



## **Scoil na mBráithre, Dungarvan**

**An Edmund Rice School**

### **Critical Incident Policy 2022/2023**

**Ratified by the Board of Management on**

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**(Chairperson of the Board of Management)**

<b>Commenced: 2014</b>
<b>Last Reviewed: September 2021</b>
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## **Introduction**

Scoil na mBráithre, Dungarvan is one of the leading providers of secondary education in West Waterford. We provide education in the Edmund Rice tradition to give every student in our care the very best possible education to prepare them for life beyond school. We nurture faith, promoting partnership between staff, students, parents, and the local community. We excel in teaching and learning and have worked hard to create a caring school community. Our 'Learning Community' encourages staff, students and parents to involve themselves fully in all aspects of school life. This is based on the core values of Respect, Responsibility, Integrity, Cooperation and Achievement. Our educational program is wide and varied and our record of success in the state exams is outstanding. Students find they can pursue their interests and strengths to the best of their ability and are encouraged to achieve their personal best. We are proud of our record and of our success in helping students achieve their dreams once they leave school. Our vision of education extends far beyond the classroom, we encourage our students to involve themselves in extracurricular activities. Students can participate fully on the sporting field as well as other personal interests. We expect high standards in all that we do at Scoil na mBráithre, Dungarvan. We encourage our students to aim high in their studies, to work hard and to be sensitive to the rights and needs of others. We aim to create a positive inclusive environment which enables everyone to reach their full potential. We promote mutual respect within the school community and strive to provide a happy and secure atmosphere which fosters a love of learning. We encourage the development of the whole person, by fostering the personal, spiritual and moral development of every student. The realisation of individual talents and academic excellence is paramount. We aim to create a friendly, healthy, safe and caring environment which affirms our pride in the school. We promote the development of the necessary skills so that students may become responsible members of society. It is our wish to see every student leave Scoil na mBráithre with moral integrity and a heightened sense of social conscience

## **1.1 The Critical Incident Management Policy (CIMP)**

In Scoil na mBráithre, the critical incident policy is to respond to a critical incident quickly and effectively, minimise the potential negative effects of the incident, care for those affected and effect a return to normal school life as soon as possible. The policy provides a framework within which a critical incident plan is developed for each critical incident as it arises.

### **1.1.1 The aim of the critical incident management policy (CIMP)**

The aim of the CIMP is to help school management and staff to react quickly and effectively in the event of an incident, to help maintain a sense of order and to ensure that appropriate support is offered to students and staff. The policy enables the development of a critical incident management plan appropriate to each specific critical incident. Having a good plan should also help ensure that the effects on the students and staff will be limited. It should enable us to affect a return to normality as soon as possible.

### **1.1.2 The critical incident plan**

The critical incident plan is the set of actions the school community takes to ensure that the critical incident is managed as well as possible. The plan is developed by the Critical Incident Management Team, led by the team leader, the principal.

Having a good plan should also ensure that the effects of any incident on the students and staff will be minimised. It should help us to affect a return to normality as soon as possible. Many of these incidents may require an inter-agency response involving the Gardai and the emergency services.

## **1.2 Contents of This Document This document contains:**

- The definition the critical incidents to which this policy guides the school's response
- The principles behind our creating a coping supportive and caring ethos, providing a foundation to our response to any critical incident,
- The definition of the Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) roles
- The key responsibilities for each role

- A template for the management of a critical incident including o creation of the initial incident plan in response to an incident o managing the critical incident to its conclusion o a post critical incident review
- Consultation and communications principles behind this document

There are a number of appendices.

- Appendix 1 provides contact details required for a critical incident.
- Appendix 2 guidelines for staff in response to a critical incident.
- Appendices 3 and 4 provide guidelines where critical incidents involve students.
- Appendix 5 consists of a list from the NEPS guidelines of 2016. These are available from the NEPS website, and on the OLS website, and are made available to the CIMT members.
- Appendix 6 is an annual checklist for the school management to ensure the policy is current for the school year.
- Appendix 7 is an updated staff contact list for the current academic year.

### **1.3 Development and Maintenance of the CIMP**

This Critical Incident Management Policy provides the framework for the response of the school community should such an incident occur. It has been developed based on feedback from the staff, students, and parents of Scoil na mBráithre and NEPS. In drawing up this policy and plan the CIMT has consulted the following resource documents provided to schools:

- Responding to Critical Incidents NEPS Guidelines and Resource Materials for Schools (NEPS 2016)
- Responding to Critical Incidents resource materials for schools (Dept. of Ed. 2015)
- Responding to a Critical Incident Pack for Schools (NEPS 2003)
- Responding to Critical Incidents Resource Material for Schools (NEPS 2007)
- Guidance on Social Media Use and Critical Incidents (2014)
- ASTI Guidelines for Schools on How to respond to sudden unexpected death of a student (2005)
- The Well-being in Schools Guidelines (2013, 2015) Student Support Teams in Post-Primary Schools (2014)

Note: although the 2016 NEPS guidelines focus on critical incidents involving students, in this document Scoil na mBráithre considers a wider range of events that would constitute a critical incident for Scoil na mBráithre.

#### **1.4 CIMP Policy Document Review and Update**

This policy is subject to review every two years by the Board of Management.

- The policy was reviewed and approved by the Board of Management in 2014
- The policy was reviewed and approved by the Board of Management in 2022.
- The policy is updated and reviewed by the Board of Management annually.

In addition, the policy will be reviewed and updated on foot of any incidents or events which give rise to invoking the policy. The appendices to this document provide information, procedures and guidelines which support the policy. These appendices should be updated to reflect:

- Changes in names/contact details for the CIMT and third parties
- Changes/developments in support provision best practices.

Any such changes should be notified to the Board, recognising that updating the appendices does not require re-approval of the policy by the Board.

## **2. DEFINITION OF A CRITICAL INCIDENT**

The staff and management of Scoil na mBráithre recognise a critical incident to be an incident or sequence of events which overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school and disrupts the normal running of the school. Critical incidents may involve one or more students or staff members, or members of our local community. Examples of Incidents that could affect schools

- The death of pupils or members of staff or other members of the school community through natural causes such as illness, an accident, by a deliberate act of violence or by suicide, suspected suicide, or other unexpected death.
- A fire, flood, explosion, vandalism, or other event that would prevent the normal usage of the school
- Threat of harm to students, personnel, or facilities.
- Use of weapons or explosives in or near the school
- An intrusion into the school by unauthorised personnel.
- Deaths or injuries on school outings e.g., Bus crash on a school trip or travelling to or from school where there are multiple injuries or deaths.
- Incidents involving children and staff from many schools
- Civil disturbances including terrorism
- An accident or tragedy in the wider community
- A physical assault on a member of the school community.
- Serious injury or death of a person on school property.
- A criminal incident occurring during school time.
- The disappearance of a member of the school community: from school or home.
- Outbreak of communicable illness or disease: Covid 19, meningitis, foot and mouth etc.



### **3. FOUNDATION: THE CREATION OF A COPING, SUPPORTIVE AND CARING ETHOS IN THE SCHOOL**

Systems are put in place to help 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. These systems will therefore form part of the school's response to any critical incident which should arise.

#### **3.1 Physical Safety Examples include:**

- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked and dated
- Regular fire drills occur
- Evacuation plan has been formulated
- School grounds are supervised before school, break times and lunchtimes: supervision rota for break periods in place.
- Barriers on both school entrances with access restricted to authorised personnel only.
- Well maintained building

#### **3.2 Psychological Safety**

The management and staff of Scoil na mBráithre 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.

Examples include:

- Pastoral/Form Teacher and Student Support Team in place
- Anti-bullying policy: The school has a clear policy on bullying and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy. There is a Pastoral Care Team established in the school.
- Links are developed with a range of external agencies: The school has developed links with a range of external agencies; NEPS, Barnardos, Community Based Drugs Initiative, Squashy Couch
- Staff attend CPD: Staff are informed in the area of suicide awareness and some are trained in interventions for suicidal students

- 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
- All school staff are encouraged to identify students at risk and to refer them to receive appropriate support. Staff are familiar with the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures
- Students who are identified as being at risk are referred to the designated staff member (e.g. guidance counsellor), 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.
- Information is provided on mental health in general and such specific areas as signs and symptoms of depression and anxiety.
- Books and resources on difficulties affecting the post primary school student are available
- SPHE classes: 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.
- Involvement in Healthy Schools Promotion
- SEN policy
- Assemblies with their Year Head and class tutors are held weekly for first year students
- Staff are informed about how to access support for themselves if requested.
- The Student Council facilitate the student voice and leadership in the school, adding to the safe community.
- There is a Guidance Counsellor established in the school who provides one to one counselling.
- Fr. John is our school chaplain.

#### **4. CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM (CIMT) MEMBERS**

The school has a standing Critical Incident Management Team CIMT in line with best practice. The members of the team are agreed annually, listed in Appendix 1, and the Board of Management notified of the relevant members. This team meets annually, at the beginning of the school year, to review and update the policy and plan.

The members of the CIMT for any particular incident will vary, in some respects, depending on the incident.

- Team Leader Principal – Agnes Guerin
- Team Coordinator Deputy Principal – Brenda Kirwan
- Garda Liaison: Agnes Guerin & Brenda Kirwan
- Staff Liaison: Agnes Guerin, Brenda Kirwan, Fergal McGrath & Stephanie Flannery
- Student Liaison: Tara Whelan, Stephanie Flannery, Fergal McGrath & Fr John McEneaney.
- Community/Agency Contact/Church: Agnes Guerin & Brenda Kirwan
- Parent Liaison: Agnes Guerin, Brenda Kirwan, Geraldine Power & Shane McGrath
- Media Liaison Principal/Deputy Principal- Agnes Guerin & Brenda Kirwan
- Administration: Geraldine Power, Paudie Lynch & Brenda Kirwan
- School Site Manager: Paudie Lynch & Eoin Barry
- Digital Teaching and Learning Team: Padraig Kennedy, Ger Commins, Fergal McGrath, Tara Whelan, Peter Morley, Gemma Hennessy
- SEN Teaching and Learning Team: Stephanie Flannery, Tara Whelan, Anna Marie O'Dwyer, Eoin Barry, Daniel Doran, Megan Dunford, Anthony Kelly, Donal Looby, Fergal McGrath, Shane McGrath, Maria McSweeney, Susie Moore,
- Guidance & SEN Team: Tara Whelan & Stephanie Flannery
- CMIT: Agnes Guerin, Brenda Kirwan, Stephanie Flannery, Tara Whelan, Eoin Barry, Fergal McGrath, Shane McGrath, Geraldine Power, Paudie Lynch

## **4.1 Critical Incident Folder**

Each member of the critical incident management team has a folder with the relevant supporting documents. These include this policy and relevant templates for the critical incident (NEPS, 2016).

The folder(s) are on the school server for each member of the CIMT. The folders are reviewed and updated annually by the Team Coordinator.

## **5. CIMT KEY RESPONSIBILITIES OF EACH ROLE**

### **5.1 Team Leader - The Principal**

- Determines there is a critical incident and invokes the Critical Incident Management policy.
- Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting at 7.30am for CIMT and 8.00 am for Staff.
- Reviews and coordinates the tasks and roles with the team and develops the initial critical incident management plan.
- Liaises with the Board of Management; DES; NEPS; SEC
- Liaises with the bereaved family (if appropriate)
- Determines the end of a critical incident and the return to normal school routine.
- Ensures that information about deaths or other developments is checked out for accuracy before being shared.
- In the absence of the team leader the Deputy Principal/Chairperson Betty Tutty of the board of management will become the team leader.

### **5.2 Team Coordinator - Deputy Principal**

- Completes the annual CIMP checklist and briefs CIMT members and school staff
  - Reviews and updates the CIMT Critical Incident Folders
- Ensures that sample letters are typed up, on the school's system and ready for adaptation
- Supports the Team Leader
- Acts a point of contact for the different team members
- Allocates rooms as required during the critical incident

- Coordinates the tasks of the team as allocated by the Team Leader
- Monitors record keeping during the critical incident
- Drafts a report on the critical incident for the post incident review.

### **5.3 Garda Liaison: Principal**

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

### **5.4 Staff Liaisons: Agnes Guerin, Brenda Kirwan, Fergal McGrath & Stephanie Flannery**

- Leads briefing meetings for staff on the facts as known, gives staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions, and outlines the routine for the day
- Advises staff on the procedures for identification of vulnerable students
- Provides materials for staff from their critical incident folder. (R\_ NEPS)
- 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 Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) and gives them the contact number.

### **5.5 Student Liaison: Brenda Kirwan, Tara Whelan, Stephanie Flannery, Fergal McGrath & Fr John McEneaney.**

- Co-ordinate information from class tutors teachers and year heads about students they are concerned about
- Alerts other staff to vulnerable students where appropriate
- Provides materials for students (from their critical incident folder)
- Maintains student contact records during the critical incident (R1 NEPS).
- Looks after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room where agreed (B3/Art Room/Primary Hall)
- Liaises with Father John

## **5.6 Community/Agency Liaison: Principal & Deputy Principal**

- 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 supports
- Coordinates the involvement of these agencies
- Reminds agency staff to wear name badges/ID cards
- Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies

## **5.7 Parent Liaison: Agnes Guerin, Brenda Kirwan, Geraldine Power & Shane McGrath**

- Visits the bereaved family with the team leader (if appropriate)
- Arranges parent meetings, if held
- Liaises with the Parents' Council
- May facilitate such meetings, and manage 'questions and answers'
- Manages the 'consent' issues in accordance with agreed school policy: Ensures that sample letters are typed up, on the school's system and ready for adaptation.
- 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

## **5.8 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 the State Examinations Commissions, relevant teacher unions etc.
- Will draw up a press statement and give media briefings and interviews as agreed by school management.

### **5.9 Administrator: Ms Geraldine Power (Admin) & Brenda Kirwan**

- Maintenance of up-to-date telephone numbers of - Parents or guardians - Teachers - Emergency services
- Ensures that relevant templates are on the school's system and ready for adaptation
- Identifies a dedicated telephone line/mobile phone (as appropriate), which will be kept free for important outgoing and incoming calls. School Website and School social media may be used as appropriate.
- Takes telephone calls and notes those that need to be responded to.
- Designate a point where a log of events and telephone calls made and received will be kept
- All offers of help should be logged – the name of the agency, what they are offering, a contact name and number. These agencies may be contacted later if appropriate
- Agree arrangements for dealing with normal school business.
- Prepares and sends out letters, emails and texts
- Photocopies materials needed
- Assists in maintaining records.

### **5.10 School Site Manager: Paudie Lynch & Eoin Barry**

- Manages access and use of building during any incident.
- Helps to assess health and safety implications and may assist in contacting relevant services.

### **5.11 Record Keeping**

In the event of an incident each member of the team will keep records of phone calls made and received, letters, emails and texts sent and received, meetings held, persons met, interventions used, material used etc. Record keeping will be monitored by the CIMT Coordinator and retained at the end of the critical incident for the post incident review.

## **5.12 Confidentiality and Good Name Considerations**

The management and staff of Scoil na mBráithre, Dungarvan 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 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 used instead.

## **5.13 Critical Incident Rooms**

In the event of a critical incident, rooms will be allocated for:

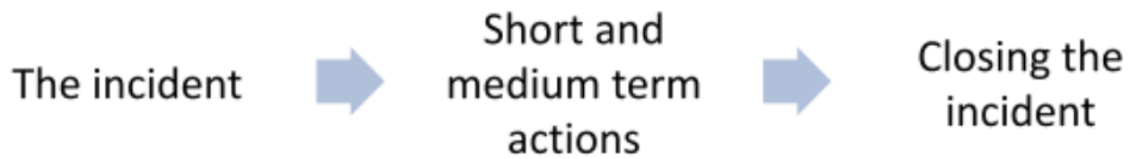
- Staff
- Students
- Parents
- Media
- Individual consultations with students
- Visitors

These rooms are allocated by Team Coordinator. An initial allocation list is available in the appendices.



## 6. MANAGING THE CRITICAL INCIDENT

This section outlines the approach to managing a critical incident. There are a number of stages.



### 6.1 Forming the Critical Incident Management Team and creating the initial action plan

The team leader deems an incident to be critical and assembles the Critical Incident Management Team and reviews tasks and allocation of roles. The CIMT then works to gather facts and accurate information:

- What has happened?
- When it happened?
- How it happened?
- Where did it take place? Is it onsite or offsite?
- Does the incident require the evacuation of the school? •
- What is the number and names of students and staff involved?
- Are there other schools involved?
- What is the extent of any injuries?
- What is the location of the incident?
- Contact appropriate agencies (see school's Emergency Contact List).

The initial action plan is agreed:

- Allocation of rooms as required.
- Communication to staff, students and parents. The CIMT for a given incident should be made known to the school community as soon as it is formed.
- Record keeping
- Communication with the media (if required).
- Meetings of the CIMT.

## **6.2 Implementing the CI Action Plan – short and medium term actions**

The CIMT meets daily to review the situation and the implementation of the Action Plan. Additional staff are involved as required. Support is arranged for students and staff.

Decisions about school closure are made in conjunction with the Board of Management.

## **6.3 Conclusion of the critical incident**

The team leader determines when the critical incident is closed. The CIMT stands down and normal school life resumes.

## **7. POST INCIDENT REVIEW**

A review will take place by the school's management of all incidents in relation to which the Critical Incident Management Policy is invoked. This review will take place when the incident is closed but close enough to the incident for the lessons learned still to be fresh. The review is led by the team leader.

The team coordinator completes the first step. This is to document the critical incident, what happened and where, who was involved. Then the actions of the CIMT including any records are noted and the roll out of the incident to the conclusion is summarised.

The purpose of such a review is to learn the lessons of the incident itself, to review the effectiveness of this policy, to review the effectiveness of our response to the incident as measured in relation to the aims set out in section 1 above, and to review the effectiveness of the supports, information, guidelines and procedures available to the school community in relation to dealing with the incident.

The outputs of the review, including any recommendations, will be presented to the Board of Management as soon as available.

## **8. CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION REGARDING THE PLAN**

Each member of the standing critical incident team has a personal copy of the plan. All staff will be informed of the details of the plan on a regular basis. The plan will be updated annually in September and the Board of Management informed. The plan will be published on the school website.

## **9. APPENDICES**

The appendices to this policy contain information, guidelines and procedures for use in support of our management of critical incidents.

- Information
  - Contact details, names etc. which may be of use in responding to a critical incident
- Procedures
  - Sequences of actions to be followed when triggers.
  - The only example below is in relation to the death of a student. In such circumstances the CIMT should follow this procedure and be in a position to provide evidence to this effect during the review of the incident.
- Guidelines
  - Guidelines guide actions and provide a support to the CIMT, and others, in their actions in response to a critical incident.

## Appendix 1 Information- To be kept in School Office and Principals Office

### 1.1 Critical Incident Management Team Contact Information 2022/2023

Role		Name	
Team Leader	Principal	Agnes Guerin	See staff address list for contact details.
Team Coordinator	Deputy Principal	Brenda Kirwan	
Staff Liaison	BOM / Principal / Deputy Principal / Staff Representatives	Agnes Guerin/ Brenda Kirwan	
Student Liaison	Guidance Counsellor/ Year Heads	Tara Whelan	
Parent Liaison	Guidance Counsellor/ Year Heads	Tara Whelan	
Community / Agency / Contact / Church	Principal / Deputy Principal	Agnes Guerin/ Brenda Kirwan	
Media Liaison	Principal / Deputy Principal	Agnes Guerin/ Brenda Kirwan	
Administration	Office Staff	Geraldine Power	
School Site Manager	Caretaker	Paudie Lynch	

### 1.1 School Management and Administration Team 2022/2023

Principal	Agnes Guerin
Deputy Principal	Brenda Kirwan
Guidance Counsellor	Tara Whelan
SENCO	Stephanie Flannery
Chaplain	Fr. John McEneaney
BOM Representatives	Chairperson – Betty Tutty
Office Staff	Geraldine Power
Site Manager	Paudie Lynch

## 1.2 Emergency Services

Ambulance		999 or 112
Fire Brigade		999 or 112
Garda Station, Dungarvan		(058) 48600
Juvenile Liaison Officer	Aidan McCarthy	
HSE Health Board		(051) 842800
Ardkeen Hospital		(051) 848000
Primary Care Centre		(051) 861100
Bereavement Counselling Services		
Department of Education		
NEPS Psychologist	Brid Foley Johnstown, Waterford City	(01) 8892492
Father John, Dungarvan		
Rape Crisis Centre		1800 77 8888
State Examinations Committee		(0906) 6442700
The Employee Assistance and Wellbeing Programme (EAWP)		(0844) 8922493
Chairperson Board of Management	Betty Tutty	
Local GP	High Street Medical Centre Shandon Medical Centre	(058) 41162 (058) 42210
CAMHS		(051) 842146
Pieta House		(051) 858510
Resource Officers for Suicide Prevention	Tracey Nugent	(051) 874013 (087) 9271041
Parent Association Chairperson	Janine Faye	
ASTI		(01) 6040160
TUI		(01) 4922588

### 1.3 Room Allocations for a critical incident

The Team Coordinator of the CIMT team reviews and confirms the allocation below for any given critical incident.

Critical Incident	Room Allocated
Staff	Staff Room/A3/SEN1
Students	Small Group SEN2 Small Groups (B3/Art Room) Large Group (Primary Sports Hall)
Parents	Meeting Room
Media	Meeting Room
Individual Consultations with Students	Career Guidance Office
Visitors	Meeting Room

## **APPENDIX 2: PROCEDURE FOR STAFF AT A CRITICAL INCIDENT**

### **Procedure for staff at a Critical Incident**

#### **Immediate Procedures for Staff at the scene:**

##### **STEP ONE:**

- Assess the situation – What has happened? Establish the facts.

##### **STEP TWO:**

- Notify the Principal or Deputy Principal(s), who will come to the scene and manage the school's response to the incident
- The Principal will contact the emergency services, parents, siblings and friends. If the Principal or Deputy Principal(s) are not available, the Assistant Principal Team will take on this role.

##### **STEP THREE:**

- While waiting for assistance:
  - Remain calm
  - Clear the area of unnecessary personnel but do not remain on your own if possible
- If there is an injury
  - Avoid moving an injured person until a medical assessment has been made. However in some situations you may need to move them.
  - Do not give anything to eat or drink

##### **STEP FOUR:**

- Fill in an accident report as soon as possible. The accident report form is available from the School Office.

**Sensitivity regarding critical incidents is of the utmost importance. All staff members are asked to refrain from discussing details of any critical incident other than with the CIMT until there is a plan in place. The school policy is never to disclose information to the media.**

**APPENDIX 2: TEACHER SUPPORT MATERIAL FOR STUDENTS/CLASS**

Please read the prepared student notice at this time.

This document was prepared by the Principal, Deputy Principal and members of the Critical Incident Management Team. This document was further discussed at this morning’s staff meeting. We wish for all students to receive the same factual information, and for parents to receive the same factual information from siblings. **PLEASE DO NOT ALTER THIS DOCUMENT.**

**The Class of the student involved in the incident:**

Only if incident is confirmed by the family, can it be relayed as such to the students. The Class of the student who has died should be the first to be told with The Deputy Principal, Counsellor and Class teacher present.

**Student Notice:**

On the \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ time \_\_\_\_\_ an event occurred that affected a member of our school community. \_\_\_\_\_ **Name of the person** \_\_\_\_\_ was involved.

**The details are:**

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**Action Taken:**

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### **After reading the student notice...**

Make them aware that this is as much information you have at this time. Refuse to be drawn into speculation as what you say may be taken out of context or misrepresented and may be very hurtful to people already suffering.

- Expect tears and outbursts.
- Let them know that the school will support them.
- Let them know who is available to support them.
- If a student insists on leaving the room he will be accompanied to assigned student room and will be supervised and supported by Guidance Counsellor.
- Don't be afraid to let them know that you are also upset by the news. This helps to create a safe and open atmosphere to grief.
- Explain how they can support one another.
- Be attentive to identifying those that are not coping well with the news.
- You may have to remind students again who is there to help, as little information is assimilated once in shock.
- Allow them time to mingle and talk.
- Let them know where the Critical Incident Management Team will be, \_\_\_\_\_
- Refreshments to be made available in the school canteen
- Refreshments ordered by office staff from local centra shop and delivered to canteen.
- Please inform the students that a planned short prayer will be said by the Principal.
- If the students appear ready, a Year group assembly may be held later in the day. The Year head will organise and administer the assembly.
- Some students may be able to continue to go to class. Regular routine will be maintained as much as possible.
- Some will need to stay with the Critical Incident Management Team for the morning.
- Encourage students to stay in school to support their friends.
- Some may need to go home (only if parents come and collect them)
- Refer to R5 in the Critical Incident Folder located in the Staff Room

### How to help someone who has suffered loss.

- Show genuine care and concern.
- Allow them to express their feelings.
- Encourage talking as much as they want to.
- Talk about the person they have lost.
- Reassure them that there was nothing they could have done.

### Common Reactions on hearing Traumatic News:

<b>Emotional and Physical</b>	<b>Behavioural and Mental</b>
Shock	Emotional Outbursts
Fear	Overwhelmed
Guilt	Nausea
Grief	Fainting
Tears	Pain
Panic	Dizziness
Denial	Weakness
Anxiety	Palpitations
Depression	Breathing Difficulties
Anger	Confusion
	Blame
	Poor Concentration
	Disorientation
	Withdrawn
	Restlessness
	Let Down
	Uncertainty



**Scoil na mBráithre, Dungarvan**

**An Edmund Rice School**

# Scoil na mBráithre Student Support Team

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# R5

## A CLASSROOM SESSION FOLLOWING NEWS OF A CRITICAL INCIDENT

Normally, the class teacher, class tutor or other teacher who knows the students should be the person to inform them of the events and lead the classroom session. Students generally feel safe and secure with someone they know. If the teacher feels uncomfortable with this role another staff member may share the task. Teachers should have the opportunity to opt out of this work if they feel unable to handle it and other arrangements should be made for that class group.

The aim of the session is to break the news to give the students an opportunity to discuss what has happened and to express their thoughts and feelings in a secure environment. The teacher needs to listen and be empathic.

The session needs to be tailored to the age and developmental level of the class group.

The outline of the session is as follows:

- STEP 1 Giving the facts and dispelling rumours
- STEP 2 Sharing stories and allowing and encouraging the sharing of thoughts and the expression of feelings
- STEP 3 Normalising the reactions
- STEP 4 Worries (for younger children)
- STEP 5 Advising about social media usage
- STEP 6 Empowerment
- STEP 7 Closure
- STEP 8 Free Time
- STEP 9 Recovery

### STEP 1 Giving the facts and dispelling rumours

Tell the students in a calm, low key and factual voice

- What has happened
- Who was involved
- When it happened
- The plan of the day

#### Sample Script

*I have something very sad I want to share with you. **The factual information agreed upon by the staff e.g. (name of student)**, who attends our school and was missing, has been found. You will probably be aware, through social media, that he is dead. Yesterday, the Gardai found his body. They are investigating what has happened and will let us know as soon as they find out more information.*

*I am feeling very sad about what's happened. Let's spend some time together now helping each other to talk about how we feel about what has happened.*

**STEP 2**  
Sharing stories

Take some time for discussion. Students may wish to tell their story of the event. As a result they will feel less alone because of their common shared experiences. Assisting them to verbalise their experiences helps their recovery. For those students who find it difficult to verbalise their experiences, or for students with learning difficulties, it may be helpful to allow them to express their feelings and recount their experiences in other ways. Writing stories or using art can be particularly helpful, especially for younger students. A number of materials that can be used are suggested in Section 11, R24. Give the students a choice as to how they want to represent their experiences. Have a box of tissues at hand.

**Sample script**

*To help us today, we are going to make a memory box for **(name of deceased)**. You can draw a picture of a time you remember with **(name of the deceased)** or write a poem or a letter to him. If you like we can put these in a nice box and give it to **(name of deceased)** family sometime soon. This will help them to see how important **(name of deceased)** was.*

**STEP 3**  
Normalising the reactions

Tell the children that they will all react differently to what has happened and that there is no right or wrong way. List some possible feelings and reactions, (see R9). Explain that their reactions are normal responses to abnormal circumstances. Let the students know that the reactions or symptoms will go away in time. Tell them that if the symptoms haven't gone after a few weeks, they should let you or their parents know. In addition to conversations they may have with friends on social media they may need to talk to someone in person about how they are feeling. Depending on the incident and the age of the students distribute handouts R7, R8, R9, R10.

**STEP 4**  
Worries (for younger children)

**Sample script**

*You may be worried about **(name of the deceased)** - that they might be sad or lonely or hungry or cold. When someone dies they don't feel cold or hungry or feelings like that anymore.*

*You may be worried that the same thing could happen to you or someone in your family. What happened to **(name of deceased)** doesn't happen very often.*

If the classmate has been ill, you could say. He was very sick and the chances of this happening to someone else you know are low.

**STEP 5**  
Advising about Social Media Usage

Discussions may begin with an outline of the various social media currently being used by members of the group. The value of these as a way of keeping in contact with and supporting friends should be acknowledged. Students may be asked for experiences of ways in which such communication has helped them as well as examples of ways in which it has gone wrong. Media involving live communication such as Skype or Viber are generally more conducive to support and less open to misunderstanding than text-based means. Students will be encouraged to consider how much social media usage is too much, particularly late into the night. More guidance on social media use is contained in R22.

<p><b>STEP 6</b> Empowerment</p>	<p>Help the students to identify strategies that they might use to help manage their reaction, for example, talking to family and friends, getting enough sleep, taking plenty of exercise and appropriate use of social media - may all help. If appropriate, students can share strategies that worked for them in other stressful situations or brainstorm ideas as to what might help. Overall, it is important to help the students regain a sense of control.</p>
<p><b>STEP 7</b> Closure</p>	<p>End the session by focusing on the future. Depending on the nature of the incident, help the class/group decide what they would like to do about various issues, e.g., what to do about the person's empty chair, about writing cards or letters. Reiterate the message that their reactions are normal responses to abnormal circumstances.</p>
<p><b>STEP 8</b> Free Time</p>	<p>After the discussion the teacher may want to allow the student's some play time in the playground or free time in the classroom or an agreed area, depending on the age.</p>
<p><b>STEP 9</b> Recovery</p>	<p>It may be useful to continue to do these activities at intervals during the days following and to intersperse them throughout the curriculum in the coming days.</p> <p>Normal routines should generally be returned to as soon as possible.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students should be encouraged to resume sports and other extra-curricular activities</li> <li>• It is appropriate that the class curriculum is adjusted or adapted. For example, teachers should avoid presenting new learning material for a while following an incident as concentration may be impaired</li> <li>• Use opportunities which arise within ordinary class work, where coping and support can be reinforced</li> <li>• Students could be encouraged to discuss how to avoid future crisis and lessons learnt from their experiences. There will also be opportunities for structured discussion within the school's social, personal, and health education programmes. Social Personal &amp; Health Education (SPHE) curriculum time is an ideal context in which to offer support.</li> </ul>

## CHILDREN'S UNDERSTANDING AND REACTION TO DEATH ACCORDING TO AGE

(This may be used with various groups and individuals)

Children's understanding and reaction to death will depend on their age and their developmental stage. The following are guides only as children will differ in their reactions and grasp of events for a range of reasons other than age alone.

### AGES 0 – 2 YEARS

- Infants do not understand the meaning of death
- They may display anxiety when separated from a loved one
- They may appear upset, subdued and uninterested in their surroundings.

### AGES 2 – 5 YEARS

- No understanding of the permanency of death
- May search for the missing person from a loved one
- May feel responsible for the death in some way
- May become apathetic and depressed
- May regress to an earlier stage of development e.g. thumb sucking, bedwetting, tantrums or may become clingy
- May develop fears of going to sleep
- May worry that other loved ones may die.

### HOW YOU CAN HELP

- Continuity of normal routine e.g. mealtimes and bedtime
- Offer physical comfort
- Explain the death in clear, simple language, using words like "dead" and "died" - Do not use terms like "gone to sleep" or "passed away"
- You may need to repeat the same information again and again
- Permit them to ask questions and be consistent in your answers
- Reassure them that they had nothing to do with the death and of the wellbeing of other family members.

### AGES 5 – 9 YEARS

- Beginning to realise the permanency of death, but their idea of life after death is still vague
- May have concerns about how the deceased is feeling or what he/she is thinking in the grave
- May have a lot of questions about aspects of the death e.g. how the person died, what they looked like, the funeral, heaven, coffins
- The reaction of their peers is important, they may feel 'different' to them
- Their peers may be awkward about the death and avoid contact
- They may become the target of bullying.



## HOW YOU CAN HELP

- Encourage the child to talk and cry about the deceased if they wish to, otherwise respect their silence
- Answer questions and provide as much factual information about the death as possible
- Reassure them that thinking and feeling ceases after death
- Be vigilant in relation to bullying.

## AGES 9 – 12 YEARS

- Understand the finality and universality of death
- Awareness of their own mortality and may worry about their own death
- May display psychosomatic symptoms i.e. physical complaints like tummy aches
- May wish to stay at home close to parents
- May display anger.

## HOW YOU CAN HELP

- Dispel fears about their own health or the health of other loved ones by offering reassurance
- Encourage them to go to school
- Allow them to express their anger, offering appropriate ways to do so.

## ADOLESCENTS

- Fully understand the finality, universality and inevitability of death. Their experience of death is similar to adults
- May have a range of feelings: guilt, regret, anger, loneliness etc.
- Death adds to the already confused array of emotions experienced by adolescents
- May appear to not care about the death
- May seek support outside of the family.

## HOW YOU CAN HELP

- Offer them time to listen
- Allow them to express their grief in their own way
- Be prepared for mood swings
- Don't feel left out if they seem to value their friends more than their parents
- Children's use of social media should be monitored and supported by parents.

If parents are grieving themselves, they may be emotionally unable to support their other children. In this instance, another supportive adult in the child's life, e.g. other family members, friends, neighbours may need to offer emotional support.

It should be remembered that for children with special educational needs, their understanding of what has happened will be in line with their developmental age.

# R7

## STAGES OF GRIEF

(This may be used with various groups and individuals)

Grief is a normal, healthy and predictable response to loss. Although there are distinct phases in the grieving process, people go through these stages in different sequences and at different paces. Generally the grieving process in adults is thought to take about two years, while with children and adolescents it may be over a more extended time-frame with different issues arising as they go through developmental milestones.

### Denial, numbness, shock (up to 6 weeks)

- Death of the person may be denied
- Emerging feelings may be suppressed
- Refusal to talk about the death
- Bereaved keeps very busy to avoid thinking about the death
- Bereaved may show signs of confusion and forget everyday routines
- Children in shock may display either silent withdrawal or outbursts of crying.

### Acute grief/searching and longing for deceased (6 weeks to 4 months)

- Acute sadness – crying
- Physical pangs of pain including loss of appetite and disturbed sleep
- Emotional pain accompanied by dejection, hopelessness, lack of concentration
- Fears of life after death, nightmares, ghosts
- Disorganisation
- Strong guilt feelings and questioning of self and others, particularly in the case of a sudden death
- Feelings of anger at the departed for leaving them
- Bereaved may reject offers to comfort them.

### Adaptation to life without the deceased (6 months to 18 months)

- People begin to adjust to their lives without the person who is gone
- Sense of isolation
- Fearful of forgetting the deceased
- Less crying and irritability
- Exacerbation of existing personality problems. Children with low self-esteem may be at a greater risk of emotional/behavioural difficulties.

### Normalisation of life

- Getting on with life
- Returned sense of humour and play
- Able to participate emotionally in new relationships
- Changed relationship with the deceased – able to think of the deceased without pain
- Reduction in physical/emotional symptoms
- Less guilt.

# R8

## HOW TO COPE WHEN SOMETHING TERRIBLE HAPPENS

- Reach out – people do care
- Talk to your friends, family and teachers - talking is the most healing medicine
- Remember you are normal and having normal reactions – don't label yourself as crazy or mad
- It is acceptable to cry
- It is acceptable to smile
- If your feelings and reactions seem different from those of your friends, remember everyone reacts differently
- When the stress level is high there is a temptation to try to numb the feelings perhaps with alcohol and drugs, this complicates matters rather than bringing relief
- Some people find that writing or drawing is helpful. What about writing a note or letter to the family of the person who died or the person themselves?
- Spend time with people who have a positive influence on you
- Make as many daily decisions as possible. This will give you a feeling of control over your life, e.g. if someone asks you what you want to eat – answer them, even if you're not sure
- Recurring thoughts, dreams or flashbacks are normal – don't try to fight them – they'll decrease over time and become less painful
- Make a special effort to take care of yourself during this time. Try to get some extra sleep, eat nutritious foods and get some exercise, even if it is just a walk
- Sticking to your "normal" routine helps. Structure your time – keep busy
- Take time out – go for a cycle or kick a football
- Provide some balance to the negative things that have gone on by doing something special or fun for yourself. Think about something that makes you feel good. Then make it happen – like going to the cinema, listening to music, calling a friend, etc. Laughter is good medicine. Watch a funny movie or play a silly game with younger children to lighten your spirits
- Use of social media can help but do not rely on it as your only source of support
- Useful websites: [www.spunout.ie](http://www.spunout.ie); [www.youth.ie](http://www.youth.ie); [www.reachout.com.au](http://www.reachout.com.au)

Above all, realise that what you are experiencing is normal following a traumatic event. Be understanding of yourself and others.

# R9

## REACTIONS TO A CRITICAL INCIDENT

Following the recent sad event, you may now be experiencing some strong emotional or physical reactions. There is no 'right' or 'wrong' way to feel but here is a list of difficulties that people sometimes experience following such an event.

FEELINGS		BEHAVIOURAL	
Fear	Insecurity	Nightmares	
Guilt	Mood swings	Social withdrawal	
Shame	Shock	Over reliance on use of social media	
Regret	Yearning	Irritability	
Anger	Numbness	Loss of concentration/forgetfulness	
Tearfulness	Confusion	Physical/Verbal aggression	
Loneliness	Isolation	Missue of drugs, including alcohol	
Anxiety			

PHYSICAL		THOUGHTS	
Tiredness		Disbelief	
Sleeplessness		Denial	
Headaches		Sense of unreality	
Stomach problems - Bowel/Bladder problems		Preoccupation with images of the event/person	
Loss or increase in appetite			

# R10

## GRIEF AFTER SUICIDE OR SUSPECTED SUICIDE

Remember there is no right or wrong way to react when someone you know dies. People will have many different reactions to what has happened.

- Know that you can survive, even if you feel you can't
- You may feel overwhelmed and frightened by your feelings. This is normal. You're not going crazy; you are grieving
- You may not feel a strong reaction to what has happened. This is normal
- You may experience feelings of guilt, confusion, forgetfulness and anger. Again these feelings are all normal
- You may feel angry at the person who has died, at yourself, at God, at everyone and everything. It is ok to express it
- You may feel guilty about what you did or did not do. Suicide is the act of an individual, for which we cannot take responsibility
- You may never have an answer as to "why" but it is ok to keep asking "why" until you no longer need to ask or you are satisfied with partial answers
- Sometimes people make decisions over which we have no control. It was not your choice
- Feeling low is temporary, suicide is permanent. Suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem. If you are feeling low or having a difficult time, ask for help
- Allow yourself to cry, this will help you to heal
- Healing takes time. Allow yourself the time you need to grieve
- Every person grieves differently and at a different pace
- Delay making any big decisions if possible
- This is the hardest thing you will ever do. Be patient and compassionate with yourself
- Spend time with people who are willing to listen when you need to talk and who also understand your need to be silent
- Seek professional help if you feel overwhelmed
- If you are thinking of trying to kill yourself, you must talk to a trusted adult
- Avoid people who try to tell you what to feel and how to feel it and, in particular, those who think you should "be over it by now"
- Ask in school about a support group for survivors that provides a safe place for you to express your feelings, or simply a place to go to be with other survivors who are experiencing some of the same things you're going through
- Allow yourself to laugh with others and at yourself. This is healing
- Useful websites: [www.spunout.ie](http://www.spunout.ie); [www.youth.ie](http://www.youth.ie); [www.reachout.com.au](http://www.reachout.com.au)

# R11

## REINTEGRATION OF THE BEREAVED CHILD IN SCHOOL

Some suggestions are offered here which may help prepare the school and the bereaved child for their return to school. They will help to ensure that the individual, the other students and the staff feel more comfortable and at ease.

- Visit the bereaved student at home to see what s/he would like to happen when they return to school
- Talk to the student's class about how people are affected by grief and encourage them to share their own feelings. Ask about how they have coped with bereavement in their own lives and what has helped
- Discuss how difficult it may be for their classmate to come back to school. Ask how they would like to be treated if they were returning to school after a death. This might be done in pairs or small groups, thus encouraging all to be involved. It will also ensure that a range of preferences are expressed, reinforcing the fact that different people will have different preferences as to how they are treated. Some people may want to discuss what has happened, while others may want to be left alone. In general bereaved students say that they would like others to treat them as before rather than being 'over-nice' to them. However, it is a delicate balance as they don't want people to behave as if nothing has happened at all
- It may help if, in advance of the student's return to school, classmates have sent cards or notes or drawn pictures for the bereaved classmate. This will let her/him know that they are in their thoughts
- When they return, acknowledge their loss "I'm sorry that (name of deceased) died. I know that you are sad. It is ok to cry". (In Post-Primary schools, check that this is done in the first class of the day and not in every class
- Teachers can express their own sympathies separately once the general re-entry to class has been managed
- When the student returns, they may have difficulty concentrating or joining in class activities. Be understanding
- Allow them access to a 'quiet room' where he/she can go to be alone. You might suggest: "We can set up a signal for you to use if you need to leave the class at any time". (Ensure supervision)
- Link the student in with the guidance counsellor for support if needed
- Listen when they want to talk: "If you need to talk at any time, I am here to listen"
- Carry on normal routines and normal approaches to discipline
- They may have difficulty completing homework and assignments: "If you are having difficulty doing your homework it is ok to do as much as you can for a while"
- Allow them as much time as they need to grieve.

# R12

## WAYS TO HELP YOUR CHILD THROUGH THIS DIFFICULT TIME

Children do not need to be taught how to grieve. They will do it naturally and in healthy ways if we allow them and if we provide a safe atmosphere, permission and example to do so.

- Listen carefully. Let them tell their story. Tell them that the reactions they are having are normal
- Pay extra attention, spend extra time with them, be more nurturing and comforting
- Reassure them that they are safe
- Don't tell them that they are "lucky it wasn't worse". People are not consoled by such statements. Instead, tell them that you are sorry such an event has occurred and you want to understand and help them
- Do not be surprised by changes in behaviour or personality. They will return to their usual selves in time
- Don't take their anger or other feelings personally. Help them to understand the relationship between anger and trauma. Help them find safe ways to express their feelings e.g. by drawing, taking exercise, or talking
- Understand that there is a wide range of emotions associated with grief and that some children and young people may be more likely to express emotions like anger rather than sadness. Recognise that displays of risky behaviour, defiance or aggression may be your child's way to avoid feeling the pain, hurt and/or fear they are experiencing. Notice their emotional state, help them label what they are feeling, and show empathy and understanding so they feel less alone with their emotions.
- When going out, let them know where you are going and when you will be back
- If you are out for a long time, telephone and reassure them
- Tolerate regressive behaviour such as nail biting, thumb sucking, or the need for a night light
- Share your own experience of being frightened of something and getting through it
- If they are feeling guilt or shame, emphasise that they did not choose for this to happen and that they are not to blame. Even if they were angry with the person who died, or had been mean to them, this did not make it happen
- Work with the school support services and other available services
- As well as advising your child about appropriate use of social media, monitor their use, particularly during this vulnerable time. Useful website: [www.webwise.ie](http://www.webwise.ie)

# R14

## CHECKLIST - STUDENTS AT RISK

This checklist may be used as an aid by school staff who are concerned about a student. It should be remembered that the checking of a number of items for any one student may point to other problems. Indication of a number of these factors in any one student should always be followed up.

Unexpected reduction of academic performance	<input type="checkbox"/>
Talking about suicide	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ideas and themes of depression, death and suicide in their work	<input type="checkbox"/>
Making statements about hopelessness, helplessness or worthlessness	<input type="checkbox"/>
Change in mood and marked emotionally instability	<input type="checkbox"/>
Significant grief or stress	<input type="checkbox"/>
Withdrawal from relationships	<input type="checkbox"/>
Break up of an important relationship	<input type="checkbox"/>
Discipline problems, being in trouble in school	<input type="checkbox"/>
Withdrawal from extra-curricular activities	<input type="checkbox"/>
Giving personal belongings away	<input type="checkbox"/>
Loss of interest in things one cares about	<input type="checkbox"/>
Neglect of physical appearance	<input type="checkbox"/>
Physical symptoms with emotional cause	<input type="checkbox"/>
High risk behaviours	<input type="checkbox"/>
Alcohol or drug abuse	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bullying or victimization	<input type="checkbox"/>
History of suicidal behaviour e.g. cutting or overdose risk behaviours	<input type="checkbox"/>
Family history of suicide/attempted suicide	<input type="checkbox"/>
Over use or reliance on social media	<input type="checkbox"/>



# R17

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (TEACHERS)

The following is a summary of questions often asked by teachers in the aftermath of a critical incident.

**Q. I would like to opt out of support type work for personal reasons. Is this OK?**

**A.** It has been found that their teachers are the best people to support students in school in times of distress because they are with people they know and trust. Accordingly, all teachers and other school staff members are encouraged to help the students at these times. However, nobody should be obliged to do this work and people should be able to opt out of it if they feel they need to. This may be for a number of reasons, including recent personal bereavement, experience of a loss similar to that occurring in the particular incident or other circumstances. However, in order to stay in touch, they would need to be in attendance at staff meetings where information is disseminated in relation to the incident.

**Q. I have no qualifications to help out in this area. Shouldn't the job should be left to the experts?**

**A.** You probably have more skills here than you realise. Your experience, competence and skills as a teacher and as an expert in dealing with children and young people are invaluable. Most importantly, the students know you. Students need a safe environment in which to come to terms with what has happened. This security is often enhanced by being able to discuss the events with a familiar teacher in the first instance.

**Q. What should I do in the classroom to be helpful?**

**A.** You should acknowledge the situation and clarify the facts, as they are known. Honesty is essential. Encourage questions so that the students have a clear understanding. Try to establish normal routines as soon as possible – but balance this with allowing students opportunities to discuss the incident and to express their thoughts and feelings. Encourage them to resume extra-curricular activities and help them to identify where they can go to for support. Encourage them to be supportive of one another.

**Q. What are the signs of grief that I may notice in students?**

**A.** After bereavement students may have a wide range of different reactions – some may become quiet and withdrawn, while others may seem to be aggressive, irritable or angry. They may have mood swings or lack concentration. Try to handle all these 'normal' reactions with patience, do not seem surprised by them and do not get cross (see R6, R7 and R9). If students come from a background where there is family breakdown, serious illness, alcohol or drug related or other difficulties, then you need to take extra note of any behavioural changes.

**Q. What if I think that some students are not grieving normally?**

**A.** There is no such thing as a 'correct' way to grieve. Some people cry, some may laugh or become giddy, some show no reaction. The important thing is that all these different ways are natural and normal and you should try to help the student understand this.

**Q. What skills do I have that are important?**

**A.** Listening skills are probably the most important. People who have experienced loss or trauma generally feel that talking helps them to cope with their feelings. When you sense a student wants to talk, try to make the time. Be reassuring and patient while gently encouraging them to talk about the loss. Reassure the student that you are there to help.

**Q. Is there any one important thing I should say?**

**A.** Yes – emphasise that grieving is a normal healthy process following a traumatic incident. It is the person's way of coping with the event. It is also normal for people to react in different ways – there is no 'right' way to grieve.

**Q. Is it a good idea to organise a classroom session following a critical incident?**

**A.** Some schools do and they have found this to be very effective. You will find notes on leading a class session after news of an incident in **R5**. An advantage here is that students may feel safer and more secure with their regular classroom teacher.

**Q. What should I do if I feel that a student needs more professional support?**

**A.** Discuss the issue with the principal or guidance counsellor. They, in turn, may wish to discuss it with the NEPS psychologist or other support services and with the student's parents. The outcome may be a referral to the appropriate service.

**Q. What is the overall message in helping bereaved children?**

**A.** *"You will get through this difficult time and we are here to help if you need support. Take care of yourself and look out for each other. If you need help, or a friend is in difficulty, it is best talk to us rather than relying totally on social media."*

**Q. When should I get back to a normal teaching routine with a class?**

**A.** It is important to give students sufficient time and space to share their feelings and to come to terms with what has happened. However, it is also important to move towards a normal routine as soon as possible. Getting on with the regular and familiar pattern of school life helps reduce stress. Avoid introducing new material in the immediate aftermath of an incident or bereavement, as grief and shock can interfere with concentration and motivation. It is often a good idea to consult the students themselves about returning to the normal routine.

**Q. What do I do about the empty chair/a student's belongings etc.?**

**A.** A helpful strategy might be to involve students in a discussion about what to do about the chair. This might also present an opportunity to move to a new phase in the process. With regard to the student's belongings, it might be useful to put together a folder or a 'memory box' of the student's work for the parents. This can be given to them at an appropriate time.

**Q. Is there a danger that by talking about suicide you make it appear to be an option for others?**

**A.** Talking about the death helps people to make sense of what has happened. People can cope with the truth, but suicide must never be represented as a valid option. There should be no criticism of the person who has died. Separate the person from the behaviour. It is important to talk about how a person can get to the point where suicide may seem to be the only option but emphasise that it is not a good option. Feeling low is usually a temporary thing, whereas suicide is permanent. With suicide the intention may have been to change life circumstances rather than end life. There is always help available if a person can take the step of reaching out for it. Encourage students to seek help if they need it.

## **APPENDIX 2 PROCEDURE: STUDENT DEATH – Scoil na mBráithre DUNGARVAN CIMT STEP BY STEP**

### **3.1 Day 1:**

1. The Principal, having confirmed the death, makes contact with the family.
2. Critical Incident Management Team meets at 7.30am to plan strategy, keeping in mind the guidelines above.
3. Key Tasks are distributed.
4. Have all guidelines for teachers ready.
5. Have written and verbal statements ready for all communication with the school.
6. Have staff to report to the staff room at 8.00am.
7. Meet staff (note any absences or late arrivals to ensure that all staff are given the news).
8. Critical Incident Management Team outline to staff the plan for the day and support available.
9. Location of Critical Incident Response Room announced (base classroom).
10. Class Teachers break news to their classes (handouts given on guidelines).
11. Deputy Principal to make alternative arrangements for classes normally using base room.
12. Principal to ensure that RE staff and Guidance Counsellor are free from all other commitments for the day.
13. Plan another update staff meeting later in the day.
14. Clarify funeral arrangements for staff later. Critical Incident Response Team meets to plan procedures for school involvement in removal and funeral.

### **3.2 Day 2:**

Students who are not coping are referred to Counsellor on an individual basis. It is important for the school to run as normally as possible.

### **3.3 Day 3:**

Crisis Team meets to plan response after the funeral in the next few days. (Involve Form Teacher and / or Year Head at this stage).

**APPENDIX 2 – GUIDELINES - STUDENT INCIDENT – Scoil na mBráithre  
DUNGARVAN PROCEDURE FOR CIMT**

**1.1 Liaising with Family/Families Involved:**

1. Appoint two staff members to visit the family within 24 hours.
2. Offer school's support, giving the name of the school contact person.
3. Make decisions on who should attend the funeral (if a death has occurred).
4. Offer help with funeral arrangements (if appropriate).
5. Liaise with local clergy.
6. Decide if the school should be closed on day of funeral.

(Notify parents/guardians/visitors/bus companies of closure.)

## **APPENDIX 2 PROCEDURES FOR TYPE OF CI SCENARIOS**

### **STUDENT DEATH/INJURY WITHIN THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT.**

1. Send a student to call the Principal/Deputy Principal/ Supervising Teacher.
2. Emergency Services and parents/guardians will be contacted by Principal/Deputy Principal/Supervising Teacher on duty.
3. Send students for neighbouring teachers to assist in clearing the area.
4. Teachers remove students from the general area and seal off the area.
5. Announce via intercom that all other pupils are to remain in or go to designated classrooms.
6. Pastoral support to be given to identified siblings and relatives.
7. CIMP is activated.

### **STAFF INJURY OR DEATH OF STAFF MEMBER WITHIN THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT.**

1. A student notifies the office and Principal/Deputy Principal and neighbouring teacher of what has happened.
2. Proceed as for Critical Incident, i.e. phone doctor and follow his/her instructions.
3. The family are notified as soon as possible by the Principal, who expresses the concern and support of the whole school community.
4. Notify staff of the situation (notice board if appropriate) and make arrangements for staff to meet at an agreed time to discuss and plan the next school day. Plan communicated to all staff. Supervision arranged where needed.
5. No information to students other than that the patient has gone to hospital.
6. Refer to short term actions.

### **STUDENT DEATH DURING SCHOOL HOLIDAYS OR OUTSIDE SCHOOL HOURS DURING TERM TIME.**

1. Staff member who becomes aware of tragic death should inform the Principal/ Deputy Principal who will verify facts.
2. The Principal activates the school's C.I.M.P.

3. Staff will be informed via telephone contact list.
4. The Principal/Deputy Principal/Year Head/ Chaplain will make contact with the family re school involvement in funeral/ceremony.
5. Members of the Student Council will be contacted for the student year group and details of funeral will be organised in consultation with the family.
6. A Book of Condolence will be opened for signing at the school. Members of the Pastoral Care team etc will be in attendance to provide support to distressed pupils.

### **STUDENT DEATH/INJURY WHILE ON SCHOOL TRIP.**

1. A minimum of two teachers should travel with students on all school outings that are not within walking distance of the school.
2. It is recommended that teachers carry mobile phones with the phone number of the school in their phonebook.
3. In the case of an accident contact the emergency services and the school.
4. One teacher will travel to the hospital with the injured party and a second teacher will stay with the remainder of the group. If only one teacher is present with the group, the Deputy Principal will arrange for a member of staff to be sent to the scene immediately.
5. The school with the support of the C.I.M.T. will contact the families involved and give them the phone number of the teacher who is accompanying their daughter to the hospital.
6. The staff will be informed and asked to brief classes, i.e., giving general details only.
7. A member of management and one other teacher will go to the hospital/scene to support the injured party.
8. If necessary, a second team will be sent to the scene of the incident if the group there are unable to continue back to the school.
9. If the group can continue, the bus will bring them straight back to the school. If the incident occurs a long distance from the school, two members of staff will go to meet the bus and one of them will return with the group to give support to teacher and students.
10. When the group returns, they will be met in the triangle by management and members of the C.I.M.T. where the situation will be assessed and students, where possible, will be reintegrated into their normal class groups.

## **SERIOUS INJURY OR DEATH OF A TEACHER WHILE ON SCHOOL TRIP.**

- Activate above points excluding points 4 & 7.
- In the event of a school trip overseas, the C.I.M.T meet organisers of the trip to discuss appropriate arrangements.

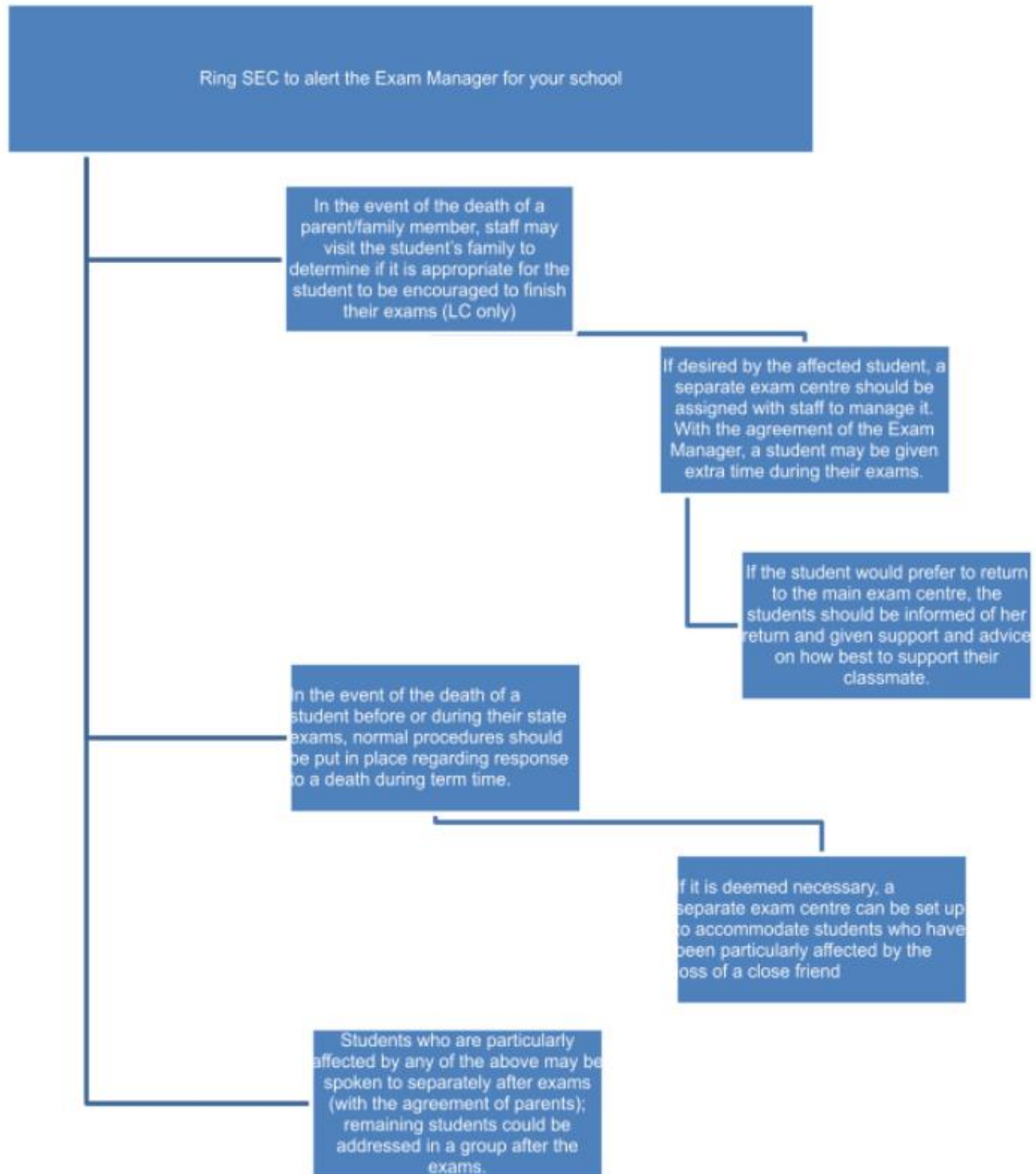
## **CIMP – Critical Incidents during State Exams**

In the event of the death of someone close to a student sitting state exams, the following procedures should be put into action:

1. Ring SEC to alert the Exam Manager for your school.
2. In the event of the death of a parent/family member, staff may visit the student's family to determine if it is appropriate for the student to be encouraged to finish their exams (LC only).
3. If desired by the affected student, a separate exam centre should be assigned with staff to manage it. With the agreement of the Exam Manager, a student may be given extra time during their exams.
4. If the student would prefer to return to the main exam centre, the students should be informed of her return and given support and advice on how best to support their classmate.
5. In the event of the death of a student before or during their state exams, normal procedures should be put in place regarding response to a death during term time.
6. If it is deemed necessary, a separate exam centre can be set up to accommodate students who have been particularly affected by the loss of a close friend.
7. Students who are particularly affected by any of the above may be spoken to separately after exams (with the agreement of parents); remaining students could be addressed in a group after the exams.

## CIMP – Critical Incidents During State Exams

In the event of the death of someone close to a student sitting state exams, the following procedures should be put into action:





**Initial Announcement of Crisis Event**

**FROM: MANAGEMENT/CRISIS TEAM**

**TO: STAFF**

We have just been advised of a tragedy involving a student/staff member in our school. I am sad to announce that \_\_\_\_\_ has died/has been in a serious accident. People will be available in the building to help those of you who need extra support in dealing with this situation. You will be advised of the location and times available for this support. As soon as we know the family's wishes regarding the funeral or as soon as we have more information, we will pass it on to you. We ask that all students remain in their classrooms and that staff adhere to their regular schedules.

Thank you for your co-operation.

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**FROM: TEACHERS**

**TO: STUDENTS**

We have just been advised of a tragedy involving a student/staff member in our school. I am sad to announce that \_\_\_\_\_ has died/has been in a serious accident. People will be available in the building to help those of you who need extra support in dealing with this situation. Your tutors will advise you of the location and times available for this support. As soon as we know the family's wishes regarding the funeral or as soon as we have more information, we will pass it on to you. We ask that all students remain in their classrooms as normal.

Thank you for your co-operation.

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**FROM: MANAGEMENT/CRISIS TEAM**

**TO: MEDIA**

We have just been advised of a tragedy involving a member(s) of our school. I am sad to announce that \_\_\_\_\_ has died/has been in a serious accident. We are currently unable to give you any more details. We would ask that you the media, respect the privacy rights of the family, of students and staff at this difficult time.

Thank you for your co-operation.

Agnes Guerin

Principal

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**INITIAL WRITTEN NOTICE TO PARENTS**

Dear Parent/Guardian,

We have been informed that a member of our school has died/been involved in a serious accident. We encourage each of you to discuss this loss/serious incident with your child. If you feel your child has been traumatized or affected in any way, or

if you feel that your child would benefit from talking with one of our Counsellors, please call us at the school and share your concerns. Please be advised that our support team is available at the following location and times:

School will remain open, and we ask that all adhere to their regular schedules. As soon as we know the family's wishes regarding the funeral or as soon as we have more information, we will pass it on to you.

Yours sincerely,

Agnes Guerin

Principal

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**Day TWO/THREE – FOLLOW UP WRITTEN NOTICE TO PARENTS**

To all concerned,

As you are aware a member of our school community/\_\_\_\_\_ has died tragically. Funeral arrangements are as follows:

To facilitate attendance at the funeral the school will be closed on that day. The management, staff and students extend our heartfelt sympathies to the family and friends. We at the school are deeply saddened and will miss \_\_\_\_\_ very much.

Yours sincerely,

Agnes Guerin

Principal

## **APPENDIX 3 – GUIDELINES - FROM THE NEPS GUIDELINES 2016**

- The NEPS 2016 guidelines are published at
  - <https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/National-Educational-Psychological-Service-NEPS-/Responding%20to%20Critical%20Incidents.pdf>

### **1.2 NEPS Resource References – Useful Resources Available**

- R1 STUDENT CONTACT RECORD
- R2 SAMPLE LETTER TO PARENTS/GUARDIANS – SUDDEN DEATH/ACCIDENT
- R3 SAMPLE LETTER TO PARENTS/GUARDIANS - VIOLENT DEATH
- R4 SAMPLE ANNOUNCEMENT TO THE MEDIA
- R5 A CLASSROOM SESSION FOLLOWING NEWS OF A CRITICAL INCIDENT
- R6 CHILDREN’S UNDERSTANDING AND REACTION TO DEATH ACCORDING TO AGE
- R7 STAGES OF GRIEF
- R8 HOW TO COPE WHEN SOMETHING TERRIBLE HAPPENS
- R9 REACTIONS TO A CRITICAL INCIDENT
- R10 GRIEF AFTER SUICIDE OR SUSPECTED SUICIDE
- R11 REINTEGRATION OF THE BEREAVED CHILD IN SCHOOL
- R12 WAYS TO HELP YOUR CHILD THROUGH THIS DIFFICULT TIME
- R13 A GENERAL INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR GUIDANCE COUNSELLORS, CHAPLAINS, OTHER DESIGNATED STAFF
- R14 CHECKLIST - STUDENTS AT RISK
- R15 EXPLORING SUICIDE RISK
- R16 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS - PRINCIPALS
- R17 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS - TEACHERS
- R18 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS - PARENTS
- R19 CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY & PLAN - FRAMEWORK
- R20 CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEMPLATE FOR SCHOOL PLAN
- R21 EMERGENCY CONTACT LIST
- R22 GUIDANCE ON SOCIAL MEDIA USE AND CRITICAL INCIDENTS
- R23 TEACHERS HELPING STUDENTS IN TIMES OF CRISIS OR EMERGENCY

- Issues that may arise when a student dies by suicide/suspected suicide p39-40 NEPS Guidelines 2016
- Road traffic accidents/violent deaths p.41 to 44 NEPS Guidelines 2016
- Critical incidents during exams p.49-50 NEPS Guidelines 2016

**APPENDIX 4- CIMP Annual Checklist**

<b>School Year:</b>		
<b>Action</b>	<b>Person</b>	<b>Date Completed</b>
<p><b>Review of critical incidents in previous school year</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number and Type</li> <li>• Post incident reviews completed</li> <li>• Brief report prepared for CIMT and Board of Management</li> </ul>	Team Coordinator	
<p><b>Critical Incident Management Policy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Critical Incident Management Policy published on school website.</li> <li>• Appendices updated for current school year.</li> <li>• Critical incident folders reviewed and contents updated</li> <li>• Allocation of rooms for a critical incident reviewed and updated for current year</li> </ul>	Team Coordinator	
<p><b>Critical incident Administration</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Up to date telephone numbers available of               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Parents, guardians</li> <li>✓ Teachers</li> <li>✓ Emergency services support services and other external contacts and resources</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Critical incident folders available for CIMT.</li> <li>• CI templates are available on school system.</li> </ul>	Administrator	

<p><b>Critical Incident Management Team</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Critical incident management team reviewed and team membership, roles and responsibilities confirmed</li> </ul>	Team Leader	
<p><b>CIMT team review meeting</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review critical incident plan and contents of critical incident folders</li> </ul>	Team Leader	
<p><b>Annual staff briefing</b></p>	Team Leader / Team Coordinator	
<p><b>Board of Management briefed</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Critical incidents for previous school year</li> <li>• CIMT for current year</li> <li>• Any amendments to current policy &amp; updated appendices</li> </ul>	Team Leader	

## APPENDIX 5 – Staff Contact List

### Scoil na mBráithre Dungarvan Staff Addresses 2022/2023

#### S.M.T.

Name	Mobile	Address
Agnes Guerin		
Brenda Kirwan		

#### Teaching Staff

Name	Mobile	Address
Anthony Kelly		
Peter Morley		
Daniel Doran		
Susanne Moore		
Padraig Kennedy		
Fergal McGrath		
Anna Marie O'Dwyer		
Ger Commins		
Shane McGrath		
Donal Looby		
Eoin Barry		
Maria McSweeney		
Grace Gleeson		
Jennifer Lane		
Rebecca Joyce		
Stephen Coffey		
Nicola Boland (Sarah Beausang)		
Stephanie Hodgers (Gillian Curley)		
Mairead Power (Megan Dunford)		



Tara Whelan		
Gemma Hennessy		
Sinead Corcoran		
Patrick Flynn		
Stephanie Flannery		
Cathal O'Neill		

### Special Need Assistant

Name	Mobile	Address
Rachael Hennessy		

### Office Staff

Name	Mobile	Address
Geraldine Power		

### Caretaker

Name	Mobile	Address
Paudie Lynch		

### Cleaner

Name	Mobile	Address
Ann Terry		
Bernadette Walsh		

### Canteen

Name	Mobile	Address
Claire Meehan		

**Middle Management Team 2022/2023**

<b>Peter Morley</b>	<b>AP1</b>
<b>Anthony Kelly</b>	<b>AP1</b>
<b>Shane McGrath</b>	<b>AP1</b>
<b>Fergal McGrath</b>	<b>APII</b>
<b>Grace Gleeson</b>	<b>APII</b>
<b>Jennifer Lane</b>	<b>APII</b>
<b>Eoin Barry</b>	<b>APII</b>
<b>Stephanie Flannery</b>	<b>APII</b>
<b>Anna Marie O'Dwyer</b>	<b>Programme Coordinator</b>

## **CHECKLIST – DAY OF INCIDENT**

- Gather the facts – Who? What? Where? When?
- Contact appropriate agencies.
- Convene the Critical Incident Management Team and key staff.
- Agree statement of fact.
- Organise for the supervision of students.
- Agreed statement to be read to staff at meeting.
- Identify at risk students.
- Appoint someone to deal with phone queries.
- Organise timetable for the day.

## **MAINTAIN THE SCHOOL ROUTINE WHEN AT ALL POSSIBLE**

- Inform parents/guardians.
- Inform students.
- Make contact with the bereaved family.
- Organise support.
- Respond to the media.

## **CHECKLIST DAY 2**

- Check in with team.
- Review Events – check how people are coping.
- Decide arrangements for support meetings for parents/ students/staff.
- Establish contact with absent staff and students.
- Arrange support for individual students, groups of students, staff and parents if necessary.
- Plan for reintegration of students and staff (e.g., absentees, injured, siblings, close relatives).
- Plan a visit to injured – home/hospital.
- Liaise with family regarding funeral arrangements/memorial services
- In accordance with parents' wishes, decide on attendance and participation at funeral/memorial service.
- School Closure - Check with BOM.

## **CHECKLIST – LONG TERM**

- Monitor Students for signs of continuing stress.
- Evaluate response to incident and amend the Critical Incident Management Plan appropriately.
- Review the Critical Incident Management Plan on an annual basis.
- Inform new staff/students regarding critical incident policy and/or incidents where appropriate.
- Decide on appropriate ways to deal with anniversaries (within school context) in consultation with parent/guardians.
- Ensure contact details for Students, Parents/Guardians, Teachers and Auxiliary Staff, BOM, and Parents Associations are updated regularly.
- Staff should be encouraged to attend training in managing of critical incidents and such training should be available for staff to attend.