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## Maynooth Educate Together NS Critical Incident Policy.

### Preamble

Maynooth Educate Together NS is a co-educational school with mainstream classes and classes catering for children with Autism. Our ethos espouses the following principles i.e., we are multi-denominational, co-educational, child-centred, and democratically run. We aim to provide an education that fosters development of pupil talents, abilities, and personalities. We support children in developing attitudes which will enable them to become open-minded, creative, respectful, responsible and caring members of society.

Maynooth Educate Together National School aims to protect the wellbeing of its students by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times.

Maynooth Educate Together NS has taken several measures to create a coping supportive and caring ethos in the school. The school has also formulated policies and procedures to be followed with a view to ensuring the physical and psychological safety of staff and students, both in ordinary time and in the event of a Critical Incident.

### What is a Critical Incident?

Maynooth Educate Together NS recognises a critical incident to be **‘an incident or sequence of events that overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school and disrupts the running of the school.’** Critical Incidents may involve one or more pupils, staff, the school itself or our local community.

Examples of incidents might include: -

- *The death of a member of the school community through sudden death, accident, terminal illness or suicide.*
- *An intrusion into the school.*
- *An accident/tragedy in the wider school community.*
- *Severe damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism etc.*
- *The disappearance of a member of the school community.*
- *An accident involving members of the school community.*
- *A pupil presenting with a suspected case of Covid-19.*

### Aim

Recognising that the key to managing critical incidents is Planning. Maynooth Educate Together NS has developed this Critical Incident Management Policy and accompanying plan. Our hope is that, in the event of an incident, these will help staff to react quickly and effectively and to maintain a sense of control. They should also help us to achieve a return to normality as soon as possible and ensure that the effects on the students will be limited.

## **Creation of a Coping, Supportive and Caring ethos in the school**

Maynooth Educate Together NS have put systems in place to lessen the probability of the occurrence of an incident. These include measures to address both the physical and psychological safety of both staff and students.

### **Physical Safety.**

- *Evacuation plan formulated.*
- *Regular fire drills.*
- *Fire extinguishers and exits regularly checked.*
- *Pre-opening morning time supervision in the yard.*
- *Rules of the playground.*
- *Playground supervision during school playtimes.*
- *Implementation of our Health and Safety Policy.*
- *Implementation of the SPHE programme.*
- *Implementation of the Response Plan for the safe and sustainable operation of Primary and Special Schools, and the control measures outlined therein.*

### **Psychological Safety**

Maynooth Educate Together NS aims to create an open and encouraging environment in the school where students can talk about their difficulties and seek help for same.

- SPHE programmes are included in the curriculum. These programmes are followed to address such issues as grief and loss, stress and anger management, conflict management, help-seeking, decision making and alcohol and drug prevention.
- Our positive behaviour policy includes an approach to dealing with bullying.
- Our Anti-Bullying policy is implemented. The school has a clear policy on bullying and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy. (Note: Department of Education –Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools –September 2013)
- There is a care system in place in the school. Staff are informed of difficulties affecting individual students and are aware and vigilant to their needs. Parents are informed of issues of concern that are evident at school and where appropriate a referral is made to an appropriate agency.
- Staff is informed about how to access support for themselves (information posted on the school Staff Notice board).
- School staff have access to resources from the NEPS (National Educational Psychological Service) service.
- School has developed links with outside agencies which may be contacted in the event of an emergency and for onwards referral of students.
- Implementation of strategies to enhance pupil wellbeing.
- Keep informed of the updated advice of the public health authorities and comply with same.

### **Child Protection**

- Staff have access to training for their role in S.P.H.E. (Professional Development providers)
- Staff are familiar with the Child Protection Guidelines, Procedures and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures.
- Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools Circular 0065/2011
- Children First National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children
- Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools
- Staff have access to resources of National Educational Psychological Services.

## **Critical Incident Management Team**

Maynooth Educate Together NS has set up a CI team in line with best practice and will maintain this team in the future. The members of this 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 once a year to review and update the plan

Key roles and personnel have been identified as follows:

- Team Leader ..... *Lorraine Murray (Principal)*
- Staff Liaison ..... *Elaine Phelan (Deputy Principal)*
- Student Liaison ..... *Aimee Egan*
- Parent Liaison ..... *Angela Langan*
- Community Liaison ..... *Lorraine Murray*

### **Team Leader**

- Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting.
- Co-ordinates the tasks of the team.
- Liaises with the BOM (Boards of Management) and Dept of Education and Skills, NEPS.
- Liaises with the bereaved /affected family.
- Liaises with Patron, Gardaí and media if necessary.

### **Staff Liaison**

- Leads meeting to brief staff on the facts as known.
- Gives staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and outlines the plan for the day.
- Advises staff on the identification of vulnerable pupils.
- Is alert to vulnerable members of staff and contacts them individually.
- Keeps staff updated as the day progresses.
- Advises staff of the availability of Support Services
- Provides materials to staff from the Critical Incident folder.

### **Student Liaison.**

- Liaises with other team members to keep them up-dated with information and progress.
- Alerts staff to vulnerable students.
- Provides materials for the students from the Critical Incident folder
- Looks after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room where agreed.
- Assists with administrative tasks.

### **Parent Liaison.**

- Arranges parent/guardian meetings if necessary and manages questions and answers.
- Sets up room for meeting with parents/guardians.
- Maintains a record of parents seen.
- Meets with individual parents/guardians.
- Provides materials for parents from the Critical Incident folder.
- Visits the bereaved / affected family with the Team leader.

### **Community Liaison.**

- Liaises with agencies in the community for support and onward referral.
- Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies.
- Co-ordinates the involvement of these agencies.
- Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of key parents, emergency support services and other external contacts and resources

Up to date lists of contact numbers of parents or guardians, teachers and emergency support services will be kept in the Secretary's office.

## **Covid-19: As per Maynooth Educate Together NS Response Plan for the safe and sustainable operation of Primary and Special Schools.**

### **Dealing with a Suspected Case of COVID-19**

Staff or pupils should not attend school if displaying any symptoms of COVID-19. The following outlines how Maynooth Educate Together NS will deal with a suspected case that may arise in a school setting.

A designated isolation area should be identified within the school building. The possibility of having more than one person displaying signs of COVID-19 has been considered and a contingency plan for dealing with additional cases put in place. The designated isolation area should be behind a closed door and away from other staff and pupils.

If a staff member/pupil displays symptoms of COVID-19 while at school the following are the procedures to be implemented:

- If the person with the suspected case is a pupil, the parents/guardians will be contacted immediately;
- Isolate the person and have a procedure in place to accompany the individual to the designated isolation area via the isolation route, keeping at least 2m away from the symptomatic person and making sure that others always maintain a distance of at least 2m from the symptomatic person;
- The isolation area does not have to be a room but if it is not a room it should be 2m away from others in the room;
- If it is not possible to maintain 2m distance, a staff member caring for a pupil will wear a face covering or mask. Gloves should not be used as the virus does not pass through skin;
- Provide a mask for the person presenting with symptoms. He/she should wear the mask if in a shared area with other people or while exiting the premises;
- Assess whether the individual who is displaying symptoms can immediately be directed to go home/be brought home by parents who will be advised to call their doctor and continue self-isolation at home;
- Facilitate the person presenting with symptoms remaining in isolation if they cannot immediately go home and facilitate them calling their doctor (staff member). The individual should avoid touching people, surfaces and objects. Advice should be given to the person presenting with symptoms to cover their mouth and nose with the disposable tissue provided when they cough or sneeze and put the tissue in the waste bag provided;
- If the person is well enough to go home, arrange for them to be transported home by a family member, as soon as possible and advise them to inform their general practitioner by phone of their symptoms. Public transport of any kind should not be used;
- If they are too unwell to go home or advice is required, contact 999 or 112 and inform them that the sick person is a Covid-19 suspect;
- Carry out an assessment of the incident which will form part of determining follow-up actions and recovery;
- Arrange for appropriate cleaning of the isolation area and work areas involved

The HSE will inform any staff/parents who have come into close contact with a diagnosed case via the contact tracing process. The HSE will contact all relevant persons where a diagnosis of COVID-19 is made. The instructions of the HSE should be followed and staff and pupil confidentiality are always essential. School staff should be encouraged to download the HSE COVID-19 tracker app to assist Public Health for contact tracing purposes. Both in and out of the school setting (see section 5.1).

### **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, materials used etc. The school secretary will have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters etc.

### **Letter to Parents.**

The team will prepare a brief written statement to include the sympathy of the school community for the family affected by the incident. Additional information will be communicated as is deemed appropriate.

### **Confidentiality and Good Name consideration.**

The school has 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 the pupils do also. For instance, the term 'suicide' will not be used without the consent of the family involved. The phrase "tragic death" or "sudden death" may be used instead.

### **Critical Incident Room.**

In the event of a critical incident a Special Education Teaching room or staff room will be used to meet the staff, students, parents/guardians and visitors involved.

### **Review**

This policy will be referred to regularly to check that is being consistently implemented by all staff. Policy will be reviewed every 2 years.

Approved by Board of Management;

Date:

Signed:

Chairperson Board of Management.