



RETNS CRITICAL INCIDENT Management Plan

Rathfarnham Educate Together N.S. aims to protect the well-being of its children and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment.

This Critical Incident Management Plan (CIMP) has been drawn up with the approval of the Board of Management as one element of the school's policy on the management of critical incidents. We have established a Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) to steer the development and implementation of the plan.

Definition of a Critical Incident

The staff and management of RETNS 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 children 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 or violence
- An intrusion into the school
- An accident involving members of the school community
- An accident or 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

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 children and staff. Following the plan should help ensure that the effects on children and staff will be limited. It should enable us to return to normality as soon as possible.

Creation of a coping, supportive and caring ethos in the school

We have put systems in place to help build resilience in staff and children, 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.

1. Physical Safety.

The following are some examples of how the school seeks to promote and ensure physical safety:

- Children are not permitted to enter the school building until 08.50 (08.40 for Covid-19 arrangements from 01.09.20)
- Children are not permitted to leave the school unaccompanied during school hours
- Evacuation plan formulated
- Regular fire drills
- Fire exits and fire extinguishers are regularly checked, monthly by the caretaker and annually by an external company
- Side gate of the school is closed during school hours
- Buzzer system to enter school during school hours
- Building is alarmed
- CCTV cameras are in place
- Health and safety officer appointed on BOM
- Health and safety staff representative appointed
- Staff participate in regular first aid training

2. Psychological safety

- Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is integrated into the work of the school. It is addressed in the curriculum by dealing with issues such as grief and loss; communication skills; stress and anger management; resilience; conflict resolution; problem solving; help-seeking; bullying; decision making and prevention of drug and alcohol abuse.
- Staff are familiar with the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures and details of how to proceed with suspicions and disclosures
- Books and resources on difficulties affecting the primary school child are available
- Student and staff wellbeing is given major emphasis in the school
- The school has a clear policy on bullying and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy. A student anti-bullying team is active in the school
- There is a buddy system in place where older children act as buddies to younger children for certain activities
- Staff are informed of courses or supports for themselves and their families.

Critical Incident Management Team

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. The members of the team will meet as required. The members of the team will review the policy and plan as required. Each member of the team has a dedicated critical incident folder. This contains a copy of the policy and plan and any materials deemed necessary or helpful to be used in the event of an incident.

Roles (see appendix 1 for names)

Team leader:

- 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 if applicable
- Liaises with the Gardaí if applicable
- Ensures that information about deaths or other developments is checked for accuracy before being shared. In the absence of the Team Leader the Staff Liaison rep will take the lead.

Staff Liaison:

- Leads briefing meetings for staff on the facts as known, gives staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions, and outlines a routine for the day
- Advises staff on the procedures for identification of vulnerable children
- Provides materials for staff (e.g. from critical incident folder)
- Keeps staff updated as the day progresses
- Is alert to vulnerable members of staff and makes contact with them individually

Student Liaison:

- Alerts other staff to vulnerable children
- Provides materials for children (e.g. from their critical incident folder)
- Keeps records of children seen by external agency staff
- Looks after setting up and supervision of a “quiet” room if necessary

Parent/guardians Liaison:

- Visits the bereaved family with the team leader as necessary
- Arranges parent/guardian meetings if necessary
- May facilitate such meetings and manage “questions and answers”
- Manages “consent” issues if they arise in accordance with agreed school policy
- Sets up room for meetings with parents/guardians
- Maintains a record of parents/guardians seen
- Meets with individual parents/guardians
- Provides appropriate material for parents/guardians (e.g. from their critical incident folder)

Community/agency liaison:

- Maintains up-to-date lists of contact numbers of key parents/guardians e.g. members of the Parents/guardians' Association, emergency support services and other external contacts and resources
- Liaises with agencies in the community for support and onward referral
- Checks the credentials of individuals offering support
- Coordinates the involvement of these agencies
- Reminds visiting staff to wear name badges
- Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies

Media Liaison:

- In advance of an incident, will consider issues that may arise and how they may be responded to (e.g. children being interviewed, photographers on the premises etc.)
- In the event of an incident, will liaise where necessary with the relevant teacher/ANA unions etc.
- Will draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews (as agreed by school management)

Administrator:

- Maintenance of folders for CIMT
- Maintenance of up-to-date telephone numbers of parents/guardians, staff, emergency services
- Takes telephone calls and notes those that need to be responded to
- Ensures that templates are on the school system and ready for adaptation
- Prepares and sends out letters, texts, emails and faxes
- Photocopies materials needed
- Maintains records (Roles may be doubled up as deemed appropriate.)

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.

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

Confidentiality

The management and staff of RETNS 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 children do so also. For instance, the term "suicide" will not be used unless there is solid information that death was due to suicide, and that the family consents to its use.

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 staffroom will be the main room used to meet the staff
- Classrooms for meetings with children
- Assembly hall/Nurture Room for parents/guardians
- Assembly hall/Principal’s office for media
- Resource rooms for individual sessions with children
- Assembly hall/Principal’s office/ resource room for other visitors

Consultation and communication

All staff were consulted, and their views considered in the preparation of this policy and plan. Children and parents’/guardians’ representatives were also consulted and asked for their opinions. 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 the administrator. The plan will be updated annually in September to reflect changes in staffing, school layout etc.

The plan will be reviewed every two years.

Appendix 1

Critical Incident Management Team:

Louise Ledwith(Principal)

Anna O’Herlihy (Deputy Principal)

Mary Griffin (In-school Leadership Team, ISL)

Anne Bradley (ISL)

Ronan Barrett (ISL)

Katie Doyle (ISL)

Brian Ramberg (ISL)

Aileen Cronin (Health and Safety Officer)

Sarah Lacey- Stoddart (ANA)

Carol Moran/Louise Daly (School secretaries)

Shonagh Byrne (Chairperson, BoM)

Barbara Nolan (Parent/guardians’ Nominee, BoM)

If Louise Ledwith is absent / unavailable, the Deputy Principal, Anna O’Herlihy, will assume Louise’s role. Mary Griffin/Anne Bradley* will fill Anna O’Herlihy’s place on the team (*whomever is in school at the time).

Role	Name	Telephone number
Team leader	Louise Ledwith	086-0649908
Garda Liaison	Louise Ledwith	086-0649908
Staff liaison	Anna O’Herlihy Sarah Lacey- Stoddart	086-3874117 0857212436
Children liaison	Ronan Barrett Anne Bradley	0834772112 086-3425756
Parent/guardians liaison	Louise Ledwith Barbara Nolan (Parent/guardians’ Nominee, BoM)	086-0649908 085 - 8551122
Community liaison	Mary Griffin / Katie Doyle	087-6877463/087-6330392
External agency liaison	Mary Griffin/ Katie Doyle	087-6877463/087-6330392
Media liaison	Shonagh Byrne (BOM Chairperson)	087 74754581
Administrator	Carol Moran/Louise Daly	087-2788856/086 3391836

Short term actions – Day 1

Task	Name
Gather accurate information: Who, what, when, where?	Team
Convene a CIMT meeting - specify time and place clearly	Louise Ledwith
Contact external agencies	Mary Griffin/ Katie Doyle
Arrange supervision for children	Anne Bradley / Ronan Barrett
Hold staff meeting	All staff
Agree schedule for the day	Team
Inform children – (close friends and children with learning difficulties may need to be told separately)	Louise Ledwith and class teacher
Compile list of vulnerable children	Anna O’Herlihy
Contact / visit the bereaved family	Louise Ledwith/Anna O’Herlihy/Class Teacher
Prepare and agree media statement and deal with media	Louise Ledwith with Shonagh Byrne (BoM chair)
Inform parents/guardians	Louise Ledwith
Hold end of day staff meeting	Louise Ledwith

Medium term actions – (Day 2 and following days)

Task	Name
Convene a CIMT meeting – review the events of day 1	CIMT

Meet external agencies	Mary Griffin / Katie Doyle
Arrange support for children, staff, parent/guardians	Louise, Anna, Ronan, Katie, Barbara – <i>and P.A.</i>
Visit the injured	Louise Ledwith and Class Teacher
Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements	Louise Ledwith
Meet whole staff	Louise Ledwith
Make decisions about school closure	B.O.M.
Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service	Louise Ledwith

Follow – up – beyond 72 hours

Task	Name
Monitor children for signs of continuing distress	Class teacher and supporting SET teacher
Liaise with agencies regarding referrals	Mary Griffin
Plan for return of bereaved	Louise Ledwith
Plan for giving of ‘memory box’ to bereaved family	Class teacher
Decide on memorials and anniversaries	B.O.M/ Staff and parent/guardians
Review response to incident and amend plan	Staff / B.O.M

Emergency Contact List

(Available in school office and Principal’s office)

When possible, contacts made in consultation with CIMT. Ultimate responsibility rests with the Principal and Chairperson of BoM.

AGENCY	CONTACT NUMBERS
GARDA	01 666 6500
COMMUNITY GARDA	01 6666520
AMBULANCE SERVICE	112 / 999
HOSPITAL: Tallaght Crumlin	01 414 2000 01 409 6100
FIRE BRIGRADE	112
HSE/ Community Care Team (Rathfarnham)	01 4931134
	01 8379964

POISONS INFORMATION (Beaumont Hospital)	
DES INSPECTOR (Ursula Cotter)	ursula_Cotter@education.gov.ie
NEPS PSYCHOLOGIST (Patricia Mc Tague)	(0761) 108400
DES	0906483678
EDUCATE TOGETHER HEAD OFFICE	01 4292500
INTO	01 8722533
EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE SERVICE	1800 411 057
B.O.M (Shonagh Byrne – Chairperson)	087 7454581
PARENT/GUARDIANS' ASSOCIATION Carole Bray Helen Carty	0863955489 0861634209
LOCAL SCHOOLS Ballinteer Educate Together Divine Word Good Shepherd N.S. Loreto N.S. St. Attracta's N.S St. Mary's B.N.S.	01 2963017 01 4945955 01 2989475 01 4931640 01 2951627 01 4931477

Plan ratified on 12/2/24.

Signature of Chairperson Shonagh Byrne.

Sample letters to parent/guardians
Sudden death/accident

Dear Parents/Guardians,

The school has experienced (sudden death/serious accident) of one of our children. We are deeply saddened by the deaths/events.

(Brief details of the incident and in the event of a death, perhaps some positive remembrances of the person lost.)

Our thoughts are with (the family name)

We have support structures in place to help your child cope with this tragedy. (Elaborate)

It is possible that your child may have some feelings and questions that she may like to discuss with you. It is important to give truthful information that is appropriate to her age.

You can help your child by taking the time to listen and by encouraging her to express her feelings. All children are different and will express their feelings in different ways. It is not uncommon for children to have difficulty concentrating or to be fearful, anxious or irritable. They may become withdrawn, cry, complain of physical aches and pains, have difficulty sleeping or have nightmares. Some may not want to eat. These are generally short-term reactions. Over the course of the days to come, please keep an eye on your child and allow her to express her feelings without criticism.

Although classes will continue as usual, I anticipate that the next few days will be difficult for everyone, however, we advise if at all possible that family routines proceed as normal.

(Optional) An information evening for parent/guardians is planned for _____. At that time, further information about how to help children on grief will be given.

We have enclosed some information which you may find useful in helping your child through this difficult time.

If you would like advice you may contact the following people at the school.
(Details)

Principal's signature

Sample letter Violent death

Dear Parent/Guardians,

I need to inform you of a very sad event that has happened.

(Give accurate information about the incident, but avoid using the word murder etc as this will not be established until the court case is completed)

A child/young person from the neighbourhood, who is the brother of _____, a pupil here at school, was killed as a result of (a violent attack, violent incident etc) earlier this week. We are all profoundly saddened by his/her death.

We have shared this information and have had discussions with all our children so that they know what has happened. School staff members have been available to children on an on-going basis today. Other support personnel (including...) are available to advise staff and where necessary to talk to children. This support will continue for.....

The death of any young person is tragic, but a violent death is even more difficult. It is hard to have to teach our children about the violence in our world and to accept that sometimes we do not have the power to prevent it.

This death may cause a variety of reactions in your child. Some children may be afraid for their own life and for the lives of the people they love. Take time to listen to their fears and reassure them what has happened is rare.

We have enclosed some additional information that may be useful during this time.

The media in the vicinity may approach you or your child. You need not respond to their questions if you are approached. We will not allow the media to interview your child at school and our general advice is that you should not allow your child be interviewed. They are not mature enough to judge what to say and may say something they will regret later.

(If planned) A support meeting for parent/guardians is planned for _____. At that time, we can talk further about how to help ourselves and our children.

Sincerely,

Principal