

CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY



Moyderwell Mercy Primary School aims to protect the well-being of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times in keeping with our mission statement.

The Board of Management, through Mr. Pat Neenan, Principal has drawn up a critical incident management plan as one element of the school's policies and plans. We have established a Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) to steer the development and implementation of the plan.

Review & Research

The CIMT has consulted resource documents and publications provided to schools which include the following:

- When Tragedy Strikes – guidelines for effective critical incident management in schools (INTO/Ulster Teachers Union 2000)
- Responding to Critical Incidents; Guidelines for Schools (NEPS 2007)
Guidelines for schools on How to Respond to the Sudden Unexpected death of a student (ASTI 1997)
- Suicide Prevention in Schools – Best Practice Guidelines 9IAS, National Suicide Review Group 2002)

Critical Incidents

The staff and management of Moyderwell Mercy Primary School recognise a critical incident to be “an incident or sequence of events that overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school”

Critical incidents may involve one or more students or staff members, or members of our local community. Types of incidents include:

- The death of a member of the school community through accident, violence, suicide or suspected suicide or other unexpected death
- An intrusion into the school
- An accident involving members of the school community
- An accident/tragedy in the wider community
- Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism, etc
- The disappearance of a member of the school community

Aim

The aim of the CIMP is to help school management and staff to react quickly and effectively in the event of an incident; to enable us to maintain a sense of control and to ensure that appropriate support is offered to students and staff. Having a good plan also helps to ensure that the effects on the students and staff will be limited and enables us to affect a return to normality as soon as possible.

Creation of a coping supportive and caring ethos in the school

We have put systems in place to help build resilience in both staff and students, thus preparing them to cope with a range of life events. These include measures to address both the physical and psychological safety of the school community.

Physical safety

Our Health and Safety Policy provides for the duty incumbent on all members of the school community in complying with the requirements of the Safety, Health & Welfare Act 1989.

- Evacuation plan formulated
- Regular fire drills occur
- Fire exits and extinguishers are checked annually
- Pre-opening supervision in the school yard (15 minutes)
- Front gate locked during school hours
- School doors locked during class time
- Rules of the playground – see Code of Behaviour

Psychological safety

The management and staff of Mercy Primary School use available programmes and resources to address the personal and social development of students, to enhance a sense of safety and security in the school and to provide opportunities for reflection and discussion:

- Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is integrated into the work of the school. It is addressed in the curriculum by addressing issues such as grief and loss; communication skills; stress and anger management; resilience; conflict management, problem solving; help-seeking; bullying; decision making and prevention of alcohol and drug misuse. Promotion of mental health is an integral part of this provision
- Staff have access to training for their role in SPHE
- Staff are familiar with the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures. Each staff member has been given an updated “pack” on Child Protection Guidelines’09-’10
- The school has developed links with a range of external agencies – CAMHS, Social Work Department HSE, NEPS, Gardaí
- Inputs to students by external providers are carefully considered in the light of criteria about student safety, the appropriateness of the content, and the expertise of the providers

- The school has a clear policy on bullying and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy. Each teacher has an “Incident report” template
- Students who are identified as being at risk are referred to the designated staff member, concerns are explored and the appropriate level of assistance and support is provided. Parents are informed, and where appropriate, a referral is made to an appropriate agency
- Staff are informed about how to access support for themselves – Employee Assistance Service, See page 42 of resources manual book

Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)

A CIMT has been established in line with best practice. The members of the team were selected on a voluntary basis and will retain their roles for at least one school year. The members of the team will meet annually to review and update the policy and plan. Each member of the team has a dedicated critical incident folder. This contains a copy of the policy and plan and materials particular to their role, to be used in the event of an incident

Roles

In consultation with the staff, roles have been assigned as follows:

Team leaders:	Pat Neenan, Principal & Máire Jones, DP
Garda liaison:	Paula Brassil
Staff liaison:	Oonagh O’Rahilly
Parent & Community liaison:	Caroline Doody
Media liaison:	Pat Neenan/Máire Jones
Administrator:	Michelle Kerins/Carmel Spring

Team leader

- Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting
- Coordinates the tasks of the team
- Liaises with the BOM; DES; NEPS
- Liaises with the bereaved family
- Ensures that sample letters are typed up, on the school’s system and ready for adaptation

Garda liaison

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

Staff liaison

- Leads briefing meetings for staff on the facts as known, gives staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions, 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)
- Keeps staff updated as the day progresses
- Is alert to vulnerable staff members and makes contact with them individually
- Advises them of the availability of the EAS (Spectrum) and gives them the contact number

HSCL liaison

- Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of members of the Parents Council, Emergency support services and other external contacts and resources
- Coordinates the involvement of these agencies
- Reminds agency staff to wear name badges
- Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies
- Visits the bereaved family with the team leader
- Sets up room for meetings with parents
- Maintains a record of parents seen
- Meets with individual parents
- Provides appropriate materials for parents (from critical incident folder)
- Liaise with agencies in the community for support and onward referral (Longer term)

Media liaison

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

Administrator

- Maintenance of up to date telephone numbers of :
Parents or guardians
Teachers
Emergency services
- Is alert to the need to check credentials of individuals offering support
- Takes telephone calls and notes those that need to be responded to
- Prepares and sends out letters, emails and faxes
- Photocopies materials needed
- Maintains records

Record keeping

In the event of an incident, each member of the team will keep records of phone calls made and received, letters sent and received, meetings held, persons met, interventions used, material used, etc

Michelle / Carmel will have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters, photocopying materials, etc

Confidentiality and good name considerations

The management and staff of Moyderwell Mercy Primary School 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. The phrases 'tragic death' or 'sudden death' may be used instead. Similarly, the word 'murder' should not be used. 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:	Staff
Assembly hall/ class room:	Students
	Parents
	Media
	Other visitors

Consultation and communication regarding the plan

All staff were consulted and their views canvassed in the preparation of this policy and plan. Parent representatives were also consulted and asked for their comments.

Our school's final policy and plan in relation to responding to critical incidents has been presented to all staff.

Each member of the critical incident team has a personal copy of the plan.

All new and temporary staff will be informed of the details of the plan by Paula Brassil. The plan will be updated annually by the Critical Incident Team.

This Critical Incident Plan and Policy was reviewed October 2022 and ratified by the Board of Management:

Signature:

Date: