



CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT POLICY

Introduction

Canal Way ETNS aims to protect the well-being of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times, in line with the Educate Together Ethos of the school. The Board of Management, in consultation with the staff of *Canal Way ETNS*, has drawn up a Critical Incident Management Plan as one element of the school's policies and plans.

The Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) have consulted resource documents available to schools on www.education.ie and www.nosp.ie including:

- 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 Primary Schools - Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion (DES, DOH, HSE 201 5)

The staff and management of *Canal Way ETNS* 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

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.

Background

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 supervision in the school yard (possibly include details)
- Front gate locked during school hours
- School doors locked during class time
- Rules of the playground – include details

Psychological safety

The management and staff of *Canal Way ETNS* 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; this will be done through Mental Health Week as well as through timetabled SPHE lessons.

- Staff have access to training for their role in SPHE through the Weaving Well Being and the Welcome to Well Being Program.
- Parents invited to Weaving Well Being information evening.
- 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 that may affect children are available in school.
- 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.
- The school has developed links with a range of external agencies – list these agencies
- 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).
- 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.
- 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. Staff Mental Health Week to take place annually during January. Croke Park hours are used

for speakers to talk to staff about the importance of their Mental Health and ways to monitor and improve it.

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.

Team leader *Principal* (Deputy Principal to step in in absence)

- 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 or other developments is checked out for accuracy before being shared

Staff liaison *Deputy Principal*

- 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 staff of the availability of the EAS and gives them the contact number.

Community/agency liaison *Assistant Principal*

- Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of
- Key parents, such as members of the Parents Committee and Board of Management
- 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 *ISM*

- 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*

- 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 *Eavan*

- 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.

Administrator 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 CWETNS 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
<i>STAFF ROOM</i>	Main room for meeting staff
<i>CLASSROOMS</i>	Meetings with students
<i>HALL</i> <i>PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE</i>	Meetings with parents

HALL PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE	Meetings with media
SUPPORT ROOMS PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE	Individual sessions with students
PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE	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 Dermot. The plan will be updated annually

Short term actions – Day 1

Task	Name
Gather accurate information	ISM
Who, what, when, where?	ISM
Convene a CIMT meeting – specify time and place clearly	Principal
Contact external agencies	Assistant Principal
Arrange supervision for students	Deputy Principal
Hold staff meeting	All staff

Agree schedule for the day	Principal
Inform students – (close friends and students with learning difficulties may need to be told separately)	Wilma and Ciarán- Rainbow (Bereavement) training certified
Compile a list of vulnerable students	SET Team
Prepare and agree media statement and deal with media	BOM
Inform parents	BOM
Hold end of day staff briefing	ISM

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	Principal
Meet whole staff	ISM
Arrange support for students, staff, parents	Deputy and Assistant Principal
Visit the injured	Member of ISM
Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements	Principal
Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service	ISM
Make decisions about school closure	BOM

Follow-up - beyond 72 hours

Task	Name
Monitor students for signs of continuing distress	All Staff
Liaise with agencies regarding referrals	SET Team
Plan for return of bereaved student(s)	Wilma and Ciarán
Plan for giving of 'memory box' to bereaved family	ISM
Decide on memorials and anniversaries	ISM
Review response to incident and amend plan	ISM

Ratification and Communication

This policy will be in operation in the school year 2022, having been ratified by Staff and BoM. Every teacher will be provided with a copy of this policy for their files.

Date of next policy review: 2025

Signed on Behalf of the Board of Management:

Chairperson: Treasa Ní Mhurchú Date 14.12.2021

Principal: Dermot Stanley Date: 14.12.2021

