



Drumcondra N.S., Church Ave, Drumcondra, Dublin 9.
Tel: (01) 8374886 Email: office@drumcondrans.ie

Critical Incident Management Policy

(Last Updated/Reviewed: October 2024)

Introduction:

A critical incident challenges the very fabric of the school community. It overwhelms the normal coping capacity of the school and the school community. It is usually sudden and unexpected. It can happen during the school day, during outside school activities or may involve the wider school community. Events will have different significance for different schools and it is important that the significance of the event is measured and not the size. It is important a plan is in place to enable the staff to react quickly and to maintain control.

The following resources are available in the school for consultation in a yellow folder in the cupboard in the office.

- When Tragedy Strikes – Guidelines for Effective Critical Incident Management in Schools. (I.N.T.O.)
- <http://www.into.ie/ROI/Publications/WhenTragedyStrikes.pdf>
- Responding to Critical Incidents – Guidelines and Resource Materials for Schools (N.E.P.S) 2016:
- <http://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/National-Educational-Psychological-Service-NEPS-/Responding%20to%20Critical%20Incidents.pdf>

Definition of a critical incident:

A critical incident is any incident or sequence of events which can overwhelm the school's normal coping mechanisms. Some examples of critical incidents include:

- The death of a member(s) of the school community through accident, violence suicide or suspected suicide, or other unexpected death
- An accident involving members of the school community
- An intrusion into the school
- 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

Critical Incidents Management Team:

- Leadership Role Communication Role: (see below)
- Student Liaison/ Counselling Role: (see below)
- Chaplaincy Role: (see below)
- Family Liaison Role: (see below)

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- Parents Association Rep: (see below)
- B.O.M. Rep: (see below)

The first-named person has the responsibility as defined.

The second-named person assists and only assumes responsibility on the absence of the first-named (See Appendix 1)

Prevention:

Through the SPHE curriculum, the staff aim to have systems in place that promote positive mental health, wellbeing and resilience of both staff and pupils, to help them better cope with a range of life events. This includes:

- The creation of a safe environment
- Integration of SPHE across the whole life of the school
- Provision of mental health programmes such as Fun Friends/Friends for Life
- Provision of staff training and resources
- Procedures for identifying students at risk
- Links with outside agencies, as appropriate
- Staff training on Child Protection guidelines
- Support for staff members and clear information on how to access the Employee Assistance Service

Management of the Incident:

During an incident, there are many areas to be taken care of immediately. These include

- Ensuring the safety of the other children on site.
- Immediate first aid and informing the emergency services.
- Setting up a communication point.
- Liaising with the Board of Management, and relevant authorities and support agencies.
- Collecting data and keeping detailed records of the incident and how the management plan was put into place.
- Contacting parents and organising reunion of parents and children.
- Preparing a media statement and keeping the media away from the children.

As soon as possible after the incident, the school should:

- Arrange for all the staff to meet to discuss the situation.
- Agree the information to be given to the children.
- Distribute a prepared statement to the parents.
- Keep in contact with the media through prepared statements.
- Visit the injured and bereaved.
- Plan memorial services and assemblies.

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- Make plans for the return to normal routines.
- Monitor the children and refer to support services if needed.
- Organise a post-incident curriculum to allow the children an opportunity to come to terms with what has happened.

- Arrange review meetings to monitor progress.

The attached appendices contain useful telephone numbers, sample letters and templates to organise the initial response to the incident.

Appendix 1: Critical Incident Management Team/Roles

Appendix 2: Emergency Contact List

Appendix 3: Drumcondra N.S. CIMT Action Plan Short-term Actions - Day 1

Appendix 4: Medium-term Actions- Day 2 and Subsequent Days

Appendix 5: Student Contact Record

Appendix 6: Consent Letter - Individual or Group Support Session

Appendix 7: Advance Parental Agreement to Child Being Seen

Appendix 8: Sudden Death/Accident Notification Letter

Appendix 9: Violent death notification letter

Appendix 10: Sample media announcement

Appendix 11: Employee Assistance Programme Contact Details

First Created: April 2005.

Most recent update: October 2024

Signed: [Signature] (Chairperson) Signed: [Signature] (Principal)
Date: 15/10/2024 (Chairperson) Date: 15/10/2024 (Principal)

Drumcondra N.S.

Appendix 1:

Critical Incident Management Team/Roles

Role	Name	Telephone Number (home and mobile)
Team Leader Garda Liaison	Karl Lawless Laura Neale	085 7261313 087 7507865
Staff Liaison	Karl Lawless Laura Neale	085 7261313 087 7507865
Student/Parent Liaison	Karl Lawless Laura Neale Garth Bunting	087 9619961 087 7507865 01 8372505
Community Liaison	Garth Bunting Laura Neale	01 8372505 087 7507865
Agency Liaison	Karl Lawless Vicki Gray	085 7261313 086 3859073
Media Liaison	Karl Lawless Garth Bunting	085 7261313 01 8372505
Administrator	Vicki Gray Julia Meregalli	086 3859073 087 410 0340

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Appendix 2:

Emergency Contact List

Agency	Contact Numbers
Garda	086 783 8111 Laura – Community Garda
Hospital	Temple Street Children’s Hospital 01 8784200 Mater Hospital (01) 803 2000 Beaumont Hospital (01) 809 3000
Emergency Services	999 or 112
HSE Health Centre	Millmount, Millmount Avenue, Dublin 9 (01) 8840920
Social Worker	(01) 855 6871
School Inspector	Sinéad Patten (087) 4067645 Sinead_Patten@education.gov.ie
NEPS Psychologist	Fiona DeBrun Fiona_DeBrun@education.gov.ie (Fiona is no longer our NEPS psychologist. We are yet to be assigned a new one.)
Parish Priest/Clergy	Rev. Garth Bunting 01 8372505
Chairperson	Rev. Garth Bunting 01 83728505
Employee Assistance Service	1800 411 057 Text ‘Hi’ to 087 3690010

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Appendix 3:

Drumcondra N.S. CIMT Action Plan
Short-term Actions - Day 1

Task	Name
Gather accurate information	Karl Lawless Laura Neale
Who, what, when, where?	Karl Lawless Laura Neale
Convene a CIMT meeting - specify time and place clearly	Laura Neale Karl Lawless
Contact external agencies	Laura Neale Karl Lawless
Arrange supervision for students	Julia Meregalli (Fixed Term SET Teacher) Maria Kennedy (Permanent Teacher) Susan Wilson (SNA - Job-share) Derval Coughlan (SNA - Job-share) Eva de Larrea (SNA)
Hold staff meeting	All staff
Agree schedule for the day	All Staff
Inform students (close friends and students with learning difficulties may need to be told separately)	All Staff
Compile a list of vulnerable students	All Staff
Contact/Visit the bereaved family	Karl Lawless Laura Neale Garth Bunting
Prepare and agree media statement and deal with media	Karl Lawless Laura Neale Garth Bunting
Inform parents	Karl Lawless Vicki Gray
Hold end of day staff briefing	All staff

Appendix 4:

Medium-term Actions- Day 2 and Subsequent Days

Convene a CIMT meeting to review the events of day 1	Karl Lawless
Meet external agencies	Laura Neale
Meet whole staff	All Staff
Arrange support for students, staff, parents	Julia Meregalli Maria Kennedy
Visit the injured	Karl Lawless / Laura Neale / Garth Bunting
Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements	Karl Lawless /Laura Neale /Garth Bunting
Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service	All staff
Make decisions about school closures	B.O.M.

Follow-up-beyond 72 hours

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

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Appendix 5:

Parental Contact Record

Name of staff member: _____

Date	Students name	Class/Year	Outcome (include need for follow up)

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Appendix 6:

Consent Letter - Individual or Group Support Session

Dear Parents/Guardians,

You may already know that our teachers and staff have been providing support to our students following (specific reference to the incident).

Additional support is also being provided to our school by psychologist/s from the National Educational Psychological Service (N.E.P.S.).

The psychologist will be available, where necessary, to meet with individuals or with groups of students to help them during this difficult time.

The aim of such sessions will be to:

- Provide information about dealing with grief and loss in a healthy way
- Allow students the opportunity to express their thoughts and feelings in a safe environment
- Allow students time to comfort and support each other, under the guidance of experienced staff from Drumcondra National School
- Help students resume their normal routines as soon as possible

If you would like for your daughter/son to participate in such a session and any follow-up meetings that might be scheduled, please give your consent by signing below.

You should return it to the school immediately. If you have any questions, please contact the Principal.

Yours sincerely,

Karl Lawless
Principal Drumcondra N.S.



I give my consent for _____ to participate in a Group/Individual Session

Parent or Legal Guardian: _____ Date: _____

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Appendix 7:

Advance Parental Agreement to Child Being Seen

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Drumcondra N.S. has developed a plan for responding when a tragedy occurs. When such an event happens, schools are offered psychologists from the National Educational Psychological Service (N.E.P.S.), an agency of the Department of Education and Science. If we feel it is necessary, we would like to be in a position to have your child seen by a psychologist who can offer advice and support.

Before any child is seen by a NEPS psychologist, parental consent is usually required. We will make every effort to obtain this. However, in the unlikely event of being unable to contact you, we are writing to seek your consent for your child to be seen by a member of NEPS as part of our schools immediate response. This is to allow us to support your child in the best way possible. Your child may be seen individually, in a small group or as part of a class group.

If you wish to discuss this, please contact me at your convenience.

Yours sincerely,

Karl Lawless
Principal Drumcondra N.S.



The school will assume your agreement if you do not return this slip stating that you do not wish to have your child seen by a NEPS Psychologist. Please fill in the form below and return to Drumcondra N.S.

I do not wish _____ to be seen by the NEPS Psychologist.

Parents/Guardian: _____

Date: _____

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Appendix 8:

Sudden Death/Accident Notification Letter

Dear Parents/Guardians,

The school has experienced (the sudden death, accidental injury, etc.) of a student(s)/member of staff. We are deeply saddened by the death(s)/event(s).

(Brief details of the incident, and in the event of a death, perhaps some remembrances of the person lost).

Our thoughts are with (family name).

We have support structures in place to help your child cope with this tragedy. (Elaborate)

It is possible that your child may have some feelings and questions that he/she may like to discuss with you. It is important to give factual information that is appropriate to their age.

You can help your child by taking time to listen and by encouraging them to express their feelings. All children are different and will express their feelings in different ways. It is not uncommon for children to have difficulty concentrating or to be tearful, anxious or irritable. They may become withdrawn, cry, complain of physical aches and pains, have difficulty sleeping or have nightmares. Some may not want to eat. These are general short-term reactions. Over the course of the days to come, please keep an eye on your child and allow him/her to express his/her feelings without criticism.

Although classes will continue as usual, I anticipate that the next few days will be difficult for everyone.

(Optional) An information night for parents is planned for (date, time and place). At that time, further information about how to help children in grief will be given. We have enclosed some information which you may find useful in helping your child through this difficult time.

If you would like advice, you may contact your child's teacher or the principal.

Yours sincerely,

Karl Lawless
Principal Drumcondra N.S.

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Appendix 9

Violent Death/Incident Notification Letter

Dear Parents/Guardians,

I need to inform you of a sad event which has happened today.

A child / the sister/brother of **[insert name]** / a student/staff member of the school here, was killed as a result of a **[a violent attack/ violent incident]** earlier this week/today. We are all profoundly saddened by this event.

We have shared this information and had discussions with all the pupils so they know what has happened. School staff members have been available to the pupils on an on-going basis today. Other support professionals **[including psychologists etc, according to actual arrangements]** are available to advise staff in their support of the pupils.

The death of any (young) person is tragic, but a violent death is even more difficult. It is hard to teach our children about violence in the world and to accept that sometimes we do not have the power to prevent it.

This death may cause a variety of reactions in your child. Some children/young people may be afraid for their own life and for the lives of those they love. Take time to listen to their fears and reassure them that what has happened is rare.

We have enclosed some additional information that may be useful during this time.

The media are in the vicinity of the school and may approach you or your children. You do not need to respond to their questions if you are approached. We will not allow the media to interview your child at school and our general advice is that you do not let your child be interviewed. They are not mature enough to judge what to say and may say something they later regret.

In these times, young people tend to turn to social media to see what others are saying, or to find out more. While social media can be of great consolation, we would urge you to reinforce the need to be extremely sensitive about what your son or daughter might post to others.

Our thoughts are with **[insert family name]** and with all of you.

Sincerely,

Karl Lawless
Principal Drumcondra N.S.

Drumcondra N.S.

Appendix 10:

Sample Media Announcement

My name is **[insert name]** and I am the principal of Drumcondra National School. We learned this morning of the death of **[one of our students/staff or name of student/staff]**. This is a terrible tragedy. Our sympathies and thoughts are with the family of **[insert name]**.

[Name of student(s)/staff member] was **[insert class]** and will be greatly missed by all who knew him/her.

We have been in contact with his/her parents/family and they have requested that we all understand their need for privacy at this difficult time.

Offers of support have been pouring in and are greatly appreciated. Our school has implemented our Critical Incident Management Plan.

Psychologists from the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) and **[insert any other relevant services]** have been with us all day supporting and advising teachers in their efforts to assist our students at this time.

The teachers have been helping pupils to deal with these tragic events.

The school has been open to parents to support them and to offer them advice and guidance.

We would ask you to respect our privacy at this difficult time.

Thank you.

Karl Lawless
Principal Drumcondra N.S.

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Appendix 11:

Employee Assistance Programme Contact Details

- Spectrum Life
- Free Phone: 1800 411 057
- Text 'Hi' to 087 369 0010
- Online portal: <https://wellbeingtogether.spectrum.life/login?org=yV1IU17>