Carndonagh Community School **CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY & PLAN**	Pobalscoil Charn Domhnaigh

Based on Responding to Critical Incidents Resources for Schools: R21, P.34 (NEPS)
Carndonagh Community School aims to protect the well being of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. Our Mission Statement recognises the importance of the whole school experience. The Board of Management, through *the Principal, Paul Fiorentini,* has drawn up a critical incident management plan as one element of the school's policies and plans.

Our aim is to establish a Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) to steer the development and implementation of the plan.

Review and Research

The CIMT have consulted the two NEPS *Responding to Critical Incidents* documents as well as other relevant resources including:

When Tragedy Strikes: Guidelines for Effective Critical Incident Management in Schools (INTO/Ulster Teachers Union 2000)
Responding to Critical Incidents; Guidelines for Schools (NEPS 2007)
Guidelines for Schools on How to Respond to the Sudden Unexpected Death of a Student (ASTI 1997)
Suicide Prevention in Schools: Best Practice Guidelines (IAS, National Suicide Review Group 2002)

Definition

The staff and management of *Carndonagh Community School* 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. 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 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. Having a good plan should also help ensure that the effects on the students and staff will be limited. It should enable us to effect 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

The school operates a programme of supervision before, during and after school. Appropriate signage directs visitors to the Main Reception; Parents and Guardians are advised of the Access Policy; Junior pupils are not allowed off campus during the school day; The Health & Safety Policy identifies risks and responsibilities. All teachers are encouraged to carry out a Risk Management assessment for their classrooms.

• Evacuation plan formulated

• Regular fire drills occur

• Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked

An accident report form must be completed for any incident;

All staff are committed to the Child Protection Guidelines

• Pre-opening supervision in the school yard is in place:

• All staff are advised of health & safety requirements with special rules for practical rooms, workshops and labs.

• A record is kept of pupils with serious medical conditions;

• Teachers conducting sports /activities are advised to apply appropriate safety rules and guidelines.

Psychological safety

The management and staff of *Carndonagh Community 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 have access to training for their role in SPHE

• Staff are familiar with the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures and presentations have been made to staff.

• Books and resources on difficulties affecting the post 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

• Staff are informed in the area of suicide awareness and some are trained in interventions for suicidal students

• The school has developed links with a range of external agencies –
– HSE; CAMHS; NEPS: JLO; GARDAI; Social Care Services;

• 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

• There is a care system in place in the school

• Students who are identified as being at risk are referred to the designated staff member (e.g. guidance counsellor or support teacher), concerns are explored and the appropriate level of assistance and support is provided.

Parents are informed, and where appropriate, a referral is made to an appropriate agency
• 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.

* Team Leader   Paul Fiorentini
* Deputy Team Leader   John McGuinness
* Garda liaison   Paul Fiorentini
* Staff liaison.   Paul Fiorentini
* Student liaison   Year Heads & Pastoral Care team
* Parent liaison   Serena Doherty
* Community liaison   Mary Lafferty, Marie-Therese McDaid
* Media liaison   Paul Fiorentini
* Administrator   Owen McConway

Outlined below are some points on the key responsibilities of each role. A note on helpful qualities for each role can be found in the text box. However, each school will have to adapt these suggestions to their own circumstances and needs.

Team leader
* 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; SEC
* Liaises with the bereaved family

It is important to consider who will take the lead in the absence of the team leader.

> A person who carries authority and can make decisions during a crisis (e.g., school closure, attendance at memorial services, etc.)

Garda liaison
(This may be seen as part of the team leader's role)
* Liaises with the Gárdaí
* Ensures that information about deaths or other developments is checked out 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)

> A staff member known and trusted by the staff

- 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 Employee Assistance Scheme and gives them the contact number.

Student liaison
- At post-primary level, may co-ordinate information from tutors and year heads about students they are concerned about
- Alerts other staff to vulnerable students (appropriately)
- Provides materials for students (from their critical incident folder)
- Keeps records of students seen by external agency staff
- Looks after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room where agreed

> A trusted and familiar figure to the students.
> A bigger school may need a number of such people.

Community/agency liaison
- Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of
  - Key parents, such as members of the Parents Council
  - 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
- Coordinates the involvement of these agencies
- Reminds agency staff to wear name badges
- Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies

> Someone with good contacts with agencies and relevant individuals in the community

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)

> Someone known to parents. This person should be comfortable speaking before a large group and have skills to manage emotional reactions of individual or groups of parents

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)

> Someone with good interpersonal skills who would be comfortable talking to the media by phone or in person. A person who is able to set limits without being offensive

- In the event of an incident, will liaise where necessary with the SEC; relevant teacher unions etc.
- Will draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews (as agreed by school management)

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 schools system in advance and ready for adaptation
- Prepares and sends out letters, emails and faxes
- Photocopies 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 clerical staff 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 *Carndonagh Community 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 Library will be the main room used to meet the staff
The Guidance room(s) / Chaplain's room will be for individual sessions with students
The Aras will be for group meetings with students
The Careers Library will be the room for parents
The Board room will be used for CIM Team
The Board room may be used for other visitors
The Aras will be the room for Press:

Consultation and communication regarding the plan
All staff were consulted and their views canvassed 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 a personal copy of the plan.
All new and temporary staff will be informed of the details of the plan by *Paul Fiorentini, Secretary, Board of Management*
The plan will be updated annually (*name month* ……..)

Reviewed and approved by the Board at the meeting of 16th March 2017