



# **BALLYMENA ACADEMY**

**EST. 1828**

## **Critical Incident Policy**

Policy ratified by Board of Governors: February 2025

Date of next Review: February 2028

## RATIONALE

This policy reflects the D.E. guidance on 'A Guide to Managing Critical Incidents in Schools' and is designed to ensure a measured and considered response in a challenging circumstance, which can often be unexpected. Associated Support and Guidance materials referencing Safer-R Model, are available from the EA website at [www.eani.org.uk/school-management/in-an-emergency-school-information/managing-a-critical-incident](http://www.eani.org.uk/school-management/in-an-emergency-school-information/managing-a-critical-incident)

As a critical incident is likely to have a severe impact upon the school, both in the short 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 Ballymena Academy Community.

A critical incident can be defined as a sudden, unexpected and tragic event or sequence of events which causes trauma and confusion within a school community and which overwhelms its normal coping mechanism. It may affect pupils, staff, parents and governors, may relate directly to the safety of the school community or may involve an incident beyond the school premises.

While the policy aims to provide a comprehensive account of school procedures it should be noted that it cannot cover every potential specific incident, nor every aspect of recovery from a critical incident. Response to each incident will be determined on the basis of its individual circumstances which may necessitate flexibility in terms of procedures allotted. Occurrences may arise which cannot be foreseen or considered. The critical incident may occur during the school day, during the evening, during the school holidays or on a school trip.

The following must be remembered in relation to the critical incident policy:

- that it is followed as closely as possible, recognising that flexibility may be required depending on the nature of the incident;
- that designated personnel understand their tasks and are competent to carry them out;
- that other people do not take unilateral actions;
- that consideration and sensitivity are shown by all;
- that pupils, staff and parents are protected from external intrusion;
- that normal routines be resumed as soon as possible;
- there is a realisation that total recovery may take a long time.

The Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) along with relevant Senior Leaders and Pastoral staff has responsibility for ensuring that procedures are properly addressed at times of high emotion.

## **Aims of the Critical Incident Policy**

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

## **Objectives**

- To ensure that swift and appropriate action is taken in the case of the 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 (CIMT), the membership of which is known to all relevant parties.
- To have in place a Critical Incident Management Plan.
- 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).
- To offer sensitive, non-intrusive support in the short 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.

e.g. 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.
- A school fire, flood or an explosion in a laboratory.

e.g. Out of School:

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

## **GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING A CRITICAL INCIDENT**

- The Principal will take charge of the school's response and determine the composition of a Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) and associated roles and responsibilities.
- In the case of the Principal being unavailable, the Deputy Principal will take charge.
- The Principal's office will be the central liaison point.
- The CIMT will assess immediate practical needs and identify procedures required for dealing with the Critical Incident, including responding to any inevitable risk or threat, e.g. evacuation or first aid, notifying emergency services/the relevant authorities and agreed parties.
- The CIMT will develop and maintain a Critical Incident Management Plan.
- The CIMT will identify relevant external support agencies and liaise with them as required.
- 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.
- 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.
- All contact with pupils by any agency or individuals should be governed by current Child Protection legislation and guidance for schools.
- The CIMT will determine the involvement of parents, if appropriate.
- Short and long term support will be offered to those affected.
- There will be an evaluation of the way in which the incident was managed.

## **MEMBERS OF THE CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM (CIMT)**

- Principal
- Deputy Principal
- Vice-Principals
- Health & Safety Officer (when necessary)
- School Nurse (when necessary)
- Principal's Secretary
- Chair of Board of Governors – Dr D Johnston (or another Board member in his absence)
- Other members, for example, of Senior or Pastoral 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.)

In fulfilling their duties and responsibilities the Principal and Board of Governors will be guided by the Department of Education (DE) publication "A Guide to Managing Critical Incidents in Schools". This publication is available at [www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/guide-managing-critical-incidents-schools](http://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/guide-managing-critical-incidents-schools)

Whilst all members of the CIMT may not be available, they will be kept informed and advice sought as required, to help make appropriate decisions.

## **Procedures for Critical Incident Management – Key Roles**

### **Principal, (or in his absence, Deputy/Vice Principal):**

- Seeks clarification
- Calls emergency services if appropriate
- Summons the CIMT to inform of incident
- Oversees the development and implementation of the Critical Incident Management Plan
- Prepares relevant statements/letters for the media, parents, pupils and office staff
- Convenes and informs staff

### **Deputy Principal**

- Contacts external agencies – school counsellor / EA Support 028 3751 2515
- Contacts relevant parents
- Supports the physical and emotional wellbeing of staff
- Supports the physical and emotional wellbeing of pupils
- Supports Pastoral Staff if necessary and appropriate

### **Vice-Principal/Health and Safety Officer**

- Arranges staff cover if necessary & appropriate
- Liaises with Maintenance supervisor to ensure access for essential personnel
- Ensures health and safety measures are in place
- Manages the daily arrangements of the school
- Manages social media output, parent mail etc.

### **Principal's Secretary**

- Ensures phone lines are operative and appropriately stationed
- Ensures office staff do not vary from agreed statements

### **School Nurse**

- Liaises with school first aiders to offer first aid as appropriate

### **All members of the Critical Incident Management team must:**

- have a copy of the Critical Incident Policy 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 access to a list of names for staff and pupils for a school trip /visit
- have a register of emergency services and relevant outside agencies

## **CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT PLAN**

In the event of a critical incident the Principal should be contacted first (if not available) the Deputy or Vice-Principal and the CIMT will then meet at the earliest opportunity and agree on procedures for managing the critical incident. A Critical Incident Management Plan (CIMP) will be drawn up using the framework of:-

- initial response
- medium term response
- longer term response

This will be supported by the school's guidance document and D.E. guidance in developing a CIMP. The nature of incidents will determine the appropriateness or necessity of overall responses.

The use of appropriate outside agencies is crucial to providing immediate and long term support as is the use of appropriately trained members of staff who are known to those in need of help. A list of relevant contact information will be updated annually.

An initial response will consider the immediate tasks around gathering information, assessing risk and contacting relevant persons. It will also consider the process of informing the school community, appropriate levels of support, assess the impact of the incident and necessary responses, liaison with media if required and record keeping for future review.

A medium term response will consider how school structures and routines will be re-established, supportive strategies for pupils and staff will be implemented and ongoing contact and support of the school community and those directly affected.

A longer term response will consider a review of actions taken and possible policy amendments, a review of the education and pastoral programme and consideration of special anniversary dates.

### **Preventative Strategies**

- Regular review of relevant policies and procedures within the school.
- First Aid training.
- Fire Drills.
- PSHE Programme.
- Health and Safety reviews and training.

This policy will be kept under review.