

# Dunderrow National School



## Critical Incident Policy

"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, suicide
- ❖ Major illness/outbreak of disease/ pandemic
- ❖ Criminal incidents – Serious Assault or attack on staff or pupils
- ❖ Major accidents, serious injury (e.g. car/bus crash)
- ❖ Civil unrest, war (refugees post trauma)
- ❖ Fire
- ❖ Natural and technological disaster
- ❖ Disappearance of student from home or school
- ❖ Unauthorised removal of student from school or home.

**The Critical Incidents Management Team for Dunderrow National School is as follows:**

Leadership Role: Triona Hannon (Principal), Helen O' Callaghan (Deputy Principal)

Communication Role: Triona Hannon, (Principal), Helen O' Callaghan, (Deputy Principal), Una Feeney (Chairperson B.O.M.)

*It is vital that the Leadership and Communication team take their advice from NEPS who have experience of dealing with critical incidents.*

### ***What is a Critical Incident?***

Chaplaincy Role: Fr Robert Young

Family Liaison Role: Triona Hannon/Helen O' Callaghan

Parents Association Rep: Sue Herron (Chairperson)

B.O.M. Rep: Una Feeney

N. E. P. S: Mary Atkins

S.E.N.O. Triona Cowhig

*The first-named person has the responsibility as defined.*

*The second-named person assists and only assumes responsibility in the absence of the first-named.*

## ***Roles and Responsibilities***

### **Leadership Role: Intervention**

- Confirm the event
- Activate the Critical Incident response team
- Express sympathy/concern to family
- Clarify facts surrounding event
- Make contact with other relevant agencies e.g Gardai/ NEPS/ HSE/ Social Services/ HSE/ GP etc
- Decide how news will be communicated to different groups (staff, pupils, parents, others)

### **Postvention**

- Ensure provision of ongoing support to staff and students
- Facilitate any post trauma/memorial events
- Review Plan
- Continue to follow protocols and procedures in the School Response plan.

### **Communication Role; Intervention**

- Prepare a public statement with Critical Incident Team
- 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 staff
- Address immediate needs of students
- Information
- Counselling

#### **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
- Work in partnership with appropriate agencies
- Review and Evaluate Plan

## **Family Liaison Role:**

### **Intervention**

- Coordinate contact with families (following first contact by principal)
- Consult with family around involvement of school in e.g. funeral service
- Assist with all communication dealing with parents of any student affected by critical incident

### **Postvention**

- Provide ongoing support to bereaved family
- 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 family/families
- Consult with the family regarding appropriate support from the school, e.g. funeral service
- Ensure that a quiet place can be made for students/staff

Rooms will be made available as follows:

- Prayer Room
- Individual Meetings
- Parents: Meeting Room
- Isolation room for illnesses

#### **Convene a meeting with Key Staff/Critical Management Team (7.30-8.00am)**

- Organise a staff meeting, if appropriate.
- Organise timetable/ routine for the day. (Adhering to the normal school routine is important, if this is possible).
- Class teachers take note of any absentees who might need to be contacted, list of friends etc, or any other relevant information and give it to the Principal or Deputy Principal.
- Arrange supervision of students

#### **Contact appropriate agencies**

1. Emergency services
2. Medical services
3. H.S.E. Psychology Departments /Community Care Services
4. NEPS
5. BOM
6. DES/Schools Inspector

#### **Liase with the family regarding funeral arrangements/ memorial service**

The Chaplain/ Principal will 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. (Student Liaison person + Class teacher)

Have regard for different religious traditions and faiths

#### **Media Briefing (where appropriate)**

- Designate a spokesperson. (Leader)
  - Prepare a brief statement. (Team)
  - Protect the family's privacy.
  - Gather accurate information
  - It is important to obtain accurate information about the incident.
1. What happened, where and when?
  2. What is the extent of the injuries/situation?
  3. How many are involved and what are their names?
  4. Is there a risk of further injury?
  5. What agencies have been contacted already?

## **MEDIUM-TERM ACTIONS (24-72 HOURS)**

- Preparation of students/staff attending funeral.
  - Involvement of students/staff in liturgy if agreed by the bereaved family.
  - Facilitation of students'/ staffs' responses, eg. Sympathy cards, flowers, book of condolences, etc.
  - Ritual within the school.
  - Review the events of the first 24 hours
1. Reconvene Key Staff/Critical Incident Management Team. (8.30 a.m.)
  2. Decide arrangements for support meetings for parents/students/staff.
  3. Decide on a mechanism for feedback from teachers on vulnerable students.
  4. Have Review Critical Incident Management Team meeting. (3.00 p.m.)
  5. Establish contact with absent staff and pupils.
  6. Arrange support for individual students, groups of students, and parents, if necessary.
  7. Hold support/information meeting for parents/students, if necessary, in order to clarify what has happened.
  8. Give any teacher who feels uncomfortable with involvement in support meetings the choice of opting out.
  9. Arrange, in consultation, with outside agencies, individual or group debriefings or support meetings with parental permission. Permission slips to be included in enrolment forms.
  10. Plan for the re-integration of students and staff e.g. absentees, injured, siblings, close relative etc)
  11. Student Liaison person to liaise with above on their return to school.
  12. Plan visits to injured
  13. Family Liaison person + Class Teacher + Principal to visit home/hospital.
  14. Attendance and participation at funeral/memorial service (To be decided)
  15. Decide this in accordance with parents' wishes and school management decisions and in consultation with close school friends.
  16. School closure - Request a decision on this from school management.
  17. Communication with HSE with regard to testing and contact tracing.

## **LONGER TERM ACTIONS**

Monitor students 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 the HSE

1. Uncharacteristic behaviour
  2. Deterioration in academic performance
  3. Physical symptoms — e.g. weight loss/gain, lack of attention to appearance, tiredness, restlessness
  4. Inappropriate emotional reactions
  5. Increased absenteeism.
- Evaluate response to incident and amend Critical Incident Management Plan appropriately.
1. What went well?
  2. Where were the gaps?
  3. What was most/least helpful?
  4. Have all necessary onward referrals to support services been made?
  5. Is there any unfinished business?
- Formalise the Critical Incident Plan for the future
1. Consult with NEPS Psychologist
- Inform new staff/new school pupils affected by Critical Incidents where appropriate
1. Ensure that new staff is aware of the school policy and procedures in this area.
  2. Ensure they are aware of which pupils were affected in any recent incident and in what way.
  3. 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 students/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.

Care of deceased person's possessions. Respect the parent's wishes.  
Update and amend school records. Critical Incident Policy

### **Conclusion of the critical incident**

The Principal determines when the critical incident is closed. The Critical Incident Management Team stands down and normal school life resumes.

### **Post Incident Review**

A review of the incident will take place by the school's management of all incidents in relation to which the Critical Incident Policy is invoked. This review will take place when the incident is closed but close enough to the incident for the lessons learned still to be fresh. The review is led by the Principal. This is to document the critical incident, what happened and where, who was involved. Then the actions of the Critical Incident Management Team including any records are noted and the roll out of the incident to the conclusion is summarised. The purpose of such a review is to learn the lessons of the incident itself, to review the effectiveness of this policy, to review the effectiveness of our response to the incident as measured in relation to the short, medium and long term actions and to review the effectiveness of the supports, information, guidelines and procedures available to the school community in relation to dealing with the incident. The outputs of the review, including any recommendations, will be presented to the Board of Management as soon as available.

This Critical Incident Plan replaces the plan from 2023 to reflect new personnel on the Critical Incident Management team.

Drawn up by the Board of Management of Dunderrow N.S., in consultation with staff (8/10/21) and Parent Association (12/10/21) and ratified on 13/12/21 at Board of Management meeting. It was reviewed in 12/12/22, updated on 11/12/23 and again on 18/09/24

It will be updated as needed and reviewed as part of Board of Management policy reviews.

  
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Una Feeney, Chairperson BOM

  
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Triona Hannon, Principal, Dunderrow NS

Date: 18/09/24