

**Griffeen Community College
Critical Incident Management
Guidelines**

2022-2023
Critical Incident Plan



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Introduction

Every school faces the real prospect of having to respond, at short or no notice, to crises of various types. While critical incidents of their very nature tend to occur without warning and at any time day or night, this set of guidelines provides advice for those whose task it is to manage such incidents. However, we are being more advisory than prescriptive - since each crisis will demand a different set of responses.

This document outlines our management plan for a critical incident in Griffeen Community College and is based on the NEPS school plan template (DES, 2015a). The staff and management of Griffeen Community College recognise a critical incident to be “an incident or sequence of events that overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school” (DES, 2015b).

Types of incidents may include (but are not limited to):

- The death of a member of the school community through accident, violence, suicide or suspected suicide or other unexpected death. The term ‘suicide’ will not be used without the consent of the family involved or until it has been established categorically that a person’s death was as the result of suicide. The terms ‘tragic death’ or ‘sudden death’ shall 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.
- An intrusion into the school
- An accident involving members of the school community
- A major accident/tragedy/natural disaster in the wider community
- Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism, etc.
- The disappearance of a member of the school community
- A major accident locally or abroad etc.

If the crisis is one that affects the whole school community, then the Critical Incident Plan is put into action. This ensures that best practice is followed in offering emotional, spiritual, and psychological support to all those affected by the tragedy at a critical time in the life of the school.

The aim of our Critical Incident Management Plan (CIMP)

The aim of the CIMP is to help Griffeen CC school management and staff:

1. React quickly and effectively in the event of an incident
2. Enable us to maintain a sense of control
3. Ensure that appropriate support is offered to students and staff
4. Help ensure that the effects on the students and staff will be limited
5. Enable us to affect a return to normality as soon as possible

The creation of a coping supportive and caring ethos in the school

Griffeen Community College is a co-educational, post primary school, which opened in September 2017. We have put systems and supports in place to help prioritise wellbeing and to build resilience in both staff and students, thus preparing them to cope with a range of everyday events. These include measures to address the physical, emotional and psychological safety of the school community, and include (but are not limited to) the following:

Pastoral Supports

- Tutor System/ Student Support team
- Fire safety, drills, evacuation procedures.
- Supervision of students outside class times (before & after school, break, lunch).
- SPHE programme.
- A number of staff trained in Friends First Youth/ Stay Safe programme.
- Staff Training undertaken in Learning to Learn Programme – 1st year timetable for 1 hour per week to support self-awareness and resilience links with Jigsaw and One Good Adult.
- Other Learning Experience (OLE) programme includes study skills workshops to support learning and alleviate exam stress/ Internet Safety Talks.
- School policy for Child Protection & Safe Guarding Statement in place and will be reviewed annually. Staff and students are familiar with the procedures and the name of the DLP Noel Kelly and DDLP Edel Morrow
- Anti-Bullying Policy in place and the school in engaging with the FUSE programme
- Referral systems for students identified as being at risk – Student support team. Liaise with staff informing them of difficulties affecting individual students and are aware and vigilant to their needs.
- Staff are informed about how to access support for themselves (www.carecallwellbeing.ie) on induction.
- Resources and training available to staff on the difficulties affecting students at post-primary level available including mental health, depression, anxiety and suicide awareness (e.g. HSE training – Assist/ NBSS CPD/ Restorative Practice Facilitation and Mediation/ Safe Care/ Pieta House).
- Supports from DDLETB Psychological Support Services.
- Links made with external agencies as appropriate and visitors/speakers to school considered in line with circular 0023/2010

Environmental Supports

- Security of school grounds, buildings during school hours
- School entrance monitored during class time.
- Students leaving the building during the day must sign out.
- Visitors are to sign in at the school office.

MANAGING A CRITICAL INCIDENT

Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)

A CIMT has been established in line with best practice. The members of the team are selected on a voluntary basis and will retain their roles for at least one school year. It is school policy to have several key personnel involved to respond effectively to a critical incident and to provide leadership in the implementation of the plan.

The team will comprise the Principal, Deputy Principal, Guidance Counsellor and other teachers concerned (i.e. Tutor of the effected group). The support of the DDLETB Psychological Support Services will also be used. The names of the CIMT are outlined below.

The members of the core team will meet annually to review and update the policy and plan.

These roles are outlined further in Appendix A. The Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) will be contacted via text should a critical incident occur and will contact other external personnel as needed. See phone numbers listed below.

Critical Incident Management Team (Contact details not included in public document)

Role	Name	Contact Number
Team Leader	Noel Kelly	
Deputy Principal/ Staff Liaison	Edel Morrow	
Psychological Support Service Link Person	Jacinta Mc Comish	
Psychological Support Service Main Office		
Student Liaison 1 st Years	Year head: Adam O’Faolain Tutors: Ms Carr Ms Black Ms Walsh Dr Aysel	
Student Liaison 2 nd Years	Year head: Charlotte Kinsella Tutors: Ms Mulligan Ms Hickey Mr Aherne	
Student Liaison 3 rd Years	Year head: Ms Fitzgerald Aherne Assistant Yearhead: Ms O’Hara Frost Tutors:	

	Ms O’Hara-Frost Ms Skelly Ms Darii	
TY	Yearhead: Ms Fitzgerald Aherne TY Coordinator: Ms H Kinsella Tutors: Ms H Kinsella Mr McCormack	
6 th LC and LCA Year Liaison	Yearhead Adam Whelan Tutor Katie Kirby Catherine Hanlon Mr Quigely	
Parent Liaison	BOM Parent Nominees: Mr Tom Jackson Ms Aherne	
Community Liaison	Principal: Mr N Kelly BOM Chairperson: Ms Liona O’Toole	
Media Liaison	Principal: Mr N Kelly	
Administrator	Ms Megan Byrne	
DDLETB Contact/DOS	Mr Adrian Flynn	
GCC Caretaker	Mr Aidan Kearney	

Record keeping

In the event of an incident each member of the team will keep records of phone calls made and received, letters emails and texts sent and received, meetings held, persons met, interventions used, material used. The 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 Griffeen CC 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.

Consultation and Communication regarding the plan

- All members of the BOM were consulted and their views canvassed in review of this policy and management plan.
- Parent nominees on the BOM were consulted.
- The Parents Council were not consulted as they have not yet been established.
- The Griffeen CC ratified policy and management plan in relation to responding to critical incidents will be presented to all staff on induction, available on staff Sharepoint and on the school website-griffeecc.ie
- Each member of the critical incident team will have a personal copy of the plan
- All new and temporary staff will be informed of the details of the plan by the Principal/DP as part of Induction
- The plan will be updated annually, ideally in Sept- Oct of a new school year.

Procedures to be followed in the Event of a Critical Incident Occurring

1. **Hearing the News** – Once a critical incident comes to the attention of a member of the school community, he/she should, where possible and practical, inform the Principal. It may be necessary to call one or other of the emergency services in the first instance.
2. **Establish the Facts** – Before taking any action it is crucial that the school has the correct information regarding the crisis. Therefore, it is important that the Principal and appropriate staff gather to establish the facts as soon as practically possible.
3. **Management to Convene a Meeting of the Critical Incident Team** – Once the facts of the crisis have been established, a meeting of available members of the Critical Incident Team should be called forthwith. This group will need to agree an immediate plan of action, which may include outlining the facts, contacting relevant agencies (Emergency Services, Health Personnel, DDLETB PSS etc.), preparing a written statement liaising with the media and outside agencies and assigning roles to team members and other staff members as the incident requires. Provision for appropriate and relevant counselling services will also be made.

4. Staff Meeting

The Principal will meet with the staff to address some key issues such as:

- Facts of the Incident verified by Gardai/Emergency services/Family
- Convey a plan of action/information for staff about which outside agencies have been contacted or are involved and the supports that are in place for both students and staff. Needs of any staff member need to be acknowledged.
- How information is to be relayed to students.
- How the school will communicate with the media through liaison team only.
- Identify students particularly affected.
- Agree the common response when dealing with public.

- Teacher support will be sought to provide supervision on an ad hoc basis when necessary.
- Visits to affected families organised.
- When normal school or agreed school practices should continue/resume

5. Office Procedure

An agreed statement is to be issued when responding to phone enquiries. Further enquiries are to be directed to the Principal or other members of the critical incident team. Numbers should be available for pupils, parents, guardians, staff and all emergency support services. It is important to maintain a log of events, letter(s) to parents, telephone calls made and received.

6. Room Allocation

If in school students should follow the normal class timetable in so far as possible. Where needed the critical incident team may assign a room to outside agencies e.g. counselling service/school psychologist. A room will be available for staff/students who wish to have a quiet area for reflection. A supervised area or support room can be available to facilitate meeting with concerned parents.

7. Critical incident rooms

In the event of a critical incident,

- Staffroom will be the main room used to meet the staff
- The Art room in GCC will be used for meetings with students/ or to ensure social distancing (is applicable) – KCC gym
- If required meetings with parents will be facilitated online
- Art room of GCC will be used for meetings with media or online is possible
- DP/P office will be used for meetings with individual students.

8. After Incident

The Principal with the assistance of the CIMT will prepare a report for the BOM and DES. Counselling of those affected will continue as needed. The school will offer any appropriate requested assistance to the family.

9. Long Term

The critical incident team should meet as soon as possible to review the procedures followed, consult with the school community and amend the policy as deemed necessary.

Intervention Responsibilities

Leadership / Family Liaison/ Communication

Day 1: Short Term Actions (Leadership, CIMT)

Task	Name	Completed
Confirm the incident has occurred.	Principal	
Make contact with family, gather accurate information from family or Gardaí. (who, what, when, where?)	Principal	
Express sympathy to family, assure them of school's support, ascertain if name is in public domain, ensure family know who contact person in school is.	Principal	
Convene a CIMT meeting – specify time and place clearly.	Principal	
Notify BoM, CE or Director of Schools for DDLETB	Principal	
Contact external agencies if support needed – DDLETB PSS/ Pieta House/ HSE	Principal	
Set up CIMT room in school, distribute key tasks, prepare guidelines & procedures for teachers	Principal, CIMT, Care taker	
Send text for staff to report to staff room when they arrive. Plan and hold a brief staff meeting (teaching and non-teaching staff), make a note of any absences/late arrivals to ensure all staff know.	Deputy Principal	
Prepare an announcement for staff/students, distribute procedures to Tutor in breaking the news.	Appendix C	
Have guidelines for staff in dealing with students in distress i.e. information on grief responses, identifying those with need of counselling and support	Appendix C	
Ensure that Guidance Counsellor/ Year heads / Tutors, are freed from all other commitments for the day. (CIMT)	Deputy Principal	
Inform students – (close friends and students with learning difficulties may need to be told separately).	SENCO/Tutor/SNA	
Ensure a quiet place is available for staff/ students	Deputy Principal	
Organise timetable / routine for the day (Adhering to the normal college routine is important, if this is possible).	Deputy Principal	
Class teachers to take note of any absentees who might need to be contacted i.e. list of friends or any other relevant information and report to the college office.	Tutors/ SNA's	

Outline services available to affected students during the first hours	Principal/Guidance Dept	
Organise an Assembly, once all students have been notified	Deputy Principal/Tutor	
CIMT outline schedule for the day and the support available, location of crisis response room.	Principal / Deputy Principal CIMT	
Open the school if tragedy occurs on weekend or during holidays	Principal/Deputy Principal/Care Taker	
Arrange a process for dealing with telephone enquiries from family members and have a dedicated extension/teacher/staff member to answer queries (student name not to be given out).	CIMT –Admin staff	
Take time with the most affected students in Crisis Response Room – Create Rota so an individual teacher is not overwhelmed	CIMT	
Contact parents where some students request to go home – Rota of teachers & a Log of students allowed home. Students only released into direct care of a parent or nominated adult	Admin Staff/SNA Team	
Prepare and agree a written and oral response to enquiries, prepare media statement (discourage and staff/student from dealing with the media).	CIMT/ Appendix	
Inform parents / draft letter to parents.	CIMT/ Appendix /Admin	
Meet and support any distressed parents and staff. Parents should only be met in small groups	Available Team Members	
Liaise with local organisations/schools / clergy if necessary.	Principal /Deputy Principal/ Yearhead	
Set up a Book of Condolences /Memory Book	Tutor	
Contact / visit the bereaved family, consult with family on school involvement in funeral (family wishes to be respected).	Principal/nominated teacher	
If the bereaved family is not Catholic contact home to ascertain their wishes regarding the service	Principal	
Plan and hold end of day staff briefing.	CIMT/ Principal	

Day 2 and following days: Medium Term Actions

Task	Name	Completed
Convene a CIMT meeting to review the events of Day 1	Principal/ CIMT	
Compile a list of vulnerable students. Students not coping referred to counsellor on an individual basis.	CIMT	
Arrange additional support for students, staff, parents. Contact additional counsellors should the need arise.	CIMT /SENCO	
Meet whole staff	All Staff	
Meet external agencies if required	Principal	
Make decisions on who should attend funeral, agree if school should remain open on the day of the funeral (if possible school should remain open). Clarify funeral arrangements for staff/students. Attendance and participation at funeral to be decided - in accordance with parents' wishes and college management decisions.	CIMT	
Facilitation of student / staff responses, e.g. sympathy cards, flowers, book of condolences, etc in the context of the religious beliefs of the bereaved family.	Deputy Principal	
Possible memorial within the college – as guided by advice from Psychological support service and religious leaders.	Principal	
Arrange support for individual students, groups of students, and parents, if necessary.	Deputy Principal	
Plan for the reintegration of students and staff, e.g. siblings, close relative, etc. Planning for the reintegration of students should take place as soon as possible following a critical incident.	CIMT	
CIMT meet to plan critical incident stress debriefing (CISD) response (with relevant teachers).	CIMT	

Follow up: beyond 72 hours

Task	Name	Completed
Monitor students for signs of continuing distress	Tutor, Teachers, SNA's	
Liaise with agencies regarding referrals	CIMT	
Plan for return of bereaved student(s)	CIMT	
Decide on memorials and anniversaries	BoM / Staff, Parents, Students	
Review response to incident and amend plan	Staff / BoM	

Long Term Considerations for the School

- Take note of anniversaries and be aware that some staff / students may be particularly sensitive at these times.
- If, over a prolonged period, a student continues to display the following, he/she may need continued support. Communication with family is essential. Be mindful of:
 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 response to incident and amend Critical Incident Policy appropriately.
 1. What went well?
 2. Where were the challenges?
 3. What was most/least helpful?
 4. Have all necessary onward referrals to support services been made and followed up on?
- New staff to be informed about Critical Incident Policy
 1. Ensure that new staff are aware of the college policy and procedures in this area.
 2. Ensure new staff 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 college, the Principal should brief the Principal of the new college.
- Update and amend College records.

Emergency Contact List

Displayed in staff room, school office, Principal's office etc.)

Agency	Contact Numbers	
Garda	Lucan Garda Station Ronanstown Garda Station	01 6667300 01- 6667700
Hospital	Emergency Tallaght	999 01 414 2000
Fire Brigade	Leixlip Fire Station	01 6244455
Local GPs	Ballyowen Lane Medical Centre/ Primacare	(01) 621 4224
	Primacare/Griffeen Medical Centre	(01) 610 5022
	Finnstown medical centre	(01) 621 2288
	Dodsboro Clinic	(01) 624 1181
	Lucan Medical Centre	(01) 628 0654
	Ballyowen Castle medical centre	(01) 621 2399
	Lucan Court Medical centre Dr. John Barrett Medical Centre, Shopping Centre	(01) 628 2497
HSE / CAMHS	CAMHS via GP or	1850 24 1850
Resource Officer for Suicide	Niamh Crudden	086 2535529/ niamh.crudden@hse.ie
Prevention (CHO Area 7-Kildare/West Wicklow)	Turas Le Chéile (Kilcock)	086-0566819
Local Counselling Services	The Counselling Centre (Maynooth)	089- 2037524
National Educational Psychological Services (NEPS)	Head office Naas Clondalkin	018892700 045848504 014614824
Tusla,	Child and Family Agency, Social Work Department,	045 882400

	Naas, Co. Kildare. Dublin office	(01) 771 8500
Pieta House	Lucan	(01) 601 0000
DES	Inspectorate	01 889 6400 01 889 6553
Clergy	Lucan Parish Office St Marys Church Church of Ireland St Patricks Parish Office.	01 (01) 621 7041 (01) 624 0976 (01) 628 1018
State Exams Commission	090 6442851	
Employee Assistance Service	(Care call)	1800 411 057
Aspen	Counselling Service(Lucan)Ltd	01) 621 7063

*****This list is not exhaustive and may be subject to change as services become est. or discontinue in the area. It was accurate at the time of ratification – 18-10-18***

Contacting Staff if tragedy occurs over a Weekend/Holidays

Task	Who
If it is the death of a colleague the system of informing staff is via the texting service	Principal/ Deputy Principal
If it is the death of a student, The Critical Incident Management Team needs to be informed immediately. Other staff can be informed later.	Principal
Whoever first hears the news to contact	Principal
Contact Board of Management/ DDLETB	Principal
Similar procedures will be followed if a critical incident occurs during college holidays or while a group of staff and students are away on a college trip. If an incident occurs on a college trip contact details for all staff and students on the trip should be with the office.	

Suicide as a Critical Incident

Great care should be taken in the use of the term ‘suicide’. It should not be used until it has been established with a good degree of certainty that the death was because of suicide. Families may be very sensitive about the use of the term. The phrases ‘tragic death’ or ‘sudden death’ may be used instead.

Suicide prevention

Griffeen Community College has a role and responsibility in the prevention and management of suicidal behaviour among its students. We feel that delivering programmes focused directly on raising student awareness of suicide may appear desirable, but they may carry the risk of increasing suicidal behaviour among young people through normalising it as a legitimate response to adolescent stress.

The college aims to:

- Promote positive mental health rather than the prevention of mental health problems
- Focus on enhancing generic social competences - coping skills, good peer relationships, self-efficiency
- Implement primary prevention programmes for all students within the context of the college's SPHE provision
- Build awareness amongst key college staff and parents, through inservice and invited speakers, of the difficulties faced by some young people who have multiple problems of personal adjustment and life stress
- Implement targeted interventions for pupils who need help to overcome difficulties and manage their distress
- Have a clear procedure for the referral of distressed or at risk students, initially to the guidance counsellor (when appointed)/ Deputy principal, and where necessary to the local health services
- Develop procedures for ensuring the coordinated, supportive return of students to college after treatment for suicidal behaviour. Such procedures should provide the necessary information and guidance to college personnel before the adolescent returns to college (only on a need-to-know basis)
- The college will seek guidance from any outside agencies who are providing counselling and/or therapy to students under risk

Proposed steps to follow when concerns are raised

- Concern is reported to firstly the Guidance Department then Tutor/ Yearhead /deputy principal/principal/DLP.
- A meeting takes place with the DP and the student.
- Parents are informed of concerns, feedback is given to the original source of the referral and a plan is drawn up for monitoring the student.
- Where a concern is confirmed, the DP reports to the Principal, and may seek a consultation with NEPS/DDLETB PSS or with local Mental Health services
- The Principal informs parents or caregivers right away

- A management plan appropriate to the level of risk is put in place, including onward referral to the family GP.

Responding to attempted Suicide

Advice should be sought from the mental health professionals caring for the young person as they may be able to provide considerable assistance. A support plan should be developed and approved.

The following parties should be consulted when devising the plan;

- the student
- the family
- mental health professionals.

When meeting with the student's family, critical areas for sensitive discussion are:

- The information to be provided to various sections of the college community
- The support plan for the student's return to college
- The support for any siblings in the college
- Liaison with the mental health professional

Guidance for college staff where a student has died from suicide/suspected suicide

Family

- Consult with the family regarding the appropriate support from the college

Students

- Give the facts as agreed with the bereaved family.
- Inform close friends and relatives separately.
- Create safe and supportive spaces for the students where they can share their reactions and feelings.
- Advise the students of the support that is available to them.
- Give handout Appendix 2 - "Grief after Suicide or Suspected Suicide".

Note on care of students following a funeral:

It is important following the funeral of a student who has died by suicide that students and parents are encouraged to come back to the college for support. The college may consider providing tea and coffee as this is a particularly vulnerable time for students. Encouraging students to return to the college until the usual finishing time can provide a much-needed routine.

Resources:

“Young People and Loss, A Handbook for colleges”, Robin Cooper

“Silver Linings: Community Crisis Response”, Rainbows

“Responding to Critical Incidents – Resource Materials for colleges”, DES

“Responding to Critical Incidents – Guidelines for colleges”, DES

Guidelines on the Inclusion of Students of Other Faiths in Catholic Secondary colleges, Joint Managerial Body

Draft Media Statement 1

It is with profound sadness that the Board of Management, Staff and Students of Griffeen CC have learned of the tragic death of.....Name.

Our sincerest sympathy is extended to the family of Name.

On hearing the tragic news, the School Trauma Plan was put into immediate operation. The Critical Incident Management Team met to ensure that students affected by this loss are cared for adequately. Procedures are in place to ensure that all in the school community affected by this loss are given all the help they need to cope at this time.

The school is offering support for students & staff affected by this tragedy. Students will attend and participate in the funeral service, in consultation with the wishes of the family and in line with government guidelines and Covid 19 restrictions.

Our prayers and support are with everyone affected by this tragedy.

Media Statement 2

It is with profound sadness that the Board of Management, Staff and Students of Griffeen CC have learned of the tragic death of one of our students.

Our sincerest sympathy is extended to the bereaved family.

On hearing the tragic news the School Trauma Plan was put into immediate operation, The Critical Incident Management Team met to ensure that members of the school community affected by this loss receive all the help they need to cope at this time.

Moments of silence and reflection have been held with classes upset by the tragedy and some students will attend and participate in the funeral service, in consultation with the wishes of the family and in line with govt guidelines and Covid 19 restrictions.

Our thoughts and support are with the loved ones and friends of the deceased student.

Media Statement 3

It is with profound sadness that the Board of Management, Staff and Students of Griffeen CC' have heard of the tragic news of

On hearing the news the School Crisis Response Plan was put into immediate operation. The Critical Incident Management Team met to ensure that Students and Staff affected by this crisis are cared for adequately. Procedures have been put in place to ensure that all in the school community affected by this Crisis are given all the help they need to cope at this time.

General Letter to Parents

Dear Parent/Guardian

It is with profound sadness that the Board of Management, Staff and Students of Griffeen CC have learned of the tragic death of our student **Name**.

Our sincerest sympathy is extended to the **Name family**. On hearing the tragic news the School Critical Incident Plan was put into immediate operation. The Critical Incident Management Team met to ensure that students affected by this loss are cared for adequately. Procedures are in place to ensure that all in the school community affected by this loss are given the help they need to cope at this time. Periods of reflection have been held with affected classes in the school and we hope to have a memorial service in the near future. Following consultation with the deceased's family, the arrangements for the funeral are as follows:

Removal:

Church Service:

Burial:

If your child wishes to attend the funeral service, please inform us in writing. You will also find enclosed some information that might be of assistance at this most difficult time. If there are any other areas of concern, please do not hesitate to contact the school.

Please note attendance at the funeral will be in line with govt guidelines and Covid 19 restrictions.

Yours sincerely,

Muslim Death

It is with profound sadness that the Board of Management, Staff and Students of 'Griffen CC have learned of the death of**Name**

Name.....was a valued member of our school community and we will be holding a memorial to him/her in the coming days.

Name..... was a Muslim student and following that tradition the funeral takes place almost immediately in the mosque in Location

We have contacted the mosque and while students may attend the service female students will not be able to take part in the service or attend the burial in accordance with Muslim tradition. As we are a multidenominational school we wish to respect the faith of all our students and therefore request that our female students wait to express their sympathy at our school memorial service. We will be inviting **Name**..... family to attend our memorial service here in school and this will give all our students an opportunity to express their sympathy to the family.

I allow my son to attend the funeral.

Parents/guardians signature _____

Information Sheet for Parents

Common Reactions on Hearing Traumatic News

As you are the natural support for your child you may find that he/she will want to discuss some feelings and thoughts with you. You can help by listening carefully, restating what you hear them say so they know you are really listening. You should tell them that it is ok to feel the way they do, that people react in many ways and that they should talk rather than become withdrawn and silent. You may also find that your child will look for comfort and support from their friends, this is a natural reaction from an adolescent. 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. The length for the grieving period varies from individual to individual. If your child remains very distressed after six weeks or so, he/she may need additional support.

Emotional and Physical		Mental and Behavioural
Shock	Emotional outbursts	Confusion
Fear	Overwhelmed	Blame
Guilt	Nausea	Poor concentration
Grief	Fainting	Disorientation
Tears	Pain	Withdrawn
Panic	Dizziness	Restlessness
Denial	Weakness	Let down
Anxiety	Palpitations	Uncertainty
Depression	Breathing difficulties	
Anger	Silence	

School Programmes to tackle issues of Mental Health, Stress and Suicide

There are several programmes within the school that provide information on personal health issues and allow students an outlet for discussion of problems that may be causing distress. In the SPHE subject area, they are as follows:

1st yr. SPHE/CSPE classes

- 2 hrs. per week. The programmed includes stress/anger/conflict management, decision-making, problem solving and other mental health related topics.
- 1 hr per week of Learning to Learn Programme- developing coping skills and awareness around positive mental health.
- Guest Speakers – Jigsaw Mental health Supports/ Zeeko online Safety Course

2nd yr

- SPHE/CSPE classes – 2 hrs. per week. The programmed includes stress/anger/conflict management, decision-making, problem solving and other mental health related topics.
- 6 week programme – Resilience Academy Pieta House/ Zeeko online Safety Course
- Third and Fifth year (when applicable) groups - Study skills seminars that are designed to alleviate stress regarding preparation for examinations
- Transition Year - Core part of the Health Education class is Mental Health issues. There is also a substance abuse programme and RSE module within the year.
- Leaving Cert Applied (when applicable) – One Health Education class per week which incorporates mental health topics

Support for teachers:

Employee Assistance Service:	Freephone Helpline 1800 411 057 or Text ‘Hi’ to 087 369 0010 to avail of EAS support on SMS & WhatsApp
Turas le Cheile National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)	Care call- 1800 411 057
One day courses:	Maureen Griffin – Cyber Safety
	Jigsaw– Positive Mental Health

The Board of Management adopted this policy on

Date:

Signed Chairperson:

Appendix A

Roles and Responsibilities

Team Leader (Principal)	Principal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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
Garda Liaison	Principal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Liaises with the Gardaí Ensures that information about deaths or other developments is checked out for accuracy before being shared
Staff Liaison	Deputy Principal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 contacts them individually Advises them of the availability of the EAS and gives them the contact number.
Student liaison	Tutor(s) Guidance Counsellor SENCO SNA Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 (office). Looks after setting up and supervision of ‘quiet’ room where agreed

Community / Agency Liaison	Principal	<p>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</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	<p>Principal, Parent Nominee on BoM</p> <p>Admin staff- Megan Byrne</p> <p>Care Taker – Aidan Kearney</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	Principal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.) • Will draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews (as agreed by school management)
Administrator	Admin Staff – Megan Byrne	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintenance of up to date telephone numbers of Parents/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

Appendix B

Contacting Staff

If the critical incident occurs during term time the steps outlined above in the CIMP will be followed.

If the critical incident occurs over the weekend/holidays:

Task	Name	Completed
In the case of the death of a student, The Critical Incident Management Team will be informed immediately. Other staff will be informed later.	Principal/ CIMT	
In the case of the death of a colleague, staff will be informed by call/text.	Principal / Deputy Principal	
Whoever hears the news first is to contact the Principal or Deputy Principal	All	
Contact Board of Management and DDLETB	Principal	

Appendix C

Breaking Bad News to Students: Guidelines for Class Teachers

Task	Resource
The Class of the student who has been involved in a critical incident should be the first to be told, with school counsellor, Tutor and Year Head present.	Guidance Counsellor/Principal
Other classes to be told by their Tutor or class teachers	
Not every class is going to be traumatized, some students may not even know student/ staff involved-but it is important to acknowledge the trauma for the whole school community	
Tell the class you have sad news and it is difficult for you to do this	
Let them know the name of the person the news is about	Staff meeting
Let them know the facts, as you know them. (It is important to prevent rumors through misinformation) It is also important that students know that it is not appropriate for them to speak to the media about what has happened. If they are asked they should say they have nothing to say.	Staff meeting
Only if the tragedy is confirmed as a suicide by the family, can it be relayed as such to students	
Encourage questions	
<i>Let the class know of common reactions to tragic news (SEE Attached)</i>	Teachers Pack

Expect tears and outbursts/ silence/ withdrawal- Inform students that support will be available during the day	
Don't allow a student to leave the classroom alone in a distressed state	CIMT
Students <i>must be supervised</i> within the building while in a distressed state and should go to the designated room for students.	Have a supervised and assigned space
Let them know that you will support them	
Let them know who else is available to support them	
If a student is suspected as being at risk the Principal should be notified immediately	Crisis-Response Team/Teachers Pack
Be attentive to identifying those who are not coping well with the news – Referral of students for individual attention	Yearhead/ SENCO
Let them know where the CIMT will be (possibly base classroom/ resource area)	Tutors
Don't be afraid to let them know that you are also upset by the news	
Allow them time(limited) to mingle and talk to one another in groups (avoid hysteria)	
Explain how they can support one another	
You may need to remind students again who is there to help, as little information is assimilated once in shock	
A short period of silence/thought for those involved in the incident may be appropriate	
Inform students that Year Head/Tutor will keep them up to date	
Some students may be able to continue and go to class	
Some will need to stay with the CIMT for the morning	
Encourage students to stay in school to support their friends	
Some students, who may need to go home, may do so in consultation with the Deputy Principal and only if a family member can come and collect them. Students must sign out in the office	
Those who go to class may not be able to concentrate on the work of the class	
Subject teachers will need to make allowances for them to talk in groups as the need arises	

Appendix D

Support Documents and Guidelines:

Department of Education and Skills (2015a), Responding to Critical Incidents: Resource Materials for Schools.

Department of Education and Skills (2015b), Responding to Critical Incidents: Guidelines for Schools.

Department of Education and Skills, (2014). Student support teams in post-primary schools, A guide to establishing a team or reviewing an existing team.

Department of Education and Skills, (2013). Wellbeing in post-primary schools, Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention.

Department of Education and Skills (2010). Circular 0023/2010: Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) & Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)
Best Practice Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools

Health Service Executive (2011), Suicide Prevention in the Community - A Practical Guide

IAS, National Suicide Review Group (2002), Suicide Prevention in Schools: Best Practice Guidelines