



'OPENING DOORS OF  
OPPORTUNITY TOGETHER'

# CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY

REVIEWED FEBRUARY 2024



## Mission Statement

*Meadow Bridge Primary School aims to foster a safe, happy and caring environment where each child's personal development is nurtured.*

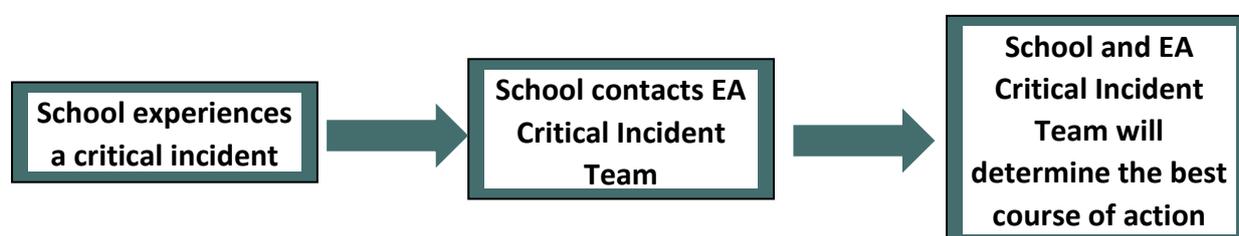
*Every child's educational journey is enhanced and their lives enriched through stimulating learning experiences.*

*Equal emphasis will be placed on pastoral care and on ensuring each individual reaches his or her academic potential, equipping them for the future.*

## CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY AND MANAGEMENT PLAN

**EMERGENCY TELEPHONE NUMBER – AVAILABLE DURING AND OUT OF BUSINESS HOURS**

**Critical Incident Line: 028 3751 2515**



### WHAT IS A CRITICAL INCIDENT?

A critical incident may be defined as any sudden and unexpected incident or a sequence of events which cause trauma within a school community and which overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of school.

It may affect pupils, staff, parents, and governors. It may relate to the safety of the school community or may involve an incident beyond the school premises.

As a critical incident is likely to have a severe impact upon school, both in the short-term and long-term, our aim is to ensure that school strategies and procedures are in place to protect the physical and emotional wellbeing of every member of the community at Meadow Bridge Primary School.

The Critical Incident Policy and Management Plan cannot cover every aspect of recovery from a critical incident. Occurrences may arise which cannot be foreseen or considered. A critical incident may occur during the school day, during the evening, during the school holidays, or on a school trip.

It is important that the Critical Incident Policy and Management Plan is easily understood and comes into action immediately.

**The following must be remembered in relation to the Critical Incident Policy and Management Plan:**

- That the policy operates in conjunction with the EA Critical Incident Team (028 3751 2515), and guidelines found in the Department of Education document, '[A Guide to Managing Critical Incidents in School](#)';
- That the policy is followed as closely as possible;
- That designated personnel understand their tasks and are competent to carry them out;
- That people do not take unilateral actions;
- That consideration and sensitivity is shown by all;
- That pupils, staff, parents, and governors are protected from press intrusion;
- That normal routines be resumed as soon as possible; and
- There is a realisation that total recovery may take a long time.

The Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) has responsibility for ensuring that procedures are properly addressed at times of high emotion. If the incident involves legal action, a precise response to the incident should be known and be able to be verified by more than one person.

#### **Aims of the Critical Incident Policy and Management Plan**

1. To maintain a duty of care;
2. To minimise educational and administrative disruption within school; and
3. To enable normal working to be resumed in the shortest possible time.

#### **Objectives**

- To ensure that swift and appropriate action is taken in the case of school being made aware that a critical incident has occurred;
- To ensure that the welfare of pupils and staff is paramount;
- To ensure that the school responds in a sensitive, consistent and effective manner which reduces confusion, panic and extreme emotion;
- To have in place a Critical Incident Management Team, the membership of which is known to all relevant parties (See [Appendix 1](#));
- To have in place a Critical Incident Management Plan, the details of which are familiar to all relevant parties (See [Appendix 2](#));
- To maintain normality, as far as possible, in parts of the school which are not affected and to restore normality as soon as possible to the parts which are affected;
- To have immediate access to all relevant contact details (including outside agencies); and
- To offer sensitive, non-intrusive support in the short-term and medium-term to all those affected directly or indirectly by the incident.

## Examples of Critical Incidents

A critical incident is likely to involve death or serious injury to one or more members of the school community and/or their families, either at school, journeying to or from school, participating in a school related activity, at home, or in some other context.

Eg In School:

- The death of a student or member of staff through natural causes;
- An accident involving a student or member of staff;
- A deliberate act of violence such as knifing or use of a firearm;
- A school fire, flood, or an explosion.

Eg Outside School:

- Deaths or injuries through accidents;
- Suicide;
- Civil disturbance.

## Guidelines for Managing a Critical Incident

- The Principal will take charge of the school's response with support from the EA's Critical Incident Team (028 3751 2515) and the DENI document '[A Guide to Managing Critical Incidents in School](#)';
- In the case of the Principal being unavailable, the Vice-Principal and members of the Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) will take charge;
- The Principal's office will be the central liaison point;
- The CIMT will assess immediate practical needs;
- The CIMT will contact next of kin of those directly involved if required;
- A short simple statement of facts will be prepared by the Principal (See [Appendix 3](#));
- All contacts from the media will be dealt with by the Principal;
- Secretarial staff taking incoming calls will use a statement agreed by the CIMT;
- When necessary, all members of staff will be informed and will be guided in relation to informing pupils;
- The CIMT will determine the involvement of parents if appropriate;
- Short-term and long-term support will be offered to those affected;
- There will be an evaluation of the way in which the incident was managed (See [Appendix 4](#)).

**Members of the Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)**

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Principal:                                  | Mr D J Ball  |
| Vice-Principal/<br>DT for Child Protection: | Mr A McCollum  |
| School Secretary:                           | Ms E Woods   |
| Health and Safety Officer:                  | Ms R Stirling  |
| Chair of Governors:                         | Miss J Townsley (or another Board Member in her absence) |

Other members of staff may be co-opted members of the CIMT as and when required. One/two members of staff may be asked to take responsibility for the normal running of the school whilst the CIMT is engaged in dealing with an incident.

## **Critical Incident Management Plan**

### **in the Event of a Critical Incident**

#### **Initial Response**

- The Principal should be contacted first (if not available, the Vice-Principal);
- The Principal (or Vice-Principal) should seek to clarify from relevant sources, the nature and circumstance of the incident;
- The CIMT will meet at the earliest opportunity and agree on procedures for managing the critical incident (See [Appendix 4](#));
- If the incident is on-site, health and safety measures will be put in place and the emergency services contacted.

#### **Longer-Term Issues**

- School structures and routines will be re-established;
- Supportive strategies for pupils and staff will be implemented, including support from the School Counsellor;
- There will be ongoing contact with parents;
- Actions taken will be reviewed and policies amended if appropriate;
- Pastoral programmes will be reviewed;
- Staff will be mindful of anniversaries and other special dates.

**The use of appropriate outside agencies is crucial to providing long-term support as is the use of appropriately trained members of staff who are known to those in need of help.**

#### **Preventative Strategies**

- Regular review of relevant policies, eg Child Protection, Health and Safety;
- First Aid Training;
- Fire Drills;
- Pastoral Programme and PDMU.

**All Members of the Critical Incident Management Team must:**

- Have a copy of the Critical Incident Policy and Management Plan at home and at school;
- Be aware of the roles of each part of the Plan to enable the school to react swiftly and accordingly;
- Have contact numbers of each other for 24-hour contact;
- In the event of a school trip/visit, have access to a list of names for staff and pupils;
- Have a register of emergency services and relevant outside agencies (See [Appendix 5](#));
- Relevant members of the secretarial staff will have a register of emergency services and relevant outside agencies (See [Appendix 5](#));
- Emergency evacuation drills are familiar to all members of the school community and practised regularly (See [Appendix 6](#));
- Opportunities to explore sensitive issues such as tragedy and death will be built into pastoral programmes and PDMU.

### Sample Announcements

#### After a known fatality...

We are taking this time to think about \_\_\_\_\_, a Primary 4 pupil who died last night in a road traffic accident. \_\_\_\_\_ was travelling with his/her family to \_\_\_\_\_. We do not know any details about the accident at this time except that the rest of the family are safe and no-one is seriously injured.

\_\_\_\_\_’s funeral is being held at \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_. A funeral is a special time to remember a person who has died. School will let your families know about the specific time and address of the funeral in a written note which will be emailed tomorrow.

Let us take a moment of silence to think of \_\_\_\_\_, to remember all the good things about him/her, and to say goodbye. In our silence we will express our loving thoughts.

#### After a suspected suicide...

A tragedy has happened. \_\_\_\_\_, a Primary 7 pupil has died suddenly. Details of \_\_\_\_\_’s premature death will not be released to protect the privacy of family members. Your parents will be emailed information about funeral arrangements as soon as possible.

This kind of tragic news is hard to accept. You may experience many different feelings within the next few days. Everyone deals with loss differently. It is important to respect the way others grieve. Counsellors are available in \_\_\_\_\_. Feel free to arrange to go and talk to the counsellors. They want to listen to your feelings and concerns.

#### Sample Press Release

Date:

School grieves sudden death of pupil.

As reported by the PSNI, a pupil at \_\_\_\_\_ 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 for the Education Authority’s Critical Incident Team have been assigned to the school to provide support. A letter has been sent by school to parents, informing them of this incident and providing information on the support services available through school.

A special assembly to remember \_\_\_\_\_ has been arranged for \_\_\_\_\_.

Contact: D J Ball, Principal, Meadow Bridge Primary School, at 028 9262 2509.

#### Pro Forma Letter (for parents)

With great regret, we have learnt of the death/deaths of \_\_\_\_\_ and we extend our deepest sympathy to the family circle.

## Prepared Statement for Media

We are sorry to learn of the tragic death of \_\_\_\_\_. We hope that, at this difficult time, school would be given the privacy needed to support our pupils.

NB: If the Principal wishes to comment about the pupil, they may want to gain permission from the family to include:

Sporting achievements;  
Musical talents;  
Academic success;  
Personal attributes.

## Sample Letter to all Parents

Date:

Dear Parent/Guardian

It is with great sadness that I have to tell you of the sudden death of \_\_\_\_\_, (a pupil in Primary \_\_\_/a Primary \_\_\_\_\_ teacher/Teaching Assistant etc). The children were told this morning by their class teacher/Principal, at Assembly.

\_\_\_\_\_ died of (an asthma attack, meningitis etc), and the children have been assured 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 Authority's Critical Incident 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 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 children's 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 DAY/DATE at TIME at (Name of Church or Crematorium). We are in touch with the family regarding their wishes for the school's representation at the Service.

## Procedures for Critical Incident Management

### Key Roles

#### Principal/Vice-Principal:

- Seek clarification;
- Call emergency services if appropriate;
- Summons the CIMT to inform of incident;
- Contact the EA Critical Incident Support Team on 028 3751 2515;
- Prepare relevant statements/letters for the media, parents, pupils and office staff;
- Convene and inform staff – Heads of Key Stage and any other staff as necessary;
- Contact external agencies – EA/Social Services/relevant parents;
- Support the physical and emotional wellbeing of pupils;
- Arrange staff communication line if necessary and appropriate;
- Manage the daily arrangements of the school, website, texts to parents, etc.

#### Heads of Key Stage/Vice-Principal

- Arrange staff cover if necessary and appropriate;
- Liaise with Building Supervisor to ensure access for essential personnel;
- Ensure health and safety measures are in place.

#### School Secretary

- Ensure phone lines are operative and all office staff are available;
- Ensure office staff do not vary from the script.

#### Health and Safety Officer

- Liaise with school first aiders to offer first aid as appropriate.

### Relevant Outside Agencies

|   |               |
|---|---------------|
| <b>EA Critical Incident Support Team:</b> | 028 3751 2515 |
| <b>PSNI:</b>                              | 101 or 999    |
| <b>Social Services Gateway Team:</b>      | 0300 1234 333 |

### Staff Support

|   |               |
|---|---------------|
| EA Human Resource Section:              | 028 9056 6200 |
| Staff Care Services – 24 hour Careline: | 0500 127079   |
| INSPIRE – 24-hour staff counselling:    | 0808 800 0002 |

### Bereavement and Trauma Resources and Support

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Barnardo's – Counselling support for children:  | <a href="http://www.barnardos.org.uk">www.barnardos.org.uk</a>               |
| Childhood Bereavement Network:  | <a href="http://www.childbereavement.org.uk">www.childbereavement.org.uk</a> |
| Childline:  | <a href="http://www.childline.org.uk">www.childline.org.uk</a>               |
| Cruse Bereavement Care – Resources and bereavement counselling for children of all ages, for parents, carers and professionals: | <a href="http://www.cruse.org.uk">www.cruse.org.uk</a>                       |
| Family Trauma Centre :  | <a href="http://www.ftc.hscni.net">www.ftc.hscni.net</a>                     |
| Lifeline – 24-hour support and counselling:   | 0808 808 8000  |
| NSPCC – Counselling support for children:   | <a href="http://www.nspcc.org.uk">www.nspcc.org.uk</a>                       |
| Samaritans:   | <a href="http://www.samaritans.org">www.samaritans.org</a>                   |
| Winston's Wish:   | <a href="http://www.winstonswish.org">www.winstonswish.org</a>               |
| Resources supporting bereaved children and young people   | <a href="http://www.youngminds.org.uk">www.youngminds.org.uk</a>             |

### Other Useful Resources

[EA CIRT Leaflet for Pupils – When something sad happens](#)

[EA CRIT Leaflet for Parents – When a critical incident happens](#)

[EA CRIT Leaflet for School Staff](#)

[DENI – Protecting Lives in School](#)

[www.papyrus-uk.org](http://www.papyrus-uk.org)

[www.selfharm.co.uk](http://www.selfharm.co.uk)

### Emergency Evacuation Procedure

It is the duty of anyone discovering a fire to operate the nearest FIRE ALARM CALL POINT immediately and to ensure that the Emergency Services are called.

The Fire Alarm sound is the continuous ringing of the school bell.

#### In the event of an emergency and the alarm sounding:

- Stop work immediately. Children should line up and walk in orderly lines with their teacher to the assembly point in the corner of the school playground;
- Children are NOT to bring anything with them;
- Teachers should take the red emergency register sheet with them, carry out a roll call and report to the Principal/Vice-Principal;
- Anyone not in class when the alarm sounds should make their way DIRECTLY to their Assembly Point by the safest exit route and join their appropriate class;
- All doors (classroom and fire doors) are to be closed after a class passes through;
- If total evacuation of the grounds becomes necessary, procedures from the Critical Incident Policy should be followed;
- All staff should be aware of alternative exits in the event that the listed exit is blocked;

#### Do not re-enter the building

- No person must leave the assembly point for any reason until permission has been given by the Principal or by the NIFRS fire officer in charge;
- **The Principal, or Vice-Principal, is responsible for receiving confirmation from each teacher that all children have been accounted for and that appropriate and timely decisions are taken;**
- Once an area has been cleared the Fire Warden (if trained) for that area can, if appropriate, use a fire extinguisher to put the fire out.

Continued overleaf ...

## Exit Points and Fire Wardens

| <b>Class/Room</b>   | <b>Exit Point</b>            | <b>Fire Warden</b> |
|---|------------------------------|--------------------|
| Room 1  | Foundation Emergency Exit    | Miss R McCrossan   |
| Room 2  | Room 1/2 Toilet Area         | Miss R McCrossan   |
| Room 1/2 Toilet Area  | Room 1/2 Toilet Area         | Miss R McCrossan   |
| Room 3  | Foundation Emergency Exit    | Miss J Neill       |
| Room 4  | Room 3/4 Toilet Area         | Miss J Neill       |
| Room 3/4 Toilet Area  | Room 3/4 Toilet Area         | Miss J Neill       |
| Room 7  | KS1 Toilet Area              | Miss E Littler     |
| Library   | Foyer Emergency Exit         | Ms R Stirling      |
| KS1 Toilet Area   | KS1 Toilet Area              | Miss E Littler     |
| Room 6  | Foyer Emergency Exit         | Ms R Stirling      |
| Room 8  | KS1 Toilet Area              | Miss E Littler     |
| Room 9  | KS2 Toilet Area              | Mr A McCollum      |
| Room 10   | KS2 Toilet Area              | Mr A McCollum      |
| KS2 Toilet Area   | KS2 Toilet Area              | Mr A McCollum      |
| Room 11   | KS2 Emergency Exit           | Mr A McQuitty      |
| Room 12   | KS2 Emergency Exit           | Mr A McQuitty      |
| Computer Suite  | KS2 Emergency Exit           | Mr A McQuitty      |
| Room 5, Foyer, Staff Toilets,<br>Offices, Staff Room, Visitors,<br>Tutors | Foyer Emergency Exit         | Ms E Woods         |
| Supervisory Staff   | Assembly Hall Emergency Exit | Mrs A Browne       |
| Assembly Hall/Kitchen   | Assembly Hall Emergency Exit | Mr D J Ball        |