



*"Great oaks from
little acorns grow"*

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Critical Incident Policy

Rationale

Park N.S. 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/Policy.

We have established 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 policy.

These include the following:

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

What is a Critical Incident?

The staff and management of Park N.S, recognise a critical incident to be "an accident 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 include the following:

- 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

Aims of Policy

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, staff and parents. Having a good plan should 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, in Park N.S., 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 and Safety Policy
- Emergency Action Plan
- Regular Fire Drills
- Fire exits and extinguishers to be regularly checked
- Supervision
- Code of Conduct
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Child Safety Statement
- Child Protection Policy
- Special Needs Policy

Psychological Safety

The management of Park N.S 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, discussion and CPD where necessary.

S.P.H.E/Curricular/Work of the school/Grow in Love

Social personal and Health Education is integrated into the work of the school and addresses areas such as the following:

- 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 Wellbeing

Staff/Supports/Systems/CPD

Staff have access to training for their role in S.P.H.E through the PDST (Professional Development and Support for Teachers)

The staff is familiar with the New Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures of Child Abuse. We, in Park N.S have a Child protection Policy and the staff is aware of who the DLP and DDLP are.

Information is provided, as appropriate on mental health in general and on such specific areas as signs and symptoms of depression and anxiety e.g Checklist-students at Risk section R14, Responding to Critical Incidents(NEPS Guidelines and Resource Materials for Schools)

The school has developed links with a range of external agencies-HSE, Community Gardaí, Tusla and NEPS.

Inputs to students by external providers are carefully considered in the light of criteria regarding student safety, the appropriateness of content and the expertise of the providers. Teachers are to be present at all times when an outsider is invited to work/speak with the children. Garda Vetting Requirements apply.

The school has a clear policy on bullying and deals with bullying in accordance with its anti-bullying policy.

There is a care system in place in the school where students who may be identified as being at risk are highlighted to the appropriate teacher(s)/Principal and support is provided. Parents are informed and where necessary, a referral is made to an appropriate agency. Some of these agencies/support services may include CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services), NEPS or the HSE.

The staff is informed about how to access support for themselves. The following support services may be accessed by the staff:

- www.into.ie/teacherHealthandWellbeing
- Employee Assistance Service/ Spectrum Life
- Employee Assistance and Wellbeing Programme set out by the Department of Education and Skills.

Critical Incident Management Team (CIMP)

A CIMT has been established in line with best practice. The members of the team will meet annually to review and update the policy/plan. They will meet at other times where necessary.

Each member of staff has a copy of the following guidelines and resources from NEPS:

- Responding to Critical Incidents (Guidelines for Schools)
- Responding to Critical Incidents (Resource Materials for Schools)

Roles

Park N.S., have assigned roles to the following people:

- Team Leader-Principal (Karen Hennessy)
- Garda Liaison-Principal/Deputy Principal (Karen Hennessy/Karen Lucey Bourke)
- Staff Liaison-Deputy Principal (Karen Lucey Bourke)

- Student Liaison-(class teachers)
- Parent Liaison-BOM Parent Nominees/PA Chairperson
- Community Liaison- Principal/Deputy Principal/Chairperson/Administrator (Secretary)
- Media Liaison-Chairperson (Patrick Curran/Karen Hennessy)
- Administrator-School Secretary (Ms. Ann-Marie Byrne)

Duties

Team Leader

- Alerts the team members to the crises and convenes a meeting.
- Coordinates the tasks of the team.
- Liaises with the Board of Management; DES;NEPS
- Liaises with the bereaved family.
- The Deputy 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 accurate before it is shared

Staff Liaison

- Leads briefing meetings for staff on the facts as known, gives staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and asks questions, outlines the routine for the day.
- Advises staff on the procedures for identification of vulnerable students.
- Provides materials for staff that may be needed, helpful or supportive.
- Keep staff updated as the day progresses.
- Is alert to vulnerable staff members and makes contact with them individually
- Advises them of the availability of Support Services and contact numbers.

Student Liaison

- May coordinate information for teachers about students which may be of concern.
- Alerts other staff to vulnerable students (appropriately)
- Provides materials for students which may be needed, helpful or supportive.
- Keeps records of students seen by external agency staff.

Community/Agency liaison

- Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of key parents, such as members of the Parents Association, lists of emergency support services, external contacts and resources.
- Liaises with agencies in the community
- Is alerted to the need to check credentials of individuals offering support.

- Coordinates the involvement of these agencies.
- Updates the team members on the involvement of external agencies.

Parent liaison

- Visits the bereaved family with the team leader.
- Arranges parent meetings, if needed.
- May facilitate such meetings and manage 'questions and answers'.
- Maintains a record of meetings held with parents
- May need to meet with individual parents
- Provides appropriate materials for parents

Media Liaison(Principal and Chairperson of the Board Only)

- The principal and Chairperson of the Board of Management, 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 Chairperson of the Board will draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews if necessary.
- NEPS advise School Staff not to speak to the media.
- The media **will not** be allowed on the school grounds.

Administrator

- Maintenance of up to date telephone numbers of parents/guardians, staff and emergency services
- Takes telephone calls and notes.
- Prepares notes/letters/emails as requested by Principal/ Team Members
- Maintains records.

Record Keeping

In the event of an accident each member of the team will keep records of phone calls made and received, letters/emails/texts sent and received, meetings held, persons met, interventions used, materials given or used.

The school secretary/administrator will have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending out letters, photocopying materials/resources etc.

Confidentiality

The management and staff of Park N.S 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 these rooms/areas may be used for certain purposes:

- The Staffroom room will be the main room to meet with parents/ NEPS/Gardaí
- The SEN rooms will be used for individual sessions with students/small groups of students.
- The staff room will be used to consult with staff
- The senior room will be used to address pupils

Consultation and Communication regarding this plan/Policy

- All staff were consulted and their views canvassed in the preparation of the policy/plan.
- Parent representatives were also consulted in the drafting of this policy.
- This policy has been presented to staff and also made accessible to the school community.
- Each member of the CIMT has a copy of this policy.
- All new and temporary staff will be informed of the details of this plan by the Principal/Deputy Principal

Useful Publications/Websites/Training Programmes/Agencies

The following websites, publications, guidelines and training programmes may be helpful:

- Responding to Critical Incidents Guidelines and Resources for Schools (NEPS 2016)
- Suicide Prevention in Schools Best Practice Guidelines (IAS, National Suicide Review Group 2002)
- Suicide Prevention in the Community (A Practical Guide, HSE 2011)
- Wellbeing in the Primary School (Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion, DOH, HSE 2015)
- Media Guidelines for the Reporting of Suicide, Self Harm (Irish Society of Suicide and the Samaritans 2007)
- www.barnados.ie/resources
- www.irishchildhoodbereavementwork.ie
- www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk
- www.pdst.ie
- www.sphe.ie
- www.nosp.ie (National office for Suicide prevention)
- www.mentalhealthireland.ie

- Training-Safetalk-Suicide Alertness Talk
- Assist-Training (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training)
- Agencies/Services-NEPS/PDST/CAMHS

Ratification

This policy has been ratified by the Board of Management.

Signed Pat Curran

Chairperson of the Board of Management.

Date 19/11/24.

It will be reviewed again in the second term 2025 or before this if needed or if legislation affects this policy's content.