



VIRGIN MARY GIRLS' NATIONAL SCHOOL

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CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY 2021/2022

Revised in consideration of Covid-19

Overview:

Critical Incident Management Guidelines are essential in school life today. This document has been compiled to offer a summary guide to our approach, should the need arise. Our main reference materials are Responding to Critical Incidents: Guidelines for Schools and Responding to Critical Incidents: Resource Materials for Schools (Published by Dept. of Education & Skills (DES) and National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), 2007 and revised and updated in 2016).

Mission Statement:

Our School cherishes each child and, in partnership with the parents, aims to provide a safe and happy environment which promotes esteem for oneself, for other people and the value of life-long learning. To this end Virgin Mary GNS aims to protect the well-being of its students by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times.

Virgin Mary GNS has taken a number of measures to create a coping, supportive and caring ethos in the school. The school has also formulated a number of policies and procedures to be followed with a view to ensuring the physical and psychological safety of staff and students, both in ordinary time and in the event of a critical incident.

What is a Critical Incident?

As per DES / NEPS guidelines Virgin Mary GNS recognises a critical incident to be “an incident or sequence of events that overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school and disrupts the running of the school”. Critical incidents may involve one or more pupils, staff, the school, or our local community. Types of incidents might include:

- The death of a member of the school community through sudden death, accident terminal illness or suicide.
- **Outbreak of disease or major illness in school or community.**
- Serious injury sustained by a member of the school community as a result of violence on or off school grounds.
- A threatening or violent intrusion into the school.
- An accident / tragedy in the school or wider community.
- Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism, etc.
- The disappearance of a member of the school community.
- Unauthorised removal of student from school.

- A case of Covid-19 is detected in the school
- A death of a member of the school community from covid-19.

Aim

Recognising that the key to managing critical incidents is planning, Virgin Mary GNS has developed this Critical Incident Management Policy and accompanying Plan. Our hope is that, in the event of an incident, these will help staff to react quickly and effectively and to maintain a sense of control. They should also help us to achieve a return to normality as soon as possible and ensure that the effects on the students and staff will be limited.

Creation of a coping supportive and caring ethos in the school

We have put systems in place to lessen the probability of the occurrence of an incident. These include measures to address both the physical and psychological safety of both staff and students.

Physical safety:

The following policies and strategies have been put in place in order to maintain the physical safety of all members of the school community.

Child Safeguarding Statement

Intimate Case and Toileting Policy

S.P.H.E. address personal, water , fire and road safety.

Supervision at break time and home time.

- Health & Safety Statement.
- Evacuation plan formulated.
- Regular fire drills occur.
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked.
- The Fire Alarm is serviced regularly, at least once a year.

Regular Fire drill occur.

- Playground gates are locked during school hours.
- Pupils leaving early will only be released by a member of teaching staff when an authorised adult arrives to accompany the child from the premises. Such departures are recorded in the 'Sign Out' book.
- Pupils are not released into the care of persons unknown to school staff without checking with a parent/ guardian.
- Pupils are reminded of playground rules by staff at regular intervals in the context of our School Code of Behaviour.
- First Aid policy and box maintained and kept in a secure place known to staff.
- **Covid-19 Response Plan and procedure in place.**

Psychological Safety:

Virgin Mary GNS aims to create an open and encouraging environment in the school where students can talk about their difficulties and seek help for same. The following strategies aim to support and ensure the psychological well-being of our pupils:

- SPHE is an integral part of the school curriculum and addresses issues such as grief and loss, communication skills, stress and anger management, conflict management, problem solving, help-seeking, decision making, and alcohol and drug prevention.

Child Safeguarding Statement. Staff are familiar with the child Safeguarding Statement and how to proceed with disclosures.

- School Anti-Bullying Policy. • Substance / Alcohol Misuse Policy.

- Staff are informed of difficulties affecting individual students and are aware and vigilant to their needs.
- Staff have access to books and resources on difficulties affecting the primary school child.
- The school has developed links with outside agencies, which may be contacted in the event of an emergency and for onward referral of students. – Tusla, NEPS, Gardai, HSE agencies
- Staff are informed about how to access support for themselves via the Employee Assistance Service (Formerly Carecall) 1800 411 057 (Freephone, 24/7)

All Staff are familiar with the COVID-19 Response Plan.

Critical Incident Management Team

Virgin Mary GNS has set up CI Management Team in line with best practice and will maintain this team in future. 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 once a year to review and update the plan. Each member of the team has a Ready-to-Go pack with relevant materials to be used in the event of an incident.

Roles

Key roles have been identified and assigned as follows:

- Team Leader: Niamh Cuthbert (Main Office)
- Staff Liaison: Robbie Hennessy (Teacher Nominee on BOM)
- Student Liaison: Patricia Nolan/ Gillian Horan
- Parent Liaison: Oisín O'Donovan HSCL (Room 11)
- Community Liaison: Fr. Declan Blake in conjunction with Oisín O'Donovan HSCL (Room 11)
- Media Liaison: Niamh Cuthbert
- Administration Tasks: Sarah Chaney (Secretary's Office)

Should any of the above staff members be involved in the incident, or be unavailable for another reason, another member of teaching staff will be assigned to that role. In the event of a critical incident the responsibilities of each role-holder will be as follows:

Team Leader- Niamh Cuthbert

In the absence of Niamh Cuthbert, Patricia Nolan will take the lead

Liaises with Gardai

Ensures that information about deaths or other developments are checked out for accuracy before being shared.

Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting.

Is alert to the need to check credentials of individuals offering support

Co-ordinates the tasks of the team.

Liaises with the Board of Management and Department of Education and Science, I.N.T.O., NEPS / relevant agencies.

Liaises with the bereaved family.

Staff Liaison – Robbie Hennessy (with Patricia Nolan)

Leads meetings to brief staff on the facts as known, gives staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and outlines the routine for the day.

Advises staff on the identification of vulnerable students.

Provides materials to staff from the Critical Incident Folder.

Keeps staff updated as the day progresses.

Is alert to vulnerable staff members and makes contact with them individually.

Student Liaison –Patricia Nolan/Gillian Horan

Looks after setting up and supervision of 'quiet room' where agreed (Cookery Room)

In the current climate, the quiet room will be in the library as cookery room will be used as a second staffroom.

Alerts staff to vulnerable students. (appropriately)

Provides materials for students.

Maintains students contact records.

Community Liaison- Fr. Declan Blake and Oisín O'Donovan

Liaises with agencies in the community for support and onward referral.

Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies.

Co-ordinates the involvement of these agencies.

Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of emergency support services and other external contacts and resources.

Parent Liaison – Oisín O'Donovan

See page 84 Critical Incident Guidelines

Facilitates 'questions and answers' meetings.

Meets with individual parents.

Visits the bereaved family with the team leader.

Media Liaison- Niamh Cuthbert

In advance of an incident, will consider issues that may arise during an incident and how they might be responded to (e.g. students being interviewed, photographers on the premises, etc).

Intervention: With CIM Team, prepare a public statement with accurate information, expressing sympathy for the affected parties. Organise a designated room to address media promptly.

Postvention: Ensure up to date facts are accurate. Review and evaluate effectiveness of communication response. Subsequent statements if necessary will be prepared by the CIM Team saying what has been done and what is going to be done.

In the event of an incident, will liaise where necessary with the Communications Section in the DES.

Administrative Tasks – Sarah Chaney

See Page 85 Critical Incident Guidelines

Maintenance of up to date lists of contact numbers of: Parents or guardians, Teachers, Emergency support services

Telephone calls needing to be responded to, letters sent and materials photocopied.

Record Keeping

In the event of an incident each member of the team will keep detailed records of phone calls made and received, letters sent and received, meetings held, persons met, interventions used, material used etc. The school secretary will have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters, photocopying materials, etc.

Letter to Parents

The Principal will prepare a brief, written statement to include:

The sympathy of the school community for the affected/bereaved family.

Positive information or comments about the deceased/injured person(s).

The facts of the incident.
What has been done.
What is going to be done.

Confidentiality and good name considerations

See page 85 Critical Incident Guidelines.

The management and staff 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 see to ensure that pupils do so also. For instance, the term 'suicide' will not be used without the consent of the family involved or until it has been established categorically that the person's death was a result of suicide. The phrases 'tragic death' or 'sudden death' may be used instead.

Critical Incident Room

In the event of a critical incident, the Library will be the main room used to meet the students, parents and visitors involved. In the event of a larger incident the School Hall & Library may be used. In the event of a critical incident, the Staff Room/Kitchen will be the main room used to meet the staff.

Development and communication of this policy and plan

All staff were consulted and asked for their comments. Our school's final policy and procedures in relation to responding to critical incidents has been presented to all staff. Each member of the teaching staff has a personal copy. All new and temporary staff will be informed of the details of the plan by the Principal. Critical Incident Policy to be ratified by Board of Management and reviewed regularly and up-dated as required.

The CIM Team: step by step approach, in the event of a death of a member of the school community.

- The Principal, having confirmed the death, makes contact with the family.
- The CIM Team meet to plan strategy, keeping in mind the guidelines already outlined.
- Key tasks are distributed.
- Have all guidelines for teachers ready.
- Have written and oral statements ready for all communications within the school and possible media enquiries
- Make contact with staff to request attendance in the staff room at 8.35a.m.
- Meet staff, note any absences or late arrivals to ensure that all staff members hear the news.
- CIM Team outline to staff the plan for the day and the support available.
- Class teachers break news to classes, with assistance from Chaplain if appropriate.
- Plan another staff meeting if necessary to update staff and / or make decisions.
- Clarify funeral arrangements with staff when known.
- CIM Team meets to plan for school involvement in the ceremony.

Guidelines on breaking news

From a teacher's perspective it is very difficult to pass on bad news as a result of a critical incident. The following guidelines are suggested in such an event.

- The class of the pupil/teacher who has died should be the first to be told.
- Other classes to be told by their class teacher.
- Not every class is going to be traumatised following the bad news but a possible way for a teacher to break the news would be to tell the class that they have sad news and it is difficult for them to do this. The teacher should let the class know the name of the person the news is about. Let the class know the facts as the teacher knows them and encourage questions. The teacher should let the class know of common reactions to such tragic news, the most common reaction being shock. A teacher can expect tears and outbursts but should not allow a pupil to leave the classroom alone. Pupils must be supervised within the school building while in a distressed state. Let them know that they will receive support within the school. Allow the class to mingle and talk. The teacher can explain to the class how they can support one another. The teacher may also try to be attentive to identifying those who are not coping well with the news. It may be essential to remind pupils more than once that there is help available, as limited information is assimilated initially.

Some pupils will need to stay with the CIM Team for the morning. Those who go to class may not be able to concentrate on the work for that class therefore teachers should be sensitive to this.

Common reactions on hearing traumatic news.

Individuals react differently on hearing traumatic news. Listed below are possible emotional and physical responses to hearing traumatic news:

shock, fear, guilt, grief, tears, panic, denial, anxiety, depression, anger, emotional outburst, being overwhelmed, nausea, fainting, pain, dizziness, weakness, palpitations and breathing difficulties.

In the emotional/ behavioural area there may be:

Confusion, uncertainty, blame, poor concentration, disorientation, restlessness, signs of withdrawal, or a feeling of being let down.

In response to these reactions the crisis response team and / or teacher should show genuine care and concern to the individual affected. Be available through listening and allow pupils to express their feelings and encourage as much talk as possible. Allow the pupil to talk about the pupil/teacher they have lost and reassure them that they as an individual class group have done everything possible. A list of local counselling services outside of school will be available to parents where necessary, as sometimes a child may need further or longer periods of counselling. 'Rainbows Ireland' supports children bereaved or separated and runs local groups.

Day 2

Pupils who are not coping should be referred to the Principal on an individual basis. It is important that the school function as normally as possible on the second day following a critical incident.

Day 3

The CIM Team need to meet to work through the critical incident strategy and the after care for the pupils and the school. This may involve the class teacher, resource teacher etc. School records should be updated.

Contacting staff if tragedy or incident occurs over a weekend or over holidays.

If a tragedy occurs over a weekend or during holiday time and the death is one of a teaching colleague, a system of informing staff needs to be in place. Normally the Principal and Deputy Principal will make contact with the staff by phone.

If it is the death of a pupil, the CIM Team needs to be informed immediately while other staff can be informed later. Nevertheless whoever hears the news first need to inform the Principal or Deputy Principal.

The aftercare as a result of a Critical incident.

It is important after a critical incident, that with time a de-briefing occurs for pupils and staff. In particular, staff should be kept informed of the on-going counselling and support which people are receiving within the school. Close attention and observation of pupils who are deeply affected by such incidents must be observed. De-briefing can prevent the onset of post traumatic stress disorder, (the symptoms of which may include flashbacks or nightmares, intense stress, emotional numbing, lack of sleep, irritability, anger, poor concentration). This is why critical incident stress de-briefing is an important part of our approach.

- **Memorials and Remembrances.**

Suggested below are items, which may prove useful in a critical incident plan:

- A book of Condolence, A Sacred Space, A lighted Candle

- A scrapbook or pictorial record
- The use of a photograph of the individual(s), with a candle
- A Memorial Award
- A Memorial Service
- The anniversary to be remembered.

In the event of a death or deaths of parents/pupils/retired teachers under normal circumstances, the normal response may be as follows:

* Consult the family on the school's involvement in the funeral, remembering that the family wishes must be respected.

- Make decisions on those who should attend the funeral, where relevant.
- Communication of such a death to the school as a whole.
- Discuss the possibility of the school being closed on the day of funeral which would involve notification to the Department of Education & Science, parents, the cancellation of organised activities e.g. matches, tour buses and the informing of possible visitors to the school on that day of closure.

* Organise flowers and mass cards.

* Book of condolence for pupils and staff.

* A school memorial service for pupils and staff.

Staff:

In the event of any critical incident within the school the actions above attempt to serve pupils and staff alike in their dealing with such a tragedy. Nevertheless each individual member of staff will deal with such an incident in their own way. It may be useful for staff to be aware of their own reactions when it comes to such a psychological trauma. Staff should be helped to understand their own emotional reactions, to plan for balance in the after event of such an incident and to create a support system within the school. Staff be aware of the availability of personal assistance through the Employee Assistance Scheme (DES). This can be accessed, at no cost, by email: eas@vhics.ie or on 1800 411 057.

Copies of relevant resources are included in *Responding to Critical Incidents (Resource Materials for Schools)*.

The health, safety and welfare of all the School Community are paramount to the B.O.M.



CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT PLAN

Virgin Mary Girls' National School

List of Emergency Numbers

| Outside Agency | Contact Numbers |
|---|--|
| HSE LIVE (Advice on COVID-19) | 1850 24 1850 |
| Garda – Ballymun Station Gardai have advised to ring 999/112 in any emergency and the nearest car will be dispatched. | 6664400 999/112 |
| Ambulance / Fire Services | 999/112 |
| NEPS Psychologist – Dermott Bergin NEPS Psychologist: Head Office 24/27 Frederick Court, D1 | 8892700 |
| Local GPs – Ballymun Family Practice (civic centre) | 8467033 / 8467094 |
| Health Centre – Social Services (civic centre) Social Work Dept HSE (civic centre) | 8467000 8467237 |
| Mater Child and Family Centre CAMHS (civic centre) | 8467000 |
| Beaumont Hospital – main switch desk Beaumont Hospital – poisons information | 8093000 8092566/8379964 |
| DES Inspector – Fiona Rushe DES Head Office – (Inspectorate, etc) | fiona_rushe@education.gov.ie 087-1212102 090 6483600 |
| INTO – Head Office | 8047700 |
| Parish – Sacristy Parish Priest – Fr. Declan Blake Deacon Stephen Maher | 8421551 (until 2pm) 087-2408428 086-3455745 |
| BOM Chair – Pat Kenny | 087-2466034 |
| Tusla | 018467129 |
| School Caretaker Brendan Jervis | 085-8183397 |
| School Keyholder Phil Curtis | 085-1087367 |
| Oisín O'Donovan HSCL | 087-9848328 |
| Aisling Cox (Principal BNS) | 087-2528098 |

Other Useful Contact Numbers

| | |
|---|--------------------------------|
| Barnardos | 450355 |
| The Samaritans | 1850 609090 |
| Childline | 1800 666666 |
| Parentline | 1890 927277 |
| AWARE | 6766166 1890 303302 |
| National Suicide Bereavement Support | 024 95561 |
| Rainbows | 4734175 |
| The Bereavement Counselling Service | 8391766 |
| Bereavement Counselling | 6767727 |

SHORT TERM ACTIONS AND ROLES ASSIGNED
1ST DAY

| Task | Name (Key & Support) |
|---|---|
| Gather accurate information: Establishing whether there will be media interest. Locating NEPS' publications (Responding to Critical Incidents: Guidelines for Schools and Responding to Critical Incidents: Resource Pack for Schools). Contacting the families involved in the incident. Consulting with the family regarding appropriate support from the school, e.g. funeral service. | Relevant Staff and Witnesses (accidents) |
| Contact appropriate agencies: This may have been done prior to the Critical Incident Management Team Meeting by the Principal. Emergency services Medical services H.S.E Psychology Departments/Community care services NEPS B.O.M. DES/Schools inspector | Niamh Cuthbert |
| Convene a meeting with key staff: Share as much factual information as possible Provide a timetable/schedule for the day (keeping routine as normal as possible for the day) Inform the staff that it is ok to be upset Distribute appropriate documents and appropriate literature to the staff: e.g. 'A classroom session following news of a critical incident' and discuss how to share facts with the students Identify vulnerable students with the staff (close friends/relatives, those who have suffered a recent loss/relationship breakdown, those with social, emotional, behavioural difficulties, children who have suffered abuse, students with learning disabilities) Discuss the importance of cultural sensitivities What rooms will be available for teachers and various external personnel during the day. | Robbie Hennessy with Patricia Nolan |
| Arrange supervision of students | ALL STAFF |
| Hold Staff Meeting | ALL STAFF |
| Inform parents | Niamh Cuthbert/ Oisín O'Donovan |
| Inform students | Patricia Nolan/ Gillian Horan |
| Make contact with the bereaved family | Principal/Oisín O'Donovan/ Fr. Declan Blake |
| Dealing with media In dealing with enquiries from the media the Principal will act as a liaison. Names, addresses and telephone numbers will not be released. Students and staff will be discouraged from dealing with the media. The agreed statement will also be given as a response to enquiries from anxious parents. The CI Team prepare a brief statement: Protect the family's privacy. Provide accurate information detailing some of the following: What happened, where and when? What is the extent of the injuries/fatalities? How many are involved? Is there a risk of further injury? What agencies have been contacted already? | Niamh Cuthbert |

MEDIUM TERM ACTIONS AND ROLES ASSIGNED
24 – 72 HOURS

| Task | Name / Group |
|--|--|
| <p>It is sometimes the case that the first day following an incident is quite calm as people may be in shock. Day 2 may be a day when more support is needed as the news begins to sink in.</p> <p>Day 2 will entail: Preparation of pupils/staff attending funeral. Involvement of pupils/staff in liturgy if agreed by bereaved family. Facilitation of pupils/staffs responses, e.g. Sympathy cards, flowers, book of condolences, etc. Ritual within the school.</p> <p>Review the events of first 24 hours. The Critical Incident Management Team will meet early in the morning (8:30am) to discuss: What has been done to date. Make a decision about school closure (it is advisable that the school remains open and normal routine is maintained if possible). Make decision about funeral arrangements (what pupils and staff will attend). List tasks for the day. List items to be addressed by the Principal at the staff meeting. Review the schedule for the day. Review list of vulnerable pupils that was gathered at the End of Day 1 Session with teachers the previous day and plans to monitor these pupils will be discussed. The Staff meeting will be held at 9:00am.</p> <p>Decide arrangements for support meetings for parents/pupils/staff if necessary. Decide on mechanism for feedback from teachers on vulnerable students. Have a review Critical Incident Management Team meeting at the end of the school day (3.00 p.m.). Establish contact with absent staff and pupils.</p> | C I Team plus Staff |
| <p>Arrange support for individual pupils, groups of pupils, and parents, if necessary (e.g. HSE support, Rainbows, Barnardos etc.). Hold support/information meeting for parents/pupils, if necessary, in order to clarify what has happened. Teacher for each age group to talk separately (depending on age) certain things they don't need to know. Give any teacher who feels uncomfortable with involvement in support meetings the choice of opting out. Arrange, in consultation, with outside agencies, individual or group debriefings or support meetings.]</p> | Niamh Cuthbert/Patricia Nolan/ Oisín O'Donovan Staff |
| <p>Plan for the re-integration of pupils and staff e.g., absentees, injured, siblings, close relative etc. (p. 19: Responding to Critical Incidents: Resource Pack for Schools) o Student Liaison person to liaise with above on their return to school. Acknowledge the student's loss on their return to school: e.g. "I'm sorry that ___ died. I know that you are sad. It's ok to cry" o The child may have difficulty concentrating on her return. Normal routine and normal approaches to discipline will be maintained as much as possible</p> | Management Team Class Teacher |
| <p>Plan visits to the household, prior to a bereaved child's return HSLC, Chaplin, and/or Class teacher and Principal to visit</p> | Fr. Declan, Niamh. Cuthbert |

| | |
|---|--|
| home/hospital to see what the parents and/or child would like to happen when they return to school. The school representative may bring cards/ notes/ pictures from the bereaved child's classmates which will let him/her know that they are in their thoughts. Class teacher will talk to the student's classmates about how people are affected by grief and encourage them to share their own feelings. How have they coped with bereavements in their own life and what has helped. How might their classmate like to be treated on her return. | Oisín O'Donovan./Class Teacher |
| Liaise with family re: Funeral arrangements / memorial service | Fr. Declan/ Niamh Cuthbert Oisín O'Donovan. |
| Attendance and participation at funeral/memorial service (to be decided). Decide this in accordance with parents' wishes and school management decisions and in consultation with close school friends. | Staff |
| School closure. Request a decision on this from school management. | BOM |

**LONGER TERM ACTIONS AND ROLES ASSIGNED
BEYOND 72 HOURS**

| Task | Name / Group |
|---|---|
| <p>Monitor students for signs of continuing stress:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Uncharacteristic behaviour 2. Deterioration in academic performance 3. Physical symptoms – e.g. weight loss/gain, lack of attention to appearance, tiredness, restlessness 4. Inappropriate emotional reactions 5. Increased absenteeism. If, over a prolonged period of time, a student continues to display the above, she may need assistance from the services of the HSE (i.e. Community Care Psychology). | Class Teachers |
| <p>Evaluate response to incident and amend Critical Incident Management Plan appropriately</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What went well? 2. Where were the gaps? 3. What was most/least helpful? 4. Have all necessary onward referrals to support services been made? 5. Is there any unfinished business? | Staff &BOM |
| Formalise the Critical Incident Plan for the future. Consult with NEPS psychologist. | Staff &BOM & NEPS where appropriate |
| Inform new staff/new school pupils affected by Critical Incidents where appropriate. Ensure that new staff is aware of the school policy and procedures in this area. Ensure they are aware of which pupils were affected in any recent incident and in what way. When individual pupils or a class of pupils affected by an incident are transferring to a new school, it would be useful to brief the Principal of the new school. | Niamh Cuthbert Principal |
| <p>Decide on appropriate ways to deal with anniversaries (be sensitive to special days and events)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Anniversaries may trigger emotional responses in pupils/staff and they may need additional support at this time. 2. Acknowledge the anniversary with the family. 3. Be sensitive to significant days like Birthdays, Christmas, Mother's Day, and Father's Day. Plan a school memorial service e.g. plant tree. Care of deceased persons possessions. What are the parents' wishes? <p>Update and amend school records.</p> | Staff &BOM & Parents where appropriate |

PREVENTATIVE APPROACHES

- Policies & Curriculum
 - Anti-Bullying Policy
 - Anti-Cyber Bullying Policy
 - Health & Safety Statement
 - Code of Behaviour
 - Child Safeguarding Statement
 - SPHE/Stay Safe/ RSE
 - Circle Time
 - Peer Mediation
 - SPHE Policy
 - Staff Alert To Students With Difficulties
 -
 - **COVID-19 Response Plan**

- Support
 - NEPS/EAS
 - Parish priest/Clergy
 - Community Gardai
 - Rainbows
 -
 - TUSLA Child and Family Services etc
 - **HSE Guidelines in relation to COVID-19**
 - **Department of Education Guidelines in relation to COVID-19**

- Physical Environment
 - Fire Drill – Evacuation Of Pupils & Staff
 - Maintain Fire Extinguishers, Staff Able To Use Fire Extinguishers
 - Health And Safety Statement
 - Playground Supervision, regular checks for safety

Appendix 1:**Checklist of Actions:****Checklist of Actions
Short Term Actions- Day 1**

| Task | Name | Check |
|--|------|-------|
| Gather accurate information (who? what? when? where?) | | |
| Convene a meeting of the CIMT (specify time and place clearly) | | |
| Contact external agencies | | |
| Meet representatives from external agencies in school | | |
| Arrange supervision of students if necessary | | |
| Hold staff meeting | | |
| Agree schedule for the day | | |
| Inform students (vulnerable students separately) | | |
| Compile a list of vulnerable students | | |
| Contact/ visit the bereaved family | | |
| Prepare and agree media statement and deal with media (if necessary) | | |
| Inform parents | | |
| Provide appropriate literature for parents | | |
| Hold end of day staff meeting | | |

Checklist of Actions
Medium Term Actions- Day 2

| Task | Name | Check |
|--|------|-------|
| Convene a CIMT meeting to review the events of Day 1 | | |
| Meet external agencies (if present on Day 2) | | |
| Meet whole staff | | |
| Arrange support for students, staff and parents | | |
| Visit the injured (if applicable) | | |
| Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements | | |
| Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service | | |
| Make decisions about school closure | BOM | |

Long Term Actions- beyond 72 hours

| Task | Name | Check |
|---|-------------------------------|-------|
| Monitor students for signs of continuing distress | Class Teachers | |
| Liaise with services regarding referral | | |
| Plan for the return of the bereaved student | | |
| Plan for giving of memory box to bereaved family | | |
| Decide on memorials and anniversaries | BOM/ Staff, parents, students | |
| Review response to incident and amend plan | | |

Appendix 2:

Sample Letter To Parents

Dear Parents,

The school has experienced (the sudden death, accidental injury, etc.) of one of our students / staff members. We are deeply saddened by the death / event.

(Brief details of the incident, and in the event of a death, perhaps some positive remembrances of the person lost).

We have support structures in place to help your child cope with this tragedy. (Elaborate)

It is possible that your child may have feelings that she may like to discuss with you. You can help your child by taking time to listen and encouraging them to express their feelings. It is important to give truthful information that is appropriate to their age.

If you would like advice, you may contact the following people at the school. (Details).

Yours sincerely,

Principal.

Sample Letter Requesting Consent For Involvement Of Outside Professionals

Dear Parents,

Following the recent (tragedy, death of x) we have arranged professional support for students in school who need particular help. (x.....) is available to help us with this work. The support will usually consist of talking to children, either in small groups or on a one-to-one basis and offering reassurance and advice as appropriate.

Your daughter has been identified as one of the students who might benefit from meeting with the (x.....) If you would like your child to receive this support please sign the attached permission slip and return to the school by

If you would like further information on the above or to talk to the psychologist, please indicate this on the slip or telephone the school.

Yours sincerely,

Principal.

✂✂ _____ ✂✂

I consent to having our daughter met by

I understand that my daughter may meet x in an individual or group session depending on the arrangements which are thought to be most appropriate.

Name of Student:

Class:

Date of Birth:

I would like my daughter to avail of the support being offered by x

Signed: _____

Appendix 3:

Agendas for CIMT Meetings

CI MT: Initial Meeting Day 1

Share full details of the event.

Agree on the facts. These will need to be relayed in a clear, appropriate and consistent manner by all staff to the students.

Discuss what agencies have been contacted and whether there are additional ones that should be informed (check Emergency Contact List for Schools).

During major incidents phone lines may become jammed. Agree on which phone line is to be kept open for outgoing and incoming emergency calls.

When a number of external agencies are involved in a response, co-ordination will be needed and procedures will need to be agreed. An agency such as NEPS may take on this role.

Plan procedures for the day.

Discuss issues relating to school routine, including school closure. Remember it is important to maintain a normal routine when at all possible. It is recommended that the school timetable runs as normal. This will provide a sense of safety and structure which is comforting for many students. Teachers should give students the opportunity to talk about what has happened and temporarily shelve all academic activities if necessary.

You may wish to consult students about what to do if there is an event scheduled such as a trip, concert, match. This should reduce the likelihood of students being angry later on as a result of any school action or in-action

Discuss how to break the news to relatives and close friends and who should do this (Remember that they must always be told separately). Discuss how to break the news to the rest of the students. Class groups are often best, rather than large assemblies.

Discuss how to identify vulnerable students.

If there are students of various nationalities and religions in the school, this needs to be taken into consideration in organising prayer services, attendance at the funeral etc. Parents of different religious or national groups may need to be consulted.

Plan a whole staff briefing (including ancillary staff). This may need to be done in two groups depending on the arrangements for the supervision of students

Agree the text of a letter to be sent to parents.

Discuss how to deal with the media. Prepare a media statement, if appropriate. This can be faxed or emailed to media representatives who make contact with the school. It may also be used if an interview is requested.

Delegate responsibilities to the appropriate critical incident team member or key personnel.

Discuss which room(s) will be available to external agencies.

Decide whether a quiet room should be made available for students. This is a place that students can go if they are having difficulty remaining composed in the classroom. Depending on the age of the students it should have tissues, a few stuffed toys, cushions, drawing and writing materials and appropriate information leaflets from Resource Materials for Schools. It is generally recommended that this is available for the week following the incident and that its use is then reviewed. Students should sign out of their regular class and sign into the quiet room for a certain time. The room should be supervised to ensure student safety. A very distressed student may need individual support. This might be offered by the guidance counsellor, chaplain or other staff member. A similar room could be set up for staff.

Discuss the issue of consent for students who may need to be seen by the psychologist and arrange for the consent form to be photocopied and sent to parents.

If a general letter was sent out by the school to parents, check whether any parents sent a negative reply.

Where a request is made that a student be seen by the psychologist prior to having a signed consent form, telephone the parent or carer to obtain verbal consent. If it isn't possible to make immediate contact, the Principal, in consultation with the psychologist, should then make the decision in the best interest of the student. This should take precedence over procedural matters. If a student is seen without consent, parents should be contacted as soon as possible by the school.

A record should be kept of all students seen by school staff and agencies external to the schools. One person should be appointed to collate the lists regularly Agree the next meeting time for the Critical Incident Management Team/key staff.

Agree a time for a follow up staff meeting at the end of the day. This gives an opportunity for the Principal to update staff on any developments. It also allows time for preparation for the following day. Lastly, it gives staff a chance to share their experience and to wind down after the day.

CIMT Day 2:

Review what has been done to date.

Make a decision about school closure.

List tasks for the day and assign roles – media; contact with bereaved family; attendance and participation in the funeral service.

List items to be addressed by the Principal at the staff meeting.

Review the schedule for the day.

Go through the list of students and staff that may be vulnerable and review how they are doing.

Develop a plan for monitoring students over the next few weeks, especially those identified as vulnerable.