



KILGARVAN CENTRAL SCHOOL

Policy for Management of Critical Incidents

2024

Roll No 19458F

Kilgarvan Central School

Railway Road

Kilgarvan

Co Kerry

CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT POLICY

Kilgarvan Central School aims to protect the well-being of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. The Board of Management, through the School Principal, has drawn up a Critical Incident Management Plan as one element of the school's policies and plans.

Review and Research

In drawing up this policy and plan the CMIT has consulted the following resource documents provided to schools:

- Responding to Critical Incidents and resources for Schools (NEPS 2016)
- Suicide Prevention in Schools: Best Practice Guidelines (IAS, National Suicide review Groups 2002)
- Well-Being in Primary Schools – Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion (DES, DOH, HSE 2015)
- Template for the Development of a Critical Incident Policy and Plan (NEPS)

Definition of a Critical Incident

The staff and management of Kilgarvan Central 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, but are not limited to:

- The death of a member of the school community through accident, violence, suicide, suspected suicide or other unexpected death
- An intrusion into the school
- An accident involving members of the school 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 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 too 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

Some of the measures taken by the school to ensure the physical safety of the students include:

- Evacuation plan formulated and clearly visible in each room (Appendix 1)
- Recorded Bi-Annual Fire Drills
- Fully functional and regularly serviced fire alarm system
- Fire exits and extinguishers regularly checked
- No child left unsupervised in the school grounds before and after school and during all breaks. Staff supervision of children begins at 9.10 and finishes at 3pm.
- First Aid Courses provided for all school staff regularly. First Aid equipment checked regularly.
- Code of behaviour with behavioural expectations for the creation of a safe environment) is signed by all parents / guardians on behalf of children
- Annual risk assessment
- Induction for new staff members.

Psychological Safety

The management and staff of Kilgarvan Central 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 alcohol and drug prevention. Promotion of mental health is included in this programme
- Staff are familiar with the Child Protection Guidelines and procedures and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures are familiar to all staff
- Relax Kids programme covered with all classes annually
- Stay safe Programme also covered annually
- The Friends for Life Programme is a school based positive mental health programme. Some members of staff are trained in the delivery of this programme, which is delivered every second year in 5th and 6th classes.
- The School has developed links with a range of external agencies including:
 - Our NEPS Educational Psychologist
 - HSE
 - Child and Family Mental Health Services
- 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 using the “Continuum of Support” approach which is outlined by NEPS documents published in 2007 for all primary schools.
- 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: Caroline Lehane

- 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.

In the absence of Caroline, Aileen will take the lead.

Garda Liaison: Aileen Moriarty

- Liaises with Gardaí
- Ensures that information about deaths or other developments is checked out before being shared.

Staff Liaison: Ana Ní Shúilleabhadhán

- 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 critical incident folder).
- Keeps staff updated as day progresses.
- Is alert to vulnerable staff members and makes contact with them individually. Advises them of availability of EAS and gives them the contact number.

Parent Liaison: Juliette Cronin

- 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 meeting with parents.
- Maintains a record of parents seen.
- Meets with individual parents.
- Provides appropriate materials for parents (from their critical incident folder).

Community Liaison Maria Magnier

- Maintains an up to date list of contact names and numbers for local community organisations.
- Ensures that accurate information is provided to local community groups who are linked in with the school.
- Liaises with organisations in the community for support.
- Provides information on an on-going basis where appropriate.

Agency Liaison: Helen Cronin

- Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of
 - Key parents, such as members of the Parents' Association
 - 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.

Communication / Media Liaison – Caroline Lehane

- 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 the SEC: relevant teacher unions etc
- Will draw up press statement, give media briefings and interviews (as agreed by school management)
- Will coordinate the monitoring of communications relating to the incident

Administrator: Eileen Scanlon

- Maintenance of up to date telephone numbers of
 - Parents or guardians
 - Teachers
 - Emergency support services
- Takes telephone calls and notes those that need to be responded to
- Ensures that templates are on the school's system in advance and ready for adaptation
- Prepares and sends out letters and emails.
- Photocopies materials needed.
- Maintains records

Attendance tracking: Caroline Lehane

- In the immediate aftermath of the critical incident special care will be paid to attendance of students
- All absences will be carefully monitored

Record Keeping and School Secretary: Eileen Scanlon

In the event of an incident Eileen will keep records of phone calls made and received, letters sent and received, meetings held, persons met, interventions used, materials 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 Kilgarvan Central School have a 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. 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:

- Staff room will be used to meet the staff
- 5th /6th Classroom will be used for meetings with students
- Principal's Office for parents
- Principal's Office for press
- Resource room for individual meetings with students
- Principal's Office for other visitors

Consultation and communication regarding the plan

The relevant staff were consulted and their views were canvassed in the preparation of this policy and plan. Our school's final policy and plan in relation to responding to critical has been presented to all staff for review and agreement. Each member of the critical incident team has a personal copy.

Parents representatives were also consulted and asked for their comments

All new and temporary staff will be informed of the details of the plan by the principal, Caroline Lehane, and it will form part of the Welcome Pack they will all receive.

The plan will be updated annually.

This policy was reviewed in January 2024 and ratified by the Board of Management of Kilgarvan Central School at a meeting on 22nd January 2024

This policy will be due for review in 2026

Signed: *Jeremiah McCarthy*

Date: 22/01/2024

J. McCarthy, Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed: *Caroline Lehane*

Date: 22/01/2024

Caroline Lehane Principal