

FIVEMILETOWN COLLEGE

CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY & PLAN

Introduction

Fivemiletown College aims to protect the well being of its pupils and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times.

The school's mission statement states: *“Fivemiletown College aims to educate, prepare and inspire all students to achieve their full potential as lifelong learners, thinkers and productive contributors to society. We provide a caring, supportive environment in which each student is encouraged and challenged to develop their strengths, interests and talents.”*

The Board of Governors, through the Critical Incident Management Team has drawn up a Critical Incident Management Plan (CIMP) as one element of the school's policies and plans within the Pastoral Care arrangements.

A Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) has been established to steer the development and implementation of the plan.

Definition

The Governors and staff of Fivemiletown College recognise a critical incident to be “an incident or sequence of events that overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school”. Critical incidents may involve one or more pupils or staff members, or members of our local community.

Types of incidents might include:

- The death of a member of the school community through accident, violence, suspected suicide or other unexpected death
- An intrusion into the school
- An accident involving members of the school community
- An accident/tragedy in the wider community
- Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism, etc
- The disappearance of a member of the school community.

Aim

The aim of the CIMP is to help school management and staff to react quickly and effectively in the event of an incident, to enable us to maintain a sense of control and to ensure that appropriate support is offered to pupils and staff. Having a good plan should also help ensure that the effects on the pupils and staff will be limited. It should enable us to effect a return to normality as soon as possible.

Creation of a coping supportive and caring ethos in the school

Our curriculum and pastoral care arrangements aim to help and support both staff and pupils, thus preparing them to cope with a range of life events. These include measures to address both the physical and emotional needs of the school community.

Physical Needs

- Evacuation plan formulated
- Regular fire drills occur
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
- Public access doors are locked during school hours
- School doors are security locked during class time
- Rules of the playground are agreed and known by the school community

Emotional Needs

The Governors and staff of Fivemiletown College aim to use available programmes and resources to address the personal and social development of pupils, to enhance a sense of safety and security in the school and to provide opportunities for reflection and discussion. Further details can be found within other relevant policies such as Pastoral Care, Child Protection and Anti-bullying.

- Consultation has taken place with the whole school community as the Policy and Plan have been developed
- Staff have accessed training from the Education Authority Pupil Personal Development Team as the policy has been developed.
- Staff are familiar with the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures
- Emotional health and well-being is an integral part of the school curriculum
- The school may use a range of external agencies for support
- Inputs to pupils by external providers are carefully considered in the light of criteria about pupil safety, the appropriateness of the content, and the expertise of the providers.
- The school has a clear policy on anti-bullying and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy.

- There is a comprehensive Pastoral Care System in place in the school.
- Pupils who are identified as being at risk are referred to the designated staff member, concerns are explored and the appropriate level of assistance and support is provided. Parents are informed, and where appropriate, a referral is made to an appropriate agency.
- Members of staff are informed about how to access support for themselves.

Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)

A CIMT has been established in line with best practice. Members bring a wealth of experience and expertise to the team and were selected on a voluntary basis and will retain their roles for at least one school year. The members of the team will meet biannually and after an incident to review and, if necessary, update the policy and plan. Each member of the team has a dedicated critical incident folder. This contains a copy of the policy, a site plan and materials particular to their role, to be used in the event of an incident.

Preparation of CIMP

Roles

The key roles covered are as follows:

- Team Leader – Principal
- PSNI liaison – Mr Clarke
- Staff liaison – Mrs McCrae
- Pupil liaison – Mrs McConaghy
- Parent liaison – Mrs Elaine Kennedy
- Community liaison – Mr Clarke
- Media liaison – Principal
- Administrator – Mrs Maureen Morrison

[For key responsibilities of each role see Appendix 1]

Record keeping

In the event of an incident, a log sheet will be completed regularly throughout the incident as a record of the actions and procedures undertaken.

Mrs Morrison will have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters, photocopying materials etc.

Confidentiality

The management and staff of Fivemiletown College has a responsibility to protect the privacy and good name of the people involved in any incident and will be sensitive to the consequences of any public statements.

Critical incident rooms

In the event of a critical incident the following rooms will be used:

- the Staff Room - to meet the staff
- the Nurture Room - for meetings with pupils
- the Board Room - for parents
- the Principal's office for media (if required)
- the Board Room for other visitors

[Immediate, short and medium term actions are detailed in appendix 3]

Consultation and communication regarding the plan

- All staff were consulted and their views canvassed in the preparation of this policy and plan. Parents were also consulted and their comments requested by the draft policy being made available
- An audit of the school's current arrangements was completed in preparation for formulating the policy and plan
- Our school's final policy and plan in relation to responding to critical incidents has been presented to all staff.
- Each member of the critical incident team has a personal copy of the plan.
- All new and temporary staff (as appropriate) will be informed of the details of the plan by the Principal
- All teachers and support staff have a resource pack for supporting children in class
- The plan will be reviewed and, if necessary, updated bi-annually and after an incident

References

The CIMT has consulted resource documents provided to schools as well as publications listed in the resources section of this book.

These include:

- SELB Critical Incident Response Manual & Resources Disk
- Document draft: Every School a Good School - A guide to Managing Critical Incidents in Schools DE – PEHAW Work Stream
- Protecting Life in Schools – DE - PEHAW Work Stream
- Community Response Plan - Protect Life Strategy
- When Tragedy Strikes: Guidelines for Effective Critical Incident Management in Schools (INTO/Ulster Teachers Union 2000)
- Responding to Critical Incidents; Guidelines for Schools (NEPS 2007)
- Winstonswish Foundation, help for grieving children and their families. www.winstonswish.org.uk
- A national charity committed to improving the mental health of all children and young people. www.youngminds.org.uk
- **The Childhood Bereavement Network** (CBN) is a multi-professional federation of organisations and individuals working with bereaved children and young people. www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk
- **Cruse Bereavement Care** exists to promote the well-being of bereaved people and to enable anyone bereaved by death to understand their grief and cope with their loss. www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES OF CRITICAL INCIDENT TEAM MEMBERS

Team leader

- Usually the Principal
- Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting
- Coordinates the tasks of the team
- Liaises with the Board of Governors
- Liaises with the bereaved family

In the absence of the team leader, the Pastoral Leader will assume the lead.

PSNI liaison

- Liaises with the PSNI
- Ensures that information about deaths or other developments is checked out for accuracy before being shared

Staff liaison

- Leads briefing meetings for staff on the facts as known, gives staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions, outlines the routine for the day
- Advises staff on the procedures for identification of vulnerable pupils
- Refers staff to materials from their critical incident folders
- Keeps staff updated as the day progresses
- Is alert to vulnerable staff members and makes contact with them individually
- Advises them of the availability of Staff Care Services and gives them the contact number.

Pupil liaison

- Alerts other staff to vulnerable pupils (appropriately)
- Provides materials for pupils (from their critical incident folder)
- Keeps records of pupils seen by external agency staff
- Looks after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room where agreed

Community/agency liaison

- Maintains up to date lists of relevant contact numbers such as emergency support services and other external contacts and resources
- Liaises with agencies in the community for support and onward referral
- Coordinates the involvement of agencies
- Reminds agency staff to wear name/visitor badges
- Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies

Parent liaison

- Arranges parent meetings, if held
- May facilitate such meetings, and manage 'questions and answers'
- Ensures that sample letters are typed up, on the school's system and ready for adaptation
- Sets up room for meetings with parents
- Maintains a record of parents seen
- Meets with individual parents
- Provides appropriate materials for parents (from their critical incident folder)

Media liaison

- Will draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews (as agreed by school management). Will consult Communications Officer Southern Region.
- Where appropriate, may liaise with the Southern Region Legal Services and relevant teacher unions.

Administrator

- Maintains up to date telephone numbers of
 - Parents or guardians
 - Teachers
 - Emergency services
- Takes telephone calls and notes those that need to be responded to
- Ensures that templates are on the schools' system in advance and ready for adaptation
- Prepares and sends out letters, emails and faxes
- Photocopies materials needed
- Maintains records of all correspondence