

# **Killeshin National School - Critical Incident Policy**

## **Introductory Statement**

This policy was devised and formulated by the school community, involving Board of Management, parents and Staff of Killeshin National School, in accordance with the Rules and Regulations of the Department of Education and Science and the C.P.S.M.A.

## **Ethos**

Killeshin National School is a co-educational, primary school, which strives to provide a well ordered, caring, happy and secure atmosphere where the intellectual, spiritual, physical, moral and cultural needs of the pupils are identified and addressed. While respect is paid to all religious and/or value systems, Killeshin National School is a Catholic school under the patronage of the Bishop of Kildare & Leighlin.

The school supports the principles of inclusiveness, equality of access and of participation in school life, with respect for diversity of tradition, values, beliefs, languages and ways of life in society, whilst working within the context of the Rules and Regulations of the Department of Education and Science.

## **Aim**

To outline the steps that should be taken to ensure an effective response to crisis

situations. **What is a Critical Incident**

A critical incident is any incident or sequence of events which overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school and disrupts the running of the school.

## **Examples**

Death, major illness/outbreak of disease

Criminal Incidents

Major accidents, serious injury

Suicide

Civil unrest, war (refugees may be traumatised by events that happened elsewhere) Fire, natural and technological disaster

Disappearance of student from home or school

Unauthorised removal of student from school or home

## **Critical Incidents Management Team**

Leadership Role: Principal -Nicola McGuill / Chairperson of B.O.M. -Fr. John Dunphy

Communication Role: Principal - Nicola McGuill / Chairperson of B.O.M.-Fr. John Dunphy

Student Liaison/ Counselling Role: Graham Ball

Chaplaincy Role: School Chaplain : Fr. John Dunphy

Family Liaison Role: Deputy Principal : Mary-Clare Fitzpatrick

Parents Association Rep: Chairperson of Association, Geraldine

Hennessy/Louise Doyle Board of Management Rep: Vera Bolger

National Educational Psychological Services Rep: Psychologist Appointed to the School  
: (Éilis Wallace Chisholm\*)

### **Roles and Responsibilities:**

#### **Leadership Role:**

Intervention

Confirm the event

Activate the C.I. response team

Express sympathy to family

Clarify facts surrounding event

Make contact with other relevant agencies

Contact and inform Family/Friends of incident

Establish lines of communication with agencies dealing with incident with a view to being kept informed of developments as they occur.

Decide whether a site visit is appropriate (Site visit by Principal or person nominated by Principal) Decide how news will be communicated to different groups (staff, pupils, outside school) Postvention

Ensure provision of ongoing support to staff and students

Facilitate any appropriate memorial events

Review plan

#### **Communication Role:**

Intervention

With team prepare a public statement

Organise designated room to address media promptly

Ensure telephone line free for outgoing and important incoming calls

Liaison with relevant outside support agencies

Postvention

Review and evaluate effectiveness of communication response

**Student Liaison/ Counselling Role:**

Intervention

Outline specific services available in school

Put in place clear referral procedures

Address immediate needs of pupils/staff

Decide on information to be presented to children with team leader

Provide information on counselling services available

Postvention

Ongoing support to vulnerable students

Monitor class most affected

Refer on, as appropriate

Review and evaluate plan

**Chaplaincy Role:**

Intervention

Visit home, if appropriate

Assist with prayer services

Make contact with local clergy

Be available as personal and spiritual support to staff

Postvention

Provide follow-up support to family in conjunction with Community Liaison

Role. Work in partnership with religious education team

Review and evaluate plan

**Family Liaison Role:**

Intervention

Coordinate contact with families (following first contact by C.I. Team Leader) Keep families of pupils involved informed of current developments in incident. Consult with family around involvement of school in possible events e.g. funeral service Assist with all communication dealing with parents of any student affected by critical incident. Postvention

Provide ongoing support to bereaved/affected family/families

Involve as appropriate family in school liturgies/ memorial services

Offer to link family with community support groups.  
Review and evaluate plan

## **Action Plan**

### **Short-Term Actions (Day 1)**

Immediate contact with families involved in incident  
Consult with the family regarding appropriate support from the school, e.g. funeral service.  
Contact with families of the other children affected(option : (a) in school support (b)withdrawal by family)  
Ensure a quiet place can be made for pupils/staff  
Rooms will be made available as follows:  
Prayer room: Resource Room 1  
Individual Meetings: Resource Room 2  
Parents Room: School Hall

### **Media Briefing (0 - 24 hours)**

Designate a spokesperson. (Leader)  
Prepare a brief statement. (Team)  
Protect the family's privacy.  
Gather accurate information.  
What happened, where and when?  
What is the extent of the injuries/fatalities?  
How many are involved and what are their names?  
Is there a risk of further injury?  
What agencies have been contacted already?  
Contact appropriate agencies  
Emergency services  
Medical services  
H.S.E Psychology Departments/Community care services  
NEPS  
B.O.M.  
DES/Schools inspector  
Convene a meeting with Key Staff/Critical Management Team (8.30 a.m.)  
Organise a staff meeting, if appropriate. (9.00 a.m.)  
Organise timetable/routine for the day.(Adhering to the normal school routine is important, if this is possible).  
Class teachers to take note of any absentees who might need to be contacted, list of friends etc., or any other relevant information and give to the student Liason person  
Arrange supervision of pupils  
Liaise with the family regarding funeral arrangements/memorial service.  
The Chaplain/Principal liaise with the family, to extend sympathy and clarify the family's wishes regarding the school's involvement in funeral/memorial service.  
Arrange a home visit by two staff representatives within 24 hours, if appropriate.(Principal + Class Teacher)  
Have regard for different religious traditions and faiths.

## **Medium-Term Actions (24-72 Hours)**

Preparation of pupils/staff attending funeral

Involvement of pupils/staff in liturgy if agreed by bereaved family

Facilitation of pupils/staffs responses, eg Sympathy cards, flowers, book of condolences, etc  
Ritual within the school.

Review the events of first 24 hours.

Reconvene Key Staff/Critical Incident Management Team. (8.30 a.m.)

Decide arrangements for support meetings for parents/pupils/staff.

Decide on mechanism for feedback from teachers on vulnerable students.

Have reviews Critical Incident Management Team meeting. (3.00 p.m.)

Establish contact with absent staff and pupils.

Arrange support for individual pupils, groups of pupils, and parents, if necessary. Hold support/information meeting for parents/pupils, if necessary, in order to clarify what has happened.

Teacher for each age group to talk separately (depending on age) certain things they don't need to know.

Give any teacher who feels uncomfortable with involvement in support meetings the choice of opting out.

Arrange, in consultation, with outside agencies, individual or group debriefings or support meetings: (with parental permission (permission slips to be included in enrolment forms)

Plan for the re-integration of pupils staff e.g., absentees, injured, siblings, close relative etc.) Student Liaison person to liaise with above on their return to school.

Plan Visits to injured.

Family Liaison person + Class teacher + Principal to visit home/hospital.

Attendance and participation at funeral/memorial service (to be decided).

Decide this in accordance with parents wishes and school management decisions and in consultation with close school friends. School closure

Request a decision on this from school management.

## **Longer Term Actions**

Monitor Pupils for signs of continuing distress

If, over a prolonged period of time, a student continues to display the following, he/she may need assistance from Health Board

Uncharacteristic behaviour

Deterioration in academic performance

Physical symptoms - e.g. weight loss/gain, lack of attention to appearance, tiredness, restlessness Inappropriate emotional reactions

Increased absenteeism.

Evaluate response to incident and amend Critical Incident Management Plan appropriately What went well?

Where were the gaps?

What was most/least helpful?

Have all necessary onward referrals to support services been made?

Is there any unfinished business?

Formalise the Critical Incident Plan for the future.

Consult with NEPS psychologist

Inform new staff/new school pupils affected by Critical Incidents where appropriate. Ensure that new staff is aware of the school policy and procedures in this area. Ensure they are aware of which pupils were affected in any recent incident and in what way. When individual pupils or a class of pupils affected by an incident are transferring to a new school,

it would be useful to brief the Principal of the new school.

Decide on appropriate ways to deal with anniversaries. (Be sensitive to special days and events)

Anniversaries may trigger emotional responses in pupils/staff and they may need additional support at this time.

Acknowledge the anniversary with the family.

Be sensitive to significant days like Birthdays, Christmas, Mother's Day, and Father's Day. Plan a school memorial service e.g. plant tree(closure)

Care of deceased persons possessions. What are the parents wishes?

Update and amend school records.

## **Resources**

"Young People and Loss, A Handbook for Schools" Robin Cooper

"Silver Linings: Community Crisis Response" Rainbows

"Responding to Critical Incidents - Resource Materials for Schools" DES

"Responding to Critical Incidents -" Guidelines for Schools" DES

## **Review**

This policy will be reviewed May 2024 or sooner if required.

Signed: Fr. John Dunphy, Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed: Nicola McGuill, Principal.