

Creagh National School

CRITICAL INCIDENT

The school's Critical Incident Policy has been revised in line with latest guidelines *Responding to Critical Incidents* (DES and NEPs Publication November 2016).

Creagh NS aims to protect the well being of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. The Board of Management, through the Critical Incident Management Team, has drawn up a critical incident management plan as one element of the schools policy and plan.

The staff and management of **Creagh NS** have formulated a number of policies and procedures to be followed with a view to ensuring the physical and psychological safety of both staff and students, and the creation of a supportive and caring ethos in the school, in ordinary time as well as in the event of a critical incident. They have established a Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) to steer the development and implementation of the plan.

Definition of the term 'critical incident'

The staff and management of **Creagh NS** 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 school 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:

The school Safety Committee monitor all areas of safety within the school.

Supervision is undertaken by staff throughout the school day (from 9.20 a.m. to 3 p.m.) The playground is divided by class group and supervised throughout the lunch-break.

Regular fire drills occur

Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked

Visitor entrance to the school is monitored by the CCTV system, controlled by the school secretary.

Visitors are requested to sign in/sign out and provide a brief description of their business in the school.

All external doors have a security system installed. A security code is required to open all of these doors and this code is changed periodically as an additional security measure. All external doors are locked after the official opening and closing times. Access to the school throughout the day is through the main entrance door only.

Parents/Guardians who wish to collect their child/children early must inform the school in writing. Parents do not have direct access to classrooms during the school day.

Rules of the playground are revised on a regular basis with pupils in their classrooms and at whole school assemblies. The safety and well being of our students and staff are a priority at all times.

Psychological safety

The management and staff of *Creagh 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 issues and to provide opportunities for reflection and discussion.

Social, Personal and Health education (SPHE) is integrated into the work of

Include specific examples as appropriate. Some suggestions follow:

- 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 alcohol and drug prevention. Promotion of mental health is included in this provision.
- Staff has 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 are familiar to all staff.
- Books and resources on difficulties affecting the primary school student are available.
- A whole school approach to promotion of mental health and well-being as identified in *Well-being in Primary Schools-Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion (2015)*
- Information for staff is provided on mental health in general and such specific areas as signs and symptoms of depression and anxiety.
- Staff are informed in the area of suicide awareness and interventions for suicidal students.
- The school has developed links with a range of external agencies – DES, NEPS, HSE West, Brothers of Charity, Garda Síochána, Local Clergy, Galway Rural Development, TCD, Local Education Centres, Family Support Services
- 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 school has a clear policy on bullying and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy
- 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. These documents are available to download on www.education.ie Students

who are identified as being at risk are referred to the principal or deputy principal, 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 are informed about 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 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 draft plan

Roles

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

- Team Leader
- Garda liaison
- Staff liaison.
- Student liaison
- Parent/Guardian liaison
- Community liaison
- Media liaison
- Administrator

Team leader: Stephanie Keating, Principal

Deputy Team Leader: Noel Lohan, Deputy Principal

- 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
- Liaises with the Gardaí
- Ensures that information about deaths is checked out before being shared.

Staff liaison: Noel Lohan

- 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 day progresses
- Is alert to vulnerable staff members and makes contact with them individually. Advises them of availability of EAS and gives them the contact number.

Student liaison: Stephanie Keating and Aine Bleahene

- 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
- SEN Pupils

Community/agency liaison: Regina Power

- 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 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: Fr O' Donovan, Chairperson Board of Management and Mary Barrett

- 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)

Media liaison: Stephanie Keating and Caroline Gallagher

- 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 press statement, give media briefings and interviews (as agreed by school management)

Administrator: Majella O' Rourke and Ann Haynes

- Maintenance of up to date telephone numbers of
 - Parents or guardians
 - Teachers/ SNAs/ All School Staff
 - Emergency support 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.

Ann Haynes, as school Secretary 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 ***Creagh NS*** 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,

- *Library* will be the main room used to meet the staff,
- *Classrooms* for meetings with students,
- *Hall* for parents,
- *Room 18* for press
- *Room 13* for individual sessions with students, and
- *Room 12* for other visitors

Supporting Documents and References

- Responding to Critical Incidents (2016)
- Well-Being In Primary Schools (2015)
- Continuum of Support (2007)

Consultation and communication regarding the plan

- Staff and parents/guardians were consulted on the draft copy of the revised plan and invited to make submissions.
- The final draft of this policy is available to download from the school website.
- Hard copies of the policy are available on request.
- Each member of the Critical Incident Team has a copy of the policy.
- All new and temporary staff will be informed of the details of the plan and given access to the plan by Noel Lohan, Deputy Principal.

The plan will be updated annually, at the start of the school year.

Ratified by the Board of Management on February 28th 2017