



Cappataggle National School

Critical Incident Policy

Introduction:

Cappataggle National School aims to protect the well-being of its students by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. As stated as part of the School Ethos "In Cappataggle NS there is a genuine attempt on the part of all to create a well ordered, caring, happy and secure atmosphere, where it is endeavoured to enhance the self-esteem of the school community". The school 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 both staff and students during the normal course of the school day and in the event of a critical incident.

Such policies include:

Health and Safety Policy

Anti-Bullying Policy

Code of Discipline/Behaviour Policy

SPHE Programme

Safeguarding Statement

Definition of a Critical Incident:

Cappataggle NS recognizes a critical incident to be "an incident or sequence of events that overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of the school, and disrupts the normal running of the school".

Critical incidents may involve students, staff, the school or the local community.

Examples of a critical incident might be:

- The death of a member of the school community, through sudden death, accident, suicide or terminal illness
- A serious accident or tragedy in the school community
- Serious damage to the school through fire, flooding, vandalism etc.
- The disappearance of a member of the school community
- A physical attack on a staff member or student
- Intrusion into the school.

Aim of Plan:

The aim of the Critical Incident Plan is that in the event of such an incident as outlined above, the plan will help staff and management to react quickly and effectively and to maintain control of the situation. The plan will also help the school to return to normality as soon as possible and limit the effects of the incident on staff and students.

Record Keeping:

All team members will keep written records of phone calls, letters, meetings, interventions etc.

Confidentiality:

The school is conscious of its responsibility to protect the privacy and good name of people involved in any incident and will be sensitive to the consequences of any public statements. They will encourage students to do so also. For example the phrases "tragic death" or "sudden death" may be used instead of "suicide" or "violent death" instead of "murder".

Critical Incident Management Team:

Leadership Role: Mr Shane Dervan, Principal

Communication Role: Ms. Fiona Egan, Deputy Principal

Student Liaison/Counseling Role: Class Teachers, Special Education Teachers and SNA

Chaplaincy Role: Fr. Kirby

Chairperson of B.O.M.: Mr. Michael Hannon

Liaison to Parent Body Role: Ms. Fiona Egan

N.E.P.S: Ms. Michelle McMahon

The first named person has the responsibility as defined.

The second named person assists and assumes responsibility on the absence of the first named.

Roles and Responsibilities:

Leadership Role:

Intervention

- Confirm the event
- Activate the Critical Incident response team
- Express sympathy to the family
- Clarify facts surrounding the event
- Make contact with other relevant agencies (e.g. NEPS, HSE, Gardaí)
- Decide how news will be communicated to different groups (staff, pupils, outside school, for example via the class teacher with assistance)
- With Team, prepare a public statement. Where necessary speak with the media.

Postvention

- Ensure provision of ongoing support to staff and students (e.g. Carecall 1800 411 057)
- Facilitate any appropriate memorial events (e.g. Book of Condolence, Tree Planting ceremony etc.)
- Review Plan

Communication Role:

Intervention

- Organise a designated space to address media promptly
- Ensure telephone lines are free for outgoing and important incoming calls
- Liaise with relevant outside support agencies (e.g. HSE, Gardaí, Psychological Services when appropriate or available)

Postvention

- Review and evaluate effectiveness of communication response

Student Liaison/Counseling Role:

Intervention

- Outline specific services available to the school
- Put in place clear referral procedures
- Address immediate needs of all staff and students
- Provide information
- Address the provision of counselling

Postvention

- Provide ongoing support to vulnerable students
- Monitor class most affected
- Refer on, as appropriate
- Review and evaluate Plan

Chaplaincy Role:

Intervention:

- Visit home(s), if appropriate (two personnel)
- Assist with prayer services if appropriate
- Make contact with other local clergy
- Be available as personal and spiritual support to staff and pupils

Postvention

- Provide follow-up support to families
- Work in partnership with Critical Incident Team
- Review and evaluate Plan

Family Liaison Role:

Intervention:

- Coordinate contact with families (following first contact by Principal)
- Consult with family around involvement of school in e.g. funeral service
- Assist with all communication dealing with parents of any student affected by critical incident

Postvention:

- Provide ongoing support to families affected by the incident – as appropriate
- Involve as appropriate family in school liturgies/memorial services
- Offer to link family with community support groups – as appropriate, e.g. Rainbows
- Review and evaluate Plan

Action Plan:

Short-Term Actions (Day 1)

- Immediate contact with family/families
- Consult with the family regarding appropriate support from the school, e.g. funeral service
- Ensure that a quiet place can be made for students/staff
- Room will be made available as follows:

Individual Meetings:

Media Briefing (if appropriate)

- Designate a spokesperson (Leader)
- Prepare a brief statement
- Protect the family's privacy
- Gather accurate information
- It is important to obtain accurate information about the incident.
 1. What happened, where and when?
 2. What is the extent of the injuries?
 3. How many are involved and what are their names?
 4. Is there a risk of further injury?
 5. What agencies have been contacted already?
- Contact appropriate agencies
 1. Emergency services
 2. Medical services
 3. HSE, Psychology Departments/Community Care Services
 4. NEPS/NCSE
 5. BOM
 6. DES/School Inspector
- Convene a meeting with Key Staff/Critical Incident Management Team
 1. Organise a staff meeting, if appropriate
 2. Ensure any absent staff members are kept informed

3. Organise timetable/routine for the day (adhering to the normal school routine is important, if that is possible)
 4. Class teachers to take note of any absentees who might need to be contacted, list of friends etc., or any other relevant information and give to the Student Liaison person
 5. Arrange supervision of students e.g. group classes, if appropriate, engage parents
- Liaise with the family regarding funeral arrangements/memorial service
 1. The Chaplain/Principal will liaise with the family, to extend sympathy and clarify the family's wishes regarding the school's involvement in funeral/memorial service.
 2. Arrange a home visit by two staff representatives within 24 hours, if appropriate. (Student Liaison person + Class teacher)
 3. Have regard for different religious traditions and faiths.

Medium-Term Actions (24-72 Hours)

- Preparation of students/staff attending funeral
- Involvement of students/staff in liturgy if agreed by bereaved family
- Facilitation of students'/staffs' responses, e.g. Sympathy Cards, flowers, book of condolences, etc.
- Ritual within the school
- Review of the events of the first 24 hours
 1. Reconvene Key Staff/Critical Incident Management Team
 2. Decide arrangements for support meetings for parents/students/staff.
 3. Decide on mechanism for feedback from teachers on vulnerable students
 4. Have review of Critical Incident Management Team meeting
 5. Establish contact with absent staff and pupils
- Arrange support for individual students, groups of students if necessary.
 1. Give any teacher who feels uncomfortable with involvement in support meetings the choice of opting out
 2. Arrange, in consultation, with outside agencies, individual or group debriefings or support meetings with parental permission
 3. Plan for the re-integration of students and staff e.g. absentees, injured, siblings, close relative etc.
 4. Student Liaison people to liaise with above on their return to school
- Plan visits to injured
 1. Family Liaison person, class teacher and Principal to visit home/hospital
 2. Attendance and participation at funeral/memorial service (to be decided)
 3. Decide this in accordance with parents' wishes and school management decisions and in consultation with close school friends
- Schools closure (if appropriate) – request a decision on this from School Management

Longer-Term Actions

- Monitor students for sign of continuing distress
- If, over a prolonged period of time, a student continues to display the following, he/she may need assistance from the Health Board. Constant communication with family is essential.
 1. Uncharacteristic behavior
 2. Deterioration in academic performance
 3. Physical symptoms – e.g. weight loss/gain, lack of attention to appearance, tiredness, restlessness
 4. Inappropriate emotional reactions
 5. Increased absenteeism
- Evaluate response to incident and amend Critical Incident Management Plan appropriately
 1. What went well?
 2. Where were the gaps
 3. What was the most/least helpful?
 4. Have all the necessary onward referrals to support services been made?
 5. Is there any unfinished business?
- Formalise the Critical Incident Plan for the future
 1. Consult with NEPS Psychologist
- Inform new staff/new school pupils affected by Critical Incidents where appropriate
 1. Ensure that new staff are aware of the school policy and procedures in this area
 2. Ensure they are aware of which pupils were affected in any recent incident and in what way

3. When individual pupils or a class of pupils affected by an incident are transferring to a new school, the Principal should brief the Principal of the new school, in certain circumstances in consultation with parents/guardians.
- Decide on appropriate ways to deal with anniversaries (be sensitive to special days and events)
 1. Anniversaries may trigger emotional responses in students/staff and they may need additional support at this time
 2. Acknowledge the anniversary with the family
 3. Be sensitive to significant days like Birthdays, Christmas, Mother's Day and Father's Day
 - Plan a school memorial service if appropriate
 - Care of deceased person's possessions. What are the parent's wishes?
 - Update and amend school records.

Drawn up by Management and Staff of Cappataggle NS with facilitation from our NEPS Psychologist Ms. Michelle McMahon.

Review Procedure:

The policy will be reviewed regularly in the light of experience. It will be reviewed by the full staff and Board of Management every two years. Any staff member, board member, parent, guardian or student who is unhappy with the content or the implementation of any school policy may request a review at any time and such a request will be dealt with as quickly as possible. Next review of this policy will occur before or during the school year 2022.

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 27/02/20.

Signed: Michael Hannnon
Chairperson Board of Management

Date: 05/03/2020

Shane Dervan
Principal

Date: 05/03/2020