

# Critical Incident Policy

## Introduction:

In Limerick School Project we aim to protect the well being of our pupils and staff by providing a safe, tolerant and well catered for environment as outlined in our school mission statement. This policy was first ratified by the Board of Management on the 6<sup>th</sup> December 2010.

## Rationale:

The Board of Management, through the Principal, Staff and PTA has drawn up a critical incident plan. A Critical Incidents Management Team has been established to steer the development and implementation of the plan.

## Definition of the term 'critical incident':

The staff and management of the Limerick School Project National School recognise a critical incident to be 'an incident or sequence of events that overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school'. Critical incidents may involve one or more students or staff members or members of our local community. Types of incidents may include

- The death of a member of the school community through accident, violence, suicide or suspected suicide or other unexpected death
- An intrusion into the school
- An accident involving members of the school community
- An accident/tragedy in the wider community
- Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism, etc.
- The disappearance of a member of the school community

## Aims:

- To formulate a plan which enables school management and staff to respond quickly and effectively and maintain a sense of control in the event of an incident and to ensure that appropriate support is offered to students and staff.
- To ensure effects are minimised.
- To return to normality as soon as possible.
- To create a supportive and caring ethos in the school.
- To have systems in place to help build resilience in both staff and students  
Cf: Appendix A of the Health and Safety Policy of Limerick School Project.  
These systems include both the physical and psychological safety of the school community.

NEPS has outlined an appropriate response to different levels of critical incidents as follows (Responding to Critical incidents: Guidelines pg 19)

- **Response Level 1:** the death of a student or staff member who was terminally ill; the death of parent/sibling; a fire in school not resulting in serious injury; serious damage to school property

- **Response Level 2:** the sudden death of a student or staff member
- **Response Level 3:** incident: an accident/event involving a number of students; a violent death; an incident with a high media profile or involving a number of schools.

### **Critical Incidents Management Team (CIMT):**

A CIMT has been established in line with best practice. The members of the team were selected on a voluntary basis and will retain their roles for at least one school year. The members of the team will meet annually in the month of September to review and update the policy and plan. Each member of the team has a copy of the critical incident policy and access to the appropriate resources.

**Team Leader:** Matt Wallen (Principal)

**Communication & Deputy Team Leader:** Orla McCoy (Deputy Principal)

**Garda Liaison:** Matt Wallen /Orla McCoy or Ger O'Connell/ Collette Neville

**Staff Liaison:** Cathy Keyes

**Student Liaison/ Counselling Role:** Collette Neville/ Rebecca Henry

**Pastoral Care:** Rebecca Henry

**Family Liaison Role:** Anne Fitzgerald/Siobhan McNamara

**B.O.M. Rep:** Ger O'Connell or current teacher rep on B.O.M.

Mobile phone numbers for each member of the above team are available in school office.

**Community/agency liaison:** Louise O'Connor

### **Roles and Responsibilities:**

**Team leader** (Matt or Orla or Ger)

- Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting
- Coordinates the tasks of the team
- Liaises with the Board of Management; DES; NEPS
- Liaises with the bereaved family
- Keeps records of students seen by external agency staff

**Garda liaison** (Matt/Orla or Ger/ Collette)

- Liaises with the Gardaí
- Ensures that information about deaths or other developments is checked out for accuracy before being shared

**Staff liaison** (Cathy)

- Leads briefing meetings for staff on the facts as known, gives staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions, outlines the routine for the day
- Advises staff on the procedures for identification of vulnerable students
- Provides materials for staff (from their critical incident folder)
- Keeps staff updated as the day progresses
- Is alert to vulnerable staff members and makes contact with them individually

- Advises them of the availability of the EAS (Employee Assistance Service) and gives them the contact number.

**Student liaison** (Collette/ Rebecca)

- Alerts other staff to vulnerable students
- Provides materials for students (from their critical incident folder)
- Looks after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room where agreed.

**Community/agency liaison** (Matt/Orla)

- Liaises with agencies in the community for support and onward referral
- Coordinates the involvement of these agencies
- Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies.

**Family liaison** (Ger/Anne/Siobhán)

- Visits the bereaved family with the team leader
- Arranges parent meetings, if held
- May facilitate such meetings and manage 'questions and answers'
- Manages the 'consent' issues in accordance with agreed school policy
- Ensures that sample letters are typed up on the school's system and ready for adaptation
- Sets up room for meetings with parents
- Maintains a record of parents seen
- Meets with individual parents
- Provides appropriate materials for parents (from their critical incident folder)

**Media liaison** (Chairperson, B.O.M.)

- In advance of an incident, will consider issues that may arise and how they might be responded to (e.g. students being interviewed, photographers on the premises, etc)
- In the event of an incident, will liaise where necessary with relevant teacher unions etc.
- Will draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews (as agreed by school management)

**Administrator** (Louise)

- Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of
  - Key parents, such as members of the Parents Council
  - Emergency support services and other external contacts and resources
  - Parents or guardians
  - Teachers
  - Emergency services
- Is alert to the need to check credentials of individuals offering support
- Reminds agency staff to wear name badges
- Takes telephone calls and notes those that need to be responded to
- Ensures that templates are on the schools system in advance and ready for adaptation
- Prepares and sends out letters, emails and faxes

- Photocopies materials needed
- Maintains records

### **Pastoral Care (Rebecca)**

Rebecca will form part of the Critical Incident Team, and be available to liaise with pupils, parents and staff members. This could include:

- One-to-one meetings with individuals
- Informing parents
- Pastoral advice
- Having a presence in the school
- Visiting families affected

### **Record keeping (Everybody)**

In the event of an incident each member of the team will keep records of phone calls made and received, letters sent and received, meetings held, persons met, interventions used, materials used, etc.

The school secretary will have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters, photocopying materials, etc.

The CIMT will collate all records after the event and these will be stored in the principal's office, in a secure locked cabinet.

Templates of letters are on file and ready to be sent following an incident.

### **Confidentiality and good name considerations:**

The management and staff of Limerick School Project N.S. has a responsibility to protect the privacy and good name of the people involved in any incident and will be sensitive to the consequences of any public statements. The members of the school staff will bear this in mind, and will seek to ensure that students do so also. For instance, the term 'suicide' will not be used unless there is solid information that death was due to suicide, and that the family involved consents to its use. The phrases 'tragic death' or 'sudden death' may be used instead. Similarly, the word 'murder' should not be used until it is legally established that a murder was committed. The term 'violent death' may be used instead.

### **Critical incident rooms:**

The staff room will be the main room used to meet the staff. The halla will be the main room used for meetings with students. The halla/classroom will be the main room used for meetings with parents (depending on size of meeting). The halla will be the main room used for media. The LS/RT room will be the main room used for individual sessions with students. The principal's office will be the main room used for other visitors.

### **Consultation and communication regarding the plan:**

All staff members were consulted and their views canvassed in the preparation of this policy and plan. Our school's final policy and plan in relation to responding to critical incidents has been presented to all staff and is reviewed annually. Each

member of the critical incident team has a personal copy of the plan. All new and temporary staff will be informed of the details of the plan at induction.

**Timetable for Review:**

The plan will be reviewed annually and amended as required after the Critical Incident Management Team has met to review the policy in September.

**Ratification:**

This revised plan was ratified by the Board of Management on

**Action Plan:****Short Term Actions - Day 1**

<b>Task</b>	<b>Resources</b>	<b>Name</b>
Gather accurate information	Responding to Critical Incidents: Guidelines for Schools pg 20	Matt/Orla
Who, what, when, where?	Responding to Critical Incidents: Guidelines for Schools pg 20	Matt/Orla
Convene a CIMT meeting - specify time and place clearly	Responding to Critical Incidents: Guidelines for Schools pg 20,21 and 22	Matt/Orla
Contact external agencies, Including chairperson	See Emergency Contact List	Matt/Orla
Arrange supervision for students		Matt/Orla
Hold staff meeting and distribute relevant literature	Relevant resources for teachers Responding to Critical Incidents: Resource Materials for Schools; R7, R8, R9, R10, R11, R12, R19	Collette/Ger
Hold staff meeting		All staff
Agree schedule for the day		All staff
Inform students - (close friends and students with learning difficulties may need to be told separately)		Class teachers & SEN teachers
Compile a list of vulnerable students	Responding to Critical Incidents: Resource materials for Schools R16	Class teachers & Orla
Contact / visit the bereaved family	Responding to Critical Incidents: Guidelines for Schools pg 26	Matt & other staff member
Prepare and agree media statement and deal with media	Responding to Critical Incidents: Guidelines for Schools pg 43 Responding to Critical Incidents: Resource materials for Schools R6	BOM, Chairperson, Matt
Inform parents		Matt
Hold end of day staff briefing; remind all		Matt & Orla

members of team to record events of that day		
Send letter of consent to parents regarding NEPS	Responding to Critical Incidents: Resource materials for Schools pg 43; R2, R3, R4, R5	Class teachers

### Summary Checklist for Principals: Day 1

1. Gather the facts - what has happened, when, how, where and who is injured or dead.
2. Consult *Responding to Critical Incidents: Guidelines for schools* (available on the DES website [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie)). Go to NEPS link.
3. Is it an incident requiring a NEPS Response at Level 1, 2 or 3?
4. Who do I need to call (see Emergency Contact List - R23)
5. Meet with the Critical Incident Management Team.
6. Meet with other agencies, if involved, to agree on roles and procedures.
7. Have administration staff photocopy appropriate literature.
8. Arrange for the supervision of students.
9. Address the staff meeting.
10. Identify vulnerable students.
11. Inform students.
12. Draft a media statement (see R6).
13. Prepare for a media interview, (see Section 9).
14. Draft a letter to parents (see R2, R4 and R5).
15. Meet with the CIMT to review the day and arrange an early morning meeting for the following day.
16. Meet with the staff group.
17. Make contact with the affected family/families.

### Medium term actions - (Day 2 and following days)

Task	Resource	Name
Convene a CIMT meeting to review the Team leader events of day 1	Responding to Critical Incidents: Guidelines for Schools pg 27	Principal
Meet external agencies		Chairperson, principal
Meet whole staff		Principal
Arrange support for students, staff, parents	Responding to Critical Incidents: resource Materials for Schools R14	4 staff named
Visit the injured		Matt & another staff member
Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral		Same as above

arrangements		
Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service		Same as above
Make decisions about school closure		BOM

#### Follow-up - beyond 72 hours

Task	Possible resources	Name
Monitor students for signs of continuing distress		Class Teachers
Liaise with agencies regarding referrals		Matt
Plan for return of bereaved student(s)	Responding to Critical Incidents: Resource Materials for Schools R13	Class Teacher
Plan for giving of 'memory box' to bereaved family		CIMT Team
Decide on memorials and anniversaries		BOM, staff, parents & students
Review response to incident and amend plan		Staff/BOM
Resources for children	Responding to Critical Incidents: Resource Materials for Schools pg 43-50	Class teacher

## **Appendix A:**

### ***What action do I take?***

- For an incident requiring a Level 1 response it may be sufficient to talk to the psychologist on the phone.
- In the case of an incident requiring a Level 2 & Level 3 response, make contact with NEPS. Depending on the incident at least one psychologist will visit the school.

### ***Physical safety e.g. (see Health & Safety policy for further details)***

- *Evacuation plan formulated*
- *Regular fire drills occur*
- *Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked*
- *Rules of the playground (see Code of Behaviour)*

### ***Psychological safety***

*The management and staff of Limerick School Project N.S. aim to use available programmes and resources to address the personal and social development of students, to enhance a sense of safety and security in the school and to provide opportunities for reflection and discussion.*

- *Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is integrated into the work of the school. It is addressed in the curriculum through the following resources, Bí Folláin and Walk Tall, by addressing issues such as grief and loss; communication skills; stress and anger management; resilience; conflict management; problem solving; help-seeking; bullying; decision making and prevention of alcohol and drug misuse. Promotion of mental health is an integral part of this provision.*
- *Staff have training for their role in delivering the SPHE curriculum.*
- *Staff are familiar with the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures.*
- *The school has developed links with a range of external agencies e.g. NEPS, HSE,*
- *The school has a clear policy on bullying and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy.*
- *Pupils with emotional difficulties attend Resource/Learning Support Teachers, in accordance with the General Allocation system. These teachers work in collaboration with the principal and class teacher. Parents are informed, and where appropriate, a referral is made to an appropriate agency.*
- *Staff can avail of support for themselves through Employee Assistance Service (freephone 1800 411 057).*

## Appendix B

### Strategic Planning Formula:

- *Threat: what specific threat is the focus of intervention*
- *Target: who needs assistance  
who does not*
- *Type: what type of assistance do they need*
- *Timing: When will assistance be most useful and when will circumstances allow it*
- *Theme: what themes/ issues/ concerns should be considered to build the right intervention package e.g: what happened, what will happen*
- *Teams: what resources will it take to provide the right intervention at the right time*

## Appendix C

### Contact Numbers for CIMT Members:

Matt Wallen	086 1793781
Orla McCoy	087 6325034
Rebecca Henry	087 9592511
Anne Fitzgerald	087 9321980
Collette Neville	087 8049406
Cathy Keyes	087 6426672
Ger O' Connell	087 9397883
Siobhan McNamara	087 6210315
Mary Gallagher	086 8889095
Richard Allen	087 2801389
Antoinette Trimble	061 430024; 087 0530350
Employee Assistance Service	1800 411057