

## **Critical Incident Policy St Clare's P.S.**

### **Introduction**

St. Clare's Primary School aims to provide a secure and caring learning environment for all its students. The Board of Management, through the Principal and I.S.M.T. has drawn up a critical incident management plan as part of the school's policies and plans.

The aim of the school is to establish a Critical Incident Management Policy (CIMP)

### **Review and Research**

The I.S.M.T. consulted the resource documents below in devising the policy.

These include:

*Responding to Critical Incidents; Guidelines for Schools (NEPS 2007)*

### **Definition of a 'critical incident'**

The staff and management St. Clare's P.S. 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 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*
- *Disruption to the normal running of any classroom because of unacceptably violent or aggressive behaviour of a pupil, parent or guardian, or a member of the wider community which causes a health and safety risk to the teacher or pupils in that classroom.*

### **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 to enable the school to effect a 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 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 –

- Refer to the Health & Safety policy / Annual Risk Assessment
  - Evacuation plan / Fire Drill carried out twice annually.
  - Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
  - Morning supervision from 9:05 in the school yard by an I.S.M.T. member.
  - Rules of the playground are reviewed regularly at staff meetings and yard records of incidents retained.
- Tours and outings –teachers will carry a school mobile phone on tours and outings.
- Text a parent is also in operation to notify all parents if the need arises.

#### Psychological safety

The management and staff of St. Clare's P.S. 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 (S.P.H.E.) is integrated into the daily fabric of the school.
- School Curriculum dealing with loss (as required); communication skills; stress and anger management; resilience; conflict management; problem solving; help-seeking; bullying; decision making and prevention of alcohol and drug misuse.

- Staff have access to training for their role in SPHE as needed e.g. Walk Tall, Anti-bullying, RSE and child protection, Zippy's friends, Apples friends, Healthy Schools Initiative (HSE) etc.
- Staff are familiar with the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures.
- The school has developed links with a range of external agencies – H.S.E., N.E.P.S., local Priest/parish, local Gardaí, social services and Vincent De Paul.
- 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.
- The school has a clear policy on bullying, reporting all incidents to the B.O.M. and addressing cyberbullying.

### **Roles:**

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

- Team Leader
- Garda liaison
- Staff liaison.
- Student liaison
- Parent liaison
- Community liaison
- Media liaison
- Administrator

Outlined below are some points on the key responsibilities of each role.

Team leader (Mr Conlon/Kieran Ryan)

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

- Liaises with the Board of Management; D.E.S.; N.E.P.S;
- Liaises with the bereaved/family

Ms Kelly/Mrs Fox will take the lead in the absence of Mr Conlon.

Garda liaison (Mr. Conlon or School Chairperson Kieran Ryan)

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

Staff liaison (Ms Kelly/Mrs Fox)

- 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.

Media liaison (Ms Kelly/Mrs Conlon)

- 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
- Will draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews (as agreed by school management)

Student liaison Mrs Fox/Mrs Conlon)

- Will co-ordinate information from all staff about students they are concerned about

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

#### Community/agency liaison (Mrs Fox/Frank Considine)

- Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of
  - Key parents, such as members of the Parents Association, B.O.M. Members,
  - Emergency support services and other external contacts and resources

#### Ms Kelly/Mrs Mc Dermott

- 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 and reminds agency staff to wear name badges
- Updates staff members on the involvement of external agencies

#### Parent liaison (Mrs Fox/Mrs Conlon)

- Visits the bereaved family with the team leader
- Arranges parent meetings where necessary in crisis situation
- 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)

#### Administrator (Frank Considine)

- 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 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, interventions used, material used etc.

## **Confidentiality and good name considerations**

The management and staff of St. Clare's Primary School 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.

## **Critical incident rooms**

In the event of a critical incident,

*The Principal's office* will be the main room used to meet the staff ,parents and any other visitors

*School GP room* for meetings with students

*Staff Room or L.S.R.T .rooms* for media or visitors

Consultation and communication regarding the plan

All staff must be consulted and their views canvassed in the preparation of this policy and plan. Parent representatives must also be consulted and asked for their comments.

The school's final policy and plan in relation to responding to critical incidents will be presented to all staff and the plan will be updated every 3 years (Last review September 2017 review) or on request at any time.