St. John the Baptist Primary School

BALLAGHKEENE N.S.

THE BALLAGH,
ENNISCORTHY,
CO. WEXFORD

Critical Incident Management Policy

Ballaghkeene N.S. 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 Darren Nolan, has drawn up a Critical Incident Management Plan as one element of the school's policies and plans.

Review and Research

The 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)
- 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)

Define what you mean by the term 'critical incident'

The staff and management of **Ballaghkeene N.S.** recognise a critical incident to be "an incident or sequence of events that overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school".[1] Critical incidents may involve one or more students or staff members, or members of our local community. Types of incidents might include

1 Responding to Critical Incidents Resource Materials for Schools

- *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.

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

- Evacuation plan formulated
- Regular fire drills occur
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
- Pre-opening supervision on rainy mornings in the classrooms by class teachers on wet mornings only from 8.50 a.m.
- Front gate locked during school hours (code combination lock used)
- Front School doors locked during class time-access by buzzer only.
- Rules of the playground – are enforced

Psychological safety

The management and staff of **Ballaghkeene N.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 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 S.P.H.E.
- Staff are familiar with the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures

- 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 using the "Continuum of Support" approach which is outlined in the NEPS documents published in 2007 for primary schools.
- Students who are identified as being at risk are referred to the designated staff member (e.g. SEN teacher), 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.

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.

Team leader:
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;
- Liaises with the bereaved family

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

Staff liaison
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
Role
- Alerts other staff to vulnerable students (appropriately)
- Provides materials for students (from their critical incident folder)
- Maintains student contact records (R1).
- Looks after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room where agreed

Community/ agency liaison

Role

- Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of
    - Key parents, such as members of the Parents Association
    - 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

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
- Maintains a record of parents seen
- Meets with individual parents
- Provides appropriate materials for parents (from their critical incident folder)

Media liaison

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 DES; relevant teacher unions etc.
- Will draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews (as agreed by school management)

Administrator

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 schools system in advance and ready for adaptation
- Prepares and sends out letters, emails and texts
- 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.
Ann Kirwan, school secretary, will have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters, photocopying materials, etc.

Confidentiality and good name considerations
Management and staff of **Ballaghkeene N.S.** 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, e.g. the term 'suicide' will not be used unless there is solid information that death was due to suicide, *and* that 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

Room Name:	**Designated Purpose:**
Staff room	Main room for meeting staff
ICT Room	Meetings with students
Principal's Office	Meetings with parents
Principal's Office	Meetings with media
SEN Room (Ms. Wright's room)	**I**ndividual sessions with students
Principal's Office	Meetings with other visitors

Consultation and communication regarding the plan
All staff were consulted 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 Darren Nolan, Principal

The plan will be updated annually

Critical Incident Management Team		
Role	**Name**	**Phone**
Team leader:	Darren Nolan	053 9136500 083 0915450
Garda liaison	Darren Nolan	053 9136500 083 0915450
Staff liaison	Amanda Hanrahan (Laura Sinnott)	053 9136500
Student liaison		
Community liaison	Darren Nolan	083 0915450
Parent liaison	BoM parent nominees Shane Reddy Geraldine Waters	 087 2584809 086 2203462
Media liaison	Darren Nolan	083 0915450
Administrator	Ann Kirwan	053 9136500

Short term actions – Day 1

Task	Name
Gather accurate information	Darren Nolan
Who, what, when, where?	All staff – to be decided on the day
Convene a CIMT meeting – specify time and place clearly	Darren Nolan
Contact external agencies including NEPS	Darren Nolan
Arrange supervision for students	Amanda Hanrahan (Laura Sinnott)
Hold staff meeting	All staff
Agree schedule for the day	Darren Nolan/ Amanda Hanrahan (Laura Sinnott)
Inform/ address students – (close friends and students with learning difficulties may need to be told separately)	To be done on the day (depending when facts can be established)
Compile a list of vulnerable students	Amanda Hanrahan (Laura Sinnott)
Prepare and agree media statement and deal with media	Darren Nolan
Inform parents	Darren Nolan
Hold end of day staff briefing	All staff

Medium term actions – (Day 2 and following days)

Task	Name
Convene a CIMT meeting to review the events of day 1	Team leader Darren Nolan
Meet external agencies	Darren Nolan
Meet whole staff	Darren Nolan
Arrange support for students, staff, parents	CIMT
Visit the injured	To be decided
Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements	To be decided
Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service	All staff
Make decisions about school closure	BoM

Follow-up – beyond 72 hours

Task	Name
Monitor students for signs of continuing distress	Class teachers & SET
Liaise with agencies regarding referrals	SET
Plan for return of bereaved student(s)	Parents, NEPS, Class teacher, SET
Plan for giving of 'memory box' to bereaved family	All staff
Decide on memorials and anniversaries	BoM/ Staff, parents and students
Review response to incident and amend plan	Staff/ BoM

EMERGENCY CONTACT LIST

AGENCY	CONTACT NUMBERS
Garda	Enniscorthy Garda Station 053 9242580
Hospital	Wexford General Hospital 053 9153000
Fire Brigade	Enniscorthy Fire Station 053 9196585
Local GPs	The Ballagh Health Centre 053 9136411
HSE	053 9123522
Community Care Team	
Wexford Túsla Child & Family Agency	053 9198134
Child and Family Mental Health Service (CAMHS)	053 9123522
School Inspector	Mary O'Regan 087 9861463
NEPS Psychologist	Anna Marie Cullen - 087 7651475 Wexford NEPS Office - 01 8892492 NEPS Marlborough Street - 01 8892700
Dept. of Education	01 889 6400
INTO	01 804 7700
Clergy - Fr. Paddy Browne	087 950 0027
State Exams Commission	N/ A
Employee Assistance Service	1800 411 057

Ratification
This policy has been ratified by the Board of Management.

Signed: Dara Nolan Principal

Patrick Brennan Chairperson BoM

Date: 12/12/2022

Review:

This policy will be reviewed in December 2023

APPENDICES

Sample Scripts For Classroom Announcements.

- **Share facts of the deaths** - Simple announcement
- **Who, What, Where, When, How** - In response to children enquiries/concerns
- **Accident or general death** - Age appropriate response

I have some very sad news to share today. Jane Smith, a third class pupil in Mrs. Corrigan's class was hit by a car while she was waiting for the bus in front of her house yesterday morning. She died at the hospital last night.

I am feeling pretty sad and would like to take some time to talk about how you are, and answer any questions you might have.

- Suicide:

I would like to share some very sad news with you. Mr. Jones died yesterday at his home. We can all talk about it and can answer some of the questions.

- Violent Death

I have something sad to share with you. Jane Jones, a student who attends our school, had been missing for two days. The police found her body last night in the field behind her house. She had been shot in the head. The police are considering the death a homicide. They have arrested her boyfriend and charged him with murder. When someone is murdered it is very scary for all of us. We will provide an opportunity for you to talk about the death, share your concerns and fears and answer questions.

Sample Letter to Parents after a death

Dear Parent,

A very sad thing has happened in our school community. This weekend, one of our staff, Mr. Smith, a fifth class teacher and our basketball coach, was hit by a car on his way home from the beach and he was killed. According to his family, a car crossed over into his lane and hit his car head on. He died at the scene of the accident. We are all profoundly saddened by his death.

We have shared this information with your children today and had discussions with all the students in their classroom. Bereavement counsellors, teachers and other support staff have been, and will continue to be, available to students, teachers, and parents. Please contact the school if you have any questions or concerns.

As a parent you may want to talk to your child about death because it impacts each person in different ways. How children will react will depend on the relationship they had with the person who died, their age, and their prior experience with death.

Your child may:

- Appear unaffected
- Ask questions about the death repeatedly
- Be angry or aggressive
- Be withdrawn or moody
- Be sad or depressed
- Become afraid
- Have difficulty sleeping or eating

We suggest that you listen to your children. If they want to talk, answer their questions simply, honestly and be prepared to answer the same questions repeatedly.
(Optional) A parent Information Night is planned for _____.
At that time, we can talk further about how to help children in grief.
Our thoughts are with (family name)

Sincerely,

Sample letter to parents after a suicide death of a Student

Dear Parent,

I have very sad news to share with you. We learned last night that John smith, a senior in our school, died by suicide. According to police reports, he shot himself in the woods behind his home. We have shared this information with all of the students in their first period class this morning. We hope that you will be able to talk with your son or daughter about the death.

Suicide is a difficult death for most people to understand and accept because it raises many unanswerable questions. We can never rally know why a person kills himself. There can be a variety of factors that lead to and individual's suicide death. Sometimes students, especially John's friends, may wonder if they could have prevented the death. Others may feel that it was somehow their fault. It's important that students have an opportunity to communicative about these concerns and receive help if they need it.

Counsellors, teachers and other staff have been and will continue to be available for the students, parents, and teachers to talk about thoughts, feelings and concerns. Please contact us at the school if you have any questions or concerns.

A meeting will be held on Tuesday evening at 7.00 pm at the school. It is open to parents, students and staff. A bereavement counsellor will be presenting information on the suicide issues including symptoms to watch for and prevention efforts. Please plan to attend.

Our thoughts are with the Smith family as they deal with their son's death.

Sincerely

Sample letter to parents after a violent death

Dear Parent,

I have very sad news to share. We have learned that John Smith, the parent of one of our students, was found murdered in his home last night. The police informed us that a neighbour of the family had been arrested and charged with Mr. Smith's. However, the death is still under investigation. We shared this information with all of the students in their classrooms this morning. We hope that you will be able to talk with your son or daughter about the death. The children will probably have many questions about the death. Honest direct answers are always best.

A violent death may cause a variety of reactions in your child. Many children become afraid that they or someone they love may also be killed. Your child may not want to leave you or come to school. We hope that you will be able to provide messages of safety for them. We have planned some follow up activities to help deal with the fears and provide a measure of safety for the students.

You may notice news reporters around the school. We have asked them to respect the privacy of the students and staff. You do not need to respond to them if you do not want to. We will not allow your children to be interviewed

Bereavement counsellors, teachers and other staff have been, and will continue to be available for the students, parents and teachers. Please contact us at the school if you have questions or concerns.

A meeting will be held on Tuesday evening at 7.00 pm in the school. It is open to parents, students and staff. A bereavement counsellor will present information on violent death issues including common grief responses for your child and how you can help. Please plan to attend.

Our thoughts are with the Smith family as they deal with their father's death

Yours sincerely

Service (on the death of a pupil)

Music

On our sorrow we pray for_____ and we remember her in thanksgiving and we ask God's grace for ourselves.

_____ was baptised in Christ with the sign of the Cross and so we begin "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

Reading (Isaiah 25:6-9)

In heaven the Lord will prepare a great feast for all of us – a great meal with the richest food and drink. He will take away all our sorrows. He will wipe away our tears. Then we will say, "He is our God! We have put our trust in him and he has rescued us. He is the Lord". Then we will be happy and joyful because he will have saved us.

This is the Word of the Lord

In memory of _____ and to remind us that God is present with us, each of us will now light a candle.

Light candles – music

We turn to our loving God and pray:

We pray that _____ be safe in the presence of Jesus.
Lord Hear us

We pray that _____ mother; father, sister, grandparents and relatives may be strengthened at this time.
Lord Hear us

We pray that all who nurse and care for the sick may be blessed.
Lord Hear us

We pray that all our friends receive comfort at this time.
Lord Hear us.

We pray that we will live and be ready to meet the Lord when he comes.
Lord Hear us

Let us remember our own relatives and friends who have died…
Lord Hear us

Let us pray together. Our Father
The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all. Amen.
Music