



## **Critical Incident Policy for Lucan Educate Together N.S.**

### ***Purpose***

The purpose of this plan is to set out procedures which will be followed in order to ensure a timely and co-ordinated response to critical incidents and urgent situations involving staff, students and visitors to Lucan Educate Together.

### ***What is a Critical Incident?***

"A critical incident is any incident or sequence of events which overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school and disrupts the running of the school"

### **Examples:**

- Death, major illness/outbreak of disease
- Criminal incidents
- Major accidents, serious injury
- Suicide
- Civil unrest, war (foreign nationals may be traumatised by events that happened in their country of origin)
- Fire, natural and technological disaster
- Disappearance of student from home or school
- Unauthorised removal of student from school or home.

### **Creation of a coping supportive and caring ethos in our school.**

We have put systems in place 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 our school community.

### **Physical safety:**

- Regular fire drills occur
- Fire evacuation plans are in place
- Regular checks of fire door, extinguishers and alarms
- Front gates closed during school time
- Buzzer system in place at reception
- School doors closed during class time with access only through reception
- Emergency numbers displayed clearly
- Rules and procedures in place on the yard and in the school environment
- Sign out sheet for children who are collected early
- In school management team have staff contact list in case of any emergency
- Procedures in place so that young children do not go home alone
- RED CARD - system whereby staff can inform other adults if there is a critical incident in their room. If child arrives at your door with RED CARD, please ensure help is immediately dispatched to that room.

### **Psychological safety :**

- Ethos of inclusivity and acceptance
- Delivery of SPHE/ Walk Tall / Stay Safe Programmes
- Pastoral care for vulnerable children
- Teacher awareness of vulnerable children ( special needs folder in office )
- Provision of staff training and resources
- Development of links with outside agencies
- Staff familiarity with child protection guidelines and procedures
- Provision of support for staff and clear information on how to access the Employment Assistance Service ( Free phone 1800 411057 )
- Promotion of open and encouraging environment where children are encouraged to share their difficulties and seek help for same
- Discipline policy includes an approach to bullying
- Policy on bullying in the workplace
- Staff have access to books and resources on difficulties affecting pupils
- All staff made aware of Critical Incident Policy
- Critical Incident Management Team in place

## **Critical Incident Management Team 2015- 2016**

### **1. Team leaders:**

Mary Tuohy - Principal  
Helena Murphy -Deputy Principal

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### **2. Garda Liason Reps:**

Mary Tuohy / Helena Murphy

### **3. Staff Liasion Reps:**

Yvonne Mangan / Therese Hesse

### **4. Student Liaison Reps:**

Amanda Manning / Rachel Bourke / Karen Hayes

### **5. Administrator :**

Veronica Munroe ( Secretary )

### **6. Parent Liasion Reps:**

Ian Scott

### **7. Community Liaison Reps:**

Sharon Masterson / Maeve Trehy

### **8. Media Liaison Reps :**

Grainne O Reilly / Muireann O Donovan

## ***Roles and Responsibilities***

### **1. Team Leaders:**

- Confirm the event

- Activate the Critical Incident Management Team
- Clarify facts surrounding event
- Notify relevant families
- Make contact with other relevant agencies
- Liaise with BOM / DES / NEPS /EXEC
- Decide how news will be communicated to different groups (staff, pupils, outside school)
- Ensure provision of ongoing support to staff and students
- Facilitate any appropriate memorial events
- Review Plan

## **2. Garda Liaison Reps:**

- Liaise with Gardai when necessary

## **3. Staff Liaison Reps**

- Ensure that all staff are fully informed of the critical incident ( eg. Staff members on career break or maternity leave )
- Ensure that all staff meet and are fully informed of the facts and procedures ( e.g not talking to the media / what to impart to the children etc. )
- Circulate amongst staff and be alert to vulnerable members
- Organize schedule for the day with other staff - try to stay with routine as far as possible
- Organize a quiet room for staff if needed ( time out / privacy )
- Support teachers in their support of students
- Organize appropriate outside agencies / resources for staff

## **4. Student Liaison Reps:**

- CIMT meet and seek advice from NEPS as to what is the best way to approach the incident with the students , depending on the critical incident presented.

- Provide a space/area for the students affected (e.g if a parent of child has died)
- Follow handout R7 " A classroom session following news of a Critical Incident " and information on handouts R8 - R13
- Inform students of services available ( e.g Rainbows / pastoral care )
- Provide ongoing support to vulnerable students / most affected classes.
- "Responding to tragedies in schools " DES 2006

#### **5. Administrator :**

- Maintenance of up to date telephone numbers of the following groups: Parents/guardians , Staff , Emergency services, Outside Agencies
- Takes telephone calls and notes those that need to be responded to
- Prepares and sends out letters/ e-mails / faxes
- Ensures that templates are on school system and ready to be adapted
- Photocopies materials as needed
- Maintains records

#### **6. Parent Liaison Reps:**

- Coordinate contact with families immediately affected by the incident (following first contact by principal)
- Arrange visit within 24 hours
- Consult with family around involvement of school in any services e.g. funeral service with due regard to culture and traditions
- Assist with all communication dealing with parents of any student affected by critical incident via e-mail / phone/letter ( whichever is most appropriate )
- Arrange ( with the principal )large group meetings for parents
- Outline the plan for the meeting and introduce the speakers
- Give an outline of the facts as known
- Outline what the school has done to date and the plan for the next few days/weeks etc.
- Outline the in-school support systems available to students and how parents can request help from the school/ other agencies.
- Offer advice to parents about dealing with the media. In general , the advice should be not to allow their children to be interviewed.
- Provide refreshments and time for parents to ask individual questions from staff or speakers
- Provide ongoing support to families affected by the incident

- Offer to link family with community support groups ( Community Liaison officer will have details )
- Review and evaluate plan.

### **7. Community Liaison Reps:**

- Liaises with agencies in the community for support and onward referral
- Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies
- Assists the administrator in maintaining updated lists of contacts

### **8. Media Liason Reps:**

- With CIMT , prepare a public statement.
- Organize a designated room to address media promptly
- Ensure telephone lines are free for important outgoing and incoming calls
- Liaise with relevant outside support agencies
- Review and evaluate effectiveness of communication response

Notes re public statement:

Seek advice from INTO press officer or DES press officer and they can deliver the statement if appropriate. The name of the person involved in the critical incident ( child/adult ) is not to be included in any media statement , unless the family know and give their approval. One person deals with the media and no other staff member should supply a comment. If approached do not use the words " No comment ". Just continue walking.

### **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 , materials used etc.

### **Confidentiality and good name considerations:**

The management and staff of Lucan Educate Together 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 the wider school community does so also. e.g. The term "suicide" will not be used unless there is solid evidence that the death was due to suicide and that the family involved consent to its use. The phrase " tragic death " or " sudden death" may be used instead. Also the term " 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 following rooms will be used:

- Staff room - CIMT and staff meeting
- Language / learning support room 3 - meet with students / parents
- Principals office - media and visitors from other agencies

### **Consultation and communication regarding the plan:**

All staff were consulted and their views canvassed in preparation of this policy and plan .Our school's final policy and plan in relation to responding to Critical Incidents has been presented to all staff and each member of the CIMT has a personal copy of the plan. All new and temporary staff will be informed of the details of the plan by the Team Leaders. The plan will be updated annually in September .

### **Action plan**

*Depending on the critical incident the following action plans/ procedures will be implemented and these range from short term and immediate action plans to longer term action plans. At all stages, records will be kept of the sequence of events and actions taken in response to the critical incident.*

### **SHORT-TERM ACTIONS (IMMEDIATE RESPONSE)**

- Clarify the facts
- Immediate contact with family/families.
- Consult with the family regarding appropriate support from the school, e.g. funeral service / hospital visit / flowers.
- Ensure that a quiet place (e.g. small meeting room, Principal's office) can be made available for students/staff, if applicable.
- Convene a meeting with Critical Incident Management Team (as soon as possible).

1. Organise a staff meeting, if appropriate (as soon as possible).
  2. Ensure any absent staff members are kept informed.
  3. Organise timetable/routine for the day. (Adhering to the normal school routine is important, if this is possible).
  4. Class teachers to take note of any absentees who might need to be contacted, list of friends etc, or any other relevant information and give to the Student Liaison person.
  5. Arrange supervision of students
  6. In case of death, liaise and sympathise with family. If appropriate, arrange for relevant staff members to visit the family and/or attend funeral. Have regard for different religious traditions and faiths.
- Contact appropriate agencies
    1. Emergency services
    2. Medical services
    3. H.S.E. Psychology Departments/Community Care Services
    4. NEPS
    5. BOM
    6. DES/Schools Inspector.

### **MEDIUM TERM ACTIONS**

- Review the events
  1. Reconvene Critical Incident Management Team.
  2. Decide arrangements for support meetings for parents/students/staff.
  3. Decide on mechanism for feedback from teachers on vulnerable students.
  4. Have review of Critical Incident Management Team meeting.
  5. Establish contact with absent staff and pupils.
- Arrange support for individual students, groups of students, and parents, if necessary.
  1. Hold support/information meeting for parents/students, if necessary, in order to clarify what has happened.
  2. Give any teacher who feels uncomfortable with involvement in support meetings the choice of opting out.
  3. Arrange, in consultation, with outside agencies, individual or group debriefings or support meetings with parental permission.
  4. Plan for the re-integration of students and staff e.g. absentees, injured, siblings, close relative etc)
  5. Student Liaison person to liaise with above on their return to school.



- Plan visits to injured and /or bereaved
  1. Parent Liaison person + Class Teacher + Principal to visit home/hospital.
  2. Attendance and participation at funeral/memorial service
  3. Decide this in accordance with parents' wishes and school management decisions and in consultation with close school friends.
- School closure (if appropriate)
- Request a decision on this from school management.

### **LONGER TERM ACTIONS**

- Monitor students for signs of continuing distress.
- If, over a prolonged period of time, a student continues to display the following, he/she may need assistance from the Health Board. Constant communication with family is essential.
  1. Uncharacteristic behaviour
  2. Deterioration in academic performance
  3. Physical symptoms — e.g. weight loss/gain, lack of attention to appearance, tiredness, restlessness
  4. Inappropriate emotional reactions
  5. Increased absenteeism.
- Evaluate response to incident and amend Critical Incident Management Plan appropriately.
  1. What went well?
  2. Where were the gaps?
  3. What was most/least helpful?
  4. Have all necessary onward referrals to support services been made?
  5. Is there any unfinished business?
- Formalise the Critical Incident Plan for the future
  1. Consult with NEPS Psychologist
- Inform new staff/new school pupils affected by Critical Incidents where appropriate
  1. Ensure that new staff are aware of the school policy and procedures in this area.
  2. Ensure they are aware of which pupils were affected in any recent incident and in what way.

3. When individual pupils or a class of pupils affected by an incident are transferring to a new school, the Principal should brief the Principal of the new school.
- Decide on appropriate ways to deal with anniversaries (Be sensitive to special days and events)
    1. Anniversaries may trigger emotional responses in students/staff and they may need additional support at this time.
    2. Acknowledge the anniversary with the family
    3. Be sensitive to significant days like Birthdays, Christmas, Mother's Day, and Father's Day.
  - Plan a school memorial service, where appropriate.
  - Where appropriate, care of deceased person's possessions. What are the parent's/family's wishes?
  - Update and amend school records.

### **Evaluation and review**

This policy will be reviewed annually to take account of the following:

- Changes in staff
- New legislation in relation to child protection
- Any amendments that may need to be made following a critical incident

## GUIDANCE FOR STAFF FOLLOWING AN EMERGENCY ON SCHOOL GROUNDS

Record all actions - if not immediately, as soon as possible after the event

There has been an incident

- Obtain all facts and information
- Ensure any injured pupil/staff is taken care of
- Activate the Critical Incident Management Team CIMT
- CIMT follow assigned roles
- Inform the BOM / DES/ INTO as appropriate
- Consider evacuating the school , account for all pupils, staff and visitors
- Consider relocating to another premises
- Inform parents/ relatives as appropriate
- Depending on the nature of the incident continue to update/ inform parents
- If appropriate , establish links with school psychologist to arrange counselling
- Complete accident forms as necessary

## GUIDANCE FOR GROUP LEADERS ON OUT OF SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

Record all actions - if not immediately , as soon as possible after the event

There has been an incident
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- Assess the situation and take immediate action to ensure the safety of pupils and staff
- Obtain all facts and information
- Call Emergency Services
- Ensure any injured pupil/ staff are taken care of
- Account for all members of the party

If party are all together, arrange for non-casualties to return to base and await further information	If party is in separate groups, inform other groups when possible
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- Ensure all non-casualties stay together
- Establish a command centre and establish who is in charge
- If possible one member of staff to remain at incident site to liaise with emergency services
- Travel with casualties to hospital
- Inform principal of incident

**REMEMBER TO INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:**

Nature of incident

Name of those involved

Nature of injuries

Name and location of hospital involved

Request assistance at site if necessary

Make arrangements for non-casualties to return back to school / home

- Complete any accident forms
- Principal will activate the CIMT if necessary and inform parents / BOM/ DES/ Into and media

**ON SITE OF INCIDENT**

Determine who is to be the spokesperson to deal with the media. Pupils should not talk to the media unless arranged by staff with agreement from parents/ guardians.

**GUIDANCE FOR "ON-SITE " STAFF FOLOWING**  
**NOTIFICATION OF AN OFF-SITE INCIDENT**  
**(EITHER IN OR OUT OF SCHOOL HOURS )**

There has been an incident
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Obtain acts and information

Confirm which member of staff is in charge at scene and if they need assistance

Activate the CIMT

If school requires opening, contact key holders

If children / staff have been seriously injured , decide how to tell parents / guardians in conjunction with the police

Consider inviting the parents of the children involved to the school

If incident occurs during the school holidays, consider briefing the school community at earliest opportunity

**DURING A CRITICAL INCIDENT WITHIN  
THE SCHOOL**

- **ASSESS THE DANGER**
- **DECIDE WHAT ACTION NEEDS TO BE  
TAKEN (E.G. EVACUATION OR NOT )**
- **INFORM ALL STAFF ABOUT THE  
ACTION TO BE TAKEN**
- **NOTIFY EMERGENCY SERVICES**
- **ACTIVATE CIMT**
- **RECORD AND VERIFY DETAILS**
- **CREATE A CALM PURPOSEFUL  
ENVIRONMENT**