

KILLURNEY SCHOOL CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT PLAN

Introduction

This plan outlines the preparation that Killurney School will take in order to ensure an effective response to a crisis situation/critical incident. It will enable the school to cope effectively in the event of a crisis and will enable staff to react quickly and to maintain a sense of control. The plan may also ensure that normality returns as soon as possible and that the effects on students and staff are limited.

Background

Killurney School is characterised by a warm and caring ethos. We are nurtured and sustained by our anti-bullying policy, our ongoing focus on health and safety issues and the SPHE programme.

This caring and supportive environment will, no doubt, contribute to the successful implementation of this plan in the event of a critical incident.

The school also has a plan for evacuation (for instance, in the event of a fire) which all pupils and staff are aware of and as outlined in our Health and Safety Policy. A Fire drill is undertaken each school term. A copy of the plan of the school building is displayed in each classroom with the exits highlighted.

In the event of a critical incident the staff will endeavour to maintain normal routines as far as possible particularly for classes not immediately involved or affected by the incident.

Definition of a Critical Incident:

In general, a critical incident refers to "any incident or sequence of events which overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of the school" (*Responding to critical Incidents p.5*). This may include the sudden death/accident/suicide of a member of the school community, an accident involving pupils/staff on the school premises, a physical attack on a staff member or pupil or serious damage to the school building. The disappearance of a member of the school community and an accident/tragedy in the wider community are also regarded as critical incidents.

The Critical Incident Management Team

- **Principal**
- **Deputy Principal**
- **All staff**
- **Board of Management**
- **Parish Council**

To ensure that communication between the school and relevant personnel is speedy and effective in the event of a critical incident, the Critical Incident Management Team will

1. Establish and maintain an up-to-date list of contact numbers for

- Pupils, parents/guardians
- Staff Members and emergency contacts for all staff
- Emergency support services - This will be displayed in the staff room..

2. Compile emergency information for school trips to include:

- a list of all pupils/staff involved and the teacher in charge
- a list of mobile phone numbers for accompanying teachers
- up to date medical information on pupils - allergies, epilepsy etc.

3. Assign roles and responsibilities to each of the team members (and/or other staff) in the event of a critical incident.

Task	Name
Overall management of response	Schools Safety Officer (Rebecca Carroll-Principal)
External Liaison (outside support agencies; parents; distressed visitors; the media) Contact Insurance Co [Allianz]	SSO Emma Hogan (Deputy Principal)
Internal care and communication (with staff, pupils immediately involved/affected and pupils in general)	SSO
Administration Tasks Answering telephone Organising room(s) for debriefing, log and record of events etc.) Official letters/ statement compilation Setting up of conference calls (on a secure and encrypted line/ network) in circumstances wherein meetings must be held remotely	Ciara Holoahan (SNA) Brian Looram (SET) SSO and Chairperson Emma Hogan (Deputy Principal)
Other support members	NEPS Psychologist: Amanda O Shea DES; School Inspector: Elaine Hyland All Staff,

	<p>Parents Parish Priest; Fr Brian Power/ Fr Paul Waldron (Diocesan Education Offices) Clergy Pastoral Care Officer Parent's Association Officers Local Counselling Services GPs, CPSMA IPPN INTO, Allianz</p>
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Dealing with the media

- Create a list with the names and numbers of key media contacts in your community. Get to know the people on this list (some of whom could be past pupils!) and become familiar with their specific duties and what information would be useful to them. Keep their phone numbers, fax numbers and postage and e-mail addresses. Also get your name and contact numbers on their mailing lists.
- When you hear a national news story, contact the people on your media list and let them know how it is affecting your school. Journalists are always looking for way to put a local twist on a national story!
- News people love numbers. Keep statistics handy. Use them to illustrate your point. When you learn of surveys concerning areas relevant to your school, forward them (including who conducted the survey) to journalists on your media list and include a quote or two how these compare to life in your school.

Communicating in a crisis:

- No matter how awful or how minor, if an incident has captured the attention of the school, the community or the world, be prepared to talk about it, publicly and immediately. Be prepared to tell the facts right away. Don't let things stew and get out of control
- The first people to communicate with? The teaching staff, Chairperson and other school employees. Keeping them informed builds a sense of common purpose and elicits co-operation. Next, communicate with parents. Write a statement to be sent home with all students on the day a crisis occurs. Be clear in stating the facts of the situation, give all the facts you can possibly give, and tell parents how you intend to respond. More information is better, but the less

information, the more likely parents will be inclined to fill in the blanks with rumour and speculation

- If you think an incident might draw the attention of the media, be prepared. Refer all media calls to one spokesperson. That person should be prepared with facts in writing to refer to. Be honest but do not be lured into speculation. Stick to the facts. If you don't know the answer to a question, admit it, and offer to get back to the journalist, and then do so once you have ascertained the facts
- Media contacts are not always for bad news - good news can prompt a flood of media attention as well. In either case, instruct those answering the phones to collect complete information - name of person, name of company, phone number, and the journalist's deadline - and prioritise phone calls to be returned based on that information.

A few things to keep in mind when talking to the media during a crisis

- Never tell a journalist anything you are unwilling to see in print.
- Listen to yourself speak. This helps you to speak slowly and it helps you monitor your statements for accuracy and clarity
- If you are asked a question that is off the point, confusing or inappropriate, answer the question you wish you had been asked. What's important here is that Journalists are often satisfied to receive a clear, quotable statement, even if it is not perfectly responsive
- Stop talking when you are finished, even if a journalist waits in silence for more. Don't feel compelled to fill the silence, or you may say more than you intended.
- If you are angry or upset about an issue, try to postpone the interview until you regain a normal, calm demeanour.

Follow these steps within the first 30 minutes of a crisis

- Understand the circumstances; define the problem
- Consider the options; act decisively to ensure the health and safety of students and staff and protection of school property
- Communicate with staff; keep the news media informed
- Create a crisis assessment and information sheet to send to the Department of Education.

PROCEDURES TO BE FOLLOWED IN THE EVENT OF CRITICAL INCIDENTS

A. Short-Term Actions (1st Day) (*Responding to Critical Incidents pp8-11*)

Task	Name
Refer to Section 3 <i>Responding to critical Incidents</i> for details pertaining to each task	Person responsible for organising the enactment of the task(s)
Gather accurate information (who, what, where...)	SSO
Contact appropriate agencies (details in staff room and Principal's office)	SSO to contact BOM/ NEPS /HSE /School chaplain/ Parish Priest
MEDIUM-TERM ACTIONS (24 - 72 HOURS)	<i>Responding to Critical Incidents p12</i>
Gather accurate information (who, what, where...)	SSO/ Principal
Contact appropriate agencies (details in staff room and Principal's office)	SSO/ Principal
LONGER TERM ACTIONS	<i>(Responding to Critical Incidents p13)</i>
Gather accurate information (who, what, where...) from NEPS HSE	SSO
Contact appropriate agencies (details in staff room and Principal's office)	SSO/ Principal
DEALING WITH THE AFTERMATH OF A SUICIDE OR SUSPECTED SUICIDE	<i>(Responding to Critical Incidents p14 - 16)</i>
Gather accurate information (who, what, where...)	All Staff
Contact appropriate agencies (details in staff room and Principal's office)	SSO
RESOURCE DOCUMENTS AVAILABLE FOR USE BY THE SCHOOL	<i>Responding to Critical Incidents p17 - 26)</i>
Gather accurate information (who, what, where...)	<i>SSO and administration team</i>

Contact appropriate agencies [Principal's office)	<i>SSO to oversee compilation of list for Staff Room/ Principal's Office</i>
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**Reference pages and contact details have been cut from this online copy for GDPR and confidentiality reasons: These are retained in hard copy only by the school and members of the Critical Incidents Management team.*