



Moyle Park College

Critical Incident Policy

Approved by the Board of Management 25th March 2014

The Board of Management of Moyle Park College aims to protect the wellbeing of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times that is in accordance with its values and ethos.

The Board of Management reviewed its Critical Incident Policy in November 2013 with a view to ensuring the physical and psychological wellbeing of all members of the school community in the event of a critical incident.

What is a critical incident?

A critical incident is any incident or sequence of events that overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school and disrupts the running of the school.

Such an incident may include any of the following:

- The sudden death of any member of the school community.
- A physical attack or threat on staff members or students due to an intrusion into the school building or grounds.
- An accident or tragedy in the wider school community.
- Serious damage to the school building.
- An accident involving members of the school community.
- At the discretion of the Principal other scenarios may be viewed as critical incidents.

What is the aim of the Critical Incident Policy?

The aim of this policy is to help staff to react quickly and sensitively to a critical incident so as to limit any adverse effects on staff and students.

Who takes charge in the event of a critical incident?

The Critical Incident Team under the direction of the Principal will meet at the earliest possible opportunity to assess whether an incident is indeed a critical incident which warrants the immediate intervention of the team.

The Critical Incident Team comprises:

- Principal
- Deputy Principal
- Guidance Counsellor
- Chaplain
- Secretary
- Safety Officer
- Relevant Year Head
- Relevant Form Tutor
- Others deemed to be capable of providing any necessary expertise

What procedures will the Critical Incident Team follow?

Immediate Response (Day One)

1. Principal alerts Chairperson, Trustees, Chair of Parents Council, Chair of Student Council, NEPS and DES that a critical incident has occurred. (Also where necessary NEWB and SEC). It is accepted that every reasonable effort will be made to keep the school operating in as normal a manner as possible in order to provide a meaningful structure for all affected by the incident.
2. Principal convenes the initial meeting of the Critical Incident team to discuss how best to deal with the incident.
3. Principal makes known to the team all relevant facts as known.
4. Contact is made with affected the family/families or their representatives.
5. The Team decides on what supports are required.
6. Team members may be assigned the following tasks – media liaison/parent liaison/staff liaison /student liaison/record keeping.
7. A statement is prepared for the media.
8. A brief staff meeting will be convened at the earliest opportunity to update staff.
9. Students will be informed in a sensitive manner – see appendix for guidelines.

Medium Term Response (Days Two and Three)

1. A full report is made to the Board of Management and the Trustees of the college.
2. Continued support is offered to pupils/staff/families.
3. Updates for staff on all relevant follow-up actions required – this may be done through brief staff meetings and the staff email system.
4. Full briefing for the office staff in relation to any enquiries that may be made by media.
5. Sensitivity will be shown by staff when dealing with those parts of the curriculum which may involve any reference to the critical incident.

6. Appropriate events will be organised that are in keeping with the ethos of a Catholic school such as a memorial service.
7. An examination of any legal or financial implications will be undertaken by the Board should such be necessary.
8. If required, there will be on-going liaison with the media, An Garda Siochana, NEPS, the Parents' Council and Student Council.
9. The school will operate as normal so as to provide an ordered framework for all affected by the critical incident.

Long Term Response

1. An assessment will be made of the manner in which the incident was handled with a view to documenting any lessons learned.
2. Appropriate longer term memorials will be considered following consultation with affected families and staff.
3. Counselling will continue to be made available to those who remain in need of support.

The procedures to be followed in the event of a critical incident occurring outside term time

The aim will be to follow as closely as possible the procedures already laid down as appropriate to term time. However, given that the school may be closed the following will apply for **day one** of such an incident:

1. Principal or if he/she is unavailable, the Deputy Principal alerts Chairperson, Trustees, Staff, Chair of Parents Council, Chair of Student Council, NEPS and DES that a critical incident has occurred. (Also where necessary NEWB and SEC).
2. Principal or the Deputy Principal convenes the initial meeting of the Critical Incident team to discuss how best to deal with the incident. (It has to be accepted that the full team may not be available where an incident occurs outside term time. In the event of the Principal and Deputy being unavailable a nominated member of the Trustees will take charge).
3. Principal makes known to the Team all relevant facts as known.
4. Contact is made with affected the family/families or their representatives.
5. The Team decides on what supports are required.
6. Team members may be assigned the following tasks – media liaison/parent liaison/staff liaison /student liaison/record keeping.
7. A statement is prepared for the media.
8. A brief staff meeting will be convened at the earliest opportunity to update staff – again as staff may be on holiday it has to be accepted that not all may be in opposition to attend. Those unable to attend will be updated through the college email system.

9. Those students most affected by the critical incident may be invited to the school for available supports where it is deemed necessary by the Team.

Once term has resumed the steps outlined in the medium and long term responses will apply.

Appendix One

Who does what?

The Principal and Deputy Principal will normally be responsible for:

- The care of and communication with staff.
- Organising the supervision of students.
- Liaising with the administrative, caretaker and other non-teaching staff.
- Liaising with the Students' Council and the Parents' Association.
- Liaising with external support agencies, the emergency services, the Board of Management, the Trustees, and the Department of Education and Skills.
- Drawing up a letter informing all parents of the critical incident and the schools response.
- Reporting incidents to the Health and Safety Authority.

The Year Head(s) and Form Teacher(s) will normally be responsible for:

- The care of and communication of students in their Year group.
- Identifying and monitoring students at risk.
- Communication with parents of students involved or affected.
- Gathering accurate information about the incident.

The Career Guidance Counsellors and the Chaplain will normally be responsible for:

- The care of students and staff immediately involved or effected.
- The care of distressed visitors.
- Providing rooms for debriefing, parents, quiet room and counselling, reflection/prayer.
- Liaising with external support agencies e.g. NEPS and the Health Services Executive.

The Health and Safety Representative and the Critical Incident Team will normally be responsible for:

- Assessing the Health and Safety issues.
- Assisting the Principal with reports to the Health and Safety Authority and other relevant agencies.

The Administration Staff will normally be responsible for:

- Ensuring the office is manned at all times.
- Keeping a telephone line free for outgoing and important incoming calls.
- Liaising with the Principal, Deputy Principal and other members of the Critical Incident Team.

The Caretakers will normally be responsible for:

- Controlling access to the school premises.
- Maintaining security procedures.
- Maintaining services e.g. heating.
- Liaising with the Principal, Deputy Principal and other members of the Critical Incident Team.

The Teaching Staff will normally be responsible for:

- Supervising their own and colleagues' classes.
- Assisting in identifying and supporting students at risk or in distress.
- Assisting in information gathering.
- Maintaining normal procedures.

Other Non-Teaching Staff will normally be responsible for:

- Maintaining normal procedures.
- Assisting in identifying and supporting students at risk or in distress.

The members of the Student Council and the prefects, will normally contribute by:

- Assisting in identifying and supporting students at risk or in distress.
- Representing students concerns and wishes re. school's response to the critical incident.

The members of the Parents Council will normally contribute by:

- Representing parents' concerns and wishes re. school's response to the critical incident.

Appendix Two

(Key Phone Numbers)- not included in the online version

Appendix Three (for inclusion in staff handbook)

Guidelines for teachers when breaking tragic news to students once a critical incident has been confirmed and such action is authorised by the Principal

- The class of the student who has died should be the first to be told with the Chaplain, Counsellor and Tutor present.
- All other classes will be informed by Form Tutors.
- Tell students that you have sad news which you will find difficult to deliver – tell them the name of the student and the facts as you know them – the aim is to dispel rumour and to allow for all due respect for the deceased, his family and classmates – where the death has been of a tragic nature there should be no direct mention of the circumstances – do not discourage questions but there will be a need to keep all focused on how we can all support each other during what will be a difficult time.
- Do not allow a student to leave the class unaccompanied if he is in a distressed state unless he is supervised.
- Let the students know who is there to offer counselling and support.
- Try to watch for those who are particularly distressed by the sad news.
- Allow students to mingle and talk.
- Allow those who wish to attend class to do so.
- Those closely affected may be allowed to gather in a quiet place such as the library.
- If deemed helpful a general assembly of the deceased student's year group will be held and brief prayer service organised.
- Students who feel the need to phone home may be allowed to do so.

