

Critical Incident Management Policy

Our Lady's School

Critical Incident Management Policy

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	2
Definition.....	3
Critical Incident Management Team.....	4
Roles and Responsibilities.....	5
Time Frame of Events.....	6
Communication.....	7
Review and evaluation.....	7
Appendix 1 Critical Incident Procedure for Staff.....	8
Appendix2 Critical Incident procedure for CIMT.....	9
Appendix 3 Dealing with the Media.....	10
Appendix 4 Checklist for Principal following the death of student.....	11
Appendix 5 Contact Numbers.....	13
Appendix 6 Guidelines for Form teachers.....	14
Appendix 7 CIMT Step by Step.....	15
Appendix 8 A Classroom Session following news of a critical incident.....	16
Appendix 9 How to cope when something terrible happens	19
Appendix 10 Reactions to a Critical Incident.....	20
Appendix 11 Ways to help your child through a difficult time.....	21

Critical Incident Management Policy

Introduction

Our Lady's School mission statement

Our Lady's School is a community that stands for Christian values. The education it provides is aimed at a search for truth, the formation of the Christian faith and the growth and personal development of each individual. Staff, pupils, parents and guardians participate together in the education of the students and the school also reaches out to the wider community.

Whatever necessary and desirable changes in educational structures and methods may at any time present themselves; they should be measured against the above objective. Our Lady's School also seeks to retain and promote the following:

1. a genuine concern for the well-being, personal and spiritual development and moral formation of each student with special consideration for the less able and those experiencing difficulties, while at the same time fostering and encouraging academic excellence.
2. that our students, regardless of ability or circumstances, work together confidently, recognising that their different talents complement each other. To this end, they are placed in mixed ability classes within the present House System.
3. that our students take initiatives and assume responsibility throughout their school career, that they are given the opportunity for training in the exercise of leadership and for developing their social conscience, and that they are prepared to take their influential role in the family and in society.
4. that we encourage our students to be discerning, to develop the ability to analyse facts, to articulate their views confidently, to take an independent stand when necessary and to respect the needs and views of others.
5. that our students develop a positive attitude to work and extra-curricular activities so that they see them as a means of developing themselves, of serving others, of accepting that success and failure are inevitable facts of life, and of promoting justice and peace.
6. that our school is a happy one where students, staff and parents feel part of a total community, which values and affirms them and their individual contributions and where mutual respect and concern are encouraged and practised

Critical Incident Management Policy

This Critical Incident Management Policy has been developed based on feedback from the staff and NEPS. This policy refers to the response taken by this school should a Critical Incident occur. It provides the framework for the school to respond as a school community in a caring and supportive way should such an incident occur.

In drawing up this policy and plan the CIMT has consulted the following resource documents provided to schools:

Responding to a critical Incident Pack for Schools (NEPS 2003)

Responding to Critical Incidents Resource Material for Schools (NEPS 2007)

Guidance on Social Media Use and Critical Incidents (2014)

ASTI Guidelines for schools on how to respond to sudden unexpected death of a student (2005)

Definition of a Critical Incident

The staff and management of Our Lady's School recognise a critical incident to be an incident or sequence of events which overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school and disrupts the normal running of the school. Critical incidents may involve one or more students or staff members, or members of our local community.

Examples of Incidents that could affect schools

- **The death of pupils or members of staff through natural causes such as illness, an accident, by a deliberate act of violence or by suicide.**
- **A fire or explosion in the school**
- **Deaths or injuries on school outings**
- **Incidents involving children and staff from many schools**
- **Civil disturbances including terrorism**
- **Outbreak of communicable illness or disease**
- **Threat of harm to students, personnel or facilities.**
- **Use of weapons or explosives in or near the school**
- **An accident or tragedy in the wider community**

Critical Incident Management Policy

Aim

The aim of the CIMP is to help school management and staff to react quickly and effectively in the event of an incident, to enable us to maintain a sense of order and to ensure that appropriate support is offered to students and staff. Having a good plan should also ensure that the effects on the students and staff will be limited. It should enable us to affect a return to normality as soon as possible. Many of these incidents will require an Inter-Agency response involving Law enforcement and emergency services.

Knowing what to do in the case of an incident will minimise chaos, rumours and the impact of the event on the whole school community – This is the aim of Our Lady's Critical Incident plan.

The Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)

A CIMT has been established in line with best practice. The members of the team will meet annually to review and update the policy and plan.

School Principal	Pauline Meany
Deputy Principals	Marguerite Gorby & Stephen Rhatigan
Bursar	Joan Smyth
Board of Management Reps	Brian O'Donnell Gráinne Byrne
Guidance Counsellors	Lesley Porter Fionnuala Bannan (Sheila Barr)
Chaplain	Caitriona Coyne

Roles and Responsibilities

Principal

Determine whether it is necessary to activate the Critical Incident Plan.

- Confirms the death
- What agencies have been contacted
- Convene and chair a meeting of Critical Incident Team
- Contact BOM
- Make contact with the family
- Brief staff at meeting

Deputy Principal

- Facilitates the team, ensures the normal running of the school
- Makes rooms available for counselling, parents, media
- Keep staff informed
- Written and oral statements prepared

The Critical Incident Team

- Meet and plan strategy
- Distribute key tasks
- Guidelines for teachers
- Outline plan for the day and the support systems needed
- Update staff
-

Class Tutors

- Break news to the class
- Stay with the class if necessary

Time Frame of Events

Immediate First 24 Hours

1. The safety of the pupils and staff must be the immediate concern of the Principal or Acting Principal.
2. Convene a meeting of the Critical Incident Management Team(CIMT)
3. Decision on how to dispense information to affected students and to the wider school community – Staff, Pupils, Parents.
4. Involvement of outside agencies –NEPS, Gardai, HSE, Clergy, Counsellors. (Contact details in appendix)
5. Visits to affected parents and families.
6. Inform the chairs of BOM and Parents Association.

In the Medium Term

1. Reports to the BOM and DES
2. Support for affected pupils/staff/families
3. Provision of appropriate material for use by teachers
4. Organisation of appropriate events (funeral Services)
5. Access to appropriate counselling services
6. Legal and financial consequences
7. External relations Press, Local authority, Gardai, parents
8. Role of school bodies –BOM Parents Association, Student Council
9. Continuity and restoration of normal school routine

In the Long Term

1. Review of the operation of Critical Incident Plan
2. Effect on the interaction of staff and pupils
3. Acknowledgement of any part played by the school in the incident
4. Appropriate memorials
5. Long-term counselling needs of individuals
6. Long-term effects on the educational progress

Critical Incident Management Policy

Communication

1. Staff
The Deputy Principal to keep staff fully informed
2. Students
Form teachers will break the news to their form class (see appendix 6)
3. Media
The principal will liaise with the media (see appendix 3)
4. Parents
The principal will inform the parents with support from the Parents Association (appendix).

Review and Evaluation

As part of its development planning Our Lady's School will monitor, review and evaluate this policy and all related work and procedure on an on-going basis to ensure legal compliance and maintenance of best practices.

APPENDIX 1

Critical Incident Procedure for Staff

STEP ONE:

- Assess the situation – What has happened?

STEP TWO:

- Notify the Principal or Deputy Principal, who will come to the scene and manage the school's response to the incident
- The Principal will contact the emergency services, parents, siblings and friends.

STEP THREE:

- While waiting for assistance:
 - Remain calm
 - Avoid moving an injured person until a medical assessment has been made. However in some situations you may need to move them
 - Do not give anything to eat or drink
 - Clear the area of unnecessary personnel but do not remain on your own if possible

STEP FOUR:

- Fill in a report as soon as possible

Critical Incident Management Policy

APPENDIX 2

CRITICAL INCIDENT PROCEDURE FOR CIMT

IMMEDIATE PROCEDURES TO BE FOLLOWED:

1. Get **accurate** details of death /injury/incident (Who? What? When? Where? How?)
2. Organise care/supervision of student/s involved.
3. Contact emergency services where necessary.
4. Convene meeting of Crisis Response Team to plan strategy.
5. The Principal to make contact with the family/families concerned to express sympathy/inform of injury/incident.
6. Ensure that family/families know who the school contact person is.
7. Plan a staff meeting to outline the plan for the day and support available.
8. Decide whether or not to invite an outside professional to the meeting.
9. Allocate appropriate roles for the team members.
10. Agree a statement of facts.
11. Appoint staff to handle phone enquiries.
12. Organise timetable for the day, (normal school routine if possible).

DEALING WITH FAMILY/FAMILIES INVOLVED:

1. Appoint two staff members to visit the family within 24 hours.
2. Offer school's support, giving the name of the school contact person.
3. Make decisions on who should attend the funeral (if a death has occurred).
4. Offer help with funeral arrangements (if appropriate).
5. Liaise with local clergy.
6. Decide if the school should be closed on day of funeral. (Notify parents/guardians/visitors/bus companies of closure.)

DEALING WITH STAFF/STUDENTS/PARENTS/GUARDIANS/BOM

1. Agree a verbal and written statement for staff/students/parents/guardians/media.
2. Advise Board of Management & Parents' Council.
3. Outline the services available to affected students during the first hours.
4. Assist Year Head/Form Teacher in breaking the news to the class affected.
5. Have Guideline for Teachers available for staff who will be dealing with students in distress see pages 5, 6 & 7.
6. Set up a 'Crisis Response Room' in the school library.
7. Identify vulnerable students.
8. Take time with the most affected students in the crisis response room.
9. Contact parents/guardians of students who need to go home.
10. Encourage those who feel able to return to class to do so.
11. Organise availability of a phone line to deal with enquiries (if necessary).
12. Make school available as a meeting point and allocate an assembly area.
13. Organise a Year Group prayer service for mid-morning, once all students have been notified.
14. Meet and support any distressed parents/guardians/staff.
15. Advise staff/students of appropriate support services

Critical Incident Management Policy

16. Make contact with staff/students who arrive late and those who are absent.
17. Deputy Principal to ensure that Crisis Response Team / R. E. staff are free.
18. Organise a second staff meeting for later in the day to advise of any updates.

APPENDIX 3

DEALING WITH THE MEDIA

1. Discourage any involvement of non-designated staff/students with the media.
2. Decide on one person who will act as official spokesperson.
3. Decide on statement for media and put it in writing.

Sample statement for media:

It is with profound sadness that the Management, Staff and Students of Our Lady's School have learned of the tragic death of

Our sincerest sympathy is extended to the family.

On hearing the tragic news the School Trauma Plan was put into immediate operation. The Crisis Response Team convened a meeting to ensure that students affected by this loss are cared for adequately. Procedures are in place to ensure that all in the School Community are given the help they need to cope at this time.

The School is offering counselling and support for students and parents affected by this tragedy. Prayer services have been held with each class in the school. Students will attend and participate in the funeral service, in consultation with the wishes of the family.

Our prayers and support are with everyone affected by this tragedy.

Critical Incident Management Policy

APPENDIX 4

CHECKLIST FOR PRINCIPAL FOLLOWING NEWS OF DEATH OF STUDENT

Having received news of tragedy:

- Establish facts surrounding death as accurately as possible. Who? What? When? Where?
- Inform Critical Incident Team.
- Organise for the supervision of students affected.
- Contact appropriate agencies.
- Compile suitable statements for staff/students/media in relation to the established facts.
- Be aware of staff members who are closest to the student and perhaps inform them individually.
- Read statement to the staff.
- Be aware of staff members who may be upset.
- If staff members are upset they can go to the staff work room.
- Brief staff about breaking the news to the students and what to expect.
- Identify high-risk students i.e. ask staff about children who are close to, friendly, or acquainted with student who has died or who may, because of their own life experiences, be upset.
- Begin with the form class of deceased student. The class should only be told by designated members of staff. (Principal / Deputy Principal / Counsellor / R.E. Teacher)
- Organise to keep this class separate, perhaps in the R.E. room.
- Form Teachers to read prepared statement to other classes. Keep students in their rooms and allow them to react by chatting, saying a prayer etc.
- Have copies of 'Guidelines for Form Teachers in Breaking News to Students' on hand.
- Allow children most affected to go home if parents/guardians can collect them.
- Contact relevant parents/guardians and give information regarding what to expect and watch out for (in the case of suicide in particular).
- Appoint staff to deal with phone enquiries and give them the prepared statement.
- Organise timetable for the day.
- Get back to normal routine as quickly as possible.

Contacting Staff if tragedy occurs over a weekend.

1. If it is the death of a colleague, a system of informing staff needs to be in place using either the school texting system or email.
2. If it is the death of a student, the Critical Incident Management Team needs to be informed immediately. Other staff on the list of staff addresses will be informed.

Critical Incident Management Policy

Leadership / Family Liaison / Communication:

- Confirm the death has occurred. Get accurate information.
- Express sympathy to family, assure of school's support.
- Ensure family knows who the contact person in the school is.
- Consult with family on school involvement in funeral. (Family's wishes to be respected)
- Organise the crisis response team to meet.
- Prepare an announcement for staff / students.
- Plan a staff meeting if required.
- Prepare statement and distribute procedures to Form Teachers in breaking the news
- Devise a process for dealing with telephone enquiries from anxious parents.
- Have written and /or verbal response to enquiries prepared.
- Notify B.O.M.
- Prepare media statement.
- Discourage students and members of staff from dealing with the media.
- Make decisions on who should attend funeral.
- Decide if the school should be closed on the day of the funeral. (Notification to parents/buses/visitors of closure)
- Set up Critical Incident Response Room in the School.
- Outline services available to affected students during the first hours.
- Assist Form Teacher of the class affected in breaking news.
- Have guidelines for staff in dealing with students in distress i.e. information on grief responses, identifying those in need of counselling and support.
- Take time with the most affected students in Critical Incident Response Room.
- Organise a Year Group Prayer Service for mid-morning, once all students have been notified.

Critical Incident Management Policy

- Contact parents of students who request to go home.

Guidance Contact **NEPS** for advice and support

APPENDIX 5

CRITICAL INCIDENT RESPONSE TEAM PHONE NUMBERS

Principal Pauline Meany	See staff address list
Deputy Principals Marguerite Gorby, Stephen Rhatigan	
Guidance Counsellors Lesley Porter/Fionnuala Bannan (Sheila Barr)	
Chaplain Caitriona Coyne	
BOM Representatives Brian O'Donnell , Gráinne Byrne	

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Ambulance	999 or 112
Fire Brigade	999 or 112
Garda Station, Terenure	6666400 or 999 or 112
Health Board, Terenure	490 4648/4148
Hospital, Tallaght	414 2000
Bereavement Counselling Services	839 1766
Department of Education	873 4700
N.E.P.S. Psychologist	0761 108440
Parish Priest	490 7924
Rape Crisis Centre	1800 77 88 88 or 661 4911
State Examinations Commission	090 644 2700

Critical Incident Management Policy

APPENDIX 6

Guidelines for Form Teachers

- Only if the family confirms the tragedy as a suicide can it be relayed as such to students.
- The class of the student who has died should be the first to be told, with the R.E. Teacher, Counsellor and Form Teacher present.
- Other classes to be told by their Form Teachers
- Not every class is going to be traumatised. Some students may not even know the deceased. However it is important to acknowledge the loss for the whole school community.
- Tell the class that you have sad news and that it is difficult for you to impart this.
- Let them know the name of the person the news is about.
- Let them know the facts, as you know them. (It is important to prevent rumours through misinformation)
- Encourage questions.
- Let the class know of common reactions to tragic news.
- The most common reaction is shock.
- Expect tears and outbursts
- Don't allow a student to leave the classroom alone in a distressed state.
- Let them know that you will support them.
- Let them know who else is available to support them.
- Don't be afraid to let them know that you are also upset by the news.
- Allow them time to mingle and talk to one another in groups.
- Explain how they can support one another.
- Be attentive so as to identify those who are not coping well with the news.
- You may need to remind students again of who is there to help, as little information is assimilated once in shock.
- Let them know where the Critical Incident Response Team will be. (Possibly base classroom).
- Arrange to have refreshments ready. Also boxes of Kleenex.
- A short prayer for the deceased would be appropriate.
- If the students appear ready, a Year Group assembly may be held later in the day
- Some students may be able to continue and go to class.
- Some will need to stay with the Critical Incident Response Team for the morning.
- Encourage students to stay in school to support their friends.
- Some may need to go home (only if parents come and collect them).
- Those who go to class may not be able to concentrate on the work of the class.
- Subject teachers will need to make allowances for them to talk in groups as needed.

Critical Incident Management Policy

- Encourage those who feel able to return class.
- Meet and support any distressed parents and staff.
- Liaise with local clergy re funeral.

APPENDIX 7

Critical Incident Management Team

Step by Step:

Day 1:

1. The Principal, having confirmed the death, makes contact with the family.
 2. Critical Incident Management Team meets to plan strategy, keeping in mind the guidelines above.
 3. Key Tasks are distributed.
 4. Have all guidelines for teachers ready.
 5. Have written and verbal statements ready for all communication with the school.
 6. Have a notice at entrances to the school for staff to report to the staff room at 8.20 a.m.
 7. Meet staff (note any absences or late arrivals to ensure that all staff are given the news).
 8. Critical Incident Response Team outline to staff the plan for the day and support available.
- Location of Critical Incident Response Room announced (base classroom).
 - Class Teachers break news to their classes (handouts given on guidelines).
 - Deputy Principal to make alternative arrangements for classes normally using base room.
 - Principal to ensure that RE staff and Guidance Counsellor are free from all other commitments for the day.
 - Plan another update staff meeting later in the day.
 - Clarify funeral arrangements for staff later.
 - Critical Incident Response Team meets to plan procedures for school involvement in removal and funeral.

Day 2:

- Students who are not coping are referred to Counsellor on an individual basis. It is important for the school to run as normally as possible.

Day 3:

Critical Incident Management Policy

- Crisis Team meets to plan response after the funeral in the next few days. (Involve Form Teacher and / or Year Head at this stage).

Critical Incident Management Policy

Appendix 8

A CLASSROOM SESSION FOLLOWING NEWS OF A CRITICAL INCIDENT

Handout for teachers:

Normally, the class teacher, class tutor or other teacher who knows the students should be the person to inform them of the events and lead the classroom session. Students generally feel safe and secure with someone they know. If the teacher feels uncomfortable with this role another staff member or the psychologist may work with them and share the task. Teachers should have the opportunity to opt out of this work if they feel unable to handle it and other arrangements should be made for that class group.

The aim of the session is to break the news to give the students an opportunity to discuss what has happened and to express their thoughts and feelings in a secure environment. The teacher needs to listen and be empathic.

The session needs to be tailored to the age and developmental level of the class group. The outline of the session is as follows:

Step 1: Giving the facts and dispelling rumours

Step 2: Sharing stories and allowing and encouraging the sharing of thoughts and the expression of feelings

Step 3: Normalising the reactions

Step 4: Worries (for younger children)

Step 5: Empowerment

Step 6: Closure

Step 7: Free Time

Step 8: Recovery

Step 1: Giving the facts and dispelling rumours

Tell the students in a calm, low key and factual voice

- What has happened
- Who was involved
- When it happened
- The plan for the day

Critical Incident Management Policy

Sample Script

I have something very sad I want to share with you. The factual information agreed upon by the staff e.g. (Name of student), who attends our school and was missing, has been found. He is dead. Yesterday, the Gardaí found his body. They are investigating what has happened and will let us know as soon as they find out more information.

I am feeling very sad about what's happened. Let's spend some time together now helping each other to talk about how we feel about what has happened.

Step 2: Sharing stories

Take some time for discussion. Students may wish to tell their story of the event. As a result they will feel less alone because of their common shared experiences. Assisting them to verbalise their experiences helps their recovery. For those students who find it difficult to verbalise their experiences, or for students with learning difficulties, it may be helpful to allow them to express their feelings and recount their experiences in other ways. Writing stories or using art can be particularly helpful, especially for younger students. A number of materials that can be used are suggested in 'Resources for Schools'. Give the students a choice as to how they want to represent their experiences. Have a box of tissues at hand.

Sample script

To help us today, we are going to make a memory box for (name of deceased). You can draw a picture of a time you remember with (name of the deceased) or write a poem or a letter to him. If you like we can put these in a nice box and give it to (name of deceased) family sometime soon. This will help them to see how important (name of deceased) was.

Step 3: Normalising the reactions

Tell the children that they will all react differently to what has happened and that there is no right or wrong way. List some possible feelings and reactions. (See appendix 10) Explain that their reactions are normal responses to abnormal circumstances. Let the students know that the reactions or symptoms will go away in time. Tell them that if the symptoms haven't gone after a few weeks, they should let you or their parents know. They may need to talk to someone about how they are feeling. Depending on the incident and the age of the students distribute handouts.

Step 4: Worries (for younger children)

Sample script

You may be worried about (name of the deceased) - that they might be sad or lonely or hungry or cold. When someone dies they don't feel cold or hungry or feelings like that anymore.

You may be worried that the same thing could happen to you or someone in your family. What happened to (name of deceased) doesn't happen very often.

If the classmate has been ill, you could say. *He was very sick and the chances of this happening to someone else you know are low.*

Critical Incident Management Policy

Step 5: Empowerment

Help the students to identify strategies that they might use to help manage their reactions. For example, talking to family and friends, getting enough sleep, exercise may all help. If appropriate, students can share strategies that worked for them in other stressful situations or brainstorm ideas as to what might help. Overall, it is important to help the students regain a sense of control.

Step 6: Closure

End the session by focusing on the future. Depending on the nature of the incident, help the class/group decide what they would like to do about various issues, e.g., what to do about the person's empty chair, about writing cards or letters. Reiterate the message that their reactions are normal responses to abnormal circumstances.

Step 7: Free Time

After the discussion the teacher may want to allow the student's some play time in the play ground or free time in the classroom or an agreed area, depending on the age.

Step 8: Recovery

It may be useful to continue to do these activities at intervals during the days following and to intersperse them throughout the curriculum in the coming days.

Normal routines should generally be returned to as soon as possible.

- Students should be encouraged to resume sports and other extra-curricular activities
- Help students to identify or establish some supports; help them to identify who they go to for different kinds of help
- It is appropriate that the class curriculum is adjusted or adapted. For example, teachers should avoid presenting new learning material for a while following an incident as concentration may be impaired
- Use opportunities which arise within ordinary class work, where coping and support can be reinforced
- Students could be encouraged to discuss how to avoid future crises and lessons learnt from their experiences. There will also be opportunities for structured discussion within the school's social, personal, and health education programmes. Where Circle Time is in use, this is an ideal context in which to offer support.

Critical Incident Management Policy

Appendix 9

HOW TO COPE WHEN SOMETHING TERRIBLE HAPPENS

Handout for Students:

- Reach out – people do care
- Talk to your friends, family and teachers - talking is the most healing medicine
- Remember you are normal and having normal reactions – don't label yourself as crazy or mad
- It is ok to cry
- It is ok to smile
- If your feelings and reactions seem different from those of your friends, remember everyone reacts differently
- Some people find that writing or drawing is helpful. What about writing a note or letter to the family of the person who died or the person themselves?
- Spend time with people who have a positive influence on you
- Make as many daily decisions as possible. This will give you a feeling of control over your life, e.g. if someone asks you what you want to eat – answer them, even if you're not sure
- Recurring thoughts, dreams or flashbacks are normal – don't try to fight them – they'll decrease over time and become less painful
- Make a special effort to take care of yourself during this time. Try to get some extra sleep, eat nutritious foods and get some exercise, even if it is just a walk
- Sticking to your “normal” routine helps. Structure your time – keep busy
- Take time out – go for a walk or kick a football
- Provide some balance to the negative things that have gone on by doing something special or fun for yourself. Think about something that makes you feel good. Then make it happen – like going to the cinema, listening to music, calling a friend, etc. Laughter is good medicine. Watch a funny movie or play a silly game with younger children to lighten your spirits
- Useful websites: www.spunout.ie; www.youth.ie; www.childline.ie, www.headsup.ie, www.reachout.com.

Above all, realise that what you are experiencing is normal following a traumatic event. Be understanding of yourself and others.

Critical Incident Management Policy

Appendix 10

REACTIONS TO A CRITICAL INCIDENT

Handout for Students:

Following the recent sad event, you may now be experiencing some strong emotional or physical reactions. There is no 'right' or 'wrong' way to feel but here is a list of difficulties that people sometimes experience following such an event.

Feelings	Behavioural
Fear	Nightmares
Guilt	Social Withdrawal
Shame	Irritability
Regret	Loss of Concentration
Anger	Forgetfulness
Tearfulness	Physical/Verbal aggression
Anxiety	Misuse of drugs
Loneliness	
Mood Swings	
Shock	
Yearning	
Numbness	
Confusion	
Isolation	
Insecurity	
Physical	Thoughts
Tiredness	Disbelief
Sleeplessness	Denial
Headaches	Sense of unreality
Stomach problems	Preoccupation with images of the event/person
Bowel/Bladder problems	
Loss or increase in appetite	

Critical Incident Management Policy

Appendix 11

WAYS TO HELP YOUR CHILD THROUGH THIS DIFFICULT TIME

Handout for parents:

Children do not need to be taught how to grieve. They will do it naturally and in healthy ways if we allow them and if we provide a safe atmosphere, permission and example to do so.

- Listen carefully. Let them tell their story. Tell them that the reactions they are having are normal.
- Pay extra attention, spend extra time with them, be more nurturing and comforting.
- Reassure them that they are safe.
- Don't tell them that they are "lucky it wasn't worse". People are not consoled by such statements. Instead, tell them that you are sorry such an event has occurred and you want to understand and help them.
- Do not be surprised by changes in behaviour or personality. They will return to their usual selves in time.
- Don't take their anger or other feelings personally. Help them to understand the relationship between anger and trauma. Help them find safe ways to express their feelings e.g. by drawing, exercise, or talking.
- Help them to understand that defiance, aggression and risk behaviour is a way to avoid feeling the pain, hurt and or fear they are feeling.
- When going out, let them know where you are going and when you will be back.
- If you are out for a long time telephone and reassure them.
- Tolerate regressive behaviour such as nail biting, thumb sucking, or the need for a night light.
- Share your own experience of being frightened of something and getting through it
- If they are feeling guilt or shame, emphasise that they did not choose for this to happen and that they are not to blame. Even if they were angry with the person who died, or had been mean to them, this did not make it happen.
- Work with the school support services and other available services.