



## **Killoughteen National School Critical Incident Policy**

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### **Critical Incident Policy**

#### **Introduction:**

This policy was drawn up by the school staff initially in consultation with Mr. Gerard Dore (NEPS). It was initially updated by staff after a workshop with Gerard Dore on January 29<sup>th</sup> 2019. It is reviewed annually in September/October by staff and the BOM.

#### **Definition of a Critical Incident:**

The Staff and Management of Killoughteen N.S. 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. Response to incidents varies and is categorised into 3 levels. This classification in no way diminishes the seriousness of any particular event. It is intended to help the school assess what level of intervention is needed.

*Response Level 1:* the death of a student or staff member who was terminally ill; the death of parent/sibling; a fire in school not resulting in serious injury; serious damage to school property.

*Response Level 2:* the sudden death of a student or staff member.

*Response Level 3:* an accident/event involving a number of students; a violent death; an incident with a high media profile or involving a number of schools.

The term “suicide” will not be used. The term “tragic death” or “sudden death” shall be used instead.

#### **Aim:**

Our aim is that in devising this plan the school staff and B.O.M. should be better equipped to respond effectively to any crisis that it may encounter.



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---

### **Creation of a coping, support and caring ethos in the school.**

#### **Physical Safety:**

We already have some measures in place to address the physical safety of our pupils

- Evacuation plan formulated
- Regular fire drills occur
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
- Supervision rota in place
- School doors locked during class time
- Playground rules discussed and reviewed frequently.

#### **Psychological Safety:**

The management and staff of Killoughteen N.S. aim to use available programmes and resources to address the personal and social development of the child to enhance a sense of safety and security in the school and to provide opportunities for reflection and discussion.

In the SPHE programme we discuss such issues as:

- Communication Skills
  - Stress and Anger Management
  - Resilience
  - Conflict Management
  - Seeking Help
  - Bullying
  - Making Decisions
  - Prevention of Alcohol and Drug Abuse
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- Staff are familiar with the Child Protection Guidelines & Procedures and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures.
  - Books and resources on difficulties affecting the primary school pupil are available both in the office and on-line.
  - The school has a policy on bullying and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy.
  - This is a caring school – staff are at all times alert to the needs of their pupils. Students who are identified as being at risk are referred to D.L.P. (Designated Liaison Person) or the (D.D.L.P – Deputy Designated Liaison Person) Concerns are explored and the appropriate level of assistance and support is provided. Parents are informed and where appropriate a referral is made to the appropriate agency.



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---

### **Critical Incident Management Team**

A CIMT has been put in place in line with best practice. All staff members are involved including the secretary and caretaker.

Roles are as follows:

Team Leader	Willie Curtin
Media Liaison	Lydia Mulqueen
Staff Liaison	Claire Ryan
Parent Liaison	Mary Curtin & Kathryn O Grady
Community Liaison	Faye Mulqueen & Fergal Keoghan
Garda Liaison	Caitriona Casey
Student Liaison	Class Teachers
Administrator	Carol Murphy

### **Responsibilities:**

#### **The Team Leader/Staff Liaison Officer:**

- Alerts staff to the crisis and convenes a meeting
- Co-ordinates the tasks of the team
- Liaises with B.O.M., DES and NEPS
- Liaises with family

#### **Garda Liaison:**

- Liaises with Gardaí
- Ensures all information is accurate

#### **Student Liaison:**

- Class teachers will be alert to the needs of their own class.

They will also:

- Alert other staff members re vulnerable students
- Provide opportunities for pupils to discuss and share their feelings and come to terms with what happened
- Keep records of pupils seen by external agency staff



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---

### **Parent Liaison:**

- Visit family with the team leader
- Manage “consent” issues as per school policy

### **Media Liaison:**

In the event of an incident will liaise with the INTO and seek their advice. With the support of the above draw up a press statement.

### **Administrator:**

The Administrator will maintain up to date telephone numbers of:

- Parents/Guardians
- Teachers
- Emergency Services
- Take phone calls and note those that need to be responded to
- Ensure that templates are on the school system
- Prepare and send out letters etc
- Photocopy materials required
- Maintain records

### **Record Keeping**

In the event of an incident each team member will keep a record of phone calls made and received, letters sent and received, persons met, interventions used etc. Mrs. Carol Murphy will have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters, photocopying materials etc.

### **Confidentiality:**

The management and staff of Killoughteen N.S. will endeavour to protect the privacy and good name of the people involved in the incident and will be sensitive to the consequences of any public statements. They will seek to ensure that students do likewise.

### **Consultation and Communication regarding the plan**

All staff were consulted in the preparation of this policy and current review. Parents were invited to view the draft plan. It was discussed at Board level and ratified on

The plan will be updated annually at the beginning of each year.

Signed: *Sheilagh O Mahony Kennedy* Chairperson B.O.M

Date: 29/9/23





**Killoughteen National School**  
Killoughteen, Newcastle West Limerick

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# Killoughteen National School

Killoughteen, Newcastle West, Co. Limerick.

Roll number: 18708U

e-mail: [killoughteenationalschool@eircom.net](mailto:killoughteenationalschool@eircom.net)

Tel: (069)61195

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Dear Parent/Guardian,

The school has experienced (the sudden death, accidental injury, etc.) of Name of student(s). We are deeply saddened by the deaths/events. Our thoughts are with (family name).

We have support structures in place to help your child cope with this tragedy (elaborate).

It is possible that your child may have some feelings and questions s/he may like to discuss with you. It is important to give factual information that is age appropriate.

You can help your child by taking time to listen and by encouraging him/her to express feelings. All children are different and will express their feelings in different ways. It is not uncommon for children to have difficulty concentrating or be fearful, anxious, or irritable. They may become withdrawn, cry, complain of physical aches and pains, have difficulty sleeping or have nightmares. Some may not want to eat. These are generally short-term reactions. Over the course of the coming days, please keep an eye on your child and allow him/her to express their feelings without criticism.

Although classes will continue as usual, I anticipate that the next few days will be difficult for everyone.

(Optional)

An information night for parents is planned for (date, time and place). At that time, further information about how to help children in grief will be given.

We have enclosed some information which you may find useful in helping your child through this difficult time.

Young people frequently turn to social media to see what others are saying, or to find out more. At these times it is important that you monitor their use and engage with them about what they read. We urge you to emphasise and reinforce the need to be extremely sensitive and careful about what they post.

If you would like advice you may contact the following people at the school (details).

Principal's signature



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Dear Parent/ Guardian,

I need to inform you about a very sad event that has happened. A child/young person from the neighbourhood, the sister/ brother of (name of student), a student here at school, was killed as a result of (a violent attack, violent incident in the street etc.) earlier this week. We are all profoundly saddened by his death.

We have shared this information and had discussions with all of our students so that they know what has happened. School staff members have been available for students on an on-going basis today. Other support personnel (including psychologists etc., according to actual arrangements) are available to advise staff in their support of students.

The death of any young person is tragic, but a violent death is even more difficult. It is hard to have to teach our children about the violence in our world and to accept that sometimes we do not have the power to prevent it.

This death may cause a variety of reactions in your child. Some children/young people may be afraid for their own life and for the lives of those they love. Take time to listen to their fears and reassure them that what has happened is rare.

We have enclosed some additional information that may be useful during this time.

The media are in the vicinity of the school and may approach you or your children. You need not respond to their questions if you are approached. We will not allow the media to interview your child at school and our general advice is that you should not let your children be interviewed. They are not mature enough to judge what to say and may say something they will regret later.

In these times, young people tend to turn to social media to see what others are saying, or to find out more. While social media can be of great consolation, we would urge you to reinforce the need to be extremely sensitive about what your son/daughter might post to others.

Our thoughts are with (family name) and with each of you.

Sincerely,

Principal's signature



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### **Sample Announcement to the Media**

My name is (Name) and I am the principal/teacher of Killoughteen National School. We learned this morning of the death of (one of our students or Name of student). This is a terrible tragedy for family(ies), our school and our community. We are deeply saddened by these events. Our sympathy and thoughts are with (Name) family and friends.

Name of student/students was a (5th class boy) and will be greatly missed by all who knew him.

We have been in contact with his/her parents and they have requested that we all understand their need for privacy at this difficult time.

Offers of support have been pouring in and are greatly appreciated. Our school has implemented our Critical Incident Management Plan.

Psychologists from the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) and (insert other information if relevant) have been with us all day supporting and advising teachers in their efforts to assist our students at this time.

The teachers have been helping students to deal with the tragic event.

The school has been open to parents to support them and to offer them advice and guidance.

We would ask you to respect our privacy at this time.

Thank you.





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### **Some key points to note in the event of a critical incident:**

**1. Returning the belongs of a child who died. When? Who?**

The principal will contact the parents of the child within a month of the incident and will arrange the returning of a child's belongings. The principal and class teacher will offer to call to the parents' house with the child's belongings or invite the parents to the school to collect same. Parents will be given the choice on this matter.

**2. Putting a candle onto the desk of a child who died. How long?**

We will mark the child's absence for a week by placing a candle on the child's table. However, we will try to return things to normality as soon as possible for the main cohort of pupils. However, our absent friend will be remembered during daily prayer time at school.

**3. Providing a choir or guard of honor at a funeral?**

Following advice from NEPS the school will not provide a choir/guard of honor at a funeral. Children may be distressed from the incident and it could make it more difficult for them if they felt pressured by the school into taking part in this. However, we acknowledge that as parents are the primary educators of their children, we would encourage them to take their own children to the funeral if they felt that it was the best decision for their child(ren). All staff will do whatever they can to make sure that the school environment is made feel safe and secure for all children.

**4. What procedures will be followed in the event of a tragedy at school?**

All children will be evacuated from the concerned classroom or area. A red hand symbol will be sent to the nearest teacher(s) signifying that an emergency situation is happening and that their help is required immediately. Ambulance/nearest doctor to the school and parents will be contacted immediately in this order. Children will be supervised and kept calm by other staff members away from the area of the incident. Then all parents will be contacted to notify them that a critical incident has occurred and that they collect their children as soon as possible.

**'A critical incident has occurred and further details of same will be issued to parents in the near future.'**

This is all that will be relayed to parents when their children are being collected if questions are being asked.