

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 _____.