

Critical Incident Policy



Mission Statement

Carrig NS aims to protect the well being of its students and staff by providing a safe environment for its students and staff at all times.

Carrig NS has taken a number of measures to create a coping, supportive and caring ethos in the school. The school has also formulated a number of policies and procedures to be followed with a view to ensuring the physical and psychological safety of staff and students, both in ordinary time and in the event of a critical incident.

What is a Critical Incident?

As per DES/NEPS guidelines, the staff and management of Carrig NS recognises a critical incident to be *“an incident or sequence of events that overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of the school and disrupts the running of the school”*. Critical incidents may involve one or more students or staff members or members of our local community. Types of incidents include;

- Serious injury sustained by a member of the school community as a result of violence on or off school grounds.
- The death of a member of the school community through accident, violence, suicide or other unexpected death.
- An accident involving a member of the school community.
- An accident or tragedy in the wider community.
- The disappearance of a member of the school community.

Aim

The aim of the Critical Incident Management Policy (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. It should help ensure that the effects on staff and students are limited. It should enable 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 lessen the probability of the occurrence of an incident. These include measures to address both the physical and psychological safety of both staff and students.

Measures to address Physical Safety

The following policies and strategies have been put in place in order to maintain the physical safety of all members of the school community;

- Health & Safety Statement
- Code of Behaviour
- Evacuation plan formulated
- Regular fire drills occur
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked

- The Fire Alarm is serviced regularly, at least once a year
- Pupils leaving early will only be released by a member of teaching staff when an authorised adult arrives to accompany the child from premises. Such departures are recorded in the 'Sign Out' book.
- Pupils are not released into the care of persons unknown to school staff without checking with a parent/guardian.
- Pupils are reminded of playground rules by staff at regular intervals in the context of our School Code of Behaviour.
- Pupils are adequately supervised at all times especially during physical activity and recess. Two members of the teaching staff and one SNA supervise the children during recess.
- First Aid box is maintained and kept in;
 - Outside First Class
 - PE Shed (by astro turf pitch)
 - In the staffroom

Measures to address Psychological Safety

Carrig NS aims to create an open and encouraging environment in the school where students can talk about their difficulties and seek help for same.

The following strategies aim to support and ensure the psychological well-being of our pupils;

- SPHE programme is integrated into the work of the school.
- Grow In Love.
- RSE programme.
- Walk Tall programme.
- The Stay Safe programme.
- School Anti-bullying Policy.
- Implementation of the Child Protection Procedures.
- Staff have access to resources to help understand psychological issues e.g. "Well Being in Primary Schools".
- BOM facilitate training for staff as requested.
- Staff are informed about how to access support for themselves e.g. Employment Assistance Service (EAS) – Spectrum Life, Freephone 1800 411057.
- Substance/Alcohol Misuse Policy.
- Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment.
- Staff are informed of difficulties affecting individual students and are aware of and vigilant in identifying their needs.
- Staff have access to books and resources on difficulties affecting the primary school child.
- The school has developed links with outside agencies, which may be contacted in the event of an emergency and for onward referral of students. These include; NEPS,

Ms Elaine O’Keeffe, Túsla Child and Family Agency, CAMHS, Nenagh, Nenagh Garda Station.

Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)

Carrig NS has set up a CIMT in line with best practice. The members of the team will retain their role for at least one year and will meet annually to review and update the policy.

- Team Leader: PERRY MALONEY, School Principal
- Garda Liaison: PERRY MALONEY, School Principal
- Community Liaison: PERRY MALONEY, School Principal
- Media Liaison: GARY PROUT, AP 2
- Parent Liaison: EIMEAR KEOGH, AP 2
- Staff Liaison: LAURA BOLAND, Deputy Principal
- Student Liaison: LAURA BOLAND, Deputy Principal
- Administration Tasks: FRANCES SHEAHAN, School Secretary
- Record Keeper: FRANCES SHEAHAN, School Secretary
- Pastoral Liaison: FR. WILLIE McCORMACK P.P.

Critical Incident Rooms

In the event of a critical incident;

- Staffroom Used to meet staff
- Hall Parents
- Classrooms For children or office for individual meetings with children
- Office Media and other visitors

Key Responsibilities for each Role

Team Leader

- Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting.
- Co-ordinates the tasks of the team.
- Liaises with the Board of Management; DES; NEPS; School Inspector; INTO; other relevant agencies.
- Liaises with the bereaved family.
- Laura Boland, 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 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 and gives them the contact number.

Community/Agency Liaison

- Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of key parents, such as members of the Parents Group.
- 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 support.
- Co-ordinates the involvement of these agencies.
- Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies.

Parent Liaison

- Visits the bereaved family with the team leader.
- Arranges parent meetings, if held. 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).

Media Liaison

- 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 BOM, INTO and Communications Section in the DES.

Administrator

- Maintenance of up to date telephone numbers of;
 - Parents or guardians
 - Teachers
 - 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 send out letters and emails.
- Photocopies materials needed.
- Maintains records.

Record Keeping

In the event on 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.

Frances Sheahan will have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, send letters, photocopying materials etc.

Letter to Parents

The Principal will prepare a brief, written statement to include;

- The sympathy of the school community for the affected/bereaved family.
- Positive information or comments about the deceased/injured person(s).
- The facts of the incident.
- What has been done.
- What is going to be done.

Confidentiality and Good Name Considerations

The management and staff of Carrig NS 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 use 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.]*

Consultation and Communication regarding the Plan

All staff were consulted and their views canvassed in the preparation of this policy and plan.

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

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.

The plan will be updated as required.