



Managing Critical Incidents

Policy



Updated:	September 2025
Board of Governor Reviewed:	September 2025
Next review date:	September 2027

Rights Respecting School

At Glenraig Integrated Primary School we are a Rights Respecting School and uphold the articles contained in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

General School Aims

We endeavour to:

- ❖ Provide and encourage an atmosphere of acceptance and mutual respect for the children from all religious, social and cultural background.
- ❖ Create a happy, secure, stimulating environment in which all pupils can learn effectively and become clear, confident communicators.
- ❖ Present children with a variety of challenging, activity-based learning experiences incorporating all areas of study required by the Northern Ireland Curriculum.
- ❖ Encourage children to recognise the value of developing a healthy mind and body and to foster, within each child, a positive self-image.
- ❖ Encourage parents to have a constructive and positive role in the school.
- ❖ Place the school at the heart of the local community

The Glenraig Integrated Primary School Critical Incident Policy has been created in the context of the following guidance.

A Guide to Managing Critical Incidents in Schools (EANI, 2018) Rationale The College constantly seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for all students and staff.

However, it is recognised that there is always the potential for a set of circumstances to impact upon the life and well-being of students and staff over which it will have no direct control. In severe circumstances, such events are known as critical incidents.

Aims

The main aim of this policy is to provide all appropriate and essential support for staff and pupils in the event of a critical incident occurring involving the School community. This support will be directed by the Critical Incident Management Team which comprises of the Principal, Vice Principal, Designated Teacher, School Secretary and the I.C.T co-ordinator. A further aim would be for the school to return to normal life as soon as reasonably possible. Finally, the school would aim to arrange any long-term support necessary for either students or staff in the aftermath of a critical incident.

Definition of a Critical Incident

Defining a critical incident is difficult, but it will have some or all of the following characteristics:

- it may affect the whole school (disruption to school day or life)
- it may be a single event or ongoing (examples - Dunblane, Holy Cross)
- it is usually unexpected
- it will require support from a wide range of staff and outside agencies
- it may involve the media
- it may potentially overwhelm the school
- it is likely to be traumatic for those who are directly involved or who are involved in responding to the incident

A working definition from the EA is 'A critical incident is a sudden or unexpected incident or sequence of events which causes 3 trauma within a school community and which overwhelms its normal coping mechanisms'

Examples of critical incidents that can occur in schools include –

- Sudden death of student or member of staff;
- Disappearance of a student or member of staff;
- Death or injury of a student or staff member on a school outing;
- Severe injury to student or staff member as a result of road traffic accident;
- Serious assault on student or staff member in school;
- Violent/disturbed intruder on school premises during school day;
- Serious damage to school building or property through fire, flood or vandalism;
- Civil disturbance in local community;
- Student with contagious illness;
- Immediate evacuation of the school with no likelihood of return for a number of hours;

Trauma is defined as 'Exposure to a terrifying and life threatening event resulting in helplessness in the face of danger, anxiety, fear and instinctual arousal' No one can predict when an incident might take place however, planning ahead will allow the School to be aware of needs to be managed and be better prepared to handle the distress experienced by both young people and staff.

Critical Incident Planning

Each member of the Critical Incident Management Team will have copies of the Critical Incident Policy available at all times, especially at home. A management plan for responding to such incidents is in place so that all staff are aware of their roles. All emergency contact numbers will be kept up to date. Draft letters to parents will be scripted and then amended as appropriate to the specific incident. Communication with students and staff should be maintained and be as accurate as possible. The incident must be acknowledged by the School although with social media it is always likely that some information (even if not wholly accurate) will already be in the public domain.

It is important that only accurate information is conveyed and if something is not known that too should be communicated so as to remove ambiguity and diffuse rumour, conjecture and speculation. Communication with key stakeholders must be implemented In the event of a critical incident taking place in the School, or an incident which directly involves a member or members of the School community, the following actions would be implemented.

Recording of Response

The following appendices from the Guide to Managing Critical Incidents in school will be placed in the Critical Incident File and utilised/completed accordingly –

- List of Contacts
- Initial Report
- Running Record
- Details of students and staff requiring ongoing support
- Review of Incident
- Sample announcements to students, staff, parents and media.
- Information for staff to address students' questions around death
- Information for staff in the event of a suspected suicide
- Information for staff for students returning to the College after a critical incident
- College record on student who has experienced loss or bereavement
- Review of Incident Form (to be completed 6 weeks after the incident)

Immediate Actions for Schools Following a Critical Incident

Maintain structures and routines with flexibility as required (VP)

Arrange Staff Briefing (Principal)

Gather factual information regarding the incident (Principal/VP)

Prepare for media interest (Principal/ICT Co-ordinator)

**Organise a debriefing with staff (VP) Set up recovery room (if required)
(Designated teacher)**

Mobilise the College Critical Incident Management Team (Principal/VP)

Arrange for appropriate information to be shared with students (Principal/VP)

Identify vulnerable students and staff (Designated Teacher)

Further explanation of Actions

1. Assess the risk and take necessary action
 - Respond to any inevitable risk or threat e.g. evacuation/first aid/emergency services
2. Gather factual information regarding the incident
 - Details of person/people involved;
 - Confirmation of facts from the appropriate source e.g. family/police/hospital etc.

3. Initiate the use of the DE – A Guide to Managing Critical Incidents in Schools

- Critical Incident Management Guide Records

4. Mobilise the School's Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) and implement the Critical Incident Management Plan (Appendix 1)

- If critical incident is out of hours use a pre-prepared contact list to contact CIMT members.

5. Immediate tasks for the School's Critical Incident Management Team

- Clarify roles to staff members. The Principal will be the Critical Incident Co-Ordinator;
- Contact the parents of pupil/s directly involved in the incident;
- Inform relevant key people and seek support as appropriate e.g. staff, BOG's, EA Critical Incident Team, CCMS, Local Clergy etc.;
- Agree the school routine for the day;
- Establish a central information point;
- Set up dedicated telephone line and logging system;
- Set up school visitor logging system;
- Set up a warm, quiet recovery room with drinks, tissues, suitable seating;
- Contact impacted family/s to determine their wishes regarding public announcements and staff/pupil briefings;
- For media enquiry support contact the EA Communications.

6. Arrange staff briefing (when incident is confirmed)

- Give a brief statement of factual information;
- Outline the school's response and proposed plan of action, maintaining normal structures and routines with flexibility
- Allow staff to ask questions and provide a response;
- Outline staff responsibility for monitoring pupil and staff welfare;
- Identify vulnerable staff and pupils who may be of risk;

- Clarify specific responsibilities for staff;
- Advise staff on procedure for dealing with media enquiries;
- Advise staff about confidentiality;
- Advise staff on agreed procedure for informing pupils and parents;
- Inform staff of the support services available;
- Advise staff about practical arrangements e.g. cover, flexible timetabling, recovery rooms etc.;
- Advise staff of time/place of next briefing and debriefing sessions.

7. Inform Pupils

- Inform pupils when incident is confirmed, with accurate and agreed statement (in form groups/classes/small groups);
- Make the announcement simultaneously, where possible, to ensure that pupils hear the news at the same time, using clear language with age appropriate factual information;
- Identify vulnerable pupils;
- Advise pupils about the support available;
- Answer any appropriate questions and dispel rumours;
- Allow time for pupils to discuss their feelings;
- Pupils who are absent from school, on work experience, educational trips or suspension should also be informed

Pupils with SENs including pupils with learning and communication difficulties will require special consideration.

8. Inform Parents

- Use appropriate format to inform parents e.g by telephone, letter, home visit etc;
- In some instances, you may wish to inform parents from a particular class/form/ year group/key stage. Monitoring and Review of Policy It is the responsibility of the Board of Governors, in liaison with the Principal, to monitor the effectiveness of the Critical

Incident Policy. To appropriately monitor the effectiveness of the Critical Incident Policy, the Board of Governors shall:

- Place a Critical Incident update on the monthly Pastoral Care Report until six weeks after the Event;
- identify priorities for action;
- assess the effectiveness of strategies employed when dealing with the critical incident;
- review the Critical Incident Policy every 4 years.

Links to Other Policies The following policies should be read alongside the Critical Incident Policy

- Positive Behaviour Policy;
- Pastoral Care Policy;
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy;
- Special Educational Needs Policy;
- Anti-Bullying Policy

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Initial Report

Date: _____ Time: _____

Information received from: _____

Contact details: _____

Name of person informed: _____

Information passed to: _____
(Name of person with overall responsibility)

Time: _____ Date: _____

Facts of incident received so far: Brief Description of the Incident on (Date)

Unconfirmed reports:

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Appendix 2

Details of individuals known to be involved

Name	Pupil/Member of Staff or Local Community	Involvement	Known/Suspected	Contact Details

IMMEDIATE ACTION

Critical Incident Team Management Informed _____ (Time) _____ (Date)

Name of Person: _____

Arrange Meeting of Critical Incident Management Team

_____ (Time) _____ (Date)

Name of Person: _____

_____ (Time) _____ (Date)

DAY 1

1. Assess the ongoing danger and take necessary action eg evacuation/first aid/emergency services

Done: Time: _____ Date: _____

Name of Person: _____

2. Allocate roles to staff members

Lead Roles	Person Responsible	Mobile Number
Establish central information point		
Set up dedicated phone line		
Arrange staff briefing and debriefing (set regular times)		
Inform pupils		
Inform parents		
Manage Media (prepared statement)		
Arrange staff support		
Set up recovery room		

Done: Time: _____ Date: _____

Person responsible: _____

3. Establish a central information point

Done: Time: _____ Date: _____

Person responsible: _____

4. Set up dedicated phone line

Done:

Time: _____

Date: _____

Person responsible: _____

5. Inform key people and seek support as appropriate/link with other relevant agencies

List of Key Contacts (name)	Phone Number	Done
Principal/Vice-Principal		<input type="checkbox"/>
Education and Library Board's Critical Incident Response Team		<input type="checkbox"/>
Chair of Board of Governors		<input type="checkbox"/>
Council for Catholic Maintained Schools		<input type="checkbox"/>
Local Clergy/Faith Workers		<input type="checkbox"/>
Local Police		<input type="checkbox"/>
Fire Brigade		<input type="checkbox"/>
Hospital		<input type="checkbox"/>
Designated Medical Officer		<input type="checkbox"/>
Communications Officer		<input type="checkbox"/>
School Nurse		<input type="checkbox"/>
Educational Psychologist		<input type="checkbox"/>
Educational Welfare Officer		<input type="checkbox"/>
Counselling Services		<input type="checkbox"/>
Key Holders		<input type="checkbox"/>

Done:

Person responsible: _____

Time: _____

Date: _____

6. Brief all staff

Remember: Clear factual information
Advice on how to inform & support pupils
Team working and practical arrangements (eg cover, flexible timetable, recovery room)
Support for staff
Identify vulnerable staff
Inform absent staff
Set time for debrief session

Done: Person responsible: _____

Time: _____ Date: _____

7. Inform all pupils

Remember: Clear language (no euphemisms)
Dispel rumour
Offer support
Age appropriate factual information
Assurances regarding updated information
Identify vulnerable pupils
Inform absent pupils

Done: Person responsible: _____

Time: _____ Date: _____

8. Inform all parents

Remember: Appropriate format eg by phone, letter, home visit.

Done: Person responsible: _____

How? _____

Time: _____ Date: _____

9. Contact with Media (if appropriate)

Remember: Consult with Communications Officer
Return media calls
Use prepared statement
Use measured tone
Emphasise school pastoral care support as appropriate

Done: Person responsible: _____

How? _____

Time: _____ Date: _____

10. Debrief staff – End of day session

Remember: Thank staff
Advise about self-care
Information about next day
Time to chat/reflect, tea and buns
Next day arrangements

Done: Person responsible: _____

Time: _____ Date: _____

11. Meeting of Critical Incident Management Team (End of day session)

Remember: Support and debrief team
Plan Day 2 – morning briefing for staff
Arrange next meeting of Team

Done: Person responsible: _____

Time: _____ Date: _____

9. Contact with Media (if appropriate)

Remember: Consult with Communications Officer
Return media calls
Use prepared statement
Use measured tone
Emphasise school pastoral care support as appropriate

Done: Person responsible: _____

How? _____

Time: _____ Date: _____

10. Debrief staff – End of day session

Remember: Thank staff
Advise about self-care
Information about next day
Time to chat/reflect, tea and buns
Next day arrangements

Done: Person responsible: _____

Time: _____ Date: _____

11. Meeting of Critical Incident Management Team (End of day session)

Remember: Support and debrief team
Plan Day 2 – morning briefing for staff
Arrange next meeting of Team

Done: Person responsible: _____

Time: _____ Date: _____

DAY 2

1. Record any further information/details since previous day

Done: Person responsible: _____
Time: _____ Date: _____

2. Maintain central information point

Done: Person responsible: _____

3. Maintain dedicated phone line

Done: Person responsible: _____

4. Deal with staff cover/flexible timetable/allocate appropriate rooms etc as necessary

Done: Person responsible: _____

5. Briefing Staff – Morning session

Think: Practical arrangements
Support for pupils
Self-care
Time of debriefing session

Done: Person responsible: _____

Time: _____ Date: _____

6. Pupils

- Providing further information (as appropriate)
- Showing care and support
- Providing comforting routine and predictability
- Allowing pupils some involvement/outlet eg cards/drawings/poems/ceremonies
- Recovery room
- Refer vulnerable pupils for further action

Details of action taken or any follow up action required should be recorded separately.

7. Parents

Provide further information (as appropriate) eg letter/meetings etc

Details of action taken:

Person responsible: _____ Date: _____

8. Consideration of memorial services

Remember: Times/dates
Staff involved
Information to parents

Done: Person responsible: _____ Date: _____

9. Debriefing staff – end of Day 2 session

Remember: Ongoing practical arrangements
Longer term monitoring of pupils who may be at risk more
detailed self-care advice
Time to reflect, chat, tea and buns

Done: Person responsible: _____

Time: _____ Date: _____

10. Meeting of Critical Incident Management Team end Day 2

Remember: Support and debrief team
Plan Day 3 – morning briefing, staff cover etc, if required
Discuss need for longer term actions these will include:

- Memorials, services and ceremonies (eg memory books, art work, school event, planting tree)
- Re-establishment of feelings of safety and predictability among school community
- Ongoing support of pupils' emotional coping (eg circle time, Personal Development and Mutual Understanding)
- School support for contact with families affected by the incident
- Ongoing monitoring of children who may be having difficulties – providing support and referring on as necessary
- Ongoing support for staff directly involved and those most affected

Done: Person responsible: _____

Time: _____ Date: _____

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Ongoing support for pupils and staff most affected

Potential Referral Agencies	Telephone Number
Family doctor (through GP)	
Other Counselling Agencies	
Educational Welfare	
Other Education and Welfare Services	
Schools' Counselling Service	

1. Details of Pupil Referrals for support following Critical Incident

Name of Child	Referred to	Referred by
Date of Referral	Outcome	
Name of Child	Referred to	Referred by
Date of Referral	Outcome	

Person responsible: _____ *Date:* _____

2. Details of ongoing support for staff directly involved and those most affected following Critical Incident

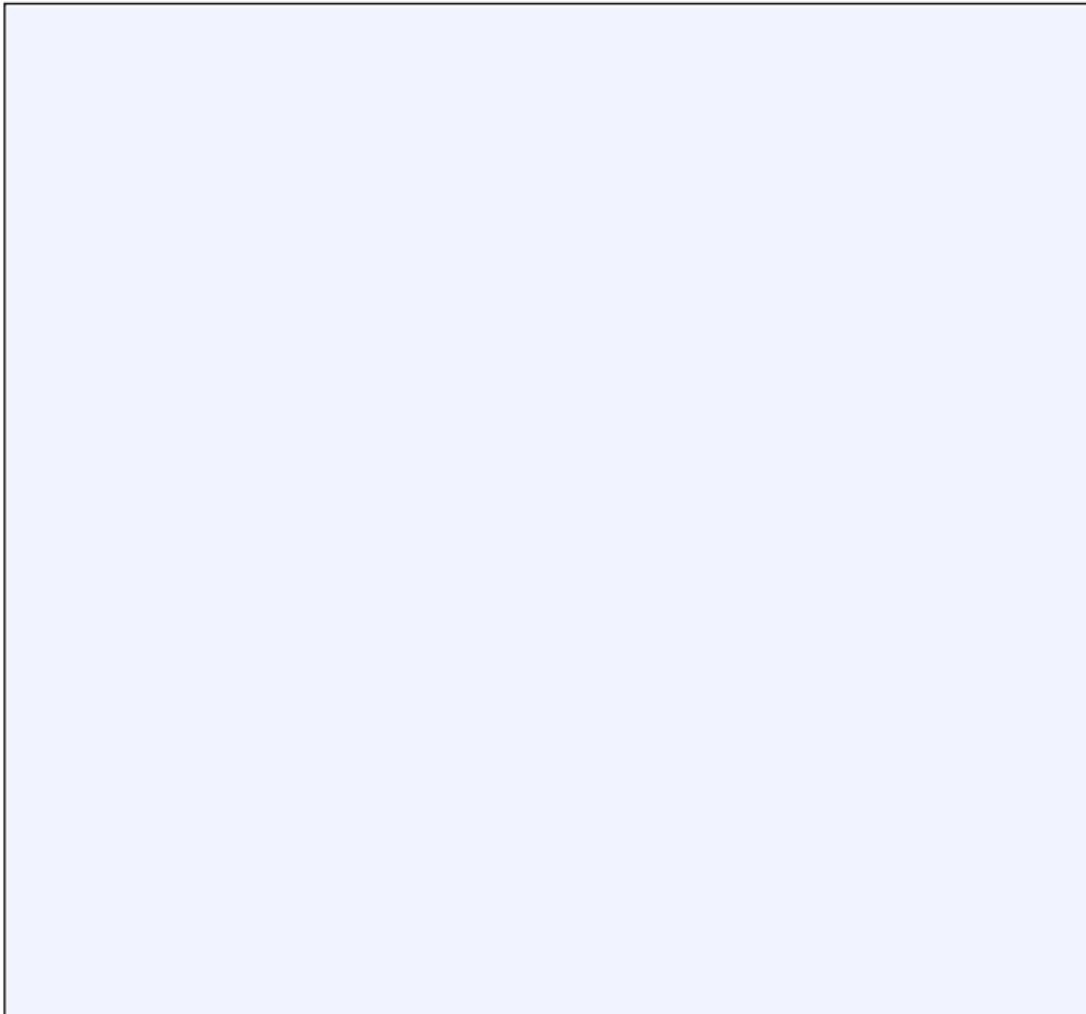
Details of action taken:

Person responsible: _____ *Date:* _____

Reflection

Details of key lessons learned through management of this incident:

- What went well?
- What was most/least helpful?
- Were there any gaps?
- Have all necessary referrals to support services been made?
- Are there any identified training needs?
- Does the policy need to be reviewed/changed/updated?
- Is there any unfinished business?



Completed by: _____ Position: _____

Date: _____

DE - A Guide to Managing Critical Incidents in Schools

Please see link below to the all the appendices:

<https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/guide-managing-critical-incidents-schools-appendices>

Critical Incident Management Guide – Initial Report and Running Record

<https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/de/appendix-3.pdf>