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Critical Incident Policy

Definition of a Critical Incident:

"A Critical incident is any incident or sequence of events which overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of the school & disrupts the running of the school"

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
- Pre-opening & school closing supervision in the school
- Front gate locked after school hours
- School doors locked after class time
- Rules of the school – Code of Behaviour

Psychological safety

The management and staff of *Presentation Secondary School, Wexford* 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/post primary school student are available
- Information 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 some are trained in interventions for suicidal students
- The school has developed links with a range of external agencies – NEPS, CAHMS, TUSLA

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- 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. See DES Circulars 0022/2010 (Primary) or 0023/2010 (Post-Primary)
- 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 NEPS documents.
- Students who are identified as being at risk are referred to the designated staff member (e.g. guidance counsellor 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 are informed about how to access support for themselves.

Critical Incidents include but are not limited to:

- Death of a member of the school community through sudden death, accident, terminal illness or suicide.
- An accident involving pupils or staff on the school premises.
- Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism etc
- A physical attack on staff member(s) or student(s) or intrusion into the school.
- The disappearance of a member of the school community.
- An accident or tragedy in the wider community.

Aim of Critical Incident Plan (CIP)

Presentation Secondary School aims:

- To protect the well being of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. A critical incident affects the whole school community and the school's response to a crisis within the first 48 hours is regarded as crucial.
- To have a coordinated response to any such incident.
- To have clear supportive strategies in place for both staff and students at the time of the incident and to provide support postvention.
- To ensure that management and staff will react effectively and promptly to maintain control of the situation, assisting the school community to return to normal as quickly as possible and thereby limit the effects of the incident on all affected by the event.

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.

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1. Principal
2. Deputy Principal's
3. Guidance Counsellor(s)
4. Year Head
5. Member of R E. Dept / School Chaplain

Other Staff members may be co-opted depending on the circumstances.

The non permanent members of C I M T will serve for two years with an option for a third year.

The team will meet at the beginning of each school year to prepare an update for staff.

Team leader: *William Ryan* **Deputy Team Leaders:** *Mary Dooley, Caroline Ryan*

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; SEC
- Liaises with the bereaved family

(Note - It is important to consider who will take the lead in the absence of the team leader.)

Garda liaison *Caroline Ryan*

Role

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

Staff liaison *William Ryan*

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 (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 *Mary Dooley*

Role

- At post-primary level, may co-ordinate information from tutors and year heads about students they are concerned about
- Alerts other staff to vulnerable students (appropriately)
- Provides materials for students (from their critical incident folder)
- Maintains student contact records (R1).
- Looks after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room where agreed

Community/agency liaison *Caroline Ryan*

Role

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- 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 *William Ryan*

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 (from their critical incident folder)

Media liaison *William Ryan*

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

Administrator *Mary Dooley*

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 *Caroline Ryan*

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.

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(*Edit* Name of 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 *Presentation Secondary School, Wexford* 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 Management Folder

A dedicated Critical Incident Folder will be available to staff. This will contain:

1. A copy of the policy
2. The Critical Incident Plan (C.I.P.)
3. Materials particular to each role
4. A copy of useful handouts

Each member of Team will hold their own copies, and have them available outside of school in case of a Incident outside school time.

Record Keeping

Team members will keep written records of all interventions:

- Meetings
- Phone calls
- Letters
- Actions taken etc

Confidentiality

The school will be sensitive to the privacy and the good name of all people involved in any event and will endeavour to ensure interventions and public statements made are done in a sensitive and responsible manner.

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Management Plan

IMMEDIATE ASSESSMENT (by School Principal)

In the event of a Critical Incident occurring:

- Confirm the event and establish the facts:
 - What, when, how it happened
 - Staff and students involved
 - Others involved
- What action needs to be taken? Is it an incident requiring a National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) Response at Level 1, 2 or 3?
- Convene a CIMT meeting to take place as soon as possible.

Critical Incident Rooms	
In the event of a critical incident, the following rooms are designated for the indicated purposes	
Room Name:	Designated Purpose:
	Main room for meeting staff
	Meetings with students
	Meetings with parents
	Meetings with media
	Individual sessions with students
	Meetings with other visitors

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 (Name of team member)

The plan will be updated annually (Review March 2020)

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Critical Incident Management Team		
Role	Name	Phone
Team leader:		
Garda liaison		
Staff liaison		
Student liaison		
Community liaison		
Parent liaison		
Media liaison		
Administrator		

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Short term actions – Day 1

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

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Medium term actions - (Day 2 and following days)

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

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Follow-up – beyond 72 hours

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

LONG TERM ACTION & FOLLOW UP

TASK	NAME
MONITOR STUDENTS FOR SIGNS OF CONTINUING DISTRESS	CLASS TEACHER
LIAISE WITH AGENCIES RE REFERRAL	
PLAN FOR RETURN OF BEREAVED STUDENT(S)	
ENSURE SCHOOL RECORDS ETC UPDATED	
PLAN FOR GIVING 'MEMORY BOX' TO BEREAVED FAMILY	
DECIDE ON APPROPRIATE MEMORIALS& ANNIVERSARIES	BOM/STAFF/PARENTS/STUDENTS
REVIEW RESPONSE TO INCIDENT & AMMEND PLAN APPROPRIATELY	STAFF & BOM

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<u>Emergency Tel Numbers</u>	
NEPS Wexford	01 889 2492
Siobhan Jacob (NEPS Psychologist Wexford)	087 992 6304
NEPS	01 889 2492
Suicide Bereavement Support Group (Pieta House)	1800 247 247 / 053 9122 787
State Exams Commission (SEC)	090 644 2700
Adolescent Psychiatry Service Wexford	053 914 5402
Wexford Community Care	053 912 3522
Wexford Psychological Services	053 918 5683
Wexford General Hospital	053 914 2233
Ambulance Emergency	999 /112 (mobile)
Care Doc	1850 334 999
Presbytery Wexford	053 912 2055
School Chaplain -Fr Tom Dalton	087 2388270
JLO (Junior Liaison Officer)	053 916 5274
Garda Station Wexford	053 916 5200
Employee Assistance Service	1800 411 057

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<u>Useful contact numbers</u>	
Barnardos	01 453055 / 1850 222 300
The Samaritans	116 123
Childline	1800 666 666
Parentline	01 873 3500 / 1890 927 277
Rainbows	01 473 4175
Aware	1800 80 48 48
Brid Carroll (Bereavement Counsellor)	051-848711 / 0872420251
Family Life Centre Wexford	053 9123086
FDYS- Youth Counsellor	053 9123262

NOTES

- **Statement on School Policy to a Critical Incident + parental consent re NEPS psychologist to be included in enrolment documentation to parents**
- **C I M T (2018/2019)**

Mr William Ryan, Ms Mary Dooley, Ms Caroline Ryan, Ms Brid Kavanagh, Mr Damien Nugent, Ms Teresa Bradshaw, Ms Amy Redmond, Fr Tom Dalton.

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Appendix I – Double Click

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RESPONDING TO CRITICAL INCIDENTS

NEPS Guidelines and Resource Materials for Schools



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Responding to Critical Incidents Guidelines for Schools

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (TEACHERS)

The following is a summary of questions often asked by teachers in the aftermath of a critical incident.

Q. I would like to opt out of support type work for personal reasons. Is this OK?

A. It has been found that their teachers are the best people to support students in school in times of distress because they are with people they know and trust. Accordingly, all teachers and other school staff members are encouraged to help the students at these times. However, nobody should be obliged to do this work and people should be able to opt out of it if they feel they need to. This may be for a number of reasons, including recent personal bereavement, experience of a loss similar to that occurring in the particular incident or other circumstances. However, in order to stay in touch, they would need to be in attendance at staff meetings where information is disseminated in relation to the incident.

Q. I have no qualifications to help out in this area. Shouldn't the job should be left to the experts?

A. You probably have more skills here than you realise. Your experience, competence and skills as a teacher and as an expert in dealing with children and young people are invaluable. Most importantly, the students know you. Students need a safe environment in which to come to terms with what has happened. This security is often enhanced by being able to discuss the events with a familiar teacher in the first instance.

Q. What should I do in the classroom to be helpful?

A. You should acknowledge the situation and clarify the facts, as they are known. Honesty is essential. Encourage questions so that the students have a clear understanding. Try to establish normal routines as soon as possible – but balance this with allowing students opportunities to discuss the incident and to express their thoughts and feelings. Encourage them to resume extra-curricular activities and help them to identify where they can go to for support. Encourage them to be supportive of one another.

Q. What are the signs of grief that I may notice in students?

A. After bereavement students may have a wide range of different reactions – some may become quiet and withdrawn, while others may seem to be aggressive, irritable or angry. They may have mood swings or lack concentration. Try to handle all these 'normal' reactions with patience, do not seem surprised by them and do not get cross (see R6, R7 and R9). If students come from a background where there is family breakdown, serious illness, alcohol or drug related or other difficulties, then you need to take extra note of any behavioural changes.

Q. What if I think that some students are not grieving normally?

A. There is no such thing as a 'correct' way to grieve. Some people cry, some may laugh or become giddy, some show no reaction. The important thing is that all these different ways are natural and normal and you should try to help the student understand this.

Q. What skills do I have that are important?

A. Listening skills are probably the most important. People who have experienced loss or trauma generally feel that talking helps them to cope with their feelings. When you sense a student wants to talk, try to make the time. Be reassuring and patient while gently encouraging them to talk about the loss. Reassure the student that you are there to help.

Q. Is there any one important thing I should say?

A. Yes – emphasise that grieving is a normal healthy process following a traumatic incident. It is the person's way of coping with the event. It is also normal for people to react in different ways – there is no 'right' way to grieve.

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A CLASSROOM SESSION FOLLOWING NEWS OF A CRITICAL INCIDENT

Normally, the class teacher, class tutor or other teacher who knows the students should be the person to inform them of the events and lead the classroom session. Students generally feel safe and secure with someone they know. If the teacher feels uncomfortable with this role another staff member may share the task. Teachers should have the opportunity to opt out of this work if they feel unable to handle it and other arrangements should be made for that class group.

The aim of the session is to break the news to give the students an opportunity to discuss what has happened and to express their thoughts and feelings in a secure environment. The teacher needs to listen and be empathic.

The session needs to be tailored to the age and developmental level of the class group.

The outline of the session is as follows:

- STEP 1 Giving the facts and dispelling rumours
- STEP 2 Sharing stories and allowing and encouraging the sharing of thoughts and the expression of feelings
- STEP 3 Normalizing the reactions
- STEP 4 Whistles (for younger children)
- STEP 5 Advising about social media usage
- STEP 6 Empowerment
- STEP 7 Closure
- STEP 8 Free Time
- STEP 9 Recovery

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (PARENTS)

The following is a summary of questions frequently asked by parents after a critical incident.

Q. This incident has upset my daughter/son. As there are many rumours circulating, I would like to know what really happened. How can I find that information?

A. The school will inform students and parents of the core details of the incident insofar as they are known. It sometimes takes some time for the true facts to emerge. In the meantime, it is important to stick to the facts as known. Discourage rumour or gossip as it is often incorrect and can be distressing for the families and friends of those involved. Information on social media is not reliable and always needs to be checked.

Q. Will help be available to the students in the school?

A. This will depend on the particular situation. The school will usually put a plan in place for supporting students. This support may include classroom discussion, small group discussion or individual support for students who need it. If there is particular concern about your son or daughter, you will be informed.

Q. How can I help my child?

A. You are the natural support for your child. He/she may want to discuss their feelings and thoughts with you. You can help by listening carefully. You should tell them it is ok to feel the way they do, that people react in many different ways and that they should talk rather than bottle things up. Advise on and monitor safe use of social media.

Q. How long will the grief last?

A. There is no quick answer to this. It varies from individual to individual and according to circumstances. It will also be affected by the closeness of the child to the event or to person who died. Memories of other bereavements may also be brought up by the incident. Be patient and understanding. It can take time.

Q. Since the incident occurred my child has difficulty in sleeping, complains of headaches etc. Can I be sure these are related to the incident?

A. Grief can affect one physically as well as emotionally and these and other symptoms may be part of a grief reaction. If they persist, consult a doctor for a check up.

Q. If my child remains very upset what should I do?

A. If your child remains distressed after a period of six weeks or so, he/she may need additional support, but there is no fixed rule about the length of the grieving process. If you are very concerned at any point, it is best to seek more help through your GP/HSE Services.

Q. In what ways are adolescents different from other children?

A. During adolescence there are a lot of changes going on for young people and some may feel confused about themselves and the world around them. Grief tends to heighten these feelings and increase the confusion. At this time, too, the individual may look more to friends than to family for support and comfort. Don't feel rejected by this. Just be available to listen when they need to talk and make sure they know you are there for them when they need you.

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Board Of Management Review

Date of Review: 19th February 2019

Chairperson: *Sr Madeleine Ryan*

Principal: *Billy Ryan*