**Galbally NS**

**Critical Incident Management Policy**

Galbally NS aims to protect the wellbeing of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. The Board of Management has drawn up a Critical Incident Management Plan as one element of the school’s policies and plans.

**Review and Research**

The CIMT (Critical Incident Management Team) have consulted resource documents available to schools including:

* Responding to Critical Incident Guidelines and Resources for Schools (NEPS 2016)
* Well-Being in Primary Schools – Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion (DES, DOH, HSE 2015)

The staff and management of Galbally 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, or members of our local community. Types of incident may include:

* 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 members or pupils

**Aim**

* The aim of the CIMP 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. Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017 will be always adhered to in relation to any critical incident that may occur.

Having a good plan should also help ensure that the effects on the students and staff will be limited. It should enable us to effect a 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**

In considering physical safety Galbally NS has:

* Evacuation plan formulated
* Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
* Supervision of the school yard each morning from 9.05 - 9.20 (Parents are informed of supervision times yearly in the September Newsletter)
* Rules for the School Playground – Appendix 1

**Psychological Safety**

The management and staff of Galbally NS 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 trained 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
* Information is provided 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 (Tusla, CALMS, Public Health Nurse, EWB officer, Psychologist NEPS)
* 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 in 2007 for primary schools
* Students who are identified as being at risk are referred to the designated liaison person, 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 on 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 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.7

**Team Leader**: Martin Kearney (Deputy Claire Byrnes)

Role

* 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; SEC
* Liaises with the bereaved family

**Garda Liaison**: Martin Kearney (Deputy Claire Byrnes)

Role

* Liaises with the Gardai
* Ensures that information about deaths or other developments is checked out for accuracy before being shared

**Staff Liaison**: Claire Byrnes

Role

* Leads briefing meetings for staff on facts as known, gives staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions, outline 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 the EAS and gives them the contact number

**Student Liaison**: Class Teachers

Role

* Alerts other staff to vulnerable students (appropriately)
* Provides materials for students (from their critical incident folder)
* Maintains student contact records
* Looks after setting up and supervision of ‘quiet’ room where agreed

**Community/agency liaison**: Martin Kearney (Deputy Claire Byrnes)

Role

* Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of:

Key parents, such as members of the Parents Council

Emergency support services and other external contacts and resources

* Liaises with agencies in the community for support and onward referral
* Is alert 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

**Parent Liaison**: Sarah Cunningham

Role

* Visits the bereaved family with the team leader
* Arranges parent meetings, if held
* May facilitate such meetings and manage ‘questions and answers’
* Manage the ‘consent’ issues in accordance with agreed school policy
* Ensures that sample letters are typed up, on the school’s system and ready for adaption
* 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**: Martin Kearney (Deputy Claire Byrnes)

Role

* In advance of an incident, will consider issues that may arise and how they might be responded to (eg. Students being interviewed, photographers on premises etc.)
* In the event of an incident, will liaise where necessary with the SEC; relevant teacher unions etc.
* Will draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews (as agreed by school management)

**Administrator**: Breda Walsh

Role

* Maintenance of up to date telephone numbers of

Parents or guardians

Teachers

Emergency services

* Takes telephone calls and notes those that nedd to be responded to
* Ensures that templates are on the school’s system in advance and ready for adaption
* Prepares and sends out letters, emails, texts
* Photocopies materials needed
* Maintains records

**Record Keeping**: Class Teacher + Each Team Member

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.

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

**Confidentiality and good name considerations**

Management and staff of Galbally NS have a responsibility to protect the privacy and good name of people involved in any incident and will be sensitive to the consequences of public statements. Members of the school staff will bear this in mind, and seek to ensure that students do so also, eg. the term ‘suicide’ will not be used unless there is solid information that death was due to suicide *and* that the family involved consent 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 use instead.

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| **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 |
| Hall or Class Rooms | Meetings with students |
| Hall | Meetings with parents |
| Hall or Outside | Meetings with media |
| SEN room or Staff Room | Individual sessions with students |
| Staff Room | Meetings with other visitors |

**Consultation and communication regarding the plan**

All staff were consulted and their views canvassed in the preparation of this policy and plan. Students and parent/guardian 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 Bernie Leahy. The plan will be updated annually.

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| **Critical Incident Management Team** | | |
| Role | Name | Phone |
| Team Leader | Martin Kearney |  |
| Garda Liaison | Martin Kearney |  |
| Staff Liaison | Claire Byrnes |  |
| Student Liaison | Class Teachers |  |
| Community Liaison | Martin Kearney |  |
| Parent Liaison | Sarah Cunningham |  |
| Media Liaison | Martin Kearney |  |
| Administrator | Breda Walsh |  |

**Short Term Actions – Day 1**

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| Task | Name |
| Gather accurate information | Martin Kearney (Deputy Claire Byrnes) |
| Who, what, when, where? | Martin Kearney (Deputy Claire Byrnes) |
| Convene a CIMT meeting – specify time and place clearly | Martin Kearney (Deputy Claire Byrnes) |
| Contact external agencies | Martin Kearney (Deputy Claire Byrnes) |
| Arrange supervision of students | Bernie Leahy |
| Hold staff meeting | All Staff |
| Agree schedule for the day | Martin Kearney (Deputy Claire Byrnes) |
| Inform students | Class Teachers & SET |
| Compile a list of vulnerable students | Class teacher |
| Prepare and agree media statement and deal with media | Martin Kearney (Deputy Claire Byrnes) |
| Inform parents | Martin Kearney (Deputy Claire Byrnes) |
| Hold end of day staff briefing | Martin Kearney (Deputy Claire Byrnes) |

**Medium term actions - (Day 2 and following days)**

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| Task | Name |
| Convene a CIMT meeting to review the events of Day 1 | Martin Kearney (Deputy Claire Byrnes) |
| Meet external agencies | Martin Kearney (Deputy Claire Byrnes) |
| Meet whole staff | Martin Kearney (Deputy Claire Byrnes) |
| Arrange support for students, staff, parents | Designated liaison officer |
| Visit the injured | Martin Kearney, Class Teacher, Sarah Cunningham |
| Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements | Martin Kearney, Sarah Cunningham |
| Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service | Martin Kearney (Deputy Claire Byrnes) |
| Make decisions about school closure | Board of Management |

Follow up – beyond 72 hours

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| Task | Name |
| Monitor students for signs of continuing distress | Class teachers |
| Liaise with agencies regarding referrals | Martin Kearney, Class Teacher, SET |
| Plan for return of bereaved student(s) | Martin Kearney, Class Teacher |
| Decide on memorials and anniversaries | BOM, Staff, parents, students |
| Review response to incident and amend plan | Staff, BOM |