



Critical Incident Management Team
Sample Letters

Procedures

Emergency Contact Details

Critical Incident Policy

Caragh National School, Co. Kildare
18654A

At all times, Caragh National School aims to protect the well-being of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment as defined in our Mission Statement. The Board of Management, through the Principal and in collaboration with the staff and parents, 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 Management Team (CIMT) 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 Caragh 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 students 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.
- A physical attack on staff member(s) / students(s)
- Any other incident which the CIMT deems to be a Critical Incident.

Creation of a Coping Supportive and Caring Ethos in the School

Caragh NS has put systems in place to help to build resilience in both staff and students through our SPHE/RSE programmes, 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

In the area of physical safety the school has put in place the following:

- Evacuation plan formulated
- Regular fire drills occur
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
- Pre-opening supervision in the school on days of inclement weather e.g. frost, rain, snow
- Parents / Visitors to the school are encouraged to report to the office to gain access.
- General school rules under the school's behaviour policy to ensure all pupils have a safe environment.

Psychological safety

The management and staff of Caragh NS also 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)

- It 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
- Staffs have access to training for their role in SPHE
- Staffs 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 school student are available
- The school has developed links with a range of external agencies e.g. HSE/Community Care/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 are referred to the designated staff member (eg Pastoral Care Teacher or DLP/DDLP). 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 access to the schools Critical Incident Management Folder which include all of the following:

- A copy of the Critical Incident Management Team/and the Key Roles
- An emergency contact list/school staff contact list
- A copy of the duties of each team member
- A copy of the Board of Management members & contacts
- An Action Plan Template

Key Roles and Responsibilities of the CIMT

- Team Leader
- Garda liaison
- Staff liaison
- Student liaison
- Parent liaison
- Community liaison
- Media liaison
- Administrator.

The following are the Key Responsibilities of each role;

Team Leaders

Principal & Deputy Principal.

- Alert the team members to the crisis and convene a meeting
- Co-ordinate the tasks of the team
- Liaise with the Board of Management; DES; NEPS; SEC
- Liaise with the bereaved family.
- Manage the 'consent' issues in accordance with agreed school policy.
- Ensure that sample letters are typed up, on the school's system and ready for adaptation.

The Deputy Principal will assume this role in the absence of the team leader.

Garda Liaison

Principal & Chairperson Board of Management

- Liaise with the Gardaí
- Ensure that information about deaths or other developments is checked out for accuracy before being shared.

Staff Liaison**Deputy Principal & ISM Team Members**

- Lead briefing meetings for staff on facts as known, give staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions and outline the routine for the day
- Advise staff on the procedures for identification of vulnerable students
- Provide materials for staff (from the Critical Incident Folder)
- Keep records of students seen by external agency staff
- Look after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room where agreed

Pupil Liaison**2 Staff Members (to be decided by the CIMT)**

- In advance of an incident, will consider issues that may arise and will prepare to respond to them.
- In the event of an incident will liaise with the relevant bodies and co-ordinate the necessary care arrangements
- Will establish an area in the school where pupils can meet with the appropriate care providers / psychologists where necessary – Critical Incident Rooms
- Alerts staff to vulnerable pupils (appropriately).
- Provides materials for students (from the critical incident folder)
- Keeps records of students seen by external agency staff

Community/Agency liaison**Chairperson Board of Management / Karen Banks**

- Maintain up to date lists of contact numbers - members of the Parents Council, emergency support services and other external contacts and resources
- Liaise with agencies in the community for support and onward referral
- Check credentials of individuals offering support
- Co-ordinate the involvement of these agencies
- Remind agency staff to wear name badges
- Update team members on the involvement of external agencies

Parent Liaison**Seán Corkery & Nicole Kennedy (Chairperson PC)**

- Visit the bereaved family with the team leader
- Arrange parent meetings if held - Facilitate such meetings, and manage 'questions and answers'
- Set up room for meetings with parents
- Meet with individual parents
- Maintain a record of parents seen
- Manage the 'consent' issues in accordance with agreed school policy
- Ensure that sample letters are typed up, on the school's system and ready for adaptation
- Provide appropriate materials for parents (from their Critical Incident Folder)

Media Liaison**Principal**

- 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, will liaise where necessary with relevant teacher unions etc
- Will draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews (as agreed by school management)

Administrator**Principal & Secretary**

- Maintenance up to date telephone numbers of:
 - (such numbers are kept in Critical Incident Folder in School Office & on Aladdin Database)
 - Parents or guardians
 - Teachers
 - Emergency services
- Take telephone calls and note those that need to be responded to
- Ensure that templates are on the school's system in advance and ready for adaptation
- Prepare and send out letters, emails and faxes
- 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 Caragh NS 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:

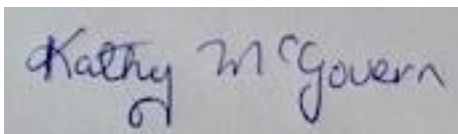
- The Staff Room will be the main room used to meet the staff
- The Assembly Hall / Library for meetings with students
- The Library for meeting small groups of Pupils.
- Learning Support rooms for use by NEPS Psychologists.
- The Assembly Hall / Library for parents
- The Library for media
- The Library for other visitors

Consultation and Communication Regarding the Plan

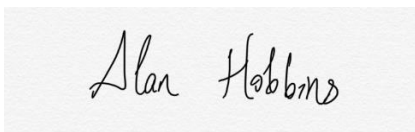
All staff were consulted and regard was given to their views in the preparation of this policy and plan. Students and parent representatives were also consulted and asked for their comments. Our school's final policy and plan in relation to responding to critical incidents has been presented to all staff. Each member of the critical incident team has access to a personal copy of the plan. All new and temporary staff will be informed of the details of the plan by a Staff Liaison member.

Ratification

This policy and plan was Ratified by the Board of Management on the 4th December 2019 and reviewed each year.



Kathy McGovern (Chairperson)



Alan Hobbins (Principal)

SAMPLE CONSENT LETTER – INDIVIDUAL OR GROUP SUPPORT SESSION

This letter can be used as a template for schools when they are seeking parental consent for a child to be seen in a group or individually by a NEPS psychologist.

Dear Parents,

You may already know that our teachers and staff have been providing support to our students following (specific reference to the incident).

Additional support is also being provided to our school by psychologist/s from the National Educational Psychological Services (NEPS).

The psychologist will be available, where necessary, to meet with individuals or with groups of students to help them during this difficult time.

The aim of such sessions will be to:

- (a) Provide information about dealing with grief and loss in a healthy way
- (b) Allow students the opportunity to express their thoughts and feelings in a safe environment
- (c) Allow students time to comfort and support each other, under the guidance of experienced staff from
- (d) Help students resume their normal routines as soon as possible.

If you would like for your son/ daughter to participate in such a session and any follow-up meetings that might be scheduled, please give your consent by signing below.

You should return it to the school immediately.

If you have any questions, please contact **(Name and phone number of contact person)**.

I give my consent for _____ to participate in a Group/Individual Session

Parent or Legal Guardian

Date

#Sincerely,

SAMPLE LETTER - SEEKING ADVANCE PARENTAL AGREEMENT TO CHILD BEING SEEN

This letter can be used as a template for schools which decide to seek advance parental consent so that a child may be seen by a NEPS psychologist (in a group or individually) in the aftermath of a critical incident. It is to cater for the situation where parents cannot be immediately contacted.

Dear Parent,

Scoil Mhuire has developed a plan for responding when a tragedy occurs.

When such an event happens, schools are offered support by psychologists from the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), an agency of the Department of Education and Science.

If we feel it is necessary, we would like to be in a position to have your child seen by the psychologist who can offer advice and support.

Before any child is seen by a NEPS psychologist parental consent is usually required. We will make every effort to obtain this. However, in the unlikely event of being unable to contact you, we are writing to seek your consent to your child being seen by a member of NEPS as part of our school’s immediate response. This is to allow us to support your child in the best way possible. Your child may be seen individually, in a small group or as part of a class group.

If you wish to discuss this, please contact me at your convenience.

Yours sincerely,

Schools should choose whether to use Option A or B below, or a more general letter (see 1.3 in the School’s Guidelines)

Option A

Please fill in the form below confirming that you have read this letter and stating whether you **wish or do not wish** to have your child seen by a NEPS psychologist and return to

I have read this letter and

I wish to haveseen by the NEPS psychologist.

I do not wish to haveseen by the NEPS psychologist.

Parents/Carers: _____

Date: _____

Option B

The school will assume your agreement if you do NOT return this slip stating that you **do not wish** to have your child seen by a NEPS psychologist. Please fill in the form below and return.

I have read this letter and I do not wish To be seen by the NEPS psychologist.

Parents/Carers: _____

Date: _____

SAMPLE LETTER TO PARENTS – SUDDEN DEATH/ ACCIDENT

This letter can be used as a template for schools when they are informing parents of a tragedy, offering some advice and outlining what the schools response involves.

Dear Parents,

The school has experienced (the sudden death, accidental injury, etc.) of Name of student(s). We are deeply saddened by the deaths/events.

(Brief details of the incident, and in the event of a death, perhaps some positive remembrances of the person lost).

We have support structures in place to help your child come with this tragedy. (Elaborate).

It is possible that your child may have some feelings and questions that he/she may like to discuss with you. It is important to give factual information that is appropriate to their age.

You can help your child by taking time to listen and by encouraging them to express their feeling. All children are different and will express their feelings in different ways. It is not uncommon for children to have difficulty concentrating or to be fearful, anxious, or irritable. They may become withdrawn, cry, complain of physical aches and pains, have difficulty sleeping or have nightmares. Some may not want to eat. These are generally short term reactions. Over the course of the days to come, please keep an eye on your child and allow him/her to express their feelings without criticism.

Although classes will continue as usual, I anticipate that the next few days will be difficult for everyone.

(OPTIONAL) An information night for parents is planned for (date, time and place). At that time, further information about how to help children in grief will be given.

We have enclosed some information which you may find useful in helping your child through this difficult time.

If you would like advice you may contact the following people at the school. (Details)

Yours sincerely,

SAMPLE LETTER TO PARENTS - VIOLENT DEATH

This letter can be used as a template for schools when they are informing parents of a violent death, offering some advice and outlining what the schools response involves.

Dear Parents,

I need to inform you about a very sad event that has happened.

(Give accurate information about the incident, but avoid using the word murder as this will not be established until the court case is completed).

A child/young person from the neighbourhood, who is the brother/sister of _____, a student here at school, was killed as a result of (a violent attack, violent incident in the street etc.) earlier this week. We are all profoundly saddened by his death.

We have shared this information and have had discussions with all of our students so that they know what has happened. School staff members have been available for students on an on-going basis today. Other support personnel (including psychologists etc, according to actual arrangements) are available to advise staff and, where necessary, to talk to students. This support will continue to be available for (if appropriate insert how long).

The death of any young person is tragic, but a violent death is even more difficult. It is hard to have to teach our children about the violence in our world and to accept that sometimes we do not have the power to prevent it.

This death may cause a variety of reactions in your child. Some children/young people may be afraid for their own life and for the lives of those they love. Take time to listen to their fears and reassure them that what has happened is rare.

We have enclosed some additional information that may be useful during this time.

The media are in the vicinity of the school and may approach you or your children. You need not respond to their questions if you are approached. We will not allow the media to interview your child at school and our general advice is that you should not let your children be interviewed. They are not mature enough to judge what to say and may say something they will regret later.

(If planned) A support meeting for parents is planned for (date, time and place). At that time we can talk further about how to help ourselves and our children.

Our thoughts are with (family name) and with each of you.

Yours sincerely,

SAMPLE ANNOUNCEMENT TO THE MEDIA

This letter can be used as a template by schools to be emailed, faxed or given to the media. It may help to decrease the number of media calls and callers to the school. In some instances it is not appropriate to provide names or information that might identify individuals. This announcement will need to be changed based upon confidentiality issues, the wishes of the victim's family and the nature of the incident.

My name is (Name) and I am the Principal of (Name) School. We learned this morning of the death of (one of our students or Name of student).

This is a terrible tragedy for _____ family(ies), our school and our community. We are deeply saddened by these events. Our sympathy and thoughts are with (Name) family and friends.

Name of student/students was a (__class boy/ girl) and will be greatly missed by all who knew him/her.

We have been in contact with his/her parents and they have requested that we all understand their need for privacy at this difficult time.

Offers of support have been pouring in and are greatly appreciated. Our school have implemented our Critical Incident Management Plan.

Psychologist from the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) and (insert other information if relevant) have been with us all day supporting and advising teachers in their efforts to assist our students at this time.

The teachers have been helping students to deal with the tragic event.

The school has been open to parents, to support them and to offer them advice and guidance.

We would ask you to respect our privacy at this time.

Thank you.

Critical Incident Management Team / Roles

Role	Name	Contact Details
Team Leader	Principal Alan Hobbins	086-8153268 045-880968
Garda Liaison	Principal Alan Hobbins	086-8153268 045-880968
Staff Liaison	Principal Deputy Principal Seán Corkery ISM Team Members	087-2872174
Student Liaison	Principal Deputy Principal Relevant Class Teacher Pastoral Care Teacher	
Parent Liaison	Principal Seán Corkery Nicole Kennedy	087-2872174 086-3759261
Community Liaison	Principal Chairperson of the Board Kathy McGovern Fr Joe McDermott	087-4185184 087-2500671
Agency Liaison	SEN Co-ordinator Karen Banks	087-1302673
Media Liaison	Principal Alan Hobbins	086-8153268
Administrator	School Secretary Ann Marie Monahan	085-7379256 045-860897

Emergency Contact List

Agency	Contact Details
Garda	Naas 045-897333 Newbridge 045-431212
Hospital	Naas General 045-897221
Fire Brigade	999
<u>Local GPs</u>	
Dr. Fay Naas	897301
Dr. Ní Bhriain Naas	875180
Dr. Kavanagh Naas	898875
Dr. Rosh Morar Prosperous	893762
Dr O Flynn Clane	868305
Dr. Kennedy Clane	868305
Dr. Healy Newbridge	486633
Dr. Caffrey Newbridge	432464
HSE	
Community Care Team	Duty Social Worker 045-882400
Child & Family Agency	
CAMHS	CAMHS 045-873880
School Inspector	Stephaine Fitzpatrick 087-1407284
NEPS Psychologist	Ailsa Seoighe 087-4553932
DES	0906 483600
INTO	1850 708 708 01-8047700
Parish Priest	Parish Office 875602 Fr. Joe McDermott 087-2500671
Chairperson	Kathy McGovern 087-4185184
Employee Assistance Service	1800 411 057