

Phoenix Park School



Critical Incident Policy

October 2021

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Critical Incident Policy

At all times, the Phoenix Park Special School aims to protect the wellbeing of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment as defined in our Mission Statement. The aim of this policy is to establish a Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) to steer the development and implementation of a Critical Incident Management Plan should the need arise.

Aim

The aim of the Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) is "to help school management and staff to react quickly and effectively in the event of an incident, to enable them to maintain a sense of control and to ensure that appropriate support is offered to students and staff". Having a good plan will also help ensure that the effects on the students and staff will be limited. It will enable the school to return to normality as soon as possible.

Definition of a Critical Incident

A critical incident is defined as "any incident or sequence of events which 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, their family members or members of the local community.

Examples:

- Death of a member of a school community through accident, violence, suicide or unexpected death
- Major illness or outbreak of disease
- Criminal incidents (e.g. Shootings)
- Major accidents, serious injury (e.g. Bus crash)
- Civil unrest/War
- Fire or natural disasters that affect the school or members of the school community
- Disappearance of a member of the school community
- Unauthorised removal of student from school or home

Caring and Supportive Ethos in the School

The Phoenix Park Special School has put systems in place to help build resilience in both staff and students through our SPHE/RSE programmes, 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

In the area of physical safety the school has put in place the following:

- Evacuation plan formulated
- Fire Safety Plan and fire drills occur
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
- Secure doors access and CCTV on main entrances to the school
- Policies that ensure the smooth and safe running of the school

Psychological safety

The management and staff of the Phoenix Park Special School also 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 including 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 delivering the SPHE curriculum
- 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
- The school has developed links with a range of external agencies e.g. CAMHS/HSE/NEPS
- 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 staff member who assesses and refers if appropriate. Concerns are explored and the appropriate level of assistance and support is provided.
- Staff are informed about how to access support themselves (

Links with External Support Agencies

NEPS

The Board of Management and school management team are aware of the role of NEPS in helping the school to respond to critical incidents. When a critical incident occurs, NEPS will be notified immediately. The response can involve:

- Helping to assess the impact of the event and draw up a response plan
- Provide information and advice
- Support school staff as they support students

- Work with teachers to identify students who are most in need of support and who may be in need of onward referral

CAMHS

All children who attend the Phoenix Park Special School are referred through a Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, Children under the age of 7 are linked to HSE Primary Care. In the event of a critical incident, every child's CAMHS/Primary Care key worker will be notified of the incident by the Community Liaison person and particularly vulnerable students will be highlighted for monitoring and support purposes.

Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)

A CIMT has been established in line with best practice (See Appendix 1). The members of the team were selected consultatively 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 access to the schools Critical Incident Management Folder which include all of the following:

- A copy of the Critical Incident Management Team and the Key Roles
- An emergency contact list/school staff contact list
- A copy of the duties of each team member
- A copy of the Board of Management members & contacts
- An Action Plan Template
- A copy of NEPS *Responding to Critical Incidents – Guidelines for Schools*

Key Roles and Responsibilities of the CIMT

1. Team Leader
2. Garda liaison
3. Staff liaison
4. Student liaison
5. Parent liaison
6. Community liaison
7. Media liaison
8. Administrator

The Following are the Key Responsibilities of Each Role

Team Leader

- Alert the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting
- Co-ordinate the tasks of the team
- Liaise with the Board of Management; DES; NEPS; SEC
- Liaise with the bereaved family.

The Deputy Principal will assume this role in the absence of the team leader.

Garda Liaison

- Liaise with the Gardaí
- Ensure that information about deaths or other developments is checked out for accuracy before being shared

Staff Liaison

- Lead briefing meetings for staff on facts as known, give staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions and outline the routine for the day
- Advise staff on the procedures for identification of vulnerable students
- Provide materials for staff (from the Critical Incident Folder)
- Keep records of students seen by external agency staff
- Look after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room where agreed

Community/Agency liaison

- Maintain up to date lists of contact numbers - members of the Parents Council, emergency support services and other external contacts and resources
- Liaise with agencies in the community for support and onward referral
- Check credentials of individuals offering support
- Co-ordinate the involvement of these agencies
- Remind agency staff to wear name badges
- Update team members on the involvement of external agencies

Parent Liaison

- Visit the bereaved family with the team leader
- Arrange parent meetings if held - Facilitate such meetings, and manage 'questions and answers'
- Set up room for meetings with parents
- Meet with individual parents
- Maintain a record of parents seen
- Manage the 'consent' issues in accordance with agreed school policy
- Ensure that sample letters are typed up, on the school's system and ready for adaptation
- Provide appropriate materials for parents (from their Critical Incident Folder)

Student Liaison

Intervention

- Address the immediate needs of the students
- Outline services available in the school
- Put in place clear referral procedures to access services
- Alert staff and parents to vulnerable students
- Keep a record of students seen by external agencies
- Looks after setting up and supervision of quiet room

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 relevant teacher unions etc
- Will draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews (as agreed by school management)

Administrator

- Maintenance up to date telephone numbers of:
 - Parents/Guardians
 - Staff (Appendix 2)
 - BOM
 - Emergency Contact List (R23)
- Take telephone calls and note those that need to be responded to
- Ensure that templates are on the school's system in advance and ready for adaptation
- Prepare and send out letters, emails and faxes
- Photocopies of materials needed
- Maintains records

Record Keeping

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

The management and staff of the Phoenix Park Special 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.

Critical Incident Rooms

In the event of a critical incident:

- The Staff Room will be the main room used to meet the staff
- The Hall for meetings with students
- The Nurture Room for parents
- The Nurture Room or Sensory Room for Quiet Room
- The Hall for media
- The Kitchen for other visitors

Consultation and Communication Regarding the Plan

All staff were consulted and regard was given to their views in the preparation of this policy and plan. Students and 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 access to a personal copy of the plan. All new and temporary staff will be informed of the details of the plan by a Staff Liaison member.

The plan will be updated annually in the month of October.

Date Created	September 2013
Date Ratified	
Date for Review	October 2021



Chairperson's Signature: _____