



Critical Incident Management

Policy and Plan

October 2024

Introduction

MPETSS aims to protect the wellbeing of its students and staff by providing a caring, safe and nurturing environment at all times in accordance with our Mission Statement.

This policy was initially drawn up by Aoife Kelly Gibson, Principal and a member of the school's Student Support Team, in conjunction with NEPS Psychologist, Nicole Daly. In doing this we have referred to and drawn from the following documents:

- ***Responding to Critical Incidents: Guidelines and Resources for Schools (NEPS, 2016)***
- ***Suicide Prevention in Schools: Best Practice Guidelines (IAS, 2002)***
- ***Wellbeing in Post-Primary Schools Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention (DES, DOH, HSE, 2013)***

These documents are to be used in conjunction with this plan and a copy of them is to be kept with this document.

Definition of a Critical Incident

The staff and management of MPETSS recognise a critical incident to be "an incident or sequence of events that overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school and disrupts the running of the school" (NEPS, 2016). Such incidents might include:

- 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

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.

Creation of a Healthy and Safe Space in School

We have put systems in place to address both the physical and psychological safety of the school community as outlined in our Health and Safety Statement:

- Evacuation plan formulated
- Regular fire drills occur
- Fire exits and extinguishers regularly checked
- Emergency Contact list displayed in staff room, school office and Principal's office.
- Pre-opening supervision of pupils (8.20-8.40 a.m.)
- The Principal must be notified of all trips outside of the school. Lists of all participants are meticulously drawn up and a copy left with the Principal/Deputy Principal.

In the event of a death of a member of the school community occurring, supports will come into action in the following ways:

- BoM and Patron informed
- Family members contacted by Team Liaison and Counsellor offering support
- Decision following family wishes on what should be shared with the school community
- Decision on how information should be shared i.e. staff contacted first, contact parents before students etc.
- Engagement of our NEPS Psychologist, Maeve D'Arcy (maeve_darcy@education.gov.ie, First Floor, Block 3, Grove Court, Blanchardstown, D15 HNT2., Tel: (01) 8650673)
- Creation of a safe space for students and staff to meet up
- Creation of separate spaces for individuals amongst the staff and student body to receive support and counselling
- Identifying the most vulnerable, those close to victim, those who may be prone to emotional and depressive reactions or who may have additional needs
- Engagement with parents of students in the school
- Continued liaison with family of victim

Creation of a Coping, Caring and Supportive Ethos

- Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is integrated into the work of the school; promotion of Mental Health is part of this provision.

- Staff have access to training for their role in SPHE (in-service provided)
- Staff are trained in Restorative Practice and Students are aware of this through daily and weekly practices.
- Information is provided on Mental Health in general and such specific areas as signs of depression and anxiety
- The school has a clear policy on bullying and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy
- Students who are identified as being at risk are referred to the Guidance Counsellor or support teacher and the appropriate level of assistance and support is provided.
- The school has developed links with a wide range of external agencies i.e. Tusla, NEPS, CAMHS, Jigsaw

Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)

The CIMT is a group of individuals from the staff of a school who know the community, the students and each other well enough to make the necessary decisions called for when an incident occurs.

A CIMT has been established in line with current best practice. The members of the team have been 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 September) 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 relevant to their role, to be used in the event of an incident. The CIMT members are as follows:

Role	Name	Telephone Number
Team Liaison	Aoife Kelly Gibson Thomond Ni Ghoill (in case of Principal's absence)	01 9631299
Garda Liaison & External Agencies	Aoife Kelly Gibson	
Staff/Building Liaison	Thomond Ni Ghoill	
NEPS (Support) Liaison	Caitriona Rosell	
Student/Counsellor Liaison	Caitriona Rosell Thomond Ni Ghoill	
Parent/Community Liaison/ BoM parent rep	Thomond Ni Ghoill To be appointed TBCTBC	
Building Access/Allocation of space	Aoife Kelly Gibson Derek Dunne	
Media/Social Media/IT	Aoife Kelly Gibson	
Administration	Amanda Hughes/Fidelma Billings	

Care Measures (food, flowers etc)	Amanda Hughes & Fidelma Billings	
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Responsibilities

Outlined below are some points on the key responsibilities of each role - Who will do what? When? And How?

Team Liaison – Aoife Kelly Gibson Thomond Ní Ghoill, in case of Principal absence

- Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting
- Co-ordinates the tasks of the team
- Liaises with the BOM, ET, DES, NEPS, Emergency Services, Gardai or any relevant agency.
- Liaises with the bereaved family
- Makes sure media liaison is briefed and manages statements
- Keeps in touch with all members of the CIMT

Garda Liaison – (Aoife Kelly Gibson)

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

Staff Liaison/Building Liaison – (Aoife Kelly Gibson, Thomond Ní Ghoill, Derek Dunne, Caretaker.

- 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
- Coordinates access to building and allocation of rooms if needed.

Student Liaison/Counsellor - (Caitriona Rosell, Thomond Ni Ghoill SST)

- Co-ordinates information from tutors and year heads about students they are concerned about
- Alerts other staff to vulnerable students (appropriately)
- Provides materials for students (from their Critical Incident folder)
- Looks after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room where agreed

- Liaising with other supports relevant to the situation i.e. NEPS, Counsellors etc

Parent Liaison – Principal/Deputy Principal. BoM Rep

- Visits the bereaved family with the team leader
- If possible, arranges meetings with parents and facilitates such meetings
- Meets with individual parents
- Ensures that sample letters are typed up in the school's system and ready for adaptation
- Provides appropriate materials for parents (from their critical incident folder)

Media Liaison – (Aoife Kelly Gibson)

- 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.)
- Will draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews (as agreed by school management)
- Family to be informed about any press release and the contents made known to them.

Community Liaison – Thomond Ní Ghoill

- Networks with community agencies
- Co-ordinates community involvement in school
- Keeps records of involvement
- Updates team members

Administrator/ Care Measures - (Amanda Hughes/Fidelma Billings Thomond NiGhoill)

- Maintenance of up to date telephone numbers of Parents or Guardians
- Takes telephone calls and notes those that need to be responded to.
- Ensures that templates are on the school system in advance and ready for adaptation
- Prepares and sends out letters, emails and texts
- Photocopies materials needed
- Maintains records
- Organises food, flowers or other care measures where necessary.

Critical Incident Management Actions

Short Term Actions – Day 1

Task	Name
Gather Accurate Information	Aoife Kelly Gibson
Inform BoM, Patron Body, NEPS	Aoife Kelly Gibson & Guidance Counsellor
Convene a CIMT meeting	Aoife Kelly Gibson
Contact External Agencies	Aoife Kelly Gibson
Put Action Plan in place	CIMT
Inform Staff	Aoife Kelly Gibson / Anne Grills
Arrange Supervision of Students	Class teachers & SNAs
Agree school schedule or closure with BoM	Aoife Kelly Gibson & Chairperson
Inform Parents - one communication strategy	Aoife Kelly Gibson
Inform Students - one communication strategy	Guidance Counsellor and Class Teachers
Make list of vulnerable students and put support plan in place	Guidance Counsellor and SST
Contact/visit the bereaved family	Aoife Kelly Gibson / Thomond Ní Ghoill
Prepare and agree media statement	Aoife Kelly Gibson
Hold end of day staff briefing	CIMT

Medium Term Actions – Day 2

Task	Name
Convene a CIMT meeting	Aoife Kelly Gibson
Meet external agencies	Aoife Kelly Gibson
Meet whole staff	CIMT
Liaise with bereaved family re funeral arrangements	Aoife Kelly Gibson
Visit the injured/bereaved	Different designated staff
Arrange for support for students/staff/parents	Guidance Counsellor and CIMT designated staff
Agree on attendance at funeral service	CIMT
Provide supported meeting space for affected students/staff/parents	Guidance Counsellor
Quiet rooms with refreshments	Counsellor, Caretaker liaise with Secretary
Make a plan for school closure if necessary	Aoife Kelly Gibson & BOM

Actions Beyond 72 hours.

Task	Name
Monitor students for signs of continuing distress	Class Teachers
Liaise with agencies about referrals	Guidance Counsellor
Plan for bereaved to return to school	Guidance Counsellor & SST
Discussion around memorial	CIMT and Whole staff with school community
Review response to incident and amend plan	Staff/BOM

Confidentiality and Good Name Considerations.

Management and staff of MPETSS 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.

Further to this, no staff other than the designated Media Spokesperson (Aoife Kelly Gibson), shall either make statements or share information on any social media platform. All students and parents shall be advised to refrain from making any statements or sharing any information on social media platforms, in order to minimise confusion, which can be caused by misinformation going out into the public domain and potentially causing unnecessary fear and distress.

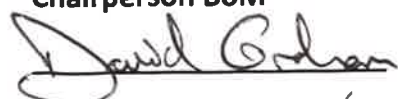
Consultation and Communication Regarding the Plan

All staff were consulted, and their views canvassed in the preparation of this plan. Students and parent representatives were also consulted and asked for their comments.

To be reviewed in September 2027

David Graham

Chairperson BoM

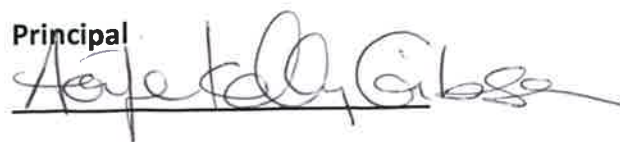


Date:

4/10/2024

Aoife Kelly Gibson

Principal



Critical Incident Plan: Emergency Contact List

Agency	Address	Contact Numbers
Garda	Main St. Swords	01-6664700
	Malahide Village	01-6664600
Hospital	Temple St. Children's Hospital	01-8784200
	Beaumont Hospital (016's)	01-8093000
Fire Brigade	Swords Fire Station	01-6734000
Local GP	Kinsealy Medical Centre	01-8405940
HSE Primary Care Centre	Malahide Health Centre	01-8457187
	Swords Medical Centre	01-9212100
School Inspector	DES, Marlborough St.	01-8896553
NEPS Psychologist	Siobhan Gahan	087-1722670
Dept. of Education & Science	Marlborough St.	01-8896400
School Unions	ASTI	01-6040160
	TUI	01-4922588
State Exams Commission	Athlone	090-6442700
Employee Assistance Service		1800 411 057
ABM Construction	Paddy on site PM & Main office	
Foxfield Special School	Susan Byrne	

[Useful websites and helplines for accessing resources](#)

NEPS has identified the following websites which schools may find helpful. However, all materials should be reviewed by school management to ensure that they conform to school ethos and policy before they are used.

TRAINING · www.nosp.ie

ASIST Training: ASIST (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training) is a two-day interactive workshop in suicide first-aid. It is suitable for all kinds of caregivers - health workers, teachers, community workers, Gardai, youth workers, volunteers, people responding to family, friends and co-workers. It is free of charge. If you'd like to make a difference in your community, you may wish to access ASIST training and learn how to help. Information can be obtained on the website of the National Office for Suicide Prevention.

SafeTALK: SafeTALK 'suicide alertness for everyone' is a half day training programme that prepares participants to identify persons with thoughts of suicide and connect them to suicide first aid resources. These specific skills are called suicide alertness and are taught with the expectation that the person learning them will use them to help reduce suicide risk in their communities. Participants learn how to provide practical help to persons with thoughts of suicide in only a few hours. Following a SafeTALK workshop you will be more willing and able to perform an important helping role for persons with thoughts of suicide.

WEBSITES

Barnardos provide resources and advice on www.barnardos.ie/resources, www.barnardos.ie/teenhelp

The **Childhood Bereavement Network** (CBN) is a multi-professional federation of organisations and individuals working with bereaved children and young people. www.irishchildhoodbereavementnetwork.ie

Cruse Bereavement Care exists to promote the wellbeing of bereaved people and to enable anyone bereaved by death to understand their grief and cope with their loss. www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk

The **Professional Development for Teachers (PDST) Health and Wellbeing Team** provide support for teachers at primary and post-primary level in physical education (PE), social personal and health education (SPHE) which includes anti-bullying, child protection, mental health and wellbeing, relationships and sexuality education (RSE) and other SPHE related areas. Supports offered to schools include in-service for principals, co-ordinators, teachers of SPHE, whole staff groups; programme planning; school policy development; schools visits. www.pdst.ie.

The former SPHE Support Service has been integrated into the Health and Wellbeing team of the PDST. Visit www.sphe.ie for further information and to book post-primary SPHE courses.

The **National Office for Suicide Prevention (NOSP)** was established to oversee the implementation of 'Reach Out' the National Strategy for Action on Suicide Prevention, and to co-ordinate suicide prevention efforts around the country. The NOSP works closely with the HSE **Suicide Prevention Officers**. Up-to-date contact details for suicide prevention officers can be found on the NOSP website www.nosp.ie

The **Irish Association for Suicidology (IAS)** sets out to be a forum for all individuals and voluntary groups involved in any aspect of suicidology for the exchange of knowledge gained from differing perspectives and experiences www.ias.ie

Irish Hospice Foundation - www.hospicefoundation.ie

Lifelines supports all people who are affected in anyway by self-injury within the United Kingdom and beyond. It supports people who self-injure, and their family and friends. www.selfharm.org

Winstonswish Foundation, help for grieving children and their families. www.winstonswish.org.uk

Resources and support for those dealing with suicide, depression or emotional distress, particularly teenagers and young adults. www.papyrus-uk.org

A national charity committed to improving the mental health of all children and young people. www.youngminds.org.uk

An Irish website covering all aspects of health, lifestyle, culture and craic. It's an online youth information centre, a magazine, a health clinic, a contact directory, a youth media forum a take action initiative, a community building place and lots more. www.spunout.ie

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A site that focuses on issues relating to youth in Ireland today. www.youth.ie

An Australian site that helps young people through tough times. www.reachout.com.au

Mental Health Ireland aims to promote positive mental health and to actively support persons with a mental illness, their families and carers by identifying their needs and advocating their rights. The pro teen matters web magazine, which is created by young people for young people, has information about physical and mental health, frequently asked questions, competitions, jokes and stories. www.mentalhelathireland.ie

Non-judgemental information and support. www.gayswitchboard.ie

HELPLINES

Remind students that if they need someone to talk to, at any time of the day or night, they can ring either:

Childline:	1800 666 666 (free calls)
The Samaritans:	1850 60 90 90 (local call cost)