



## Crosskeys National School

### Critical Incident Policy

The Board of Management of Crosskeys National School aims to protect the well-being of its pupils and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. The B.O.M, through the Principal and teaching staff, has drawn up a critical incident management plan as one element of the school's policies and plans.

Our aim is to establish a Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) to steer the development and implementation of the plan.

The staff and management of Crosskeys National School consider a critical incident to be –‘**An incident or sequence of events which overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school and disrupts the running of the school.**’

Critical incidents may involve one or more pupils or staff members, or members of our local community. For example:

- 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
- Adverse weather conditions resulting in emergency closure of school.

#### **Aim of the Critical Incident Management Plan:**

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 pupils and staff. Having a good plan should also help ensure that the effects on the pupils and staff will be limited. It should enable us to affect 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 pupils, 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:** Measures to address the physical safety of the school community include the following:

- Fire drills are held at least once a term.
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly inspected.
- Parents are informed of the arrangements for entry to and exit from school.



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- Rules of the playground and expectations of general pupil behaviour, as laid out in the school Behaviour Policy, encourage gentleness and positive relations and prohibit bullying in any form.

**Psychological safety:** The management and staff of Crosskeys National School aim to use available programmes and resources to address the personal and social development of pupils, 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 and decision making. Promotion of mental health is an integral part of this provision.
- Staff have received training for the teaching of SPHE.
- Staff are familiar with the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures. The Designated Liaison Person (DLP) is Niall Gurhy and the Deputy Designated Liaison Person (DDL) is Louise Armstrong.
- Pupils who are identified as being at risk are referred to the Designated Liaison Person (Niall Gurhy), 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.
- The school has a clear policy on bullying and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy.
- Staff members accept their role in the pastoral care of pupils and colleagues.

### **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 (in October/November) 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.

### **Preparation of CIMP (Critical Incident Management Plan):**



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A school Critical Incident Management Team has been put in place as follows:

Name	Position
Father Donal Kilduff	Chairperson BOM
Niall Gurhy	Principal (ISM)
Louise Armstrong	Deputy Principal (ISM) - in school management team
Clare O'Reilly	Post of Responsibility (ISM)

### Key responsibilities of C.I.M.T as follows:

ROLES	MEMBERS	KEY REPSONSIBILITIES
<b>Team Leader and Garda Liaison</b>	<b>Niall Gurhy, Principal and Louise Armstrong, Deputy Principal</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting</li><li>• Coordinates the tasks of the team</li><li>• Liaises with the Board of Management; DES; NEPS;</li><li>• Liaises with the bereaved family</li><li>• Liaises with the Gardaí</li><li>• Ensures that information about deaths or other developments is checked out for accuracy before being shared</li></ul> <p>[In the absence of the Team Leader, Niall Gurhy, this role will be undertaken by Louise Armstrong]</p>



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<b>Staff and Pupil Liaison</b>	<b>Niall Gurhy, Principal and Louise Armstrong, Deputy Principal and relevant class teacher</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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</li> <li>• Advises staff on the procedures for identification of vulnerable students</li> <li>• Provides materials for staff (from their critical incident folder)</li> <li>• Keeps staff updated as the day progresses</li> <li>• Is alert to vulnerable staff members and makes contact with them individually</li> <li>• Advises them of the availability of the Employee Assistance Service (E.A.S) Carecall and gives them the contact number.</li> <li>• Alerts other staff to vulnerable students (appropriately)</li> <li>• Provides materials for students (from their critical incident folder)</li> <li>• Keeps records of students seen by external agency staff</li> <li>• Looks after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room where agreed</li> </ul>
<b>Media Liaison</b>	<b>Niall Gurhy/Louise Armstrong/ Clare O'Reilly</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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)</li> <li>• In the event of an incident, will liaise where necessary with the relevant teacher unions etc.</li> <li>• Will draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews (as agreed by school management)</li> </ul>
<b>Parent Liaison</b>	<b>Niall Gurhy/Clare O'Reilly</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visits the bereaved family with the team leader</li> <li>• Arranges parent meetings, if held</li> <li>• May facilitate such meetings, and manage 'questions and answers'</li> <li>• Manages the 'consent' issues in accordance with agreed school policy</li> <li>• Ensures that sample letters are typed up, on the school's system and ready for adaptation</li> <li>• Sets up room for meetings with parents</li> <li>• Maintains a record of parents seen</li> <li>• Meets with individual parents</li> <li>• Provides appropriate materials for parents (from CI folder)</li> </ul>
<b>Community / agency liaison</b>	<b>Niall Gurhy/Clare O'Reilly</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Key parents, such as members of the Parents Council</li> <li>- Emergency support services and other external contacts and resources</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Liaises with agencies in the community for support and onward referral</li> <li>• Is alert to the need to check credentials of individuals offering</li> </ul>



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		support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinates the involvement of these agencies</li> <li>• Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies</li> </ul>
<b>Administrator</b>	<b>Secretary</b>  <b>Jo Reilly</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintenance of up to date telephone numbers of- Parents or guardians</li> <li>- Teachers</li> <li>- Emergency services</li> <li>• Takes telephone calls and notes those that need to be responded to</li> <li>• Ensures that templates are on the schools system in advance and ready for adaptation</li> <li>• Prepares and sends out letters, emails and faxes</li> <li>• Photocopies materials needed</li> <li>• Maintains records</li> </ul>

### Critical incident rooms

In the event of a critical incident, the following room allocation will be in place:

ROOM	PEOPLE
Staff Room	Staff
Senior Room (present 5 <sup>th</sup> /6 <sup>th</sup> class room - 2020)	Children/Parents
Art Room	Individual Sessions with children
Principals Office	Individual Session with Staff
Principal's Office	Others
Senior Room	Media

### Procedures to be followed in the event of critical incidents



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### **Short term actions:**

The Principal should be contacted first. If the Principal is not available, the Deputy-Principal. The Principal will gather accurate information about the incident and contact appropriate agencies including: Emergency services/Medical services/Health Board Psychology Departments/Community Care Services/ NEPS/BOM/DES/School Inspector/Patron/Insurance Company

The Principal will convene a meeting with Critical Incident Management

- Team (CIMT) to discuss possible topics to be covered.
- Agree a statement of the facts for staff, pupils, parents and the media.
- Delegate responsibilities to the Critical Incident Management Team.
- Principal will handle phone enquiries and deal with the media.
- Ensure that a phone line remains open and available for enquiries.
- Organise the timetable/routine for the day. (Adhering to the normal school routine is important if this is possible).
- Organise a staff meeting, if appropriate.
- Organise the supervision of pupils during any staff meetings.
- Decide whether an outside professional be invited to the staff meeting.
- Staff taking incoming calls will use a statement agreed by the CIMT.
- The Central Information point will be the Staff Room.

**Agenda for Staff Meeting.** – All staff should be asked to attend. The areas that should be covered are:

- An account of facts as known.
- Opportunity for staff members to express their views and feelings.
- Discussion with the staff about how the facts will be shared with the pupils.
- Outline of the routine for the day.
- Information for staff about which outside agencies have been contacted, or are involved, and the supports that will be put in place for both pupils and staff.



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- A procedure for identifying vulnerable pupils.
- Distribution of relevant hand-out materials.
- Organise timetable for the day. **N.B.** As far as possible maintain normal routines.

### **Informing Parents/Guardians of Children Directly Involved.**

Parents/guardians will be contacted as soon as possible, and this first contact will be handled with great sensitivity.

Agree who should share information with parents and how this should be done.

Make a list of parents/guardians who have been contacted and those who still need to be told to avoid duplication of messages.

Give parents/guardians relevant and factual information.

The learning support classrooms will be set-aside for distressed pupils to meet their parents/guardians. Ensure a list of telephone numbers is available for enquiries.

### **Children Not Directly Involved:**

The parents of other children may be contacted and informed of the incident and of the fact that their child may be upset.

Before meeting with pupils to inform them of a critical incident, careful preparation will be undertaken.

Consideration will be given to the age of the pupils and the group size.

A teacher, who is known to them and who they can trust, will give the information to the pupils.

Any outside “expert” may help the teacher by providing them with on-going advice and support as they manage it

The nature of the event will clearly have influence on how pupils are informed.

### **Dealing with the media:**

A written statement including the following will be prepared:

- The facts about the incident
- What has been done already
- What is going to be done
- Positive information or comments about the deceased person

### **Medium Term Actions :( 24-72 hours)**

- Review the events of the first 24 hours.
- Reconvene key staff/Critical Incident Management Team.
- Briefly check out how each person on this team is coping.



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- Decide arrangements for support meetings for parents/pupils/ staff.
- Decide on mechanism for feedback from teachers re vulnerable pupils
- Have review staff meeting with all staff if necessary. Ensure all staff are kept up to date on any developments.
- Be sensitive as to how all staff is coping on a personal and professional level.
- Establish contact with absent staff and pupils.
- Update media, if necessary.
- Arrange support for individual pupils, groups of pupils and parents, if necessary. This support will be provided in the Learning Support room
- Hold support/information meeting for parents/pupils in order to clarify what has happened.
- Offer advice and reassurance. Inform them about support services and provide relevant handouts.
- Give any teacher who feels uncomfortable with involvement in support meetings the choice of opting out.
- Arrange, in consultation with the outside agencies, individual or group debriefings or support meetings **with** parental permission.
- Plan for the reintegration of pupils and staff. (e.g. absentees, injured, siblings, close relatives etc.)
- Plan visits to injured.
- Liaise with the family regarding funeral arrangements/memorial service.
- Organise attendance and participation at funeral/memorial service.
- Make decisions with regard to school closure.

### Longer Term Action:

Monitor pupils for signs of continuing distress. (Class teachers)

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

- Uncharacteristic behaviour
- Deterioration in academic performance
- Physical symptoms – e.g. weight loss/gain, lack of concentration, tiredness, restlessness
- Inappropriate emotional reactions
- Increased absenteeism (Liaise with agencies regarding referrals)
- Plan for return of bereaved pupil/s
- Evaluate response to incident and amend the Critical Incident Management Plan appropriately.
- Anticipate events/ anniversaries/reminders that may be difficult or upsetting in the future and plan to support staff and pupils.

This Policy will be reviewed regularly.

### **Ratification**





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The Policy was adopted by the BOM on \_\_\_\_18/01/24\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_*Fr. Donal Kilduff*\_\_\_\_  
(Chairperson BOM)

Signed: \_\_\_\_*Niall Gurhy*\_\_\_\_  
(Principal/Secretary to the Board of Management)