him or her while the designated teacher makes safeguarding arrangements.

Response to Suicide Ideation Disclosure

The Designated Teacher for Child Protection (or appropriate alternative) should ensure that the pupil is safeguarded by doing the following:

Continue to supervise closely. The pupil should not be left unsupervised at this stage.

Contact parents. Parents should be advised of the content of the disclosure, the school's concern and asked to take the child or young person to the doctor for an 'emergency mental state assessment' and potential referral to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services.

Safely hand over the young person into the care of parents. Parents should be advised to supervise very closely.

Contact the young person's doctor. It may be helpful if schools also contact the doctor directly to inform him/her of the concerns.

If the above is not possible. If the school cannot safely deliver the young person into the care of parents, or has concerns that appropriate support will not be sought/provided, it is possible for school staff to bring a child or young person directly to an Accident and Emergency Department acting in loco parentis.

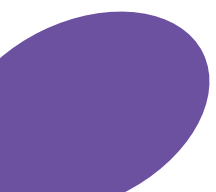
Follow-up. The Designated Teacher (or other member of staff) should remain in contact with parents and plan to support the young person upon return to school. In planning to support the young person the school should consider seeking medical/psychiatric advice.

Available Support

1. School's Key Contact for Pastoral Care
2. Independent Counselling Service for Schools
3. Lifeline – 0808 808 8000

Lifeline offers immediate help over the phone 24/7. It is a helpline service for those experiencing distress or despair and deals with issues such as suicide, self harm, abuse, trauma, depression and anxiety. Pupils can phone directly for individual counselling. Lifeline can also put an individual in touch with follow-up services to ensure the best possible response meets individual needs. Lifeline also gives support and guidance to families and carers, concerned friends, professionals, teachers, youth workers, clergy, faith workers and communities about how to support a young person that may be a risk. A number of other agencies provide support to pupils and others. These include:

- NSPCC – 0808 800 5000
- Samaritans – 0845 790 9090
- Childline – 0800 1111



HOW SCHOOL STAFF CAN SUPPORT PUPILS AT A TIME OF CRISIS

INFORMATION FOR STAFF

Pupils will react to a critical incident in a variety of ways; no two reactions are the same. Their own personality, their family support and their life experiences will influence their responses. Here are some common reactions.

THINKING	FEELINGS
Disbelief Confused Inability to take in information Talking: repeating what they have experienced/heard Nightmares Thinking that they cannot cope Lack of concentration Spending a lot of time thinking of what has happened	Anger Fear Sadness Frightened Irritable Overwhelmed Guilty Worried Easily upset
BEHAVIOURS	PHYSICAL COMPLAINTS
Panic Anxiety Crying Regression Withdrawal Aggression/argumentative	Cold and shivery Unable to rest or settle Hyper-vigilant Feeling sick/knot in stomach Loss of appetite Feel tired all the time

Adults often wish to shield children from pain and distress. Experience and research have shown, however, that children and young pupil are best supported by having the incident acknowledged in an appropriate way rather than ignored. It is important to be available and receptive to pupils, to listen to them, to empathise with them and assure them that their emotions are normal.

It is normal for adults to be upset. It is appropriate for children and young people to see this as it can help them to understand their own emotions. Staff working directly with pupils can show that they are upset, but not out of control. It is important to maintain a safe, secure and predictable environment for the pupils in their care. Staff should remember that they are modelling a response for children and young people and helping them to develop coping skills.

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR STAFF

Never underestimate the positive effect that concern and support from a caring, familiar adult can have on a pupil.

At a time of crisis pupils can be distressed, frightened and upset. It is desirable for them, in the first instance, to be supported in a familiar environment by adults who are known to them. School has a significant influence on a pupil's life.

1. On a day to day basis it provides support and a social network for the pupil.
2. At a time of a crisis, when pupils may be experiencing insecurity and change, it offers security and containment.
3. Attending school helps to keep a routine and maintain a regular daily pattern.
4. The way staff respond to a pupil can significantly affect the outcome of their experience. So staff reactions are very important.
5. Teachers know the pupils already and they are therefore in a good position to observe change, notice issues which are not being resolved and decide whether onward referral is warranted.

Useful tips for staff

1. Acknowledge the event to pupils.
2. Talk with pupils, giving them honest factual information, not shocking details.
3. Be willing to listen to them, and give them time.
4. Remain calm, keep control of the situation and contain their feelings (ie allow expression of feelings but not allowing hysteria to build up)
5. Be willing to answer questions. (It is not important that staff answer all questions but that they listen to pupils' fears and worries and take their queries seriously.)
6. Be genuine and professional.
7. Be non-judgemental.
8. Give information to them including the 'normalisation' of their reactions (ie their reactions are normal reactions to an abnormal event).
9. Encourage pupils to talk, share their feelings and seek help as appropriate.
10. Maintain a routine in school (flexible, caring and containing).
11. Offer sensitivity, care and empathy.
12. Keep pupils in relevant peer groups.
13. Keep pupils informed and updated.
14. Allow pupils to make a response to the situation, eg the making of sympathy cards (for family of deceased) or get well cards (if pupils are injured).
15. Involve them in special ceremonies/rituals/any response the school will make.
16. Do not remove a deceased pupil's belongings/work/name from classroom/s and environment – these should be discussed with pupils at a later stage.

Restoring normal routine

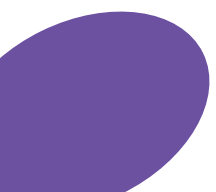
The resumption of normal routines (in as flexible but as structured a way as possible) re-establishes a pattern and support for the pupil while being sensitive enough to respond to the incident and its aftermath.

It is important to be mindful that life has changed for the pupil as well as for the staff. The healing process involves accepting what has happened, coping with the implications of this and adapting over time to the new situation.

It is necessary to continue to monitor pupils' reactions. Most symptoms should settle over time. These may include sleep difficulties, poor concentration, and loss of motivation in schoolwork, avoiding issues/places, upset, worry and anxiety. If they do not show signs of recovery or if they are becoming worse, a pupil may need more specialist support.

Advice and support is available from the appropriate education and library board support services. It is important to recognise that parents may need to be informed that a referral to a General Practitioner is necessary. Some pupils may require a more specialist intervention straight away. Early contact with their parents should be sought in order to discuss this further. Other pupils may need specialist intervention some time after the event. If symptoms persist for longer than 5/6 weeks referral for specialist help should be considered.

Remember that PARENTS, FRIENDS, PEERS and STAFF are the key supporting people for pupils. Make use of all of them.



RESPONDING TO PUPILS' QUESTIONS FOLLOWING A SUDDEN DEATH

INFORMATION FOR STAFF

1. It can be very difficult to respond to questions from children following a sudden death especially when the member of staff is also shocked and bereaved. Many factors will influence a pupil's idea of death - their developmental stage, their experiences, their ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds, and their personal way of seeing things.
2. It is useful to agree a 'script' for all staff. The advantages of this are that staff will have a form of words to use so they are not caught unawares and that pupils get to hear a reassuring message over and over again. This is particularly reassuring and helpful to young pupils or pupils with special needs when processing the information.
3. Some questions will reveal that children feel insecure about whether the adults in their lives will be around to look after them. Reassure them that even though nobody knows the future, they can be sure that there will always be reliable adults to look after them.
4. It is not unusual for young children to ask the same question again and again. Repeating questions and getting answers helps the child understand and adjust to the loss of someone loved.
5. Sometimes children become very interested in physical details. Keep the reply very simple and factual. Repeat it as often as necessary and do not be drawn into giving further details. Be careful not to use euphemisms such as 'sleep' or 'went way' for death. Keep it simple, factual and clear. Younger children find it difficult to understand the permanence of death. Euphemisms will only make it worse.
6. When answering questions about death tell a pupil only what he or she is capable of understanding. There is no need to be evasive, but modify explanations to what the pupil can comprehend; use language the pupil can understand; and what is said is important, but the manner in which it is said has even greater significance. Be aware of voice tone. Try to answer the questions in a matter-of-fact way without too much emotion.

Suggested Answers to Certain Questions

Question: Why did _____ die?

Answer: "There are some things we understand and some things we don't understand. We do/don't know exactly why _____ died. The doctors have told us the reason was _____."

Question: Why Do People Die?

Answer: Dying is a natural part of life. All living things like plants, animals, and people are special parts of the natural world. Nature almost always gives us long, healthy lives. Like all things in nature, after many years people grow old and reach the end of life. This is called death.

Question: Is Death Like Sleeping?

Answer: No. Dying is not like sleeping at all. People sleep to rest and stay healthy. Sleep gives hard working parts of our body time to build up strength again. Think of how good you feel after you sleep. You feel so good because your body is rested and ready for another day. When someone dies, their body stops working. It is not resting anymore. Its job is over.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR REACTIONS

INFORMATION FOR PUPILS

You have experienced an incident which has been very upsetting for you. Even though this event is over, you may still be experiencing some reactions to it. This is normal. It is unlikely that you have experienced anything like this before and so you may never have been faced with such reactions.

Your reaction may last a few days, a few weeks or longer. Your parents, teachers and friends can help you cope with this and get rid of some of these feelings and reactions. Sometimes this might be a bit more difficult and you might need more help. This does not mean that anything is wrong with you. It only means that the event is just too powerful for you to deal with on your own. Here are some reactions you might experience.

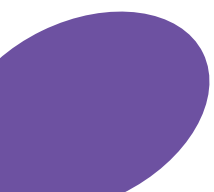
THINKING	FEELINGS
Confused Nightmares/bad dreams Poor concentration Restless Not interested in what is going on Spending a lot of time thinking about what happened	Worried Guilty Angry Sad Easily upset Cross Overwhelmed
BEHAVIOURS	PHYSICAL COMPLAINTS
Loss of appetite Being very quiet Agitated Being quarrelsome/arguing	Feeling tired all the time Unable to rest or settle Feeling sick/knot in tummy Cold and shivery

REMEMBER

1. Your reactions are normal.
2. They should lessen in time, normally over the next few weeks.
3. If you have any concerns tell your parent or a teacher.
4. People love you and care about you. Let them help.
5. Dreams or other thoughts about the traumatic event will get less over time. They are normal reactions to what you experienced. They are signs that your mind is trying to understand what happened.



THINGS THAT MIGHT HELP YOU

- 1 Talk to people and tell them what is on your mind. Talk to your parents or to your teachers. Talking is a great way to help at this time. No one can resolve all their worries by themselves. Your teachers, parents or friends may be able to help you.
 - 2 Take some exercise – walking, running, playing games. This will get rid of some of the tension in your body and mind.
 - 3 Keep yourself busy.
 - 4 Keep doing all the usual things – this will also help you.
 - 5 Spend lots of time with your friends and your family.
 - 6 Do things that you like and that make you feel good.
 - 7 Get plenty of rest.
 - 8 Do not be afraid to ask for help.
- 

INFORMING PARENTS OF A SUDDEN DEATH

LETTER TO PARENTS

Date:

Dear Parent

It is with great sadness that I have to tell you of the sudden death of _____ use caution if naming a pupil (a pupil in Year _____/a Year _____ Teacher). The pupils were told this morning by their Principal/class/form teacher.

_____ died of (an asthma attack, meningitis etc) and the pupils have been reassured this is something that does not happen very often. Your child may or may not want to talk about it but it is likely that he/she will need extra love and support from you in the days ahead. This does not mean that anything is wrong with him/her. It only means that this traumatic event has been too powerful for him/her to deal with on his/her own. He/she may be feeling anxious. Take time to listen to your child and try to provide a predictable routine for him/her at home. Avoid too many absences to start with.

We have enclosed an information leaflet for you which may be useful at this time.

Trained staff from the education and library boards' Critical Incident Response Team are helping to support us through this difficult time. It is sometimes necessary for a member of the team to speak to a class or to individual pupils who may be distressed. He/she will be guided by the Principal/class teacher in this. If you do not wish your child to receive such support from the team please contact us immediately.

We are deeply saddened by this great loss but are trying, for the pupils' sake, to keep the school environment as normal as possible. Our thoughts are with _____'s family at this tragic time and the school community sends them sincerest sympathy and support.

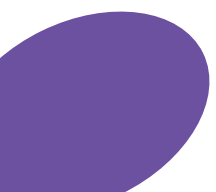
_____ 's funeral is on _____ at _____ am/pm at _____.

We are in touch with the family regarding their wishes for the school's representation at the Service.

If you require further clarification or have any concerns please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

PRINCIPAL



**UNDERSTANDING YOUR CHILD'S REACTIONS AND HOW YOU CAN HELP
INFORMATION FOR PARENTS**

When a child or young person experiences a traumatic incident it can be very upsetting for them and for you. Even though the event is over your child may still be experiencing reactions to it. It is normal for children and young people to be upset after such a happening. It is unlikely that they have experienced such an event before and so their reaction may be challenging for you.

Their reaction may last a few days, a few weeks or longer. Reassurance, understanding and support from you, along with their teachers and their friends can help them to cope.

Here are some common reactions to a traumatic incident. You might have noticed some of these.

THINKING	FEELINGS
Confused Nightmares/bad dreams Poor concentration Restless Not interested in what is going on Spending a lot of time thinking about what happened Thinking that they cannot cope	Worried Guilty Anxious Fearful Easily upset Cross Panicky Overwhelmed
BEHAVIOURS	PHYSICAL COMPLAINTS
Loss of appetite Being very quiet Nervous Being quarrelsome/arguing	Feeling tired all the time Unable to rest or settle Feeling sick/knot in tummy Cold and shivery

REMEMBER

1. These are normal reactions.
2. The reactions should lessen in time normally over the next few weeks.
3. If you continue to have concerns some more specialist help may be needed. Talk to your doctor about this.

HELPING YOUR CHILD

It is important that you are strong enough to bear whatever your child wants to talk about and to answer their questions.

DO	DO NOT
Take time to listen and answer questions.	Try to hide your own sadness or grief but try not to overwhelm them with such.
Be honest in your explanations and in showing your own sadness or grief.	Tell your child not to worry or be sad. They cannot control their feelings.
Let them know their feelings are important.	Feel like you have to have all the answers or get it right all the time.
Give plenty of reassurance and affection. Let them know you love them and will be there for them.	Be surprised at your child's ability to set grief aside and alternate between sadness and happiness. Time with friends and playmates enables them to release anxiety about incidents over which they have no control.
Keep to routines and patterns as much as possible.	
Be aware that changes such as clinging or aggressive behaviour or physical problems may be an expression of grief.	
Take things one day at a time.	

PRESS STATEMENTS

INFORMATION FOR STAFF

1. Schools are under no obligation to speak to the press. If however, schools feel it is necessary to issue press statements the following guidance may be useful. Remember that support and guidance are available from the education and library boards' and Council for Catholic Maintained Schools Communications Officers. They will act on behalf of schools they are responsible for when asked.
2. Press statements can be issued and updated as new and accurate information becomes available. Explain that the whole school has been deeply shocked and that all available resources and support services have been gathered. Outline what steps are being taken to provide support for students and staff in an effort to get things back to 'normal' as soon as possible.
3. Press statements should include:
 - Facts about the incident, what has been done and what is planned.
 - Information regarding the implementation of the school's critical incident management plan and the fact that the situation is under control.
 - Affirmation of the principles of critical incident management in order to reduce and prevent further stress; stabilise the situation; normalise and promote the functioning of the school, its staff and pupils; and ensure everyone receives the help they need.

1. Historic school destroyed by fire

Date _____

_____ School was destroyed by fire in the early hours of Saturday morning. Fire and Rescue Services and the PSNI responded to a 999 call reporting the blaze at 3 am on Saturday. There were no injuries reported. The cause of the fire is under investigation. Damage is estimated at £ ____ million.

"It is a tragedy to have lost this school, not only for our students and their families, but for our community." _____, Chairperson of the Board of Governors said. "Schools are much more than a place of learning. They are where our communities meet for special events, to vote and to play. _____ school, in particular, was a landmark in our community with historical building designation." _____ School was built in 1906 and has undergone substantial renovations in recent years.

Arrangements have been made to house _____ school's _____ pupils at _____ for the remainder of this school term, with the addition of temporary classrooms at _____. All parents were contacted by telephone on Sunday.

To assist in supporting our staff and pupils through this time of shock and loss, additional trained staff from the education and library board's Critical Incident Response Team have been assigned to the school to provide support.

Contact: _____ Chair of Board of Governors of: _____

School at: _____.

Adapted from 'When Tragedy Strikes' (INTO & UTU, 2000)

2. School grieves sudden death of pupil

Date _____

As reported by the PSNI, _____ (use caution if naming a pupil), a pupil at _____ school died tragically on _____. The circumstances of _____'s death are not known at this time and an investigation is currently ongoing.

This is a tragic loss to _____'s family and to our school community. To assist in supporting our staff and pupils through this time of grief, additional trained staff from the education and library board's Critical Incident Response Team has been assigned to the school to provide support. A letter has been sent by the school to parents, informing them of this incident and providing information on the support services available through the school.

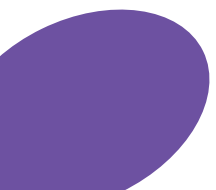
A special assembly to remember _____ has been arranged for _____.

Contact: _____ Principal, _____ School at _____.

MEDIA INTERVIEWS

INFORMATION FOR STAFF

1. It can be difficult to manage media interviews especially when a school is dealing with a critical incident. A school should think carefully before agreeing to any interview(s). Advice should be sought from Communications Officers. It is important in advance of a media interview to ascertain the main focus of the message, for example, is it about providing public reassurance or is it about clarifying public misunderstanding.
2. Schools should have a 'one spokesperson' practice. The spokesperson should be well briefed on the details and expectations of the interviewer. Briefing should include the most likely questions that may be asked. Negative lines of questioning and difficult questions should be anticipated and appropriate responses prepared. If media deadlines cannot be met it is essential to say so and to keep to new deadlines if agreed.
3. Before making a media statement. The school's spokesperson should:
 - liaise with the Chair of the Board of Governors and/or relevant education and library board/Council for Catholic Maintained Schools Communications Officers in order to identify two or three key messages to be highlighted;
 - write these down before the interview and refine for accuracy, clarity, simplicity and impact;
 - keep spoken comments simple, factual and short so that key points such as what has been done so far, are not edited out;
 - be aware that interviews, if not live, may be edited and comments taken out of context;
 - take time to respond to questions and seek clarification if necessary;
 - be aware of legal issues, particularly the language/terminology used;
 - avoid making comments which imply blame or fault for any part of the incident, as there could be significant legal implications;
 - remember that official enquiries are likely to follow serious incidents. Media comments on the public record may have a bearing on such proceedings;
 - avoid 'off the record' comments at all times;
 - express concern and the school's grief, restricting answers to facts and accentuating the positive developments following the event.



PUPILS RETURNING TO SCHOOL AFTER BEREAVEMENT

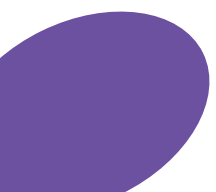
INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

Returning to school after bereavement can be difficult for a bereaved pupil. It can also be difficult for peers and staff to know how best to support the pupil. The circumstances of the bereavement and the age and developmental stage of the pupil will determine the approach used by teachers.

The following advice may be helpful in planning a positive return to school

1. Speak to the bereaved pupil. Check how he/she feels about coming back to school and what he/she may want to happen. Discuss the support that will be available. Speak to the parents to find out what they may want.
2. Discuss with class peers how they feel and how they can support the pupil. Discuss normal grief reactions. Encourage them to share their feelings and experiences of bereavement and how they coped. They may have sent cards or messages.
3. Ask a group of friends to be supportive during the first days following the return to school.
4. Consider a phased return. Plan for the day of the return of the pupil with a key member of staff taking the lead. When the pupil comes back to school it is important to acknowledge the loss. You may wish to say something like "I am/we are sorry that _____ died. I/We know you are sad and I/we want to support you at this time".
5. Consider giving the pupil age appropriate information on normal bereavement responses and grief reactions.
6. Allow for possible changes in emotions, behaviours, concentration, and work levels. All teachers need to be made aware.
7. Allow for "time out" when the pupil wants to be in a quiet place or to talk with a school counsellor, pastoral care teacher or another member of staff.
8. Carry on normal routines with normal approaches to discipline, with sensitivity.

Once a pupil returns to school following bereavement complete a record of this and place on pupil's file - see Appendix 18.



**SCHOOL RECORD ON A PUPIL WHO HAS EXPERIENCED
LOSS/BEREAVEMENT**

This document should be treated as confidential and its content shared and stored in accordance with Data Protection and Child Protection Policies.

Name: _____ DOB: _____ Age: _____

Faith/culture: _____ Key Support Person: _____

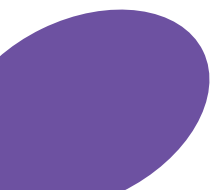
IMPORTANT INFORMATION: *(to include relationship of pupil to deceased, nature of bereavement, illness, accident, sudden death)*

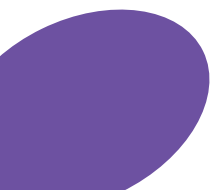
FAMILY DETAILS: *(names, ages, relationships, school etc)*

SIGNIFICANT DATES: *(anniversary, birthday, child's/young person's birthday etc)*

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS BY STAFF:

Signed: _____ Date: _____





PUBLICATIONS, RESOURCES AND SUPPORT SERVICES

Schools might find the following resources helpful. These should be reviewed to ensure that they meet school requirements and conform to school policies and ethos. This is not an exhaustive list.

The School Library Service, Northern Ireland Library Authority, will be a useful source of materials and information.

Books and publications

Barnardos Books for children, parents and professionals.

Bereavement Issues – Information for Schools. (Psychology Section, SEELB)
www.seelb.org.uk

"Children and Grief. When a Parent Dies". J. William Worden. Guildford Press.
ISBN 1-57230-148-1.

"Dealing with Traumatic Bereavement". OFMDFM; Belfast and South Eastern Health and Social Care Trusts (2012).

"Developing a Whole School Response to Loss". Pupil Personal Development Services, SELB, WELB.

"Effective Grief and Bereavement Support". The role of family, friends, colleagues, schools and support professionals. Dyregrov, Atle and Dyregrov, Kari. (2008).
Jessica Kingsley Publishers. ISBN 978-1-84310-667-8.

"Grief in Children. A Handbook for Adults". 2nd edition. Dyregrov, Atle (2008).
Jessica Kingsley Publishers. ISBN 978-1-84310-612-8.

"Grief in Young Children. A Handbook for Adults". Dyregrov, Atle (2008).
Jessica Kingsley Publishers. ISBN 978-1-84310-650-0.

"Grief Matters – Managing bereavement and trauma in schools; a support pack".
(Educational Psychology Service, WELB, 2000).

"LOSSS". Middlesbrough Psychological Team. Middlesbrough Teaching and Learning

Centre, Tranmere Avenue, Middlesbrough TS3 8PB. Tel: 01642 201858.

Meditec Medical. Very comprehensive bereavement booklist for children, parents and professionals. Sales@meditec.co.uk

"Protect Life. Suicide Prevention Strategy". DHSSPS 2006**.

"When Tragedy Strikes: Guidelines for Effective Critical Incident Management in Schools" INTO/UTU (2000).

Bereavement and Trauma resources and support

Barnardos. Counselling support for children. www.barnardos.org.uk

Childhood Bereavement Network - www.childbereavement.org.uk

Childline - www.childline.org.uk

Cruse Bereavement Care. Resources and bereavement counselling for children of all ages; for parents, carers and professionals: www.cruse.org.uk

Family Trauma Centre: www.ftc.hscni.net

Lifeline: 24-hour support and counselling helpline 0808 808 8000.

NEPS: Responding to Critical Incidents Resource Materials for Schools. neps@neps.gov.ie

NSPCC. Counselling support for children - www.nspcc.org.uk

Samaritans - www.samaritans.org.uk

Winston's Wish - www.winstonswish.org.uk

Resources supporting bereaved children and young people - www.youngminds.org.uk

Other useful websites

www.copewithlife.org.uk

www.papyrus-uk.org

www.selfharm.org

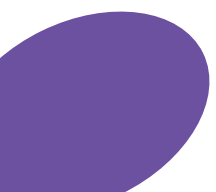
Staff support

BELB	Human Resources Section	Tel: 028 90564000
NEELB	Human Resources Section	Tel: 028 25662416
SEELB	Human Resources Section	Tel: 028 90566200
SELB	Human Resources Section	Tel: 028 37512559
WELB	Human Resources Section	Tel: 028 82411411

Catholic Council for Maintained Schools. Staff Welfare Section
Tel: 028 90426972.


Staff Care Services. 24 hour Careline. Freephone: 0500 127079.

Every effort has been made to provide accurate and complete information. The Department of Education, cannot, however, accept responsibility for any errors.



REFERENCES WHICH HAVE INFORMED THE PRODUCTION OF THIS DOCUMENT

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- "Bereavement Issues. Information for Schools". Educational Psychology Section. SEELB (2000). www.seelb.org.uk
- "Critical Incidents in Schools". (2007) South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust, SEELB, Investing for Health, Wellnet.
- Data Protection Guidelines - www.ico.gov.uk
- "Developing a Whole School Response to Loss". SELB/WELB Pupil Personal Development Services.
- "Grief in Children. A Handbook for Adults". 2nd edition. Dyregrov, Atle (2008). Jessica Kingsley Publishers. ISBN 978-1-84310-612-8.
- "Grief in Young Children. A Handbook for Adults". Dyregrov, Atle (2008). Jessica Kingsley Publishers. ISBN 978-1-84310-650-0.
- "Grief Matters – Managing bereavement and trauma in schools; a support pack". Educational Psychology Service. WELB (2000).
- "Order from Chaos". Gibson, M. (1998). Birmingham. Venture Press.
- Pastoral Care in Schools - www.deni.gov.uk
- Includes "Pastoral Care in Schools - Child Protection", and "Pastoral Care in Schools - Promoting Positive Behaviour".
- "Responding to Critical Incidents. Guidelines for Schools". The National Educational Psychological Service Agency. Dublin. Tel: 00 353 1 889 2700. Email: neps@neps.gov.ie
- "The Basic Critical Incident Stress Management Course: Basic Group Crisis Intervention. 3rd Edition." Mitchell, T. and Everly, S. International Critical Incident Stress Foundation, Inc. USA. 2001. www.icisf.org



"Traumatic Grief". A series of 23 information booklets for schools, relatives and carers. Royal Hospitals and EHSSB, (2007). www.royalhospitals.org/traumaticgrief

"When Tragedy Strikes: Guidelines for Effective Critical Incident Management in Schools" INTO/UTU (2000).

"Wise before the Event". Yule, W., & Gold, A (1993). London. Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation.

Special Educational Needs

"Am I allowed to cry?" A study of Bereavement amongst People who have Learning Difficulties. Oswin, Maureen. (2000). Souvenir Press (E&A) Ltd.

ISBN 0-285-65095 (Hardback).

ISBN 0-285-65096 (Paperback).

"Loss and Learning Disability". Blackman, Noelle. (2003). Worth Publishing.

ISBN 1-903269-02-4.

"LOSSS". Middlesbrough Psychological Team. Middlesbrough Teaching and Learning Centre, Tranmere Avenue, Middlesbrough TS3 8PB. Tel: 01642 201681.

