



New Cross College

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Critical Incidents Policy

This policy refers the process and steps put in place in response of a critical incident. For the purpose of this policy a critical incident is defined as *any incident or sequence of events which overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of the school and disrupts the running of the school.* This could include:

- The death of a member of the school community
- A serious accident involving pupils or staff
- A serious accident or tragedy in the wider community
- A traumatic event involving the school

The Critical Incident Team:

In the event of a critical incident, the Critical Incident Team is brought together to put in place an appropriate response. The Critical Incident Team consists of:

Principal

Deputy Principal

Religious Education team

Home School Community Liaison

Year Head

Class Tutor

Other volunteer teachers

The team will meet annually. This is depending on the nature of the critical incident; the school may access professional support from agencies such as:

- Department of Education Psychological services
- National Suicide Bereavement Support Network
- Counsellors
- Gardai
- Parish Priest

Key administrative tasks in planning for a critical incident:

Maintaining an up-to-date list of contact numbers for

- a) Staff
- b) Pupils, parents / guardians
- c) Emergency support services

Initial response to critical incident:

On notification of a critical incident the Principal will organise the Critical Incident Team to carry out the following:

- Gather all relevant information
- Contact appropriate agencies
- Organise for the supervision of pupils
- Inform Staff and Board of management.
- Prepare a statement of the facts
- Identify high risk pupils
- Appoint someone to deal with phone calls
- Organise timetable for the day

- Inform parents and guardians
- Inform pupils
- Contact the bereaved family
- Organise support
- Respond to the media through a nominated spokesperson decided by the Board
- Contact school solicitors if required

The team should draw up a written statement of the facts for staff, pupils, parents and the media.

School Tours:

The Teacher involved will compile an information pack to include:

- Name of the Tour Leader
- A list of all participating teachers and pupils
- A list of mobile phone numbers for all participating teachers and pupils
- Passport details and (in the case of tours outside the country)
- Photographs of participating pupils
- Home contact numbers and mobiles of all involved
- Relevant medical information on pupils and permission forms from parents in case of a medical emergency
- Insurance details
- Copy of itinerary (A copy of this file should be left with the Principal prior to departure.)

The School mobile phone will be made available to staff for outings, trips etc.

Media:

A spokesperson will be assigned to brief the media where necessary. All communication with the media should be factual and brief. The school, will, always look to protect the privacy of the family. The statement should include:

- The facts about the incident
- The school's response to the incident
- Support services available to the pupils
- Positive information or comment about the deceased
- Condolences extended to the family

Administrative requirements:

- organise supervision or substitution
- make necessary phone calls
- reserve rooms for meetings / counselling
- record events, letters to parents, telephone calls made and received.
- deal with normal school business
- organise practical requirements (snacks/ drinks/ tissues)
- maintain the normal school routine where possible

Medium Term Arrangements:

- Prepare staff and pupils for attending the funeral
- Involve the bereaved family in a school liturgy if they are agreeable
- Facilitate staff and pupils' responses e.g. book of condolence, school council's vote of sympathy, flowers
- Support distressed staff and pupils
- Ensure counselling service is available

- Deal with deceased person's possessions in keeping with parental wishes
- Facilitate the return to school of siblings and close friends
- Monitor siblings and friends of the deceased carefully
- Update and amend school records and inform the DES Long Term Tasks:
- Keep in contact with the parents of the deceased
- Be sensitive to occasions such as anniversaries, birthdays, Christmas etc
- Organise a school service and memorial
- Help staff and pupils to acknowledge bereavement
- Provide appropriate support for the primary carers
- Review overall school response
- Review the support structures available

Critical Incident Management Team

Principal: Derek Lynch

Deputy Principal: Patricia Mac Manus

Religious Education Team: Lisa Hope, Audrey O'Hara, Ann Marie O'Keefe

Home School Community Liaison: Mairead O'Brien

Guidance Counsellor: Doreen Maher