

Critical Incident Policy



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Mission Statement

At Bray School Project National School, we are dedicated to creating a happy, friendly, and inclusive educational environment where every child is celebrated for their uniqueness and value. Our school is a warm and welcoming place that embraces diverse talents, and we firmly believe in fostering a community that collaborates with respect. To achieve this, Bray School Project N.S. is committed to safeguarding the well-being of our students by always providing a safe and nurturing environment. We have taken several measures to establish a resilient, supportive, and caring atmosphere within the school, both during ordinary times and in the event of a critical incident.

What is a Critical Incident?

According to guidelines from the Department of Education and Skills (DES) and the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), Bray School Project N.S. recognises a critical incident as "an incident or sequence of events that overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school and disrupts the running of the school." These incidents can encompass various situations, such as:

- The death of a school community member due to sudden death, accidents, terminal illness, or suicide.
- Outbreaks of diseases or major illnesses within the school or the broader community.
- Serious injuries resulting from violence on or off school premises.
- Threatening or violent intrusions into the school.
- Accidents or tragedies within the school or the local community.
- Severe damage to the school building caused by fire, flood, vandalism, etc.
- The disappearance of a school community member.
- Unauthorised removal of a student from school.

Aim

Recognising that effective management of critical incidents requires planning, Bray School Project N.S. has developed this Critical Incident Management Policy and accompanying plan. Our goal is that, in the event of an incident, this policy will enable our staff to respond swiftly and efficiently while maintaining a sense of control. It should also aid in restoring normalcy as quickly as possible and minimising the impact on students and staff.

Creation of a Coping and Caring Ethos in School

We have implemented various measures to reduce the likelihood of incidents and to build resilience among both staff and students, preparing them to cope with life's challenges. These measures address the physical and psychological safety of our school community:

Physical Safety

- Implementation of a comprehensive Health & Safety policy (please refer to the [Health and Safety](#) policy on the website for further details).
- Regular fire drills to practice timely evacuation of the premises.
- Regular inspection of fire exits and extinguishers.
- Annual servicing of the Fire Alarm system.
- Strict visitor registration and reporting procedures.
- Students are not released to unknown individuals without parental/guardian verification.
- Regular reminders of playground rules and our School Code of Behaviour.
- Adequate supervision of students, especially during physical activities and break times, with a minimum of three staff members overseeing children during outdoor breaks.
- Maintenance and availability of first aid kits in the secretary's office, staff room, and every classroom.

Psychological Safety

Bray School Project N.S. aims to provide an open and supportive environment where students can freely discuss their difficulties and seek help. Our strategies to support and ensure the psychological well-being of our pupils include:

- Integration of Social, Personal, and Health Education (SPHE) into the curriculum, addressing topics like grief, communication skills, stress management, conflict resolution, problem-solving, help-seeking, resilience, bullying, decision-making, and alcohol and drug prevention.
- Teaching the Stay Safe programme to students in specific classes.
- Implementation of an Anti-Bullying Policy (please refer to policy for further details).
- Regular review of the Child Protection and Child Safeguarding policies.
- Staff completion of the 'Introduction to Children First' online training program.
- Staff engagement in Restorative Practice training.
- Staff awareness of and vigilance in identifying individual student needs.
- Availability of resources on difficulties affecting primary school children.

- Establishment of links with external agencies, including HSE, NEPS, Lucena Services, Enable Ireland, CAMHS, and Túsla Child and Family Agency.
- Provision of information on mental health, including signs and symptoms of depression and anxiety.
- Careful consideration of external providers and their content when delivering interventions to students.
- Adoption of a clear policy on bullying and adherence to it.
- Implementation of a care system for students based on the "Continuum of Support" approach.

Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)

Bray School Project N.S. has established a Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) in accordance with best practices, and this team will be maintained in the future. The team members are volunteers and will serve in their roles for at least one school year. The team will meet annually to review and update the plan.

Key Roles 2023 - 2024:

- **Team Leader:** Alan Bedford (Principal)
- **Staff Liaison:** Sinead Jones (Deputy Principal) / Jamie Finnerty (Acting Deputy Principal/ Assistant Principal) and Niamh Acton (Assistant Principal)
- **Student Liaison:** Margaret Masterson/Claire Ryan (Assistant Principal/ Acting Assistant Principal)
- **Community Liaison:** Sinead Jones (Deputy Principal)/ Jamie Finnerty (Acting Deputy Principal) and Niamh Acton (Assistant Principal)
- **Parent Liaison:** Michelle Adebisi (Parent Staff Association member)
- **Media Liaison:** Alan Bedford (Principal)
- **Administrator:** Máire Ní Mhidhigh (Secretary)

Responsibilities in the Event of a Critical Incident:

Team Leader:

- Alerts team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting.
- Coordinates team tasks.
- Liaises with the Board of Management, Department of Education and Skills, I.N.T.O., NEPS, and relevant agencies.
- Coordinates with An Garda Síochána when necessary.
- Liaises with any affected families.
- Identifies and responds to any misinformation which may cause panic or concern within the school community in a timely manner.

Staff Liaison:

- Conducts meetings to brief staff on known facts, allowing staff to express their feelings and outlining the day's routine.
- Advises staff on identifying vulnerable students.
- Identifies and supports vulnerable staff members.

Student Liaison:

- Liaises with other team members to keep staff and students updated on information and progress.
- Alerts staff to vulnerable students.

Community Liaison:

- Collaborates with community agencies for support and referrals.
- Updates team members on external agency involvement.
- Coordinates the involvement of external agencies.
- Maintains up-to-date contact lists of key parents, emergency support services, and other external contacts and resources.

Parent Liaison:

- Facilitates "questions and answers" meetings.
- Meets with individual parents.
- Visits the bereaved family with the team leader.

Media Liaison:

- Prepares for potential media interactions during an incident.
- Liaises with the Communications Section in the Department of Education and Skills if necessary.

Administrator:

- Maintains up-to-date contact lists of parents/guardians, teachers, and emergency support services.
- Manages telephone calls requiring a response, sends letters, and photocopies materials.

Record Keeping

In the event of an incident, each team member will maintain detailed records of phone calls, letters, meetings, interventions, materials used, and other relevant information. The school secretary will play a crucial role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters, photocopying materials, and other administrative tasks.

Letter to Parents

The Principal will prepare a brief, written statement that includes:

- Expressions of sympathy from the school community to the affected/bereaved family.
- Positive information or comments about the deceased/injured person(s).
- The facts of the incident.
- Actions taken and planned.
- A commitment to confidentiality and sensitivity

We understand the importance of protecting the privacy and reputation of individuals involved in an incident, and we will be cautious in our public statements, considering the impact on affected families.

Mary Diskin, Chairperson



Date: 22/01/2024

Alan Bedford, Principal



Date: 22/01/2024