



St. Comgall's Primary School

A Policy for Handling Critical Incidents

Reviewed Jan 2019

Definition of a Critical Incident.

A critical incident is not necessarily an event that attracts large media attention and many fatalities but rather is:

“An event or events, usually sudden, which involve/s the experience of significant personal distress to a level that can potentially overwhelm the individuals involved.”

Rationale

Critical incidents may involve one or more pupils, staff, the school or the community in which the school functions. They may range from incidents stemming from natural disasters, accidents, civil unrest, criminal acts, to incidents of personal trauma such as self-harming, disclosure of abuse, disappearance or death. Whether an incident is critical or not depends on past and current experiences as well as on the coping skills of those involved.

For a school the most important factor in a critical incident is the ***significance of the effect*** on the whole or part of the school community. What is a small-scale incident for one school maybe a major one for another. Whether or not an incident is deemed critical will depend on how far away it is from the normal events handled by the school as a matter of course over the school year and the number of people directly and indirectly affected. The School Leadership Team will determine the depth and degree of response to any incident, in conjunction with the Board of Governors, CCMS and any other relevant statutory body.

Importance of Schools' Response to Critical Incidents.

Critical incidents can throw normal school order into chaos if the school Leadership team has not pre-considered the possibility of such incidents occurring and agreed on procedures to be followed if such an event occurs.

It is important therefore that a school has agreed a policy for dealing with incidents identified as critical ***before they arise*** because the sooner assessment and response is initiated, the sooner a degree of order can be restored.

If an incident does occur the principal and the school Leadership team can quickly assess the situation and determine the scale and nature of the response required (if any). Those who have been prepared can initiate effective and focused action, minimise panic and insecurity and quell rumour through the provision of accurate information.

School's Role After An Incident

A school has a duty to and is able to work with those from the community affected after such incidents in a special way because:

- school is a very significant part of the pupils' and the teachers' lives. Teachers are in a strong position to offer strategic and specific support to colleagues, children and their parents.
- teachers are in a central position to observe behavioural changes, to monitor progress and to identify concerns.
- school is an important part of any community and if it deals with critical incidents in an effective manner it can help provide support throughout the school and the wider community.
- teachers have many skills which can, through the curriculum be used to promote the child's ability to cope with traumatic events.
- schools have existing systems which can be adapted to support and inform people.
- teachers are important role models for both parents and children. They can create a feeling of security, and model healthy ways of coping and leadership.

School's Role After An Incident (continued)

The role a school will have after an incident will vary according to circumstances. Whilst the school's main role is in the areas of teaching and learning and the provision of duty of care to pupils and staff, incidents which disrupt individual performance and behaviour, school functioning and morale require sensitive and timely response and must be addressed.

It is also of extreme importance that after any serious incident, any school procedures which were utilised, should be carefully scrutinised in the light of events for fitness of purpose and amended in any way necessary.

How Teachers Can Help

Although teachers are not social workers some children and their families may rely on any assistance a school can offer. Teachers are used to dealing with children with varying levels of psychological problems and are used to referring children or advising on specialist help available. Teachers help by providing continuity, security, coping skills, and supportive responses. While teachers do not engage in therapy provision their work does complement and support that of health and other professionals. The impact of trauma on individuals is multi-dimensional and requires a holistic network of support. Crucial to this can be the timely identification of sufferers and teachers are ideally placed to assist with this.

AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF A CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY

The aim of our policy is:

To enable the school to respond to any critical incident in an informed and effective manner through the creation of a positive, open, communicative climate where critical incidents are recognised and the needs of staff and pupils involved in such incidents are met.

This encompasses work within all areas of our school aims and to achieve this aim we will pursue the following objectives:

- corporate use of the *concept of risk management* as a strategy for evaluating activities/events beforehand so that opportunities for problems are minimised through sensible management;
- the establishment of *procedures to facilitate the competent handling of emergencies*,
- and the *thorough reviewing of such events* subsequently so that future repetition can be avoided;
- the *creation of a safe school environment* wherein the physical, social and psychological well-being of pupils and staff is prioritised and a *relationship built on mutual trust is established* between parents and staff;
- *an understanding of the nature of trauma and its impact* on staff and pupils;
- the recognition by staff of *the value and importance to pupils of the adapting active learning strategies and life skills* capable of being developed within the PDMU curriculum and:

- the establishment of *positive working relationships and dialogue with outside agencies* which will enable full and effective collaboration in the event of a critical incident occurring.

Relationship between this policy and other school policies.

Policies and practice relating to PDMU, Safety and Risk Management, Outdoor Education and site-management are among those which will impinge on this policy.

POLICY FOR DEALING WITH EMERGENCIES

Pro-active Action Taken By The School To Minimise Risks

SCHOOL SAFETY AND SECURITY

The principal and Board of Governors of the school work closely with EA Health, Safety and Security departments to monitor school safety and security and to produce and implement the policies deemed necessary in this area by EA, CCMS and DE.

REVIEW OF POLICIES

All policies are ratified by the Board of Governors and reviewed regularly.

A Risk Management Policy and Strategy has been implemented. The school has agreed and implemented Emergency Evacuation Procedures. All staff has been informed of these. Fire Drills evacuations are carried out three times per year and procedures adapted as necessary following review. A list of staff with First Aid qualifications is maintained in the school office. INSET First Aid guidance is offered to all staff as appropriate and individual staff are nominated for externally run courses.

Security admission systems are installed on outside doors to prevent unauthorised entry. Controlled access systems operate at the main school entrance and the entrance to the Speech and Language Centre. Strangers visiting the school are required to wear an identifying badge and staff challenges those without. All electrical items and items of PE equipment are checked yearly and the building supervisor charged with implementing any recommendations made. All policies are kept under review and amended as necessary in the light of experience, advice and circumstances. Significant policies are presented to new/substitute staff on Induction and re-presented to existing staff, both teaching and non-teaching regularly. All staff complete confidential next of kin contact details.

PROCEDURES REGARDING PUPIL SAFETY

Parents of all new pupils complete a **Data Capture** sheet giving full details of those responsible for the child and numbers to be contacted in case of an emergency. They are charged with ensuring that these are kept up to date following any changes to circumstances that may arise.

There are procedures governing the safe handing over of pupils both at the end of the school day and during the day. All relevant staff members are aware of these and charged with complying with them.

The school has agreed policies on Child Protection, Pastoral Care, Positive Behaviour and Discipline, Accident and Emergency Procedures and Special Needs. INSET is undertaken regularly to keep all staff up-to-date with relevant policies and practice and to inform them about the classroom management of children with specific special needs.

When children enter school parents complete a **Medical Form** giving full details of child's medical history so that staff are aware of any needs a child may have in the classroom or on an outside educational visit.

It is the business of the SENCO to maintain through the SIMS SENCO module an overview of this area also and to liase with the class teacher concerning the well-being and development of individual pupils.

Activities, (such as curriculum activities with possible safety concerns, outdoor pursuits, residential trips and daily trips, etc.) which are deemed to have elements of risk are assessed beforehand and guidelines provided by EA and other advisory bodies are acted upon.

The school operates stringent controls over pupil movement coming into, leaving and travelling through the school. Unruly behaviour is never accepted.

School rules have been developed for movement outside of school and all staff members are charged with implementing these rules.

INTERNET SAFETY

Guidance for staff and pupils on the Acceptable Use of the Internet has been developed and implemented. All using the internet are required to sign their agreement to comply with this policy.

PARENTAL AWARENESS

Guidelines for parents on the safe use of the school car-park have been developed and these are issued to parents at the beginning of the year and as necessary during the year.

Parents are kept informed of our policies and practice through the school Prospectus, Newsletters and Annual Report.

TEAM

In a recognised emergency a team led by the principal (or his deputy in his absence) and the available members of the School Leadership Team will meet to assess the situation, allocate roles and tasks and implement whichever of the following steps are deemed appropriate. The response will be determined by the type of incident.

NON-SPECIFIC EVENT. PRIORITIES AND TIMETABLE

OF IMMEDIATE IMPORTANCE	WHEN	WHO
Obtain factual information	Within hours	Principal/VP
Contact CCMS/EA/BOG/Trustees as necessary. Seek help/guidance as required. Share information with school staff Establish intervention team and allocate roles Contact immediate families involved as appropriate		Principal/VP Principal/VP Principal/VP Members of SLT
SECONDARY PRIORITIES		
Call a staff meeting and give staff full details and information Inform general parent body as necessary through newsletter or other suitable means. (Media) To allay panic caused by rumour inform pupils in small groups Call a debriefing meeting of staff involved in the crisis.	Same day if possible.	Principal/VP Principal/SLT Class teachers/SLT Principal/VP
Debrief pupils involved in crisis Identify high risk pupils and staff	As soon as possible	SENCO Class teachers / SENCO / Outside agency staff
ON-GOING TASKS		
Promote discussion in pupil groups Identify need for individual/group counselling or other help.	Next few days/weeks	Class teachers Class teachers / SENCO Outside agency staff
Organise any counselling/support	As required for up to two years	SENCO

ROLES OF SCHOOL TEAM MEMBERS

These will depend on the type of incident and may include;

ROLE	RESPONSIBILITY
<p>Overall director of situation and liaison with outside advisory or other relevant bodies. (CCMS, EA, PSNI, Insurance Co. etc)</p> <p>This role will be taken by the principal unless circumstances determine otherwise.</p>	<p>To monitor incident, response and outcome. To ensure everyone involved carries out their designated roles and that all bodies who need to be consulted for advice and support are contacted asap.</p> <p>To ensure any action needed, including closing of school, is taken in accordance with accepted procedures.</p> <p>To ensure event is fully analysed afterwards and that any policies and procedures which require amending are updated in the light of events.</p>
<p>Internal Communications Manager (Staff, pupils)</p> <p>This role will be taken by the principal unless circumstances determine otherwise.</p>	<p>Relaying information to staff and pupils in a manner agreed by team addressing situation.</p>
<p>External Communications Manager (Parents, Parish, Media)</p> <p>This role will be taken by the principal unless circumstances determine otherwise.</p>	<p>Relaying information to parents and dealing with media enquiries in a manner agreed by team addressing situation.</p> <p>In a very serious and traumatic situation it is likely that a senior member of CCMS / EA may undertake the role of dealing with the media.</p>
<p>Stress Support Organiser</p> <p>This role will be taken by the principal and vice principal and members of the SLT.</p>	<p>Ensuring that support is made available to those from the school community who need it. This may include arranging external interventions from recognised groups as well as school based activity. Support may be needed immediately by those affected but problems may also emerge some time later so it is important that the needs of involved individuals are kept in mind.</p>
<p>Spiritual Support Organiser</p> <p>This role will be taken by the principal and vice principal and members of the SLT.</p>	<p>Ensuring that those involved who require spiritual help are given it and that services to help the school community deal with events are organised.</p>
<p>Practical Support Organiser</p> <p>This role will be taken by the principal and vice principal and members of the SLT.</p>	<p>Ensuring that support of a practical nature which is required is provided to anyone in the school community affected by the incident.</p> <p>This may require referring individuals or groups to possible areas of help. (DHSS, etc) the provision of volunteer help or fund-raising at a later stage .</p>

APPENDICES

TYPES OF EVENT WHICH MAY REQUIRE PLANNED RESPONSE

APPENDIX 1

CHILD'S SERIOUS INJURY / DEATH	
At home. Outside of school	
RESPONSE TO FAMILY	WHO
<p><u>IMMEDIATELY</u> Contact parent Offer support to parent / visit hospital</p> <p><u>SHORT TERM</u> Attend funeral mass with classmates or group/class of older pupils. Provide choir if requested. Obtain course/information on coping with /supporting bereavement for class teacher/s if necessary.</p> <p><u>LONG TERM</u> Support other sibling/s and liase with parents / class teacher if outside support is needed. Review Pastoral Care Programme if necessary.</p>	<p>Class teacher / principal Class teachers / principal</p> <p>Music Teacher/RE Coordinator Class teacher / principal/VP</p> <p>VP</p> <p>SENCO/ class teachers Pastoral Care co-ordinator</p>
RESPONSE TO SCHOOL COMMUNITY	
<p><u>IMMEDIATELY</u> Inform/support other children in the class. Arrange in consultation with parents for classmates to attend wake and attend/participate in funeral if possible. Provide support for other siblings who may attend the school.</p> <p><u>SHORT TERM</u> Arrange school-based service to celebrate life of class-mate.</p> <p><u>LONG TERM</u> Support other sibling/s and liase with class teacher if outside support is needed. Remember child at November Masses. Provide a lasting token by which the child will be remembered. (Tree, picture, trophy, etc.)</p>	<p>Class teacher. VP/Principal.</p> <p>Class and music teachers. Chaplain.</p> <p>Class teacher / VP</p> <p>Chaplain.</p> <p>SLT</p>

CHILD'S SERIOUS INJURY OR DEATH In school/ On a trip/Residential	
RESPONSE TO FAMILY	WHO
<p><u>IMMEDIATELY</u> Contact emergency services as necessary. Contact parent. Explain that there has been an accident/incident and that child has been taken to hospital. If possible, contact second point of contact and alert them to the situation. Offer support to parent / visit hospital Contact CCMS/EA/BOG/Trustees as necessary. Seek help as required.</p> <p><u>SHORT TERM</u> Provide choir if requested. Attend funeral mass with classmates or group/class of older pupils. Obtain course/information on coping with /supporting bereavement for class teacher/s if necessary.</p> <p><u>LONG TERM</u> Support other sibling/s and liase with parents / class teacher if outside support is needed. Arrange whole school staff INSET on coping with bereavement</p>	<p>Principal/VP</p> <p>Principal/VP</p> <p>Principal/VP</p> <p>Principal</p> <p>Class teacher / principal Music teacher/RE Coordinator. Class teacher / principal</p> <p>VP</p> <p>VP / class teacher</p> <p>VP</p>
RESPONSE TO SCHOOL COMMUNITY	
<p><u>IMMEDIATELY</u> Inform/support other children in the class. Arrange for classmates to attend wake and attend/participate in funeral if possible. Provide support for other siblings who may attend the school. Arrange support for involved teachers as necessary.</p> <p><u>SHORT TERM</u> Arrange school-based service to celebrate life of class-mate.</p> <p><u>LONG TERM</u> Support other sibling/s and liase with class teacher if outside support is needed. Remember child at November Masses. Provide a lasting token by which the child will be remembered. (Tree, picture, trophy, etc.)</p>	<p>Class teacher. Principal. Class teacher Class and music teachers. Chaplain. Principal/CCMS</p> <p>Class teacher / SENCO Chaplain.</p> <p>SLT</p>

TEACHER / ASSISTANT'S/PARENT SERIOUS INJURY OR DEATH
In school/ On a trip/Residential

RESPONSE TO FAMILY	WHO
<p><u>IMMEDIATELY</u> Contact emergency services as necessary. Contact next-of-kin. Explain that there has been an accident/incident and that staff member has been taken to hospital. If possible, contact second point of contact and alert them to the situation. Offer support to family / visit hospital Contact CCMS/EA/BOG/Trustees as necessary. Seek help as required.</p> <p><u>SHORT TERM</u> Provide choir if requested. Attend funeral mass with colleagues, pupil representatives. Obtain course/information on coping with /supporting bereavement for class teacher/s if necessary.</p> <p><u>LONG TERM</u> Support family through keeping in contact. Ensuring all available Teachers' Union and CCMS support is available as needed. Arrange whole school staff INSET on coping with bereavement</p>	<p>Those in situ, Principal/VP Principal/VP Principal/VP</p> <p>Principal</p> <p>Class teacher / principal/VP</p> <p>Class teacher / principal</p> <p>VP</p> <p>Principal Principal, Union colleagues</p> <p>VP</p>
RESPONSE TO SCHOOL COMMUNITY	
<p><u>IMMEDIATELY</u> Inform/support other staff members. Arrange for colleagues to attend wake and attend/participate in funeral if possible. Provide support for pupils and close colleagues or those who were in close contact with deceased.</p> <p><u>SHORT TERM</u> Arrange school-based service to celebrate life of staff member.</p> <p><u>LONG TERM</u> Support close colleagues and arrange outside support if needed. Remember staff member at November Masses. Provide a lasting token by which he/she will be remembered.</p>	<p>Principal. Class teacher. Chaplain. Principal/CCMS</p> <p>Chaplain / Staff.</p> <p>SLT / CCMS</p> <p>Chaplain SLT / Staff</p>

APPENDIX 2

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NAME	ROLE	TELEPHONE NUMBER
Fr Emerson	Chair of Governors Senior Trustee	028 94428016 (Parish Office) 0755 334 7161
Mrs Roisin Lynch	Vice Chair. BOG	0798 0752 121
CCMS	CCMS Welfare	028 92013014
EA	EA Welfare	028 90564000
B O'Callaghan	School Insurance (CCMS)	028 92013014
	EA Insurance	028 90564000
	DENI	028 71319000
MEDIA		
BBC TV	Local news	028 90338000
Radio Ulster	Local news	0845 955578
UTV	Local news	028 90328122
Irish News	Local news	028 90322226
Belfast Telegraph	Local news	028 90264000
Antrim Guardian	Community News	028 9446 2624
Parish Bulletin (Bernie)	Parish News	028 94428016
TEACHERS' UNIONS		
INTO		028 90381455
NAHT		028 90776633
NASUWT		028 90784480

Appendix 3 - Critical Incident Management Guide

Initial Report

Date: _____ Time: _____

Information received from: _____

Contact details: _____

Name of person informed: _____
(Name of person with overall responsibility)

Time: _____ Date: _____

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

**Unconfirmed
reports:**

Details of individuals know to be involved

Name	Pupil/Member of Staff or Local Community	Involvement	Known/Suspect	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: Running Record

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 & When _____

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: Running Record

1. Record any further information/details since previous day

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 e.g. 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

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: _____

Details of Pupils and Staff Requiring Ongoing Support

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

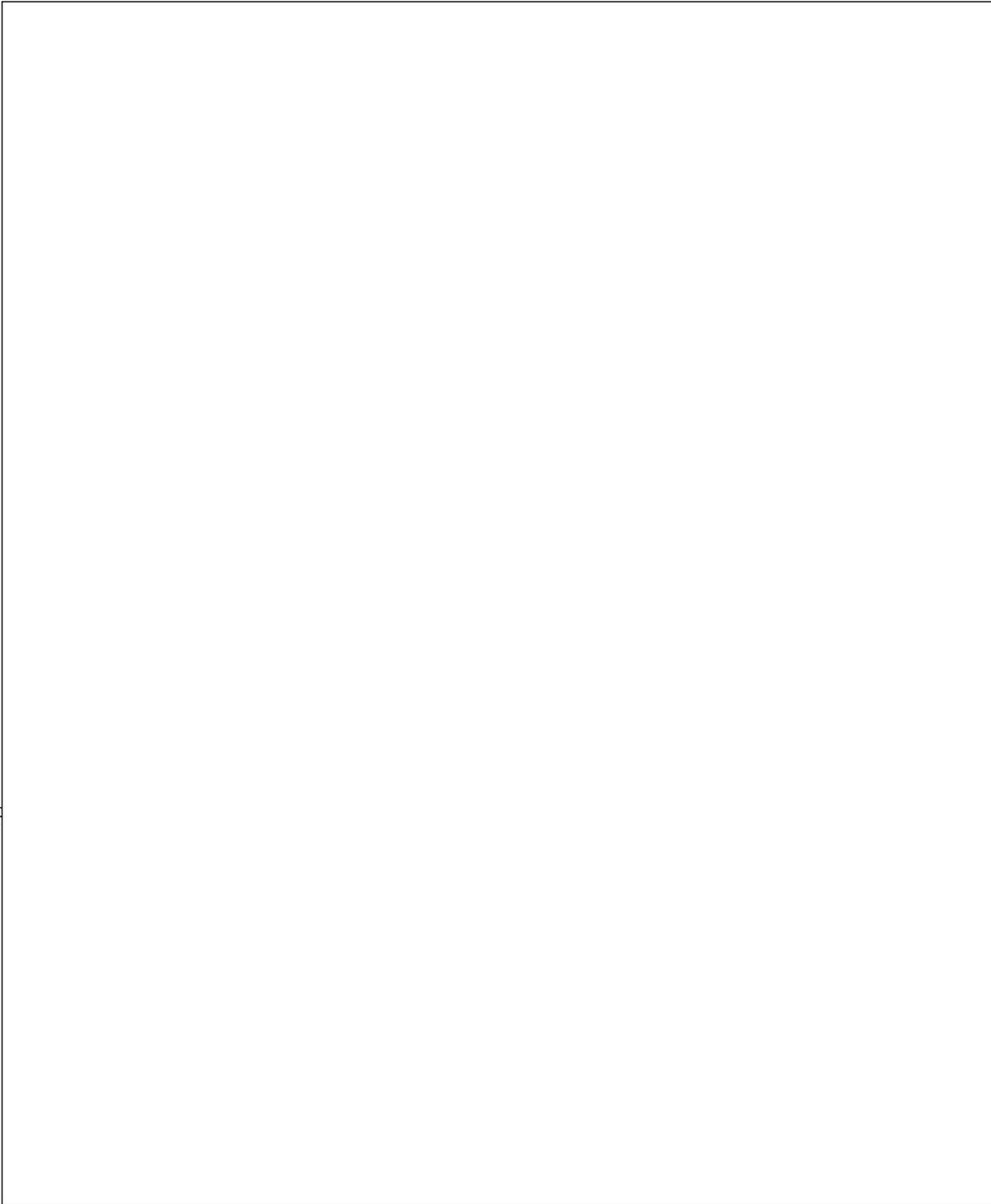
Name of Child	Referred to	Referred by
Date of Referral	Outcome	
Name of Child	Referred to	Referred by
Date of Referral	Outcome	

Person responsible: _____ Date: _____

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

Details of action taken:

F



Review of Management of Incident

(to be completed 6 weeks after the incident.)

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?

