



Maynooth Educate Together NS

Critical Incident Policy

1. Introduction

Maynooth Educate Together National School is a co-educational, vertical school with mainstream classes and classes catering for children with Autism. Our ethos espouses the following principles; we are multi-denominational, co-educational, child-centred and democratically run. We aim to provide an education that fosters the 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 a number of measures to create a coping supportive and caring ethos in the school. The school has also formulated a number of policies and procedures 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.

2. 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 or our local community. Examples of incidents include:

- **The death of a member of the school community through sudden death, accident, terminal illness or suicide.**
- **An intrusion into the school building.**
- **An accident/tragedy in the wider school community.**
- **Serious 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.**

3. Aim

Recognising that the key to managing critical incidents lies in appropriate and clearly defined planning, Maynooth Educate Together NS has developed this Critical Incident Management Policy and accompanying plan. Our aim is that in the event of a critical incident, this policy and plan will clearly support and enable staff to react quickly and effectively in order to

maintain a sense of calm, routine and control. It should support a return to normality as soon as is possible while ensuring limited negative effects on our pupils and staff.

4. Creation of a Coping, Supportive and Caring Ethos in the school

Maynooth Educate Together NS has 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.

4.1 Physical Safety.

- **Evacuation plan formulated.**
- **Regular fire drills.**
- **Fire extinguishers and exits regularly checked.**
- **Pre-opening morning time supervision on 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 our Child Safeguarding Policy**
- **Sign in/out procedures at reception.**
- **Visitor badges.**
- **Garda Vetting as required.**
- **CCTV**
- **Fob system for entry and exit to the school**

4.2 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 such as Stay Safe** are included in the curriculum.
- Additional programmes such as the **Friends Programme** are implemented as required at age appropriate class levels to address issues such as anxiety, stress and anger management, conflict management, help-seeking, decision making etc.
- **Red card to racism programme** as required at senior class level
- **Cyber Safety and Safer Internet** procedures are implemented at senior class level.
- **Our positive behaviour policy** includes an approach to dealing with bullying.
- **Our Anti-Bullying policy** is implemented.
- **Pupil anti-bullying surveys are completed on a termly basis**
- **Our Wellbeing Policy** is implemented.

- **Restorative Practice Principles** and the **Educate Together values** are practiced and promoted within the school.
- There is a **Care System** in place in the school. Relevant staff are informed of difficulties affecting individual students/families and supportive measures are applied.
- Staff are made aware of **counselling supports** available to them (Spectrum Life).
- School staff have access to resources from the **NEPS service**.
- School has developed **links with outside agencies** such as Primary Care, CDNT, NEPS, CAMHS which may be contacted in the event of an emergency and for onwards referral of students.
- The BOM keep informed of the updated advice of the public health authorities and comply with same.

5. Child Protection

- Staff have access to training re. their role in S.P.H.E. (via OIDE), if and when required and made available.
- Staff is familiar with the Child Protection Guidelines, Child Safeguarding Statement and Procedures and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures.
- Children First National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children are made available to all staff
- Staff have access to resources of National Educational Psychological Services.

6. Critical Incident Management Team; Roles and Responsibilities

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 appointed 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

6.1 Key Roles have been identified as follows.....

(Substitute roles apply in the event of staff absence)

- **Team Leader/Community Liaison**-Lorraine Murray (Principal)
Sub-Elaine Phelan (Deputy Principal)
- **Staff Liaison**-Aimee Egan
Sub-Dave O' Mahony
- **Student Liaison**- *Noreen Keane*
Sub-Eoin Mac Domhnaill

- **Parent/Guardian Liaison** -Elaine Phelan (Deputy Principal)
Sub-Robert Leonard
- **Media Liaison**-Lorraine Murray (Principal)
Sub -Niall Hare (Chairperson of BOM)
- **Social Media Monitorer**- Dave O' Mahony
Sub- Robert Leonard
- **Administration** -Hilary Kellett (secretary)
Sub Phil Connolly

6.2 Key Responsibilities of the Critical Incident Team

6.2a Team Leader/Community Liaison

- Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting as soon as is possible (virtually or face to face).
- Co-ordinates the tasks of the team.
- Liaises with the Board of Management, Dept of Education, NEPS.
- Liaises with the bereaved /affected family.
- Liaises with Patron, Gardaí and media if necessary.
- Communicates with the parent/guardian body.

6.2b 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 (available on teams).

6.2c Student Liaison

- Liaises with other team members to keeps them up-dated with information and progress.
- Alerts staff to vulnerable students.
- Informs staff of the importance of maintaining calm and routine
- Directs staff to materials for the students from the Critical Incident folder (on Teams). Looks after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room where agreed. Assists with administrative tasks.

6.2d Parent/Guardian 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/guardians seen.
- Meets with individual parents as required.
- Provides materials for parents from the Critical Incident folder.
- Visits the bereaved / affected family with the Team leader.

6.2e 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.

6.2f Social Media Monitor

- Monitors social media (Facebook/X/Instagram etc.) surrounding the critical incident and alerts team leader to any inappropriate/misleading or confidence breaching comments.
- Will liaise with all staff and directing them not to post or reply to any online comments or posts regarding the critical incident.

6.2g Media Liaison

- Provides a written/spoken statement for the media in conjunction with the chairperson of the Board of Management if required

6.2h Administration

- Monitors/answers phones and gives a standard prepared response (prepared by Team Leader) to parents/guardians who may contact the school with queries
- Shares written pre-approved updates/advice via Aladdin or email to the parent/guardian body

7. 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.

8. Letter to Parents/Guardians.

The team leader and chairperson of the BOM 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.

9. 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).

10. Critical Incident Room.

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

Review

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

Ratified by Board of Management

Date: 22/2/2024

Review Date: 22/2/2024

Signed (Principal) Lorraine Murray

Signed: Niall Hare

Chairperson Board of Management