

# Critical Incident Policy

October 2016

## Initiate and establish structures

A Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) has been established which will take responsibility for putting a Critical Incident Management policy and plan in place (CIMP).

**Clodagh Farrell**

**Louise Tighe**

**Adrienne Middleton**

**Karen McGoldrick**

**Caitriona Hayden**

**S N Eoin Bosco (Nai)** aims to protect the well being of its students and staff by providing a happy, secure, friendly learning environment where children, parents, teachers, ancillary staff and Board of management work in partnership; where each individual is valued, encouraged and respected for their uniqueness.

The **Board of Management**, through **Clodagh Farrell**, has drawn up a critical incident management plan as one element of the school's policies and plans. Our aim is to establish a Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) to steer the development and implementation of the plan.

## Review and Research

The following publications were reviewed prior to the formulation of this policy.

*When Tragedy Strikes: Guidelines for Effective Critical Incident Management in Schools*

(INTO/Ulster Teachers Union 2000)

*Responding to Critical Incidents; Guidelines for Schools (NEPS 2007)*

*Responding to Critical Incidents; Resource Materials for School (NEPS 2007)*

*Guidelines for Schools on How to Respond to the Sudden Unexpected Death of a Student*

(ASTI 1997)

## What is a 'critical incident'?

The staff and management of **S N Eoin Bosco (Nai)** 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.

## **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 effect 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**

- Evacuation plan formulated
- Regular fire drills occur
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked by Diskin Fire Ltd.
- Pre-opening supervision in the schoolyard is the duty of the parent. This is out-lined in the School Handbook
- Three trained Occupational First Aiders – Nicola Galvin, Laura Fagan & Marie O'Donoghue.
- Parents are required to sign out pupils who leave before the end of the school day.
- Rules of the playground have been established and are displayed around the school.

### **Psychological safety**

The management and staff of **S N Eoin Bosco (Nai)** 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 are familiar with the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures.
- Books and resources on difficulties affecting the primary school

student are available and kept in the staffroom.

- Information is available to all teachers on mental health in general and such specific areas as signs and symptoms of depression and anxiety.
- The school has developed links with a range of external agencies – NEPS, Child & Family Services (Castleknock).
- 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. The student liaison for the class will attend with the external provider.
- The school has a clear policy on bullying and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy
- Students who are identified as being at risk are referred to the designated staff member (e.g. guidance counselor or support teacher), 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 informed about how to access support for themselves. Employee Assistance Service (for teachers) 1-800-411057 or email [eas@vhics.ie](mailto:eas@vhics.ie)

## **Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)**

A CIMT is being established in line with best practice. The members of the team were selected on a voluntary basis and will meet annually (in October) 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.

## **Preparation of CIMP Roles**

The key roles, which need to be covered, are as follows:

### **Team Leader**

Clodagh Farrell – Priomhoide

- 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; SEC
- Liaises with the bereaved family

### **Garda liaison**

Clodagh Farrell

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

### **Staff liaison**

Karen McGoldrick

- 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 and gives them the contact number.

### **Student liaison**

Recommend that two student liaisons (class teacher & one back up in the case of absence) be appointed to each class. Class teacher to recommend back up.

- Alerts other staff to vulnerable students (appropriately)
- Provides materials for students (from their critical incident folder)
- Keeps records of students seen by external agency staff
- Looks after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room where agreed

Junior Infants – PF 9  
Angela Sawyer  
Adrienne Middleton

Junior Infants – R.6  
Karen McGoldrick  
Jennifer Moran

Junior Infants – PF 11  
Fiona Coffey  
Aoife Roche

Senior Infants – R.3  
Louise Tighe  
Rachael Leslie

Senior Infants R.4  
Rachael Leslie  
Louise Tighe

Senior Infants R.5  
Jennifer Moran  
Avril Markey

First Class PF.12  
Aoife Roche  
Karen McGoldrick

First Class R.1  
Adrienne Middleton  
Fiona Coffey

First Class R.7  
Avril Markey  
Laura Fagan

ASD Class PF8  
Louise Carr  
Nicola Galvin

### **Parent liaison**

Adrienne Middleton

- 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)

### **Community / Agency liaison**

Louise Tighe

- 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
- Liaises with agencies in the community for support and onward referral
- Is alert to the need to check credentials of individuals offering support
- Co-ordinates the involvement of these agencies
- Reminds agency staff to wear name badges
- Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies

### **Media liaison**

Caitriona Hayden

- 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 the SEC; relevant teacher unions etc.
- Will draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews (as agreed by school management)

## **Administrator**

Marie Duffy

- 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 schools system in advance and ready for adaptation
- Prepares and sends out letters, emails and faxes
- 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.

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

## **Confidentiality and good name considerations**

The management and staff of **S N Eoin Bosco (Nai)** have 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**

In the event of a critical incident, the following will be the main room for communication with each of the partners.

### **Staffroom**

To meet the staff.

### **Classrooms**

For meetings with students.

**Assembly Hall**

For addressing large groups of parents.

**Parish Centre**

For meeting with the media. (Consult with DES & other 2 schools on campus if appropriate)

**LS/RT Rooms**

for individual sessions with students.

**Office**

for other visitors.

**Consultation and communication regarding the plan**

All staff consulted and their views canvassed in the preparation of this policy and plan.

Parent representatives will also be consulted and asked for their comments.

Our school's draft 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 teachers also have a copy of it.

All new and temporary staff will be informed of the details of the plan by Staff Liaison – Karen McGoldrick.

The plan will be updated annually in October.