

# Coolderry Central School

## Critical Incident Policy.



### **Introduction:**

Coolderry Central School aims to protect the well-being of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. Our school mission statement states that our school aims to provide each child with an education in a caring and happy environment. The Board of Management, through its Principal Mr Patrick Mc Carthy, has drawn up a Critical Incident Management Plan (CIMP), as one element of the school's policies and plans. The policy establishes a Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT), to steer the development and implementation of this plan.

Definition of a 'critical incident':

The staff and management Coolderry Central School, recognise a critical incident to be: **'An incident or sequence of events that overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school'** (DES 2008). Critical incidents may involve one or more students or staff members, or members of our local community. Types of incidents might 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 assist 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 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 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:**

An intensive Health and Safety Statement has been created and in accordance with this statement the school has established a safety management system, to meet the requirements of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005, and all relevant safety legislation including approved codes of practice and guidelines. Examples of what systems and procedures the school have in operation include:

- Fire alarm and fire doors installed.
- Evacuation plans have been formulated and communicated to students and staff.
- Regular fire drills occur.
- External & emergency lighting.
- 'Buzzer' system for entry to school.
- Intruder alarms set each evening.
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked.
- Staff have engaged in First Aid training.
- Pre-opening supervision in the school yard occurs from 9:05 am, where a teacher is present on yard, on wet days the pupils will be supervised in the GP room.
- After school supervision: all pupils are supervised by the teacher on duty who escorts each student to the gate and supervises that each pupil is collected at the zebra crossing. Infant class teachers bring their pupils to the gate in a line and hand them over to parents/guardians.

### **Psychological safety:**

The management and staff of Coolderry Central 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 are familiar with the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures

- and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures.
- 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.
- The school has developed links with a range of external agencies:
  - Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).
  - National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS).
  - Our Public Health Nurse
  - Relevant Social Workers.
  - Relevant Childcare Workers.
  - Relevant Play Therapists.
  - Relevant Speech Therapists.
  - Relevant Occupational Therapists.
  - Birr Garda Station, our local liaison guard is Garda Declan Ganley
- 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.
- Students who are identified as being at risk are referred to the designated liaison person (DLP), where appropriate a referral is made to an appropriate agency and parents are informed.
- 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 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.

#### **Role 1 - Team Leader and Garda Liaison: Mr Patrick Mc Carthy**

This role includes:

- 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.
- Liaises with the Gardaí.

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

\*In the absence of the team leader, this role will be assumed by the Deputy Principal.

## **Role 2 - Staff and Community Liaison: Geraldine ` O**

### **Brien**

This role includes:

- 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  
EAS phone number **1800 411 057**
- Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of key parents, such as members of the Parents Association.
- Liaises with agencies in the community for support and onward referral.
- Is alert of 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.

## **Role 3 - Parents Liaison: Mary Dunne and Michelle Brady**

This role includes:

- Visits the bereaved family with the team leader.
- Arranges parent meeting, if held.
- May facilitate such meetings, and manage 'questions and answers'.
- 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).

#### **Role 4 - Administrator and Record Keeping: Martina Kennedy, School Secretary**

This role includes:

- Maintenance of up to date telephone numbers of parents, teachers and emergency services.
- Takes telephone calls and notes those that need to be responded to.
- Ensures that templates are on the school system in advance and ready for adaptation.
- Prepares and sends out letters, emails and group texts.
- Photocopies materials needed.
- Maintains records.

#### **Role 5- Media liaison – Patrick Mc Carthy & Marie Kennedy**

This role includes:

- 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, Patrick & Marie will liaise where necessary with the representative of DES; relevant teacher unions etc.
- Will draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews (as agreed by school management) 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, materials used etc. Martina the secretary will have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters, photocopying materials etc.

#### **Confidentiality and good name considerations**

Management and staff of *Coolderry Central School* have a responsibility to protect the privacy and good name of people involved in any incident and will be sensitive to the consequences of public statements. Members of school staff will bear this in mind, and seek to ensure that students do so also, e.g. 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.

### Critical Incident Rooms

In the event of a critical incident, the following rooms are designated for the indicated purposes

Room Name:	Designated Purpose:
<i>Staff Room</i>	Main room for meeting staff
<i>Classroom (Room 5<sup>th</sup> /6<sup>th</sup> )</i>	Meetings with students
<i>GP Room</i>	Meetings with parents
<i>Library</i>	Meetings with media
<i>SET Room</i>	Individual sessions with students
<i>Classroom (Room 3<sup>rd</sup> /4<sup>th</sup> )</i>	Meetings with other visitors
<i>Principal's Office</i>	Confidential one to one meetings

#### **Consultation and communication regarding the plan:**

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

Once ratified by the Board of Management, the school's final plan in relation to responding and to critical incident will be presented to all staff.

All new members of staff will be informed of the details of the plan by Patrick Mc Carthy.

The plan will be updated annually. The next review will be held in March 2025

## **Ratification & Communication**

This policy was officially ratified by the BoM

On: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

(Chairperson of BoM)

Circulate and communicate the policy to members of the school community.

