

# **Critical Incident Management Policy**

The Board of Management of Ballyfacey N.S. has put in place a Critical Incident Management Policy and has established a Critical Incident Management Team which will take responsibility for putting this plan in action should the need arise.

Ballyfacey N.S. aims to protect the wellbeing of pupils and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. We strive to promote the full and harmonious development of all aspect of the person of the pupil.

## **Review and Research**

The CIMT should consult resource documents provided to the school as well as publications listed in the resource section of this book.

These include:

- Responding to Critical Incidents Guidelines and Resources for Schools (NEPS 2016)
- 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 Primary Schools - Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion (DES, DOH, HSE 2015)

## **Define what you mean by the term 'critical incident'**

The staff and the management of Ballyfacey N.S. 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 member 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 an effective plan should also help ensure that the effects on the students and staff will be limited. It should enable us to affect 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 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.
- External school doors closed during class time.
- School Health and Safety Statement.
- Students who are identified as being at risk are referred to the designated staff member, 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.
- 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.
- Pupils are adequately supervised at all times especially during physical activity and recess. Two members of the teaching staff supervise the children during recess.
- Garda Vetting legislation compliance.

#### **Psychological safety**

The management and staff of Ballyfacey N.S. 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.
- Programmes such as Stay Safe and Walk Talk are used to support this work.
- Staff are familiar with the Child Safeguarding Guidelines and Procedures and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures.
- The school has a clear policy on bullying and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy.
- Staff are available to parents to discuss parental concerns in relation to pupil's well-being.
- The school believes a healthy body leads to a healthy mind. We promote regular exercise and healthy eating. We are an Active School.
- Staff members are informed about and encouraged to access support for themselves.

#### **Critical Incidence Management Team (C.I.M.T.)**

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 dedicated 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:**

Team Leader	Tommie O' Gorman
Garda Liaison	Ciara O' Connor
Staff Liaison	Tommie O' Gorman
Student Liaison	Noelle Phelan
Community/agency liaison	Ciara Spencer
Parent Liaison	Ciara Spencer
Media Liaison	Tommie O' Gorman
Administrator	Ciara O' Connor
Record Keeping	Noelle Phelan

#### **Team Leader:**

- 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/ relevant agencies; INTO.
- Liaises with the bereaved family.
- The Deputy Principal will take the lead in the absence of the Principal.

#### **Garda Liaison:**

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

#### **Staff Liaison:**

- 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.
- Advise staff on the procedure 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 make contact with them individually.
- Advises them of the availability of the EAS and gives them contact number.

#### **Student Liaison:**

- 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.

### **Community/Agency liaison:**

- Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of:
  - Key parents, such as members of the Parents Association.
  - 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 those agencies.
- Reminds agency staff to wear name badge.
- Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies.

### **Parents Liaison:**

- Visits the bereaved family with team leader.
- Arranges parent meeting, if held
- May facilitate such meetings, and manage 'questions and answers'
- Manages the 'consent' issues in accordance with agreed school policy.
- Ensure that sample letters are typed up, on the school 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:**

- In advance of an incident, will consider issues that may arise and how they might be responded to.
- Will draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews (as agreed by school management)

### **Administrator:**

- Maintenance of up to date telephone numbers
  - Parents or guardians
  - Teachers
  - Emergency services
- Takes telephone calls and notes those that need to be responded to.
- Ensures that templates are on the school system in advance and ready for adaptation.
- Prepares and sends out letters.
- Photocopies materials needed.
- Maintains records.

### **Record Keeping:**

In the event of an incident each member of the team will make a record of phone calls made and received, letters sent and received, meetings held, persons met,

interventions used, materials used etc. as necessary and these will be kept together by the CIMP record keeper.

### Confidentiality and good name considerations

The management and staff of Ballyfacey N.S. 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 statement. The members of the school staff will bear 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' 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 SEN room will be the main room used to meet the staff.

The Middle classroom for meeting with pupils.

The Senior classroom for parents.

The Junior classroom for individual sessions with pupils.

The staff room for other visitors.

### Consultation and communication regarding the plan

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

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 as necessary of the details of the plan by the Principal.

It was first implemented in May 2015 and received a review in May 2022. The plan will be updated as necessary going forward.

Signed: Shamus O'Leary Date: 19/5/2022  
Chairperson BOM

Signed: Tammy O'Garra Date: 19/5/22  
Principal