



Critical Incident Policy

What is a Critical Incident?

Incidents become critical when they overwhelm the normal coping mechanisms of a school and its community. Types of incidents might include:

- The death of a member of the school community through sudden death, accident, terminal illness or suicide.
- A physical attack on staff members or pupils.
- An intrusion into the school.
- Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism etc.
- The disappearance of a member of the school community.

Aims

- To enable the school to respond in a structured and effective manner to a critical incident.
- To help the school to achieve a return to normality as soon as possible.
- To ensure that the effects on the students and staff will be limited.

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

- Evacuation plan to a physically safe environment formulated
- Regular fire drills occur
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
- Front school door locked with buzzer entry during class time
- School rules as indicated in the school's Code of Behaviour

Psychological safety

The management and staff of the Carbury 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. It is addressed in the curriculum by addressing 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 have access to training for their role in SPHE.
- Staff are familiar with the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures.
- Books and resources on difficulties affecting the primary/post primary school student are available.
- Staff are informed in the area of suicide awareness.
- The school has developed links with a range of external agencies – HSE, NEPS, Rainbows.

- 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 using the "Continuum of Support" approach which is outlined in the NEPS documents published on 2007 for primary schools and the Wellbeing in Primary Schools Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion (2015).
- Students who are identified as being at risk are referred to the designated staff member (e.g. support teacher), 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 for themselves.

Critical Incident Management Team.

Team Leader:	Linda McMahon (Principal)
Communication Role:	Sabrina Love (Deputy Principal)
Student Liaison:	Sandra Armstrong (Assistant Principal II)
Chaplaincy Role:	Dean Arfon Williams
Chairperson of the BoM:	Derek Whitcroft
Parents' Association Rep:	Nicola McCutcheon
N.E.P.S.:	Patricia Conway
(National Educational Psychological Service)	

Roles and responsibilities.

Team Leader

- Confirms the event.
- Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting.
- Liaises with the Board of Management and Department of Education and Science.
- Liaises with the bereaved family.
- Leads briefing meetings for staff on the facts known.
- Consultation with NEPS.

Communication Role

- With Team prepare a public statement.
- Respond to any enquiries from the media.
- Ensure telephone line is free for outgoing and important incoming calls.
- Liaises with relevant outside agencies for support.
- Preparation of templates for press release/for communication with parents.

Student Liaison/Support

- Address immediate needs of staff and organise supervision of pupils for staff meeting if appropriate.
- Alert staff to vulnerable pupils.
- Liaises with other team members to keep them up-dated with information and progress.

Chaplaincy Role

- Visit bereaved family if appropriate.
- Consult with family around involvement of school e.g. funeral service.
- Make contact and work in partnership with local clergy if appropriate.
- Be available as personal and spiritual support to staff.

Short Term Actions (Day 1)

The procedures to be followed will depend on the particular incident that has occurred. The Critical Incident team will meet as soon as possible and address the following:

- Gather accurate information
- What happened, where and when?
- What is the extent of the injuries?
- How many are involved and what are their names?
- Is there a risk of further injury?
- What agencies have been contacted already.
- Plan procedures for the day.
- Discuss issues relating to school routine, including school closure.
- Discuss how close relatives/friends and students will be informed.
- Discuss how to identify vulnerable students.

The team will agree a statement of facts for parents and the media. If possible there should be a written version of this to include

- The sympathy of the school community for the affected/bereaved family
- Positive information or comments about the deceased/injured person(s)
- The facts of the incident
- What has been done
- What is going to be done

A spokesperson will be designated (probably the principal or chairperson)

The Staff

If possible, depending on time of incident, teachers will be contacted by the principal and asked to arrive at school at 8.30a.m. for staff meeting. Should this not be possible, junior teachers will meet with team first, followed by senior teachers. Supervision of pupils will be shared among teachers whilst staff meeting is in progress.

- The chairperson, principal, student liaison and N.E.P.S. Rep. will meet with the staff in the staffroom to:
- Give an account of the facts as known.
- Discuss with the teachers about how the facts will be shared with the pupils.
- Outline the routine for the day.
- Advise of any cultural/religious sensitivities.
- Advise teachers to closely monitor students identified as more vulnerable than others.
- Provide support for teachers who feel unable to address students/classes.
- Provide supporting literature to staff.
- Give the teachers an opportunity to express their views and feelings.
- Agree time for follow up meeting.

The school will try and maintain normal routines as far as possible.

The Pupils

The chairperson and principal will visit each classroom.

- To monitor the pupils.
- To offer the pupils an opportunity to talk and to listen to them.
- To meet privately, if necessary, with individual pupils or small groups who might be particularly upset.
- A designated space/quiet room may be made available for students for a short period following a tragedy.

(Some parents may have to be contacted and the students brought home)

The Media

The main concern with any media interest is that the privacy of the bereaved family be respected and that their trauma not be increased. As already outlined in this policy one person will be designated as spokesperson and a written statement will be prepared.

School Closure

If it is felt that the school should be closed for a day then the school management will decide.

It is probable that the school would definitely close in the case of a sudden/accidental death of a pupil/teacher.

Counselling

Following a Critical Incident, it is expected that pupils may feel upset, especially close friends and relatives. If students continue to show significant signs of distress a number of weeks after the incident, it may be necessary to refer these students for further professional support, including counselling.

Longer Term Action

- Monitor pupils for signs of continuing distress.
- Critical Incident team evaluate response to incident and amend the policy appropriately
- What went well?
- Where were the gaps?
- What was most/least helpful?

1. Decide on appropriate ways to deal with anniversaries, etc.

2. Plan a school memorial service.

This policy was reviewed and revised with the assistance of N.E.P.S. and ratified by the B.O.M.
This policy is reviewed on an annual basis.

Signed: Linda McMahon Date: 26th October 2023
Principal

Derek Whitcomb

Chairperson of the Board of Management

Emergency Contact List

Agency	Contact Numbers
Garda	071-9157000
Hospital	071-9171111
Fire Brigade	071-9111404
HSE Duty Social Worker	071-9155133
Child and Family Mental Health Service (CAMHS)	071- 9113960
School Inspector: Caitríona Uí Ghrianna	087-2033252
NEPS Psychologist: Patricia Conway	01-8650690/ 01-8650701
Department of Education	01-8896400
INTO	01-8047700
Clergy: Dean Arfon Williams	087-6935478