



Critical Incident Policy for Rathcormac NS

Introduction:

In Rathcormac NS we aim to protect the wellbeing of our pupils and staff by providing a safe, tolerant, and well catered for environment as outlined in our school philosophy statement.

The BOM through the Principal, the Staff and the Parents Association has drawn up a Critical Incident Management Plan. They have established a Critical Incidents Management Team to steer the development and implementation of the plan.

What is a Critical Incident?

The staff and management of Rathcormac 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 community
- Considerable 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 affect a return to normality as soon as possible.

Critical Incidents Management Team

Critical Incidents Management Team:		
Role	Name	
Team Leader	Geraldine Connell	
Staff Liaison	Catherine Coggins	
Student Liaison	Ronan Brennan	
Community Liaison	Catriona Mc Donagh	
Parent Liaison	Geraldine Connell	
Media Liaison	Fr Tom Hever Geraldine Connell	
Administrator	Catriona Mc Donagh	

Roles and Responsibilities

Team leader: Geraldine Connell

Role: Principal

- Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting
- Coordinates the tasks of the team
- Consults 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.

Communication

Staff liaison: Catherine Coggins

Role: 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 contacts them individually.
- Advises them of the availability of the EAS and gives them the contact number.

Student liaison: Mr Ronan Brennan.

Role: Class Teacher

- Gives the known facts and avoids speculation. This is to dispel rumours which may cause unnecessary stress.
- Allow pupils to ask questions, tell their story and express their feelings.

- 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 liaison: Mrs Catriona Mc Donagh

Role: School secretary

- Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of - Key parents, such as members of the Board of Management, Parents association - Emergency support services and other external contacts and resources
- Consults 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: Mrs Geraldine Connell

Role: Principal

- Visits the bereaved family
- 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 Geraldine Connell

Role: Principal

Fr Tom Hever

Role: Chairperson BOM

- 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 communication section of the DES, relevant teacher unions etc.
- Will draw up a press statement to include the known facts about the incident, what has been done already, positive information or comments about the deceased person.
- give media briefings and interviews (as agreed by school management)

Administrator: Catriona Mc Donagh.

Role: School Secretary

- 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 school's 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. Catriona Mc Donagh 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 Rathcormac NS 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.
Staff Room	Main room for meeting staff
Old Staff room	Meeting with students
Principal's Office	Meeting with parents
Principal's Office/School Hall	Meeting with media
New SEN room	Individual sessions with students
Principal's office	Meeting with other visitors.

Action plan

SHORT-TERM ACTIONS

Day 1.

Task	Name
Gather accurate information. Who, what, when, where?	Geraldine Connell
Convene a CIMT meeting-specify time and place clearly.	Geraldine Connell
Contact External agencies.	Geraldine Connell
Arrange supervision for students	All staff
Hold staff meeting	All staff
Agree schedule for the day	All staff
Inform students- (close friends and students with learning difficulties may need to be told separately)	Ronan Brennan Geraldine Connell.
Compile a list of vulnerable students	Ronan Brennan
Prepare and agree media statement and deal with media.	Geraldine Connell Fr Tom Hever Catriona Mc Donagh
Inform parents	Geraldine Connell
Hold end of day staff briefing	All staff

MEDIUM-TERM ACTIONS (24-72 HOURS)

Task	Name
Convene a CIMT meeting to review the events of Day 1	Geraldine Connell
Meet external agencies	Geraldine Connell
Meet whole staff	All staff
Arrange support for staff, students, and parents	Catherine Coggins Ronan Brennan.
Visit the injured	Geraldine Connell, Staff member /class teacher. Fr Tom Hever
Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements	Geraldine Connell Fr Tom Hever
Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service	Geraldine Connell Fr Tom Hever
Make decisions about school closure	BOM


LONGER TERM ACTIONS
Follow -up Beyond 72 Hours

Task	Name
Monitor students for signs of continuing distress.	Class teachers
Liaise with agencies regarding referrals	Catriona Mc Donagh Geraldine Connell Catherine Coggins
Plan for return of bereaved students	Geraldine Connell Ronan Brennan
Plan for giving of memory box to bereaved family.	Class teacher Geraldine Connell.
Decide on memorials and anniversaries	BOM, Staff, parents, and students.
Review response to incident and amend plan	Staff BOM

Emergency Contact List

Agency	Contact Number
Garda	071-9157000
Hospital- Sligo University	071- 9171111
Fire Brigade	071-9111404
Drumcliff Family Practice	071-9321960
NEPS Psychologist Ann Conway	01-8650689
Main NEPS Office	01-8650701
School Inspector Office	071-9143218
INTO	01-8047700

Ratified by the Board of Management of Rathcormac NS on 16th April 2024

Signed : 

Chairperson.BOM

Signed : 

Principal