Toonagh National School

Critical Incident Policy

Introduction

At all times, Toonagh NS aims to protect the well-being of its pupils and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment as defined in our Mission Statement. The Board of Management, through the Principal, has drawn up the following Critical Incident Management Plan as one element of the school's policies and plans. The aim is to establish a Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) to steer the development and implementation of the plan.

Aim

The aim of the Critical Incident Policy is to help school management and staff to react quickly and effectively in the event of an incident, to enable them to maintain a sense of control and to ensure that appropriate support is offered to students and staff. Having a good plan will also help ensure that the effects on the students and staff will be limited. It will enable the school to return to normality as soon as possible.

Definition of Critical Incident

The staff and management of Toonagh NS recognise a critical incident to be "an incident or sequence of events" that overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school".
Critical incidents may involve one or more pupils or staff members, their family members or members of the local community e.g.

- 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.

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 students, 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

An intensive Health and Safety Statement has been created and in accordance with this statement the school has established a safety management system, to meet the requirements of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005, and all relevant safety legislation including approved codes of practice and guidelines. Examples of what systems and procedures the school have in operation include:

- Fire alarm and fire doors installed.
- Evacuation plan formulated.
- Regular fire drills occur.
- External & emergency lighting.
- Intruder alarms set each evening.
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
- Pre-opening supervision in the school occurs from 9.05 a.m.
- After school supervision: all pupils are escorted by their teacher to the exit gate.
- General school rules under the school's behaviour policy to ensure all pupils have a safe environment.
- Infant class teachers bring their pupils to the main school door in a line and hand them over to parents/guardians.

Psychological safety

The management and staff of Toonagh NS also 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 including issues such as grief and loss; communication skills; stress and anger management; resilience; conflict management; problem solving; help-seeking; bullying; decision making and prevention of alcohol and drug misuse. Promotion of mental health is an integral part of this provision.
- Staff are familiar with the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures.
- The school has developed links with a range of external agencies e.g. HSE/CAMHS/NEPS.
- Inputs to pupils by external providers are carefully considered in the light of criteria about pupils' safety, the appropriateness of the content, and the expertise of the providers.
- The school has a clear policy on bullying and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy.
- Pupils who are identified as being at risk are referred to the Designated Liaison Person (DLP). 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.
- Staff are informed about how to access support themselves.

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 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.

Key Roles and Responsibilities of the CIMT

- Team Leader
- Garda liaison
- Staff liaison
- Parent liaison
- Community liaison
- Administrator and Record Keeping
- Media liaison

Role 1 - Team Leader and Garda Liaison: Mr Gearóid Roughan

This role includes:

- Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting.
- Coordinates the tasks of the team.
- Liaises with the Board of Management; DES; NEPS.
- Liaises with the bereaved family.
- Liaises with the Gardaí.
- Ensures that information about deaths or other developments is checked out for accuracy before being shared.

*In the absence of the team leader, this role will be assumed by the Deputy Principal.

Role 2 - Staff and Community Liaison: Seán Eustace

This role includes:

- 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.
- Advises them of the availability of Carecall, (http://www.carecallwellbeing.ie/ & 1800 411 057 and gives them the contact number.
- Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of Key parents, such as members of the Parents Association.

- Liaises with agencies in the community for support and onward referral.
- Is alert of the need to check credentials of individuals offering support.
- Coordinates the involvement of these agencies.
- Reminds agency staff to wear name badges.
- Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies.

Role 3 - Parent Liaison: Yvonne Griffin & Parents Association Chairperson

This role includes:

- Facilitate and manage 'questions and answers' meeting.
- Sets up room for meetings with parents.
- Maintains a record of parents seen.
- Meets with individual parents.
- Visits the bereaved family with the team leader.
- Provides appropriate materials for parents (from their critical incident folder).

Role 4 - Administrator and Record Keeping: Noelette Corcoran School Secretary

This role includes:

- Maintenance of up to date telephone numbers of parents, teachers and emergency services.
- 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 group texts.
- Photocopies materials needed.
- Maintains records.
- In the event of an incident each member of the team will keep records of phone calls made and received, letters sent and received, meetings held, persons met, interventions used, material used etc.
- Noelette Corcoran will have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters, photocopying materials, etc.

Role 5 - Media Liaison: Gearóid Roughan & Marie Slattery

This role includes:

- 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)
- In the event of an incident, GR & MS will liaise where necessary with the representative & DES; relevant teacher unions etc.

- Will draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews (as agreed by school management) In the event of an incident each member of the team will keep records of phone calls made and received, letters sent and received, meetings held, persons met, interventions used, materials used etc. Noelette the secretary will have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters, photocopying materials etc.

Confidentiality and good name considerations

The school has a responsibility to protect the privacy and good name of the people involved in any incident and will to be sensitive to the consequences of any public statements. The members of the school staff will bear this in mind and will see to ensure that pupils to do also.

Critical Incident Room

Critical Incident Rooms	
In the event of a critical incident, the following rooms are designated for the indicated purposes	
Room Name	**Designated Purpose**
Staff Room	Main room for meeting staff
Classroom (5th/6th)	Meetings with students
Classroom (5th/6th)	Meetings with parents
SET Room (Gearóid)	Meetings with media
SET Room (Gearóid)	Individual sessions with students
SET Room (Yvonne)	Meetings with other visitors
Principal's Office	Confidential one to one meetings

Development and Communication of this Policy and Plan

All staff were consulted and their view canvassed in the preparation of this policy. Our school's final policy and procedures in relation to responding to critical incidents has been presented to all staff. Each member of the Critical Incident Team has a personal copy. All new and temporary staff will be informed of the details of the plan by the Principal.

Implementation and Review

This Policy will be reviewed, as deemed necessary, by the Board of Management.

Ratification:

This Policy was ratified by the Board of Management of Toonagh National School at its meeting on 29/02/2018.

Signed: *Marie Slattery*   **Date:**   *20/02/2018*
       (Chairperson, Board of Management)

       Donnchadh Kelleher
       (Principal)

Update and Review:

This Policy was updated and reviewed by the Board of Management of Toonagh National School on 08/02/2021.

Signed: *Marie Slattery*   **Date:**   *08/02/2021*
        (Chairperson, Board of Management)

        Gearóid Roughan
        (Principal)

Update and Review:

This Policy was updated and reviewed by the Board of Management of Toonagh National School on 16/10/2023.

Signed: _____   **Date:** 16/10/2023
        (Chairperson, Board of Management)

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        (Principal)