

CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT POLICY



Darrara NS aims to protect the well-being of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. The Board of Management has updated the Critical Incident Management Plan as one element of the school's policies and plans on 11/10/2023

Review and Research

The CIMT have consulted resource documents available to schools on www.education.ie and www.nosp.ie including:

- Responding to Critical Incidents Guidelines and Resources for Schools (NEPS 2016)
- Well-Being in Primary Schools - Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion (DES, DOH, HSE 2015)
- Friends For Life/Weaving Wellbeing/Get Up Stand Up/Zippy's Friends/Lust For Life

Define what you mean by the term 'critical incident'

The staff and management of *Darrara NS* 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 might 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*
- *Covid-19 outbreak in the school.*

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 control and to ensure that appropriate support is offered to students and staff. Having a good plan should also help 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.

Creation of a coping supportive and caring ethos in the school

We have put systems in place to help to build resilience in both staff and students, thus preparing them to cope with a range of life events. These include measures to address both the physical and psychological safety of the school community.

Physical safety

With a view to addressing the physical safety of staff, pupils and visitors to the school, the following policies and procedures are in place:

- Regular fire drills occur
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked (Allied Fire have school contract)
- Pre-opening supervision in the school yard (ref supervision policy)
- Rules of the playground – (ref code of behaviour)
- Visitors by appointment only
- Visitors sign in/out book

Psychological safety

The management and staff of *Darrara NS* 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 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 access to training for their role in SPHE
- Staff have completed training in Child Protection and have received a copy of the child safeguarding statement.
- Books and resources on difficulties affecting the primary school student are available
- Information is provided on mental health in general and such specific areas as signs and symptoms of depression and anxiety (pending)
- The school has developed links with a range of external agencies – NEPS, CAMHS, CoAction, Minister for Mental Health, Tusla, HSE, Department of Education, WCTC, CPSMA.
- Inputs to students by external providers are carefully considered in the light of criteria about student safety, the appropriateness of the content, and the expertise of the providers. See DES Circulars 0022/2010 (Primary).
- The school has a clear policy on bullying and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy
- There is a care system in place in the school using the "Continuum of Support" approach which is outlined in the NEPS documents published on 2007 for primary schools. These documents are available on www.education.ie
- Students who are identified as being at risk are referred to the designated staff member (DLP), concerns are explored and the appropriate level of assistance and support is provided. Parents are informed, and where appropriate, a referral is made to an appropriate agency.
- Staff are informed about how to access support for themselves. Employee Assistance Service at Spectrum Health

Critical Incident 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 to review and update the policy and plan. Each member of the team has a dedicated critical incident folder. This contains a copy of the policy and plan and materials particular to their role, to be used in the event of an incident.

Team leader: *Claire Higgins Principal, Siobhán Courtney Acting Deputy Principal.*

Role

- Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting
- Coordinates the tasks of the team
- Liaises with the Board of Management; including emergency liaison as necessary, DES; NEPS; SEC
- Liaises with the bereaved family
- Liaises with HSE
- Liaises with family of unwell child

Garda liaison (Claire Higgins, Siobhán Courtney)

Role

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

Staff liaison (Claire Higgins, Helen Roycroft)

Role

- 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
- 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 Spectrum Health support services and gives them the contact number.

- Advises them of the standard statement to be made by all – This is a tragic incident etc.

Student liaison (Yvonne Walsh, Paula Twomey, Tina O'Driscoll, Karen O'Brien)

Role

- Alerts other staff to vulnerable students (appropriately)
- Provides materials for students (closest friends first)
- Maintains student contact records.
- Looks after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room where agreed (large front resource room).

Community/agency liaison (Siobhán Courtney, Helen Roycroft)

Role

- Liaises with agencies in the community for support and onward referral GAA / Priest. Gives standard statement to them too.
- Is alert to the need to check credentials of individuals offering support
- Coordinates the involvement of these agencies
- Reminds agency staff to wear name badges
- Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies

Parent liaison (Claire Higgins, Helen Roycroft)**Role**

- Visits the bereaved family with the team leader
- Arranges parent meetings, if necessary
- 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 (Claire Higgins, Siobhán Courtney)**Role**

- 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 relevant teacher unions, CPSMA, NEPS etc.
- Will draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews (as agreed by school management) sample pg. 9/pg. 46 DES Press Office, INTO Press Office, CPSMA.

Administrator (Elaine Crowley)**Role**

- Maintenance of up to date telephone numbers of
 - Parents or guardians
 - Teachers
 - Emergency services
- Takes telephone calls and notes those that need to be responded to
- Ensures that templates are on the school's system in advance and ready for adaptation
- Prepares and sends out letters, emails and texts
- Photocopies materials needed
- Maintains records

Record keeping

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, material used etc.

Elaine Crowley will have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters, photocopying materials, etc.

Confidentiality and good name considerations

Management and staff of *Darrara NS* have a responsibility to protect the privacy and good name of people involved in any incident and will be sensitive to the consequences of public statements. Members of school staff will bear this in mind, and seek to ensure that students do so also, e.g. 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.

Critical Incident Rooms	
In the event of a critical incident, the following rooms are designated for the indicated purposes	
Room Name:	Designated Purpose:
<i>Hall</i>	Main room for meeting staff
<i>CLASSROOMS</i>	Meetings with students Special Ed Rooms for close friends
<i>OFFICE/Special Ed Room</i>	Meetings with parents
<i>Outside the school building</i>	Meetings with media
<i>RESOURCE ROOMS</i>	Individual sessions with students
<i>Outdoors if possible/hall area</i>	Meetings with other visitors

Consultation and communication regarding the plan

All staff were consulted and their views canvassed in the preparation of this policy and plan. Students and parent/guardian representatives were also consulted and asked for their comments.

Our school's final policy and plan in relation to responding to critical incidents has been presented to all staff. 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.

The plan will be updated as necessary.

Signed:

_____ (Chairperson)

Date: _____

_____ (Principal)

Date: _____

Short term actions – Day 1

Task	Name
Gather accurate information	
Who, what, when, where?	
Convene a CIMT meeting – specify time and place clearly	
Contact external agencies	
Arrange supervision for students	
Hold staff meeting	
Agree schedule for the day	
Inform students – (close friends and students with learning difficulties may need to be told separately)	
Compile a list of vulnerable students	
Prepare and agree media statement and deal with media	
Inform parents	
Hold end of day staff briefing	

Medium term actions - (Day 2 and following days)

Task	Name
Convene a CIMT meeting to review the events of day 1	
Meet external agencies	
Meet whole staff	
Arrange support for students, staff, parents	
Visit the injured	
Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements	
Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service	
Make decisions about school closure	

Follow-up – beyond 72 hours

Task	Name
Monitor students for signs of continuing distress	Class teachers
Liaise with agencies regarding referrals	
Plan for return of bereaved student(s) Prayers etc or quiet word	
Plan for giving of 'memory box' to bereaved family	
Decide on memorials and anniversaries	BOM/Staff, parents and students
Review response to incident and amend plan	Staff/BOM

EMERGENCY CONTACT LIST

AGENCY	CONTACT NUMBERS
Garda	999/112
Hospital	999/112
Fire Brigade	999/112
Local GPs	See overleaf
HSE	1850 24 1850
Community Care Team	1850 24 1850
Child and Family Centre	1850 24 1850
Child and Family Mental Health Service (CAMHS)	1850 24 1850
School Inspector	01 8896553
NEPS Psychologist	0761 108450
DES	0906 483600
INTO/IMPACT	1850 708 708
Clergy	023 8834441
State Exams Commission	
Employee Assistance Service	1800 411 057

LOCAL GP'S

Western Road Surgery 021 8835102

Clonakilty Family Health Clinic 023 8858774

Clonakilty Medical Centre 023 8833386

Dr. Thomas Moloney 023 8834171