



Critical Incident Management Policy

Introduction

River Valley Community National School aims to protect the well-being of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times as outlined in our school's mission statement. The Board of Management, through the Principal, has drawn up a Critical Incident Management Plan as one element of the school's policies and plans.

Review and Research

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 2016 – available on share drive)
- 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 2015)

What is a critical incident?

The staff and management of River Valley Community National School recognise a critical incident to be “an incident or sequence of events that **“overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms 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*

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 effect a return to normality as soon as possible. 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

- Health and Safety Policy
- Regular health and safety risk assessments
- Evacuation plan formulated
- Regular fire drills occur
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
- Pre-opening supervision in the school
- Inner gate closed during school hours
- Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures
- Code of Positive Behaviour including rules of the playground – (School Expectations)

- Psychological safety

The management and staff of River Valley Community 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 an integral part of this provision.

- Staff have access to training for their role in SPHE (Professional Development providers)
- The school has a clear policy on bullying and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy
- Staff are informed about how to access support for themselves (information is posted on the school staff noticeboard).
- Staff are familiar with the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures in line with:

Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools Circular 0065/2011

Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children

Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary School

- The school has links with a range of external agencies – such as NEPS, CAMHS, HSE Primary Care Services
- 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)

Level of Response

- ❖ Response Level 1: Death of a student or staff member who was terminally ill; death of parent, sibling; fire or damage to school property.
- ❖ Response Level 2: Sudden death of a student or staff member.
- ❖ Response Level 3: Accident/Event involving a number of students; a violent death; incident with high media profile; an event that involves a number of schools.

Critical Incident Management Team

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

Role

- 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

NB: DDLETB Director of Schools will take the lead in the absence of the Principal - the team leader.

Garda liaison: DDLETB Director of Schools

Role

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

Staff liaison: Principal

Role

- 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.

Student liaison: Teacher 1

Role

- May co-ordinate information from teachers about students they are concerned about

- Alerts other staff to vulnerable students (appropriately)
- Provides materials for students (from their critical incident folder)
- Maintains student contact records
- Looks after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room where agreed

Community/agency liaison: Principal

Role

- 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

Parent liaison: Principal & Teacher 1

Role

- 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
- Meets with individual parents
- Provides appropriate materials for parents (from their critical incident folder)

Media liaison: DDLETB Director of Schools

Role

- 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: Principal

Role

- 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 system in advance and ready for adaptation
- Prepares and sends out letters, emails and texts
- Photocopies materials needed
- Maintains records Record keeping School

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.

Contact details for the Critical Incident Management Team are in Appendix 1

Critical Incident Action Plan Template is in Appendix 2

Confidentiality and Good Name Considerations

Management and staff of River Valley Community National School 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. The term suicide should not be used unless 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:

Staff Room - Main room for meeting staff

Classroom - Meetings with students

SET Room - Individual sessions with students

Staff Room/Principal Office - Meetings parents

Staff Room/Principal 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 the principal. The plan will be updated annually.

Appendix 1

Critical Incident Management Team

- | | | |
|-------------------------|----------------|------------|
| - Team leader/Principal | Anne McArdle | 0858705523 |
| - Teacher 1 | Maria Kildea | 0861535566 |
| - Director of Schools | Nichola Spokes | 0872484746 |

DRAFT

Appendix 2

Critical Incident Plan A

Communicate plan A is in operation Via River Valley CNS emergency group message.

Short term actions – Day 1

Task	Role
Gather accurate information	Team Leader
Who, what, when, where?	Team Leader
Convene a CIMT meeting – specify time and place clearly	Team Leader
Contact external agencies	Team Leader/Community Liaison
Arrange supervision for students	Student Liaison
Hold staff meeting	All Staff
Agree schedule for the day	All Staff
Inform parents	Team Leader/Parent Liaison
Inform students – (close friends and students with learning difficulties may need to be told separately). Appendix A Classroom Session following news of a Critical Incident	Team Leader/ Student Liaison/Class Teacher
Compile a list of vulnerable students	Team Leader/Student Liaison
Contact/visit bereaved family	Team Leader/Parent Liaison
Prepare and agree media statement and deal with media	Team Leader/Media Liaison
Hold end of day staff briefing	All Staff

Medium term actions – (Day 2 and following days)

Task	Role
Convene a CIMT meeting to review the events of day 1 Team Leader Meet external Agencies.	Team Leader Team Leader /Community Liaison
Meet whole staff	Team Leader
Arrange support for Students, Staff, Parents	Team Leader//Student Liaison /Parent Liaison /Community Liaison
Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements	Team Leader
Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service Make decisions about school closure	All Staff Chairperson BOM Director of Schools

Follow-up – beyond 72 hours

Task	Role
Monitor students for signs of continuing distress	Class Teachers
Liaise with agencies regarding referrals	Team Leader/Student Liaison
Plan for return of bereaved student(s)	Team Leader/Student Liaison
Plan for giving of 'memory box' to bereaved family	Team Leader/ /Student Liaison/Parent Liaison
Decide on memorials and anniversaries Review response to incident and amend plan	School Community Staff/ BOM

Appendix 3

Critical Incident Plan B: Lockdown

Communicate Plan B in operation via River Valley CNS Emergency Group message

If intruder enters school building:

- Mobile phone used to alert staff
- Ensure all children with a staff member
- Lock doors, close windows and blinds
- Everyone hide under tables.
- If in toilet, hide in cubicles, with legs up.
- Phone 999

If intruder enters playground:

- Bring all children into school and lockdown school
- phone 999

Appendix 4

Critical Incident Policy Resources

NEPS

- Responding to Critical Incidents (NEPS Guidelines and Resource Materials for Schools 2016) located on share drive
- Child Protection  Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children
- Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools
- Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools Circular 0065/2011
- Child Protection Policy
- Stay Safe Publication - A Parent's Guide – Child Abuse Prevention Programme

Publications

- INTO/Ulster Teacher Union (2000)-When Tragedy Strikes: Guidelines for Effective Critical Incident Management in Schools.
- City of Dublin VEC Psychological Services – Coping with a Major Crisis & When Something Terrible Happens
- Pat Donnelly, Barnardos (2002)
- Someone to Talk To: A Handbook in Childhood Bereavement

Books from Rainbows Grief Support Organization

- Healing the Hurt - Suzy Yehl Marta
- Our Families - Teresa Dcaccia
- When People Die Teresa Dcaccia
- Our Feelings Teresa Dcaccia
- Getting used to Change Teresa Dcaccia
- It's Working Teresa Dcaccia

Other Books

- Young People and Loss – A Handbook for Schools – Robin Cooper
- End of life Rituals McRae Books ☒ When People Die (How can I deal with) – Sally Hewitt
- When People Die (Choices and Decisions) – Pete Sanders & Steve Myers
- Death – Helping Children Understand – Solas

Suicide

- Suicide Bereavement and Loss. Perspective and Responses Luke Monaghan (2001)
- Echoes of Suicide Siobhan Foster Ryan and Luke Monaghan (2001)
- “SafeTALK” Resource Book – Suicide Alertness for Everyone – Living Works DVDs
- “A life 2 live 4” – Console – Suicide Prevention
- “Facing up to Suicide” – Aware - A Pastoral Approach Epilepsy
- 1 in 131 people have Epilepsy – The Irish Epilepsy Association ☒ My Lights go out – Julie Greene Drug Education
- INTO – Counselling Services – 1850 708 708/ 01 8047700
- Geno – “Take care of your Mental Health” - 083 009 9739
- Inspire Workplace Services – Freephone – 1800 411 057
- My Mind – “What goes on in your Mind” – 01 4433961

Staff Supports

- INTO – Counselling Services – 1850 708 708/ 01 8047700
- Geno – “Take care of your Mental Health” - 083 009 9739
- Inspire Workplace Services – Freephone – 1800 411 057
- My Mind – “What goes on in your Mind” – 01 4433961

Appendix 5

Emergency Contact List	
Agency	Contact Numbers
Swords Garda Station	01 666 4700
Beaumont Hospital Temple Street Swift Care Clinic, Airside	01 809 3000 01 878 4200 1890 866966
Fire Brigade	999/112
Local GP – Boromhe Medical Clinic	01 840 6423
HSE Community Care Team	01 890 2200
TUSLA	01 870 8000
NEPS Psychologists	01 8892700
Child and Family Mental Health Service (CAMHS)	01 813 8260 Opening hours: 9-5 (closed for lunch 1-2)
School Inspector	Niamh_Quinn@education.gov.ie
Employee Assistance Service	1800 411 057
DDLETB Head Office	01 452 9600
Director of Schools Nichola Spokes	0872484746

Ratification and Review

The staff, under the guidance of the Principal will review this policy as required.

Signed: _____ Date: ___/___/_____

(Principal)

Signed: _____ Date: ___/___/_____

(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Reviews of Policy:

Signed: _____ Date: ___/___/_____

(Principal)

Signed: _____ Date: ___/___/_____

(Chairperson of Board of Management)

DRAFT