**Critical Incident**

**Management**

**Policy**

**

*© Glór na Mara Primary School*

*Tramore*

*Co. Waterford*

***Critical Incident Management Policy***

***Aim***

The main purpose of this policy is to provide a framework for dealing with any significant crisis which may occur in the life of the school.

***What is a Critical Incident?***

A critical incident is any incident or sequence of events which overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of the school.

***Examples***

* A major road accident or fire, on or off the school premises, involving pupils or staff and resulting in serious injuries or loss of life
* The death of a member of the school community through sudden death, accident, terminal illness, drowning, suicide or violent death
* Disappearance of a pupil from school or home
* Criminal incidents
* Unauthorised removal of pupil from school or home
* Natural disaster
* Civil unrest, war
* Major illness outbreak or any other catastrophic event

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***Goal of Critical Incident Management Team***

* To ensure the safety and well-being of the school community during the immediate aftermath of an incident
* To manage a critical incident to best enable the school community to process what has happened
* To minimise the immediate and long term detrimental impact on the school community

***Critical Incident Management Team***

By identifying key roles in advance of any incident there is a clear statement of who will do what, when and how. Every effort was made to choose suitable personnel for each role.

* Team Leader - Mr. O’Mahoney (Principal)
* Media Contact - Mr. O’ Mahoney ( Principal)
* Staff & Pupil contact – Mrs. Dalton
* Counselling Role - Ms. Phelan
* Administrators – Mrs. Dalton, Ms. O’ Riordan
* Parents Association Rep.- Mrs. Deirdre Clancy
* Board of Management Rep.- Ms. Clodagh Britton
* Chaplain: - School Chaplain Fr. Paul
* National Educational Psychological Services.

Psychologist appointed to the school – Waterford Administration 01 8650921

*The first – named person activates the plan.*

*The second – named person assists and only assumes responsibility in the absence of the first – named person.*

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***Roles and Responsibilities***

Team Leader

Intervention

* Confirm that the incident has occurred.
* Mobilise the Critical Incident Response Team and consider appropriate responses.
* Express sympathy and offer support to the family affected.
* Make contact with other relevant agencies:

Emergency Services

Medical Services

Board of Management

National Educational Psychological Service

Health Service Executive

I.N.T.O.

Local clergy

* Manage how information will be communicated and shared with different groups (staff, pupils, wider school community, local and national population)

***Postvention***

* Ensure the provision of ongoing support to staff and students
* Liaise with the family as appropriate
* Review the plan

*3.*

***Media Contact***

***Intervention***

* Prepare a public statement with the Team, if appropriate
* Organise a designated room to speak to the media promptly
* Keep a telephone line free for important outgoing and incoming calls
* Establish and maintain contact with relevant outside support agencies

***Postvention***

* Review and evaluate the effectiveness of the communication response

***Staff / Pupil Contact & Counselling Role***

***Intervention***

* Organise an information meeting for the School staff – facts, routine for the day etc.
* Decide on information to be presented to the pupils with the team leader
* Prepare a short statement for classes with the Team, including a short prayer
* Address the immediate needs of the staff
* Be alert to vulnerable teachers
* Identify vulnerable pupils
* Put in place clear referral procedures
* Provide information on counselling services available in the school
* Organise a designated room for traumatised pupils to meet with the Chaplain, a teacher or counsellor.

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***Postvention***

* Organise ongoing support to vulnerable pupils
* Monitor the class most affected
* Refer on as appropriate
* Review and evaluate the plan

***Parent Contact***

***Intervention***

* Coordinate contact with parents affected (following first contact by the critical incident Team Leader)
* Help in drafting an appropriate letter to all parents regarding the incident and school arrangements
* Keep families of pupils involved informed of current developments in the incident
* Consult with the family re involvement of the school in the aftermath of the incident, including in the funeral service, respecting family wishes e.g. guard of honour, readers, prayers
* Assist with all communication with the family of any pupil affected by the critical incident

***Postvention***

* Provide ongoing support to bereaved/affected family/families
* Involve, as appropriate, the affected family in events/services organized by the school
* Offer to link the family with community support groups
* Liaise with HSE personnel and N.E.P.S psychologist, if desired
* At significant dates/anniversary/inquest identify and offer to support the needs of the family and school friends, e.g. arrange a family visit a few days prior
* Review and evaluate the plan

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***Administrator***

* The school secretaries will form part of the team.

Key Administrative Tasks

* Up-to-date contact details are available for:

Pupils

Parents/Guardians

Staff members

They are dated

* An Emergency Contact List is displayed in the staff room, both offices and the Principal’s office.

It is dated.

* Ready-to-go templates for letters to parents and for press releases are on the school computer system so that they can be adapted quickly when an incident occurs
* Emergency packs for members of the Response Team are available in the offices. They contain a small number of key documents – emergency contact lists, checklist for the first 24 hours, layout of school buildings

***Chaplain***

* Visit the home of the affected family, if appropriate
* Assist with prayer services as appropriate
* Make contact with the local clergy
* Be available as personal and spiritual support to the staff

***Postvention***

* Provide follow-up support to the family
* Work in partnership with the middle management team
* Review and evaluate the plan

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***Pupils Needs and Support***

Teachers have a special role to play in helping pupils deal with trauma and bereavement. Professional guidelines advise that in-depth counselling or therapy should be left to specialists outside the school. Nevertheless, teachers play a key role on a day-to-day basis i.e. monitoring pupil’s progress, liaising with parents/guardians, collating information and concerns from colleagues as well as facilitating talks and discussion in addressing pupils’ emotional needs.

***The Teaching Staff***

* Read the announcement devised by the Response Team, using the deceased person’s name
* Acknowledge the deceased in that class and in each subsequent class. Have a moment’s silence or say a short prayer
* Encourage pupils to be supportive of each other
* The teacher should feel free to express his/her own feeling appropriately
* Advise pupils of teachers who are available to them to help them deal with their fears and worries

***Crisis Prevention***

Schools should have systems in place which help to promote emotional regulation, health and well-being and which build resilience in both staff and pupils thus preparing them to cope with a range of life events.

Mental Health Promotion is a vital element of this work. Mental health has been defined in the following way:

“The emotional and spiritual resilience which enables us to enjoy life and to survive pain, disappointment and sadness”

(H.E.A. 1997)

S.P.H.E. is a key element of a school’s prevention work.

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While the main purpose of this policy is to outline procedures to be followed in the aftermath of a critical incident, it is essential that an overall preventative approach be followed by all in the school community.

The following, while not intended as an exhaustive list, have been identified as key elements in a school-based preventative approach:-

* Staff are familiar with the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures and how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures
* The creation of a physically safe environment is paramount
* Adherence to the school Health and Safety Policy
* Regular checks are carried out to ensure that buildings, fire extinguishers, burglar/fire alarms, electrical wiring and related fixtures as well as C.C.T.V. cameras are in good and safe condition and repaired promptly when necessary
* Regular fire-drill takes place for all classes and a system is in place for an orderly evacuation in the event of fire
* There are security locks on the main doors and visitors must contact the secretary before being admitted to the building
* A lollipop lady assists pupils to cross the very busy road between both buildings in the morning and afternoon
* The roads outside the school, where pupils arrive and depart, are regularly monitored by the Principal for good safety practices. Parents are not allowed to enter or park in the staff car parks. Gateways are kept clear. Gardaí are occasionally summoned to monitor events
* Guidelines and procedures are in place for dealing with school trip and field work safety and for short trips around the town
* There are strict rules in place for lining up in the yard when the bell goes for class entry to and exit from both buildings and the non tolerance of rough or dangerous play in the playgrounds

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* Up-to-date and dated class lists, including addresses and contact phone numbers are kept in both offices
* A copy of the layout of both school buildings is displayed in both staff rooms, both offices and the Principal’s office. The layout includes inside and outside doors, toilets, and gates. A copy is held outside the school premises
* Up-to-date medical information on pupils with certain ongoing conditions is filed and stored for health and safety reasons
* In-service provision for the staff is highly recommended and will be pursued

***Contact Details***

* Up-to-date and dated class lists, including addresses and contact phone numbers are kept in both offices
* Roll is taken each day before 10.00 a.m.
* A copy of the layout of the school building is displayed in the staff room, both offices and the Principal’s office.  The layout includes inside and outside doors, toilets and gates.  A copy is held outside the school premises
* Up-to-date medical information on pupils is logged on Aladdin for health and safety reasons. Substitute teachers to be made aware of these medical conditions
* In-service provision for the staff is highly recommended
* Sign out books maintained in the lobby when pupils have to leave school
* First Aid

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***Action Plan***

***Short-term Actions (Day 1)***

* Immediate contact with the families involved in the incident
* Consult with the family regarding appropriate support from the school e.g. funeral service
* Ensure that a quiet place can be provided for pupils/staff
* Rooms will be made available as follows:
  + Prayer room:
  + Individual meetings:
  + Family room:

***Media Briefing (0 – 24 hours)***

* Designate a spokesperson (Leader)
* Prepare a brief statement (Team)
* Protect the family’s privacy
* Gather accurate information
  1. What happened, where and when?
  2. What is the extent of the injuries, fatalities?
  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?

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* Contact the appropriate agencies
  1. Emergency services.
  2. Medical services.
  3. H.S.E. Psychology Department/ Community Care Services.
  4. N.E.P.S
  5. B.O.M
  6. D.E.S / Schools Inspector
* Convene a meeting with Key Staff / Critical Incident Management Team before school opening.

1. Organise a staff meeting, if appropriate.
2. Organise a timetable/routine for the day. (Adhering to the normal school routine is important)
3. The team will use Aladdin to note who might need to be contacted, list of friends etc. or any other relevant information and give it to the staff/pupil liaison person.
4. Arrange the supervision of pupils.

* Liaise with the family regarding funeral arrangements/memorial service

1. The Chaplain / Principal will liaise with the family, to extend support, offer sympathy and clarify the family’s wishes regarding the school’s involvement in any future arrangements, such as, the funeral / memorial service.
2. Arrange a home visit by two staff representatives within 24 hours, if appropriate. (Principal & Class Teacher)
3. Have regard for different religious traditions and faiths.

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***Medium – Term Actions (24-72 hours)***

* Preparation of pupils/staff attending the funeral.
* Involvement of pupils/staff in the liturgy if agreed by the bereaved family.
* Facilitation of pupils/staff responses, e.g. Sympathy cards, flowers, book of condolences, etc.
* Ritual within the school.
* Review the events of the first 24 hours.

1. Reconvene the Staff/Critical Incident Management Team. (8.30a.m.)
2. Decide the arrangements for support meetings for parents/pupils/staff.
3. Decide on mechanism for feedback from teachers on vulnerable pupils.

4. Have a Critical Incident Management Team review meeting at 3.00p.m.

5. Establish contact with absent staff and pupils.

* ***Arrange support for individual pupils, groups of pupils and parents, if necessary.***
  1. Hold a support / information meeting for parents/ pupils, if necessary, in order to clarify what has happened.
  2. A teacher for each age group to talk separately (depending on the age)

certain things they don’t need to know.

* 1. Give any teacher who feels uncomfortable with involvement in support meetings the choice of opting out.
  2. Arrange, in consultation with outside agencies, individual group debriefings or support meetings with parental permission. Permission slips should be included in enrolment forms.

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* ***Plan for the re-integration of pupils and staff e.g.***

absentees, injured, siblings, close relatives etc.

1. Staff / pupil liaison

person to liaise with the above on their return to school.

1. Plan visits to the injured.
2. Family liaison person & class teacher & principal to visit home/hospital.
3. Attendance and participation at funeral/memorial service to be decided.
4. Decide this in accordance with parents’ wishes and school management decisions and in consultation with close school friends.
5. Request a decision on school closure from school management.

***Longer Term Actions***

* Monitor pupils for signs of continuing distress.
* If, over a prolonged period of time, a pupil continues to display the following, he/she may need assistance from the Health Board:

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.

***Evaluate the response to the incident and amend the Critical Incident Management Plan appropriately.***

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?

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* + Formalise the Critical Incident Plan for the Future.
  + Consult with the N.E.P.S. psychologist.
  + Inform new staff/new school pupils affected by critical incidents

where appropriate:

* + 1. Ensure that new staff members are aware of the school policy and procedures in this area.
    2. Ensure they are aware of which pupils were affected in any recent incident and in what way.
    3. 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.
       - Decide on appropriate ways to deal with anniversaries. Be sensitive to special days and events.
         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 /Father’s Day.

Plan a school memorial service e.g. plant a tree.

Care of deceased persons possessions. What are the parent’s wishes?

Update and amend school records.

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***Holiday Incident***

If a critical incident occurs during a holiday period, the school will contact the Response Team members and carry out the following:

1. Express sympathy to the family and assure them of the support of the school.
2. Prepare a statement for the media, if appropriate.
3. Try and arrange for key members of the staff to attend the funeral.
4. Consider the involvement of pupils in the funeral service as appropriate e.g. readings, prayers, guard of honour.

***Resources***

* “Responding to Critical Incidents – Resource Materials for Schools”. D.E.S.
* “Responding to Critical Incidents – Guidelines for School”. D.E.S.
* “When Tragedy Strikes- Guidelines for Effective Critical Incident Management in Schools”. I.N.T.O.
* Draft of Glór na Mara “policy for dealing with bereavement within the school community”
* Other school websites

***Policy Evaluation***

***This policy should be reviewed regularly and in the aftermath of a critical incident.***

***This policy was reviewed and then ratified by the Board of Management on Thursday May 26th, 2022***

***Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_***

***Chairperson, Board of Management***

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