

Togher Boys' NS Critical Incident Policy(Draft) 31st January 2018

Introduction

In Togher Boys' NS we are committed to promoting a caring learning environment in which the needs of our pupils and staff are catered for in a safe, sensitive and nurturing manner, when incidents of a critical nature occur. We have put systems in place to lessen the probability of the occurrence of an incident. These include the following preventative measures designed to address the physical and psychological safety of both staff and students.

Preventative Measures

The preventative measures to ensure the physical safety of the pupils and staff are documented in the School's Safety Statement (see *Health and Safety Policy*).

Togher Boys' NS has a number of systems in place to promote positive mental health and effective care systems including the following:

- SPHE programmes are included in the curriculum to address issues such as grief and loss, communication skills, stress and anger management, conflict management, problem solving, help-seeking.*
- Staff are to be trained in the Incredible Years Programme which is designed to prevent and treat emotional and behavioural challenges in young children*
- Regular opportunities for Circle Time which deals with issues such as communication, decision making and problem solving skills.*
- Strong links with external agencies such as Togher Family Resource Centre, NEPs, Sensational Kids, Child and Family Services, play therapists*
- A well-established Home School Community Liaison Programme organised by the Deputy Principal.*

Rationale

This document has been produced to offer a guide should the need arise, in the event of a critical incident occurring.

The main points of reference in terms of materials are:

- Responding to Critical Incidents. Guidelines and Resource Materials for schools (Published by the Department of Education and Skills (DES) and National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS 2016)

Recognising that the key of managing critical incidents is planning, Togher Boys' NS has developed this Critical Incident Management Policy. Our hope is that, in the event of an incident, these will help us act more 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 and staff will be limited.

What is a critical incident?

A critical incident is defined as an incident or sequence of events which overwhelm the normal coping mechanisms of the school (NEPS)

Examples of such critical incidents within the school community are:

- *Death of a member(s) of the school community.*
- *Death of a member of the wider school community*
- *An intrusion in the school.*
- *An accident/tragedy in the wider school community.*
- *Serious damage to the school through fire, flood or vandalism*

A Critical Incident Management Team consist of the following:

- Chairperson of the Board of Management
- The Principal
- Deputy Principal
- Assistant Principal
- Home School Community Liaison Teacher
- Chaplain (If required)

The Team Leader will: (Kieran Kelly/ Sinead Moynihan)

- Establish facts and get clear and accurate information.
- Alert team members to crisis and convene meeting (*in the event that the critical incident occurs outside the school day, the Team Leader will contact relevant members of the Critical Incident Management(CIM) team who will act as communications conduits for their named people on the school's emergency contact grid (see appendix 1)*)
- Lead a meeting by 8:30am (or before working day begins) to brief staff including ancillary staff and outline routine for the day/ delegate responsibilities.
- Make contact with NEPs psychologist for advice and assess need for her to attend school
- Be alert to vulnerable staff members and arrange supervision if any member of staff is overwhelmed.
- Ensure everyone is clear on what information is being presented, who where and how it is being presented.
- Liaise with Board of Management
- Liaise with particular family/families
- Prepare a letter to parents/guardian and statement on school website.(sample announcement in CIM resource pack)
- Agree a time for follow-up meeting at the end of the day
- Assist class teachers in breaking news to classes (other members of the Critical Incidents Management team may also be involved.

Staff Liaison Kieran Kelly/ Sinead Moynihan

- Have guidelines to teachers available
- Set up quiet space, as needed
- Set up room for service providers as necessary
- Be available to deal with/ assist vulnerable pupils and staff members.

Community Liaison (Kieran Kelly/ Sinead Moynihan)

- Meet with individual parents
- Home visit to family/families affected with other team member within 24 hours
- Liaise with agencies in community for support an onward referral in liaison with principal.
- Co- ordinate involvement with these agencies
- Provide materials for parents in dealing with grief responses

Media Liaison (Kieran Kelly/ Sinead Moynihan)

If there is media interest, a statement agreed by the team will be released to media, The statement should express the sorrow of the entire school community at the incident and extend sympathy to the family(ies) of those affected. The statement should be adhered to and not elaborated on in all communications with the media and should be familiar to all members of staff. The content of the statement should be discussed with the family before release. Members of the school community should be advised that innocent remarks could be misconstrued and could lead to stress for themselves and the family concerned. (sample letter available in CIM (Ready, Steady Go)resource pack which can be modified to suit and reflect the incident)

Administration(Ethna Murphy)

Maintenance of up to-date lists parents/guardians/teachers/emergency support services are part of the remit of our school secretaries who will have key roles on the day in receiving, logging calls, sending letters and photocopying materials. It is the responsibility of each member of the CIM team to ensure that detailed records of phone calls made and received, people met, interventions used are recorded.

AT THE END OF DAY 1, the Critical Incident Team convene to review and plan for Day 2.

DAY 2 onwards

In the aftermath of the critical incident the team will review events of first 24 hours. The team may...

- Meet to plan for school involvement on funeral arrangements/memorial service
- Discuss ongoing care/ aftercare for students
- Seek advice for NEPs Psychologist with regard to stress debriefing for staff /pupils as necessary.
- Meet to discuss who should attend funeral and arrange substitute cover for same
- Advise staff members affected of the availability of personal assistance in times of crisis through the Employee Assistance Scheme (DES).
- Evaluate Plan and amend appropriately
- Formalise Plan for future.

The following suggestions may be used by the Critical Incident Management team as part of the whole school approach in the following week/months

- Prayers at whole school assembly
- A sacred space
- The use of a photograph(s) with a candle

RESOURCE SECTION

Critical Incident Pack(Ready, Steady Go pack)Contents available in Principal's Office)

1. Sample letter informing parents/guardians of the incident #
2. Samples of frequently asked questions and "agreed" answers#
3. Sample press release#
4. List of phone numbers and addresses of staff
5. List of emergency support services numbers
6. List of private counsellors from the locality and their fees
7. Hand-outs on children's understanding and reaction to grief, including a range of normal reactions to a critical incident.

Source- **Responding to Critical Incidents Handbook**- Resource Section

Sample Media Announcement R4

Sample letter parent violent death template R3

Critical incident sample letter parents R2

Helpful Publications

1. Someone to Talk to – A handbook on childhood bereavements
2. Responding to Critical Incidents –Advice and Information packs for Schools
3. When Tragedy Strikes – Guidelines for effective critical incident management in schools
4. Infection in School _ Health promotion Unit
5. Togher Citizens Information Centre – Directory

The Board of Management are committed to the well-being of the pupils and staff of Togher Boys' NS in the event of a critical incident occurring and will seek to deal with the event and its aftermath effectively and empathetically.

Emergency Contact List

(to be displayed in staff-room, Principal's office etc)

OUTSIDE AGENCY	CONTACT NUMBERS
GARDA	
HOSPITAL	
FIRE BRIGADE	
LOCAL GPS	
HEALTH BOARD/FAMILY CENTRE	
INSPECTORATE	
NEPS PSYCHOLOGIST	
INTO	01-8047700 1850 708708
PARISH PRIEST/CLERGY	
SENO Special Educational Needs Organiser	