

Critical Incident Policy

Introduction

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 ethos statement. This policy has been drawn up to aid in the speedy response of a critical incident should one arise to help students and staff deal with the incident in a sensitive, supportive manner.

What is a Critical Incident?

‘A critical incident is any incident or sequence of events which overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school and disrupts the running of the school’.

Examples

- Death, major illness/outbreak of disease
- Criminal incidents
- Major accidents, serious injury
- Suicide
- Civil unrest, war
- Fire, natural and technological disaster
- Disappearance of student from home or school
- Unauthorised removal of student from school or home.
- World events that may affect the student body and/or staff. May be a need for provision of discussion and involvement in ceremonies

Critical Incidents Management Team.

Leadership Role: Mrs. Elma Cooke (Principal)

Communication Role: Mrs. Alison Nicholson, Mrs. Elma Cooke, Ms. Claire O’Dwyer,
Chairperson of the Board of Management, Mrs. Geraldine Laffey & Ms Edilene Rodrigues

Student Liaison/ Counselling Role: Alison Nicholson, Elma Cooke, Ms. Claire O’Dwyer,
Chairperson of the Board of Management & NEPS

Chaplaincy Role: Chairperson of Board of Management

Family Liaison Role: Mrs. Elma Cooke, Mrs. Alison Nicholson, Ms. Claire O’Dwyer,
Chairperson of the Board of Management

B.O.M. Rep: Mrs. Elma Cooke

Emergency Contact List

Cashel Garda Station: 062 62866

Garda (Cahir) 052 7441222

Emergency Services 112/999

Local Doctors: Cashel Medical Centre 062 61715 Minor Injuries Clinic 062 70400

Department of Education and Skills: 0906 474621

NEPS Team: Ask to speak to one of the senior psychologists in NEPS, 50 Tower Road, Clondalkin Contact no.: 01- 4614879

Health Board/ Child Care and Family Centre: 062 70600 (Primary Care)

D.E.S. –Communications Unit: 09064 74621

I.N.T.O.: 1850 708 708/ 01 8722533

Clergy/Pastoral Care: Dean of Cashel 087 240 1913

School Contacts: Elma Cooke 062-61833 Alison Nicholson 062-61833

Local Counselling Services: Primary Care 062 70600

Rainbows: Spafield Resource Centre 062 63622

Roles and Responsibilities

1. Leadership Role:

Intervention

- Confirm the event
- Clarify facts surrounding event
- Notify the Critical Incident response team
- Liaise with the Gardaí/Emergency services
- Lead briefing meetings for staff on the facts as known, give staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions, outlines the routine for the day
- Express sympathy to family
- Make contact with other relevant agencies
- Decide how news will be communicated to different groups (staff, pupils, outside school)

Postvention

- Ensure provision of ongoing support to staff and students
- Facilitate any appropriate memorial events
- Review Plan

2. Communication Role:

Intervention

- With Team, prepare a public statement
- Organise a designated room to address media promptly
- Ensure telephone lines are free for outgoing and important incoming calls
- Designate mobile numbers for contact
- Liaise with relevant outside support agencies

Postvention

- Review and evaluate effectiveness of communication response

3. Student Liaison/ Counselling Role:

Intervention

- Advise the staff on the procedures for identification of vulnerable pupils
- Alert staff to vulnerable pupils
- Outline specific services available in the school
- Put in place clear referral procedures
- Address immediate needs of staff
- Provide materials for staff (from critical incident folder)
- Provide information
- Provide counselling

Postvention

- Provide ongoing support to vulnerable students
- Monitor class most affected
- Refer as appropriate
- Review and evaluate Plan

4. Chaplaincy Role:

Intervention

- Visit home(s), if appropriate
- Assist with prayer services
- Make contact with other local clergy
- Be available as personal and spiritual support to staff

Postvention

- Provide follow-up support to families in conjunction with Home School Community Liaison
- Work in partnership with Critical Incident team
- Review and Evaluate Plan

4. Family Liaison Role:

Intervention

- Co-ordinate contact with families (following initial contact by Principal)
- Consult with family around involvement of school in e.g. funeral service
- Assist with all communication dealing with parents of any student affected by critical incident

Postvention

- Provide ongoing support to families affected by the incident
- Involve as appropriate the family in school liturgies/memorial services
- Offer to link family with community support groups
- Review and evaluate plan

Action Plan

Short-Term Actions (Day 1)

- Immediate contact with family/families
- Consult with the family regarding appropriate support from the school, e.g. funeral service
- Ensure that a quiet place can be made for students/staff

Media Briefing (if appropriate)

- Designate a spokesperson
- Gather accurate information
- Prepare a brief statement (Team)
- Protect the family's privacy
- It is important to obtain accurate information about the incident
 1. What happened, where and when?
 2. What is the extent of the injuries?
 3. How many are involved and what are their names?
 4. Is there a risk of further injury?
 5. What agencies have been contacted already?
- Contact appropriate agencies
 1. Emergency services
 2. Medical services
 3. H.S.E. Psychology Departments/Community Care Services

4. NEPS
 5. BOM
 6. DES/Schools Inspector
- Convene a meeting with Key Staff/Critical Management Team
 - Ensure any absent staff members are kept informed
 - Organise timetable/routine for the day. (Adhering to the normal school routine is important, if this is possible)
 - Class teachers to take note of any absentees who might need to be contacted, list of friends etc, or any other relevant information. This is to be given to the Student Liaison person
 - Arrange supervision of students
 - Liaise with the family regarding funeral arrangements/memorial service
 - The Chaplain/Principal will liaise with the family, to extend sympathy and clarify the family's wishes regarding the school's involvement in funeral/memorial service
 - Arrange a home visit by staff within 24 hours, if appropriate.
 - Have regard for different religious traditions and faiths

Medium-Term Actions (24-72 Hours)

- Preparation of students/staff attending funeral
- Involvement of students/staff in service if agreed by bereaved family
- Facilitation of students/staff responses, e.g. Sympathy cards, flowers, Book of Condolences, etc.
- Ritual within the school
- Review the events of the first 24 hours
- Reconvene Key Staff/Critical Incident Management Team
- Decide arrangements for support meetings for parents/students/staff
- Decide on mechanism for feedback from teachers on vulnerable students
- Have review of Critical Incident Management Team meeting
- Establish contact with absent staff and pupils
- Arrange support for individual students, groups of students, and parents, if necessary
- Hold support/information meeting for parents/students, if necessary, in order to clarify what has happened
- 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 with parental permission
- Plan for the re-integration of students and staff e.g. absentees, injured, siblings, close relative etc)
- Student Liaison person to liaise with above on their return to school.
- Plan visits to injured
 - Staff to visit home/hospital
 - Attendance and participation at funeral/memorial service (To be decided)
 - Decide this in accordance with parent's wishes, school management decisions and in consultation with close school friends
- School closure (if appropriate)
- Request a decision on this from school management

Longer Term Actions

Monitor students for signs of continuing distress

If over a prolonged period of time, a student continues to display the following, he/she may need assistance from the Health Board. Constant communication with family is essential.

- Uncharacteristic behaviour
- Deterioration in academic performance
- Physical symptoms — e.g. weight loss/gain, lack of attention to appearance, tiredness, restlessness
- Inappropriate emotional reactions
- Increased absenteeism

Evaluate response to incident and amend Critical Incident Management Plan appropriately

- What went well?
- Where were the gaps?
- What was most/least helpful?
- Have all necessary onward referrals to support services been made?
- Is there any unfinished business?

Formalise the Critical Incident Plan for the future

- Consult with NEPS Psychologist
- Inform new staff/new school pupils affected by Critical Incidents where appropriate
- Ensure that new staffs are 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, the Principal should brief the Principal of the new school

Decide on appropriate ways to deal with anniversaries (Be sensitive to special days and events)

- Anniversaries may trigger emotional responses in students/staff and they may need additional support at this time
- Acknowledge the anniversary with the family
- Need to be sensitive to significant days like Birthdays, Christmas, Mother's Day, and Father's Day

- Plan a school memorial service
- Care of deceased person's possessions. What are the parent's wishes?
- Update and amend school records

Resources

"Young People and Loss, A Handbook for Schools" Robin Cooper

"Silver Linings: Community Crisis Response" Rainbows

"Responding to Critical Incidents - Resource Materials for Schools" DES

"Responding to Critical Incidents - "Guidelines for Schools" DES

When Tragedy Strikes- INTO

Review/Ratification/Communication

Parents may view a copy of this policy by appointment in the school.

Signed: *Very Revd. James Mulhall*

Signed: *Elma Cooke*

Chairperson of Board of Management

Principal

Date: May 13th 2024

Yearly Review