CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY

Ballinure National School aims to protect the well-being of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times.

The staff, with the cooperation of the Board of Management, has drawn up a Critical Incident Management Plan as one element of the school's policies and plans.

Our aim is to establish a Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) to steer the development and implementation of the plan.

Review and Research

The CIMT has consulted resource documents provided to schools as well as publications listed in the resources section of this publication.

These include:

☐ *Responding to Critical Incidents; Guidelines for Schools* (NEPS 2016)

☐ *Guidelines for Schools on How to Respond to the Sudden Unexpected Death of a Student*

☐ *When Tragedy Strikes: Guidelines for Effective Critical Incident Management in Schools* (INTO/Ulster Teachers Union 2000)

☐ *Suicide Prevention in Schools: Best Practice Guidelines* (IAS, National Suicide Review Group 2002)

What is a Critical Incident?

The staff and management of *Ballinure National School* 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 students or staff members, or members of the local community.

Types of incidents included:-
The death of a member of the school community (child/staff) 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*

Aim

The aim of the CIMT 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. Having a good plan should also help ensure that the effects on the students and staff will be limited. It should enable us to return to normality as soon as possible.

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

☐ Health & Safety Policy

☐ School and school grounds Evacuation Plan

☐ Occurring Regular fire drills

☐ Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked

☐ Morning supervision in the classroom (from 9:10 onwards)

☐ Front door accessible by keypad during school hours

☐ Beeper System in place on inside porch door.

☐ Line up routine from yard

☐ Code of Positive Behaviour Policy

Psychological safety

The management and staff of *Ballinure National School* aim to use available programmes and resources to address the personal and social development of students, 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. Areas such as the following may be addressed:

☐ ☐as grief and loss;

☐ ☐communication skills;

☐ ☐stress and anger management;

☐ ☐resilience;

☐ ☐conflict management;

☐ ☐problem solving;

☐ ☐help-seeking;

☐ ☐bullying;

☐ ☐decision making;

☐ ☐prevention of alcohol and drug misuse.

☐ ☐Promotion of mental health is an integral part of this provision.

☐ Staff have access to training for their role in S.P.H.E. (Professional Development providers)

☐ Staff is familiar with the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures.

☐ Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools Circular 0065/2011

☐ Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children

☐ Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools

☐ Books and resources on difficulties affecting the Primary School student are available.

☐ Information is provided, as appropriate, on mental health in general and such specific areas as signs and symptoms of depression and anxiety.

☐ The school has developed links with a range of external agencies – HSE, Commnity Gardaí, TUSLA and NEPS.

☐ Inputs to students by external providers are carefully considered in the light of criteria about student 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.

☐ There is a care system in place in the school. Students who are identified as being at risk i.e. Children in receipt of Resource Hours/ Children through the attention of the Child Protection Policy – are referred to the designated staff member (e.g. Class Teacher or Resource Teachers), concerns are explored and the appropriate level of assistance and support is provided. Parents are informed, and where necessary, a referral is made to an appropriate agency.

☐ Staff is informed about how to access support for themselves.

Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)
A CIMT has been established in line with best practice. The members of the team are selected on a voluntary basis and will retain their roles for the duration of the current board.

The members of the team will meet regularly to review and update the policy and plan. Outside of this they will meet twice again.

Each member of staff, has a copy of NEPS:-

☐ Responding to Critical Incidents (Guidelines for Schools)

☐ Responding to Critical Incidents (Resource Materials For Schools)

Each member of the staff also has a dedicated Critical Incident Folder. This contains a copy of the Policy and Plan.

Roles
Ballinure National School have assigned roles to:-
☐ Team Leader – Deputy Principal Tom Butler

☐ Garda liaison – Bill Fogarty

☐ Student liaison – Both class teachers

☐ Parent liaison – Principal

☐ Community liaison – Louise MC loughlin CC. /Mary Baskin .

☐ Media liaison – Chairperson Pat Morrissey

☐ Administrator – School Secretary Kathleen O'Connell

Team leader
☐ 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.
☐ The Principal will take the lead in the absence of the team leader.

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

Student liaison
☐ May co-ordinate information for teachers about students they are concerned about.
☐ Alerts other staff to vulnerable students (appropriately).
☐ Provides materials for students (from their critical incident folder).
☐ Keeps records of students seen by external agency staff.
☐ Looks after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room where agreed.

Community/Agency Liaison
☐ Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of key parents, such as members of the Parents Teachers Association.
☐ Emergency support services and other external contacts and resources.

☐ Liaises with agencies in the community for support and onward referral.
☐ Is alerted to 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.

<u>Parent liaison</u>
- Visits the bereaved family with the team leader.

- Arranges parent meetings,if held.

- May facilitate such meetings,and manage 'questions and answers'.

- Manages the 'consent' issues in accordance with agreed school policy.

- Ensures that sample letters are typed up, on the school's system and ready for adaptation.

- Sets up room for meetings with parents.

- Maintains a record of parents seen.

- Meets with individual parents.

- Provides appropriate materials for parents (from their critical incident folder).

Media liaison (Principal and Chairperson of the Board ONLY)
- Principal and the Chairperson of the Board, in advance of an incident, will consider issues that may arise and how they will be responded to.
- In the event of an incident, will liaise where necessary with the Patron; DES; NEPS etc.
- Only the Principal and the Chairperson of the Board, will draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews if absolutely necessary.
- A letter or text will be sent home to parents requesting them not to speak to the media.
- NEPS advise School Staff not to speak to media.
- The media will not be allowed on the school campus.

Administrator
- Maintenance of up to date telephone numbers of
  o Parents or guardians

  o Staff

  o Emergency services
- Takes telephone calls and notes those that need to be responded to.

Ensures that templates are on the school's system in advance and ready for adaptation.

 Prepares and sends out letters, , emails .

 Photocopies materials needed.

 Maintains records.

Record keeping

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.

The School Secretary will have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters, photocopying materials, etc.

Confidentiality and good name considerations

 The management and staff of *Ballinure National School* have a responsibility to protect the privacy and good name of the people involved in any incident and will be sensitive to the consequences of any public statements. The members of the school staff will bear this in mind, and will seek to ensure that students do so also. For instance, *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.*

Critical Incident Rooms

In the event of a critical incident:-

Learning support room will be the main room used to meet the staff.

Hall –for whole school.

Staff room/office –for smaller groups of students.

*Hall –*for parents.

Staff room /Office – for individual sessions with students.

Consultation and communication regarding the plan

⬚ All staff were consulted and their views canvassed in the preparation of this policy and plan.

⬚ Parent Representatives were also consulted and asked for their comments.

⬚ Our school's final policy and plan in relation to responding to Critical Incidents has been presented to all Staff.

⬚ Each member of the Critical Incident Team has a personal copy of the plan.

⬚ All new and temporary staff will be informed of the details of the plan by the *Deputy Principal or Principal (if D.P. not available).*

⬚ The plan will be reviewed and updated if necessary, at the first Critical Incident Team meeting, of each academic year. (October)

Signed Pat Morrissey
Chairperson of BOM

Signed_ Margaret Gleeson
Principal.

Signed__ Tom Butler
Deputy Principal

Date Ratified March 9th 2018

Reviewed March 25th 2018