



Educate
Together



CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT POLICY (CIMP)

School Address: ETSS Wicklow, The Glebe, Wicklow Town

Roll number: 68345R

School Patron/s: Educate Together

ETSS Wicklow has a Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) and a Critical Incident Management Plan (CIMP).

Review and Research

The Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) have consulted resource documents available to schools on www.education.ie and www.nosp.ie including:

- **Responding to Critical Incidents – Guidelines and Resources for Schools (NEPS 2016)**
- Suicide Prevention in Schools: Best Practice Guidelines (IAS, National Suicide Review Group (2002)
- Suicide Prevention in the Community - A Practical Guide (HSE 2011)
- Well-Being in Post-Primary Schools Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention (DES, DOH, HSE 2013)
- Well-Being in Primary Schools - Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion (DES, DOH, HSE 2015)

Definition of 'critical incident'

The staff and management of **ETSS Wicklow** 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.

This could include but is not exhaustive:

- *The death of a member of the school community through accident, violence, suicide or suspected suicide or other unexpected death*
- *Medical Emergencies*
- *An intrusion into the school*
- *Potentially Violent Situations (unauthorized/ suspicious person / intruder)*
- *An accident involving members of the school community*
- *An accident/tragedy in the wider community*
- *Pandemic Flu or other Pandemic Episodes*
- *Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism, etc*
- *The disappearance of a member of the school community*
- *A national or international emergency*
- *Evacuation Process and Procedure for Sheltering Off-site*

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 should also help ensure that the effects on the students and staff will be limited. It should enable us to return to normality as soon as possible.

Creation of a coping supportive and caring ethos in the school

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

Physical safety

Measures in place:

- School evacuation plan
- Regular fire drills
- Fire exits and extinguishers regularly checked
- Supervision plan
- Rules for classrooms and outdoor areas – e.g. classroom code and protocols for using pathways and steps
- Online learning in the event of school closures

Psychological safety

The management and staff of **ETSS Wicklow** aim to use available programmes and resources to address the personal and social development of students, to enhance a sense of safety and security in the school and to provide opportunities for reflection and discussion.

- Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is integrated into the work of the school. It is addressed in the curriculum by addressing issues such as grief and loss; communication skills; stress and anger management; resilience; conflict management; problem solving; help-seeking; bullying; decision making and prevention of alcohol and drug misuse. Promotion of mental health is an integral part of this provision;
- Staff have access to training for their roles in SPHE;
- Staff are familiar with the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures;
- Information is provided on mental health in general and such specific areas as signs and symptoms of depression and anxiety;
- Staff are informed in the area of suicide awareness;
- The school has developed links with a range of external agencies – DES, JMB, NEPS, TUSLA, ISPCC, Gardai, NPCPP
- 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 (as per DES Circular 0023/2010 Post-Primary)
- The school has a clear policy on bullying and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy
- There is a care system in place in the school using the ‘Continuum of Support’ approach which is outlined in the NEPS documents published in 2010 for post primary schools. See also Student Support Teams in Post Primary Schools (2014). These documents are available on www.education.ie
- Students who are identified as being at risk are referred to the designated staff member (e.g. guidance counsellor or support teacher), 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.

Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)

A CIMT has been established in line with best practice. The members of the team consist of:

- Principal
- Deputy Principal
- Student Support Co-Ordinator (relevant)
- Other volunteer teachers

(See Appendix 1)

The members of the team will meet annually to review and update the policy and plan. The team members hold meetings and determine plans of action to deal with emergency situations. This includes a communications plan, meetings, dealing with any media involvement and keeping records.

Key administrative tasks in planning for a critical incident:

Maintaining an up-to-date list of contact numbers for

- a) Staff
- b) Pupils, parents/guardians
- c) Emergency support services

Compiling emergency information for school tours including:

- a) List of all pupils and teachers involved and group leader
- b) Copy of itinerary
- c) List of phone numbers / contact numbers of all involved including school mobile numbers
- d) Up-to-date medical information on pupils and permission forms from parents in case of a medical emergency
- e) Insurance details

Procedures to be followed in the event of critical incidents:

Short Term Tasks:

On notification of a critical incident, the Principal will convene the Critical Incident Management Team to carry out the following:

- Ascertain the facts.
- Contact appropriate agencies
- Organise for the supervision of pupils
- Inform Staff, BOM and Educate Together Head Office
- Prepare a statement of the facts
- Identify high risk pupils
- Appoint someone to deal with phone calls
- Organise timetable for the day
- Inform parents and guardians
- Inform pupils
- Make contact with the bereaved family if required
- Organise support
- Respond to the media through a nominated spokesperson decided by the Board
- Contact school solicitors if required

The team should draw up a short-written statement of the facts for staff, pupils, parents and the media.

Media:

A spokesperson will be designated to brief the media where necessary. ETSS Wicklow is a single source outlet when contacting the media on behalf of the school. All communication with media will go through this single source. All communication with the media should be simple, factual and brief. At all times ETSS Wicklow must balance the need for clear and effective communication with the rights of those involved to privacy. The school will at all times endeavour to protect the privacy of any individuals involved.

Where a critical incident involves issues of a sensitive nature, the team should agree on the information which can be disclosed and that which should only be disclosed on a need to know basis. It is advised that a sample statement is agreed by ETSS Wicklow during the planning process.

In the event of a critical incident it is very important that ETSS Wicklow agree the process for dealing with the media at an early stage. This should include agreement on the following:

- The location for communication.
- Decide whether this is best suited onsite or offsite.
- The statement to be released.

The statement should include:

- The facts about the incident
- The school's response
- Support available for the pupils
- Positive information or comment about the deceased person if a death occurs
- Condolences extended to the family if required

A sample announcement to the media and further guidance is available in "Responding to Critical Incidents, Resource Materials for Schools", Department of Education and Science, 2007; (http://www.sdpi.ie/other_des_publications/neps_critical_incidents_resource_material_schools.pdf)

Administrative requirements:

- Organise supervision or substitution
- Make necessary phone calls
- Reserve rooms for meetings / counselling
- Record events, letters to parents, telephone calls made and received
- Deal with normal school business
- Organise practical requirements (snacks/ drinks/ tissues)
- Maintain the normal school routine where possible

Managing Stress Following a Critical Incident

Involvement in, or exposure to, abnormal workplace incidents can lead a person to experience distress. It is normal to react emotionally to a critical incident. It is important therefore that staff involved in a critical incident are kept informed and given the opportunity to rest and have time out from their routine duties following an incident.

The Principal or Deputy Principal should consider the following strategies:

- Convene a meeting for those involved as soon as possible
- Summarise the incident and clarify uncertainties
- Invite questions and discuss issues of concern
- Show care and support for the individual
- Draw up a plan of action, taking into account the needs of the school community
- Make short-term arrangements for work responsibilities
- Ensure that staff and students are happy to leave the facility and are escorted home if necessary
- Seek expert advice on debriefing

Medium Term Tasks:

Secondary Response [24–72 hours]

- a) Assess the need for support and counselling for those directly and indirectly involved.
- b) Provide staff, parents and wider community with factual information as appropriate.
- c) Arrange debriefing for all parents, children and staff most closely involved and at risk.
- d) Restore the facility to regular routine, program delivery, and community life as soon as practicable.
- e) Complete critical incident report.

Medium Term Tasks in the aftermath of a critical incident, a death, accident, serious illness or any such critical incident:

- Prepare staff and pupils for attending a memorial service should this arise.
- Facilitate the involvement of staff or pupils in a service if needed.
- Facilitate staff and pupils' responses e.g. book of condolence, school council's vote of sympathy, flowers.
- Support distressed staff and pupils.
- Ensure counselling service is available.
- Deal with deceased person's possessions in keeping with parental wishes.
- Facilitate the return to school of siblings and close friends.
- Monitor siblings and friends of the deceased carefully.
- Update and amend school records and inform the DES.

Long Term Tasks in the aftermath of a critical incident, a death, accident, serious illness or any such critical incident:

- Keep in contact with the family/families concerned
- Be sensitive to occasions such as anniversaries, birthdays, holidays etc.
- Organise a school service if appropriate
- Help staff and pupils to acknowledge bereavement
- Monitor students, staff for signs of stress

- Provide appropriate support for the primary carers
- Review overall school response
- Review the support structures available
- Inform new staff and students if appropriate

Consultation and communication regarding the plan

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

Our school's final policy and plan in relation to responding to critical incidents has been presented to all staff. Each member of the critical incident team has a personal copy of the plan.

All new and temporary staff will be informed of the details of the plan by management.

The plan will be updated annually in the first term of the academic year.

The Board of Management carried out this review on Tuesday, 30th November 2023.

The next planned review: 2024-2025.

APPENDIX 1

Critical Incident Management Team

Principal:	John Maddock
Deputy Principal:	Sarah Hayward
Volunteer Staff	Shauna O'Toole
	Craig Ledwith
Board of Management Liaison Person	Danny Haskins