



Shellybanks Educate Together National School

Critical Incident Policy-DRAFT

Shellybanks Educate Together National School aims to protect the well being of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times.

Our aim is to establish a Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) to steer the development and implementation of the plan.

Review and Research

The CIMT has consulted resource documents provided to schools as well as publications listed in the resources section of this publication.

These include:

- *Responding to Critical Incidents; Guidelines for Schools* (NEPS 2007)
- *Guidelines for Schools on How to Respond to the Sudden Unexpected Death of a Student*
- *When Tragedy Strikes: Guidelines for Effective Critical Incident Management in Schools* (INTO/Ulster Teachers Union 2000)
- *Suicide Prevention in Schools: Best Practice Guidelines* (IAS, National Suicide Review Group 2002)

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What is a Critical Incident?

The staff and management of *Shellybanks Educate Together National 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 the local community.

Types of incidents include:-

- *The death of a member of the school community (child/staff) 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 CIMT 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 a return to normality as soon as possible.

Creation of a coping supportive and caring ethos in the school

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

Physical safety

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- Health & Safety Policy
- Campus Evacuation Plan
- Occurring Regular fire drills
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
- Front gate closed during school hours. The back gate is closed.
- Front and middle school doors locked during school hours
- Rules of the playground
- Code of Positive Behaviour Policy

Psychological safety

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

- Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is integrated into the work of the school. It is addressed in the curriculum by addressing issues such as grief and loss; communication skills; stress and anger management; resilience; conflict management; problem solving; help-seeking; bullying; decision making and prevention of alcohol and drug misuse. Promotion of mental health is an integral part of this provision.
- Staff have access to training for their role in S.P.H.E. (Professional Development providers)
- Staff is familiar with the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures.
- Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools Circular 0065/2011----WILL PRINT COPY
- Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children
- Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools
- Books and resources on difficulties affecting the Primary School student are available.
- Information is provided on mental health in general and such specific areas as signs and symptoms of depression and anxiety.
- Staff is informed in the area of suicide awareness.
- The school has developed links with a range of external agencies – HSE/ Mater CAMHS/ Community Gardaí/ NEWB/ NEPS.
- 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. (Note: Department of Education and Skills –Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools –September 2013)
- There is a care system in place in the school. Students who are identified as being at risk are referred to the designated staff member (e.g. Class Teacher or Resource Teachers) 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 is 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 are 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. Outside of this they will meet twice again.

Each member of the Team and each Class level, has a copy of NEPS:-

- **Responding to Critical Incidents (Guidelines for Schools)**
- **Responding to Critical Incidents (Resource Materials For Schools)**

Each member of the Team also has a dedicated Critical Incident Folder. This contains a copy of the Policy and Plan. Materials particular to their role, to be used in the event of an incident are kept in the Principal's Office.

Roles

Shellybanks Educate Together National School have assigned roles to:-

- **Team Leader** – Principal/Deputy Principal – Thérèse Gamble/Anne Marie Lillis

- **Garda liaison** – Principal/ Deputy Principal (Thérèse Gamble/Anne Marie Lillis)

- **Staff liaison** –Deputy Principal – Anne Marie Lillis

- **Student liaison**- Maura Moran (Class Teacher) Sonja Hughes (SNA)

- **Parent liaison** – Jennifer Fleenor (Chairperson PTA)

- **Community liaison** – School Chairperson – Jessica Ryan

- **Media liaison** – Principal/ BOM Chairperson-Thérèse Gamble/Jessica Ryan

- **Administrator** – School Secretary/Principal and Deputy Principal

Team leader

- Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting.
- Coordinates the tasks of the team.
- Liaises with the Board of Management; DES; NEPS
- Liaises with the bereaved family.
- The Deputy Principal will take the lead in the absence of the team leader.

Garda liaison

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

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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 Support Services and gives them the contact number.

Student liaison

- Co-ordinate information for teachers about students they are concerned about.
- Alerts other staff to vulnerable students (appropriately).
- Provides materials for students
- Keeps records of students seen by external agency staff.
- Looks after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room where agreed.

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Community/Agency Liaison

- Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of key parents, such as members of the Parents Teachers Association.
- Emergency support services and other external contacts and resources.
- Liaises with agencies in the community for support and onward referral.
- Is alerted to the need to check credentials of individuals offering support.
- Coordinates the involvement of these agencies.
- Reminds agency staff to wear name badges.

- Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies._

Parent liaison

- Visits the bereaved family with the team leader.
- Arranges parent meetings, if necessary.
- May facilitate such meetings and manage 'questions and answers'.
- Manages the 'consent' issues in accordance with agreed school policy.
- 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).

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Media liaison (Principal and Chairperson of the Board)

- Principal and the Chairperson of the Board, in advance of an incident, will consider issues that may arise and how they will be responded to.
- In the event of an incident, will liaise where necessary with the Educate Together Patron;DES;NEPS etc.
- The Principal and the Chairperson of the Board, will draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews if absolutely necessary.
- A letter or text will be sent home to parents requesting them not to speak to the media.
- NEPS advise School Staff not to speak to media.
- The media will not be allowed on the school campus.

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Administrator

- Maintenance of up to date telephone numbers of

- Parents or guardians

- Staff

- Emergency services

- Takes telephone calls and notes those that need to be responded to.
- Ensures that templates are on the school's system in advance and ready for adaptation.
- Prepares and sends out letters, emails and faxes.
- Photocopies materials needed.
- Maintains records.

Record keeping

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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.

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

Confidentiality and good name considerations

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- The management and staff of *Shellybanks Educate Together National 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 unless there is solid information that death was due to suicide and that the family involved consents 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.*

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Critical Incident Rooms

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In the event of a critical incident:-

Staffroom -will be the main room used to meet the staff.

Hall -for whole school.

Principal's Office-for smaller meetings/parent meetings

Note:- Depending on the Critical Incident, Classrooms will be used ie. Classes will be doubled-up thus making classrooms available

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 the *Principal* or Deputy Principal if Principal not available_
- The plan will be reviewed and updated if necessary, at the start of each academic school year.

This plan was reviewed and ratified by the Board of Management on 10th May, 2016.

Principal: Therese Gamble

Chairperson: Jessica Ryan

Review

This policy will be reviewed in May 2017