

SLIEVEARDAGH NS

ROLL NO. 11470B

Critical Incident Policy

Slieveardagh National School aims to protect the well-being of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. The Board of Management through the Principal Fiona Looby, has drawn up a critical incident management plan as one element of the school's policies and plans.

Our aim is to establish a Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) to steer the development and implementation of the plan.

What is a critical incident?

The staff and management of Slieveardagh National school 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 that 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 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 is limited. It should enable us to affect a return to normality as soon as possible.

We have put systems in place to help build a 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

- Child Safeguarding Statement
- 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 closed during school hours.
- School doors locked during class time.
- Rules of the playground
- School checked every evening – taps, windows etc by Margaret Butler

Psychological Safety

The management and staff of Slieveardagh National School 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 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 primary school students 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, doctor
- 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 e.g. fire officers, gardai.
- 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.
- Students who are identified as being at risk are referred to the designated staff member, 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
- To Promote Well-Being, we have a separate Well-Being Policy.

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.

Roles

Schools need to make arrangements for assigning roles, taking account of such practical issues as school size and the number of staff available. Many schools will do some doubling up of roles. Schools might wish to consider including one or more members of the BOM on the team as well as members of the school's care team if there is one in place.

The key roles which need to be covered are as follows:

- Team leader – Fiona Looby
- Garda Liaison-Fiona Looby
- Staff liaison-Bridget Fogarty
- Student liaison-each teacher
- Parent liaison-Fiona Looby and Bridget Fogarty
- Community liaison-Lorraine Fitzgerald & Sarah Lawlor
- Media liaison: Fiona Looby – nobody else to speak to the media, including children
- Administrator-Margaret Mullally
- Spiritual Advisor- Fr. Derry Quirke

Key responsibilities of each role

Team Leader – Fiona Looby

- 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
- Liaises with the bereaved family – led by family

Garda Liaison – Fiona Looby

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

Staff liaison – Bridget Fogarty

- 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

Community liaison – Fiona Looby

- 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 – Lorraine Fitzgerald and Sarah Lawlor

- Visits the bereaved family with the team leader
- Arranges parents 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 a room for meetings with parents
- Meets with individual parents
- Provides appropriate materials for parents (from their critical incident folder)

Media liaison – Fiona Looby

- 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) Text will be sent to parents to come into school, no photos on facebook or on media, only designated person to speak with media with pre-written script.
- 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 – Margaret Mullally

- 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 for letters are on the schools system in advance and ready for adaptation
- Prepares and sends out letters, emails and faxes
- 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, intervention used, material used etc.

The school secretary will have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters, photocopying etc.

Confidentiality and good name considerations

The management and staff of Slieveardagh N.S. 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. In the case of a tragic death words such as suicide or murder will not be used. The phrases such as tragic death or sudden death may be used.

Critical incident rooms

In the event of a critical incident

The staff room will be the main room used to meet with staff

Classroom A will be used for meetings with students

A spare classroom will be used for parents

Classroom B will be used for media

Name room for individual sessions with students

Staffroom for other visitors / NEPS

Consultation and communication regarding the plan

All staff were consulted, and their views canvassed in the preparation of this policy and plan. Students and parents 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 presents 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 Fiona.

The plan will be updated annually.

Signed: _____

Date: _____