



Critical Incident Policy (April 2023)

Cullina National School aims to protect the well-being of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment as defined in our Mission Statement). The Board of Management and staff have drawn up a Critical Incident Management Plan which will be reviewed annually.

Review and Research

The CIMT have consulted resource documents available to schools on www.education.ie and www.nosp.ie as well as -

- Responding to Critical Incidents Guidelines and Resources for Schools (NEPS 201 6)
- Suicide Prevention in Schools: Best Practice Guidelines (IAS, National Suicide Review Group (2002)
- Suicide Prevention in the Community - A Practical Guide (HSE 2011)
- Well-Being in Post-Primary Schools Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention (DES, DOH, HSE 2013)
- Well-Being in Primary Schools - Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion (DES, DOH, HSE 201 5)

Define what you mean by the term 'critical incident'

The staff and management of *Cullina National school* 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 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

In the area of physical safety, the school has put the following in place:

- Evacuation plan formulated
- Regular fire drills occur
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
- Pre-opening supervision in the school yard by the Principal from 8:50am to 9:00am
- Front gate locked during school hours
- Access control panels are attached to all entrance doors
- Rules of the school are displayed in all classes

Psychological safety

The management and staff of *Cullina 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.

Cullina NS have implemented the following -

- 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/Friends For Life/ Zippy's Friends
- Staff are familiar with the Child Safeguarding Statement, Risk Assessment and Associated Procedures of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures
- The school has developed links with a range of external agencies – NEPs, CAMHS & KIDS
- The school has a clear policy on bullying
- There is a care system in place in the school using the "Continuum of Support" approach which is outlined in the NEPS documents published in 2007 for primary schools.
- A nurture group has been established
- Staff are informed on how to access support for themselves.

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 copy of the policy.

Team leader: *Leona Twiss*

Role

- 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;
- Liaises with the bereaved family

(Marie Murphy will take the lead in the absence of Leona)

Garda liaison *Lisa Stack*

Role

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

Staff liaison *Lorraine Counihan*

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 the EAS and gives them the contact number.

Student liaison *Michelle McLaughlin*

Role

- Alerts other staff to vulnerable students (appropriately)
- Provides materials for students
- Maintains student contact records (R1)
- Looks after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room where agreed

Community/agency liaison *Siobhan Hayes*

Role

- 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
- Coordinates the involvement of these agencies
- Reminds agency staff to wear name badges
- Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies

Parent liaison *Marie Murphy*

Role

- 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

Media liaison *Leona Twiss/Paul Neary*

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 with the external agencies
- Will draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews (as agreed by school management)

Administrator *Shelly Teahan*

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 schools 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.

Shelly Teahan School Secretary 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 *Cullina National School* 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. The term 'violent death' may be used instead.

Critical Incident Rooms	
In the event of a critical incident, the following rooms are designated for the indicated purposes	
Room Name:	Designated Purpose:
	Staffroom for meeting staff
	Halla for meeting with students
	Halla for Meetings with parents
	Halla for Meetings with media
	Individual sessions with students (Principal's Office)
	Meetings with other visitors (Principal's Office)

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 by the Principal

The plan will be updated annually (January of each year)

Critical Incident Management Team		
Role	Name	Phone
Team leader:	<i>Leona Twiss</i>	0879840125
Garda liaison	<i>Lisa Stack</i>	0868311315
Staff liaison	<i>Lorraine Counihan</i>	0877930224
Student liaison	<i>Michelle McLaughlin</i>	0876234663
Community liaison	<i>Siobhan Hayes</i>	0876715459
Parent liaison	<i>Marie Murphy</i>	0876715280
Media liaison	<i>Paul Neary / Leona Twiss</i>	0879631962
Administrator	<i>Michelle Teahan</i>	0874673833

Short term actions – Day 1

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

Medium term actions - (Day 2 and following days)

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

Follow-up – beyond 72 hours

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

Agency	Contact Numbers
Garda	0646631222
Hospital	Kerry General Hospital 066718400
Fire Brigade	999
Local GP	Dr Eleanor Johnson 0646632205
HSE/Community Care Team/Child & Family Centre/CAMHS	HSE 0667184500 CAMHS 0667144081 School Nurse 0867871949
School Inspector	Mr Eavan O Donoghue
NEPS Psychologist	Eileen Devitt 0667102690
DES	0906483600
INTO/ASTI/TUI	018047700 / 1850 708 708
Parish Priest/Clergy	Fr Fergal Ryan 0872408540
Chairperson	Paul Neary 0879631962
Employee Assistance Service	1800 411 057

Signed: _____
Paul Neary Chairperson, Board of Management

Date: *April 2023*

Signed: _____
Leona Twiss Principal

Date: *April 2023*