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CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY

The Board of Management of Rathcormac N.S. aims to protect the wellbeing of its students by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times in accordance with its mission statement.

The school has formulated policies and procedures to be followed with a view to ensuring the physical and psychological safety of staff and students, both in ordinary time and in the event of a critical incident. This Critical Incident Policy was formulated and first ratified by the Board of Management in February 2015.

What is a critical incident?

A critical incident is deemed to be “an incident or sequence of events that overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school and disrupts the running of the school”.

We will endeavour to maintain the running of the school in accordance with the Rules for National Schools. Critical incidents may involve one or more pupils, staff, the school or the local community. Types of incidents might include:

The death of a member of the school community through sudden death, accident, terminal illness or suicide

A physical attack or threat on staff member(s) or student(s) on intrusion into the school

An accident/tragedy in the wider school community

Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism or Act of God

The disappearance of a member of the school community

An accident involving members of the school community

Aim

Recognising that that the key to managing critical incidents is planning, the Board of Management has developed this Critical Incident management Policy and accompanying plan. The aim is that, in the event of a critical incident, this policy will help staff to react quickly and effectively and to maintain a sense of control. This will help to achieve a return to normality as soon as possible and to ensure that the effects on students and staff will be limited.

Critical Incident management Team

The Board has set up a Critical Incident Management Team in line with best practice and will maintain this team in the future. The members of the team were appointed on a voluntary basis and will retain their roles for at least one school year.

Key roles have been identified and assigned as follows;

Team Leader;	Frank O Sullivan
Staff Liaison;	Louise O Boyle
Student Liaison;	Mary Power
Parent/Media Liaison;	Frank O Sullivan/Fr. T.Hever
Community Liaison;	Catriona McDonagh
Administration ;	Catriona McDonagh

In the event of a critical incident the **duties** of the role holders will be as follows;

Team Leader.

A person who carries authority and has the power to make decisions during a crisis (eg school closure, attendance at memorial services etc).

Alerts the team members to a critical incident and convenes a team meeting.

Coordinates with the Board of Management and DES.

Liaises with family/families affected by the critical incident.

Staff Liaison.

A staff member, known and trusted by the staff.

Leads a meeting to brief the staff on the facts as known, gives staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and outlines the routine for the day if known.

Advises staff on the identification of vulnerable students.

Is alert to members of staff who may be vulnerable and makes contact with them individually .

Provides relevant materials to staff .

Student Liaison.

Give the known facts and avoid speculation. This will help to dispel rumours which can cause unnecessary stress.

Allow pupils to ask questions, tell their story and express their feelings.

Liaise with other team members to keep them updated with information and progress.

Alert staff to vulnerable students .

Provide materials for students.

Community Liaison.

Liaises with agencies in the community for support and onward referral.

Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies.

Coordinates the involvement of these agencies.

Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of key parents such as members of the Board and Parents' Association, emergency support services and other external contacts and supports.

Parent Liaison.

A person known to parents, who is comfortable speaking before a large group and has skills to manage emotional reactions of individuals or groups of parents.

Facilitates questions and answers meetings.

Meets with individual parents.

Provides materials for parents.

Visits affected family/families.

Media Liaison.

A person with good interpersonal skills who is comfortable talking to the media by phone or in person.

Has considered in advance issues that may arise in relation to access to students, interviews, photographers and journalists on the premises

Prepares a written statement to include the known facts about the incident, what has been done already, what is going to be done, positive information or comments about the deceased person.

Liaise where necessary with the Communications Section of the DES.

Administrative Tasks.

A person with administrative skills who will;

Maintain an up to date list of contact numbers for parents and guardians and for school staff and their next of kin.

A list of emergency support services.

Respond to telephone calls, send letters and photocopy materials.

Record Keeping.

In the event of a critical incident, each member of the team will keep detailed records of phonecalls made and received, meetings held, persons met, interventions used, materials used etc. The school secretary will have a vital role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters, photocopying materials etc.

Communication with Parents.

The Board of Management will prepare a brief written statement to each family which may contain the following:

The sympathy of the school community for the affected/bereaved family;

Positive information about the deceased/injured person;

Facts about the incident;

What has been done;

What is going to be done;

Confidentiality and Good Name considerations.

The school has the responsibility to protect the privacy and the 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 ensure that pupils do so as well. (e.g. the term suicide will not be used without the consent of the family involved. The phrase sudden death or unexpected death will be used instead.)

Critical Incident Room.

In the event of a critical incident, the meeting room will be the main room used to meet the staff, parents, students and visitors involved. (Peter's room)

Development and communication of this Policy and Plan.

All staff members, Board members and parents Council were consulted and their views were canvassed in preparation of the draft plan. The Critical Incident Policy and Plan has been presented to all relevant members to the school community.

Each member of the critical Incident Team has a personal copy of the plan.

A master copy is held in the school office.

Essential numbers are displayed in the school office.

All new and temporary staff are introduced to the details of the plan by the Staff Liaison person.

Policy Review.

September 2019

Signed : 
Fr. Tom Hever (Chairperson)

Date: 12/12/18