



Castle Tower School

Critical Incident Policy

Review Date: May 2019

Rationale/Introduction

Castle Tower School caters for pupils with special educational needs in the North Eastern area of the Education Authority. The school provides education for pupils from 3 to 19 years old with a wide range of barriers to learning.

At Castle Tower we celebrate the talents of each individual and strive to improve the quality of each person's life by developing confidence, tolerance, honesty, happiness and curiosity. We aim to develop within each individual the skills they require for a full and happy life and help them to be independent, ambitious and look forward with hope to the future.

The nurturing ethos of the school contributes to a safe, caring and happy environment where children are supported to help them overcome any barriers to learning.

At Castle Tower we encourage our young people to become involved in discussions and decisions on school life that affect them. We want our pupils to be self-motivated and take responsibility for their own learning and we use a range of strategies to promote this.

This procedure outlines the actions the school would take in coping with the emotional issues that pupils, staff and others associated with the school may face as a result of a bereavement or other critical incident.

“ A critical incident is an event that has the potential to create significant human distress and can overwhelm one's coping mechanisms”

Marion Gibson

A serious injury to or death of a pupil or member of staff can challenge the very heart of the school community. It can challenge our ability to cope with the magnitude of the event.

It is therefore very important that, should such a situation arise, the staff, and in particular the principal and Senior Leadership Team have a plan in place.

There is also a need for effective support from the Education Authority.

Procedure to follow in the event of a critical incident

In the event of a Critical Incident, the following things need to be considered. Not all will necessarily need to be put in place.

- Establish the veracity of the information about the incident/news
- Confirm/verify with parents/carers, other relatives
- Inform EANI, North East Region, Special Education Branch
- Inform staff; e mail/staff briefing
- Inform Chair of Board of Governors / members of BoG
- Provide accurate, timely and ongoing information to appropriate people
- Named member of staff to act as Press contact in liaison with EANI
- Draw up a press release, updates or statements
- Hold an assembly to inform pupils, if appropriate
- Offer counselling through school counsellor / EANI support services
- Offer support to family of pupil/member of staff
- Alert and brief school counsellor/ other counselling services
- Visit family if appropriate
- Card/letter to family from principal, representing staff and BoG
- Card/letter from BoG
- Period of silence at assembly/ BoG meeting
- Regular updates to staff
- Be aware of materials in school relating to a deceased pupil/member of staff and file/remove as appropriate
- Further assemblies following incident if necessary
- Respond to cards of condolence
- Consider a memorial / book of condolences
- Support from EANI may include:
 - Assistance with the implementation of the school's Critical Incident plan*, including dealing with the immediate situation
 - Help in co-ordinating support to the school
 - Liaison between school and other services/agencies
 - Referral to other specialist support services for those severely affected by the incident

**management of the media / minimising secondary trauma /
information on the likely symptoms of trauma / information and
guidance on bereavement, trauma and loss / provision of counselling
services / communication with pupils and parents*



CASTLE TOWER SCHOOL RESPONSE TO A CRITICAL INCIDENT

SCHOOL EXPERIENCES A CRITICAL INCIDENT

- School contacts Special Education – 028 25662562
- Special Education listens to school's concerns, ask specific questions and completes a short record of the Critical Incident. This record is used to inform relevant EA officials / services as appropriate. This creates an accurate record of the incident and relieves the school from the pressure of having to repeat the same information to others. Initial advice will be offered at this stage, particularly in relation to EA policies, regulations and procedures. The school will also be made aware of the assistance available. If required, Special Education will make a referral to the Educational Psychology service.
- Where a referral is made to the Educational Psychology service, the matter is given priority and immediate contact is made with the school's coordinating psychologist. They will consider the referral information and, in consultation with colleagues, determine the necessary course of action and the most appropriate personnel to be involved.
- Senior staff in school will cooperate with all external agencies and follow the Critical Incident plan as appropriate.