

CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY.

Our mission in Borrisokane Community College is

“to promote a caring and committed school community which will facilitate the education of our students and where each individual is valued as a unique human being”.

“Is ar scáth a chéile a mhairimid”

The school has taken a number of measures to create a coping, supportive and caring ethos in the school. The school has also formulated a number of policies and procedures to be followed with a view to ensuring the physical and psychological safety of both staff and students during the normal course of the school day and in the event of a critical incident.

Such policies would include

- Health and Safety Statement
- Pastoral Care Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Code of Behaviour
- Guidance Plan
- S.P.H.E Programme

Definition of Critical Incident:

Borrisokane Community College recognises a critical incident to be “an incident or sequence of events that overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of the school, and disrupts the normal running of the school”.

Critical incidents may involve students, staff, the school or the local community.

Examples of a critical incident might be;

- The death of a member of the school community, through sudden death, accident, suicide or terminal illness
- A serious accident or tragedy in the school community
- Serious damage to the school through fire, flooding vandalism etc.
- The disappearance of a member of the school community
- A physical attack on a staff member or student
- Intrusion into the school.

Aim of Plan:

The aim of the Critical Incident Plan is that in the event of such an incident as outlined above, the plan will help staff and management to react quickly and effectively and to maintain control of the situation. The plan will also help the school to return to normality as soon as possible and limit the effects of the incident on staff and students.

Critical Incident Management Team:

Borrisokane Community College has set up a Critical Incident Management Team consisting of the following personnel.

- The Principal
- The Deputy Principal
- The Care Team/Critical Incidence Management Team
- The Critical Incident Management Team may co-opt other members of staff to assist them, should they deem it necessary.

The Principal will act as Team Leader or in his absence the Deputy Principal. In the unlikely event of the principal and deputy not being present the role will be passed on temporarily to a member of the senior management team.

Role of Team Leader:

- The team leader alerts team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting of the team
- Co-ordinates/delegates tasks of the other team members.
- Liaises with the Board of Management, the Department of Education and Skills, NEPS (National Education & Psychological Services)
- In case of bereavement, liaises with the bereaved family

Other areas of responsibilities, which may be delegated by the team Leader to other members of the team would include:

- Contacting Emergency support services
- Briefing and advising all staff, including auxiliary staff and noting their feelings and concerns.
- Organising the supervision of students in the school
- Keeping staff updated on information/developments /progress
- Meeting students to brief them on the situation
- Taking care of “Vulnerable students/vulnerable staff”
- Liaising with external agencies for support or referrals
- Liaising with school organisations such as Parent's Council & Students’ Council.
- Meeting with individual parents or groups of parents.
- Visiting bereaved families or families closely associated with the incident
- Preparing a Press release and liaising with the media.
- Preparation of an “Incident Room”

Record Keeping:

All team members will keep written records of phone calls, letters, meetings, interventions etc.

Confidentiality:

The school is conscious of its responsibility to protect the privacy and good name of people involved in any incident and will be sensitive to the consequences of any public statements. All statements to the media must be cleared by the Principal.

Appendix 1

Key Roles Assigned by Team Leader

<p>Team Leader</p>	<p>The team leader alerts team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting of the team Co-ordinates/delegates tasks of the other team members. Liaises with The Board of Management and the Department of Education and Skills, NEPS In case of bereavement, liaises with the bereaved family Contacting Emergency support services Briefing and advising all staff, including auxiliary staff and noting their feelings and concerns. Organising the supervision of students in the school Keeping staff updated on information/developments /progress Meeting students to brief them on the situation Taking care of “Vulnerable students/vulnerable staff” Liaising with external agencies for support or referrals Liaising with school organizations such as Parents’ Council & Students’ Council. Meeting with individual parents or groups of parents. Visiting bereaved families or families closely associated with the incident Preparing a Press release and liaising with the media. Preparation of an “Incident Room”</p>
<p>Designated team leader</p>	<p>Tasks as above or delegated from the above list</p>
<p>Secretary</p>	<p>Provides information and advises on the critical incidence Deals with phone calls in line with team briefing Responsible for administration of appropriate letters (parents, press, etc.)</p>
<p>Staff Liaison This staff member may or may not be a member of the care team but is the closest staff member appropriate to the critical incidence (year head/tutor)</p>	<p>Briefs meetings for staff on the facts known, gives staff members an opportunity to express feelings Advises staff on the procedures for identification of vulnerable students Provides materials for staff(critical incidence folder) Updates staff as the day progresses Is alert to vulnerable staff members and makes contact with them individually Advises them of the availability of external support services and gives them relevant contact details</p>
<p>Student Liaison Team Two appointed: Students Council representatives and other relevant students</p>	<p>Identify the needs of students and communicate these needs to the Critical Incidence Team Assume responsibility in a supervisory role if the need arises Advises other students of the external support services and gives them the relevant contact numbers</p>
<p>Careteam</p>	<p>Maintains up to date list of contact numbers of emergency support services, key parents (parent’s council), etc.</p>

	Provides support to team leaders and assumes any delegatory roles Provide support to secretary in administration duties Liaises with agencies in the community for support Is familiar with policy and resources
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Appendix 2

SUICIDE – INDICATORS AND INTERVENTION MEASURES

Suicide is a particularly traumatic event in the life of any school. A study conducted in Ottawa, Canada, revealed a number of behaviours which can be exhibited by those contemplating suicide. Principals may find this list and the suggested forms of intervention helpful.

Ottawa Pointers

1. Loss of interest in usual activities.
2. Withdrawal from social contact.
3. Difficulty in concentrating, problems with judgement and memory.
4. Dramatic fall-off in school performance.
5. Feelings of sadness, emptiness, hopelessness may be expressed in essays.
6. Sleep disturbance – decreased, or sometimes increased.
7. Increased overt displays of anger and rage, verbal or physical.
8. Excessive use of drugs and/or alcohol.
9. Promiscuous behaviour.
10. Uncharacteristic delinquent behaviour/thrill seeking.
11. Lack of supportive relationships with friends or family.
12. Previous suicidal threats, gestures, attempts.
13. Statements, verbal or written, revealing wish to die or preoccupation with death.
14. Nihilistic comments – life is meaningless, filled with misery.
15. Gestures to be noticed – self mutilation, scratches.
16. Planning for death, making final arrangements, giving away treasured possessions.
17. Suddenly becoming cheerful after long depression (relief when decision taken).

WHAT TO DO: TAKE IT SERIOUSLY – have a talk with the young person keeping some principles in mind:

1. Remain in control – don't panic, act slowly.
2. Encourage expression of feelings and accept them (give time).
3. Avoid judgemental comments or empty reassurance.
4. Avoid promises you can't keep (e.g. secrecy; call me any time; confidentiality).
5. Empathise and let them know you care (biggest single preventative is knowing someone cares).
6. Encourage them to see a counsellor or therapist (carefully).
7. Inform Parents and Management of school.
8. If seriously worried, don't leave them alone.
9. Seek advice and support yourself (nobody should carry the worry about a suicidal youngster alone).

SUICIDE

What Not to Do

1. Don't assume a youngster is not the "type" to commit suicide.
2. Don't leave a child/teenager alone if you believe the risk of suicide is imminent.
3. Don't act shocked at whatever is told to you.
4. Don't debate whether suicide is right or wrong. This may make him/her feel more guilty and intensify the depression.
5. Don't take responsibility for "saving the youth", get additional help.

6. Don't feel that you have to have an answer to all the child's questions. If you do not know the meaning of life, say so. Make it clear that you are there to help, not to solve problems.
7. Don't be afraid to be the first to mention suicide. Generally it comes as a relief to the youth that you are willing to discuss the subject.
8. Don't deny or cover up the youngster's feelings or intents. Don't be judgemental. Acknowledge his/her feelings without reinforcing the negative. "I believe you are feeling miserable right now. Let's talk about it".
9. Don't abandon the youth because the problems are too overwhelming. Follow through in getting him/her help. Don't be another loss or rejection to him/her.
10. Don't wait too long because you hope he/she will get over it. It can't hurt to talk about his feelings.

Appendix 3

School Emergency Contact Sheet

Contact	Name	Telephone
School Doctor	Dr. Glynn	067 27106
Fire Brigade		112/999
Gardaí	Borrisokane Nenagh Paul Monaghan	067 27101 067 50457 083-3150403
Hospital Emergency Dept.	Nenagh Hospital	067 31491
Social Work Team	Child Care Manager Principal Social Worker Intake and Duty Child Protection Fostering Children in Care	067 38300 067 41934 067 46660 067 41934 067 46661 0504 27609
HSE Child Psychiatry		061 483388 emergency 061412247
Health Promotion		061483218
Sláinte, Health and Advice Centre		061483522
Local Clergy	Fr. Michael Cooney Rev Shannon Deloreal Rev Terry Mitchell	067 – 22017 085-1920808
Counselling Services	H.S.E. – Social Workers Wendy Greenford – Psychologist Mary Joe Meehan	067 – 41934 067 – 23923 087 2501353
Educational Services	NEPS NEPS Limerick Helen Fitzgerald Psychologist	01 8892700 061 108561 065 6113010 087 6113010
Suicide Prevention Office		061461454
Voluntary Agencies	Aware Rainbows Grow Mental Health Ireland Al Ateen Pieta House Suicide Aware	01 6766166 01 4734175 061 318813 061 461323 061 310303 0505 22568 087 9454202
Press and Media	Nenagh Guardian Midland Tribune Tipp FM	067 31214 0509 20003 067 44477, 052 25447
SUAS		0504 36366

Living Links		087 9693021
DES Press Office		01 8892322

This list was updated on: 14th September 2006. This list was updated on 9th October 2009.
This list was updated: 15th May 2015.

Appendix 4

PRINCIPAL'S CHECKLIST/ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

The following is a checklist of things to consider on the morning of a tragedy. They are not written in order of what must come first etc. It is important for a Principal to take time to plan what he/she must do and what is appropriate to say to all concerned.

- Take time to let the news sink in.
- Call a meeting of the Support Team, include Year Head and Tutor of deceased student.
- Put together as much factual information as possible.
- Inform staff what has happened.
- Discuss school routine for the first day with the staff.
- Identify particular students who may need to be told individually, e.g. close friends, relatives etc.
- Inform the pupils that a student has tragically died and explain that this is something everyone will find difficult to cope with. Explain school routine for the day and support and back-up for the students.
- Contact NEPS and HSE Crisis Service.
- Make contact with the family of the deceased.
- Meet with key staff who can offer student support and decide on the format for this.
- Decide on any other arrangements which need to be made on the first day, e.g. prayers for the student and his/her family.
- Check in with staff in the staff room during the day and keep abreast of what is happening in the school.
- Be aware of any particular teachers who may be particularly distressed, e.g. teachers who are recently bereaved themselves or who have had prior experience of suicide in their family.
- Encourage staff to come to you during the day and let you know how things are going.
- Find out details of the funeral etc. and communicate this to staff and students.
- Make contact with the bereaved family.
- At the end of the first day review events with staff and make plans for the following day.
- Make staff aware of students who are particularly vulnerable and what supports will be available to them.
- If there is a likelihood of interest from the media discuss a strategy to deal with any such requests.

Long Term:

- In-service for Class Teachers and staff to help them explore death, dying and grief with students.

Appendix 5

Trauma Response Plan:

Support Team Meeting (include Year Head and Class Tutor of deceased student)

1. Agree on a common statement with regard to the crisis giving the facts as they are known.
2. Decide who tells:
 - a) The class/student
 - b) Close friends of the student
 - c) Teachers of the student
 - d) All other teachers and staff of school
3. Decide how to inform classes and teachers, e.g. through pastoral care/tutor time block by block, through tutor system etc. Avoid whole school announcements.
4. Discuss and decide on school routine for the first day including visit to home of the bereaved, time out for staff and students.
5. Arrange a further meeting for later in the day to discuss school routine for the following days, arrangements for the funeral etc.
6. Staff:
 - a) Ask for volunteers from staff to inform students in no larger than class size.
 - b) Allow time for Support team to go through guidelines with these staff members on how to do this. Highlight the support that will be available in the school for students and staff.
 - c) Distribute guidelines on bereavement to all staff.
 - d) Arrange for a meeting of Religion teachers to discuss prayer services/assemblies for the day beginning with the year group of the deceased student.

Appendix 6

Contents of Critical Incidence Folder- Student Support File

Critical Incident Policy

Teacher- Student Resources

- Students- how to cope when something terrible happens
- Telling Students- Guidelines for Teachers
- Reactions to a Critical Incident
- Responding to Grief
- Checklist for Students at Risk
- Frequently asked Questions by Teachers

Letters-Announcement- Media

- Sample letter- traumatic death or event
- Sample Announcement to Media
- Sample letter to parents
- Guidelines for parents

NEPS Critical Incidents Guidelines

NEPS Critical Incidents Resource Materials

Guidance on Social Media Use and Critical Incidents 2014

This policy was developed during the school year 2014/2015 and adopted by the Board of Management on 13th October 2015.

