**Critical Incident Management Policy and Plan**

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

This critical incident management plan was drawn up by the staff during their in-school planning day on August 27th 2009, was reviewed in September 2013 and September 2015, and is being reviewed and amended once more in September 2017.

Ballyadams National Schoolhas 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 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.

Our aim was to establish a Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) to steer the development and implementation of the plan.

The staff and management of Ballyadams National 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:

* The death of a member of the school community through sudden death, accident, terminal illness or suicide
* An accident involving pupils or staff on or off the school premises
* A physical attack on staff member(s) or student(s) or an intrusion into the school
* An accident/tragedy in the wider community
* Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism etc.
* The disappearance of a member of the school community

**Aim**

Recognising that the key of managing critical incidents is planning, Ballyadams N.S. 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 and staff will be limited.

**Creation of a coping supportive and caring ethos in the school**

We have put systems in place to help 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. Provision of staff training in this area will be provided as part of the Croke Park hours set and delivered on a needs basis as determined by either management or staff.

**Physical Safety**

The Board of Management has in place an up to date Health & Safety Policy.

* Evacuation plan formulated
* Fire Drills occur
* Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
* Front doors locked at all times
* Playground supervised during breaks and rough play prohibited
* Visitors’ book must be signed by all visitors to the school. Parents or adults collecting children early from school must sign the children out.

**Psychological Safety**

The management and staff of Ballyadams National 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. We aim to create an open and encouraging environment in the school where students can talk about their difficulties and seek help for same.

* Social, Personal and Health Education 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 prevention of alcohol and drug misuse. Promotion of mental health is an integral part of this provision
* Staff have access to training for their role in SPHE
* Staff are familiar with the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures
* The school has developed links with outside agencies, which may be contacted in the event of an emergency and for onward referral of students.
* Inputs to students by external providers are carefully considered in the light of criteria about student safety, the appropriateness of their content and the expertise of the providers.
* The school has a clear policy on bullying and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy.
* Students who are identified as being at risk are referred to the designated staff member (Learning Support Staff), concerns are explored and the appropriate level of assistance and support provided. Parents are informed and where appropriate, a referral is made to an appropriate agency.
* Staff are informed of difficulties affecting individual students and are aware and vigilant to their needs.
* Staff members are informed as to how they might access support for themselves. Information regarding ‘Carecall’ is displayed on the staff noticeboard.

**Critical Incident Management Team**

A CIMT has been established in line with best practice. All members of staff will retain their roles for at least two school years, unless work circumstances dictate otherwise. The plan will be reviewed and updated every second September. It will also be reviewed following a critical incident. Each member of the team will be provided with a critical incident policy in their Teacher Information folder. The ‘Responding to Critical Incident’ handbook published by NEPS will be retained in the principal’s office.

**Roles**

The key roles which are covered are as follows:

* Team Leader
* Garda Liaison
* Staff Liaison
* Student Liaison
* Parent Liaison
* Community Liaison
* Media Liaison
* Administrator

Outlined below are some points on the key responsibilities of each role.

**Team Leader (T. Fitzgerald - Principal)**

* Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting
* Co-ordinates the tasks of the team
* Liaises with the Board of Management, DES, NEPS, TUSLA etc.
* Liaises with the bereaved family

In the absence of the team leader (Principal), this role will be designated to the Deputy Principal or next most senior staff member.

**Garda Liaison (M. Mullooly)**

* Liaises with the Gardaí
* Ensures that information about deaths or other developments is checked out for accuracy before being shared.

**Staff Liaison (M. Burke/B. Murray/E. Holden/R. Doyle)-Members of SEN Team**

* 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
* Keeps staff updated as the day progresses
* Is alert to vulnerable staff members and makes contact with them individually
* Advises them of the availability of Carecall and gives them the contact number.

**Student Liaison (Class Teacher)**

* Alerts other staff to vulnerable students (appropriately)
* Liaises with other team members to keep them up-dated with information and progress.
* Provides materials for students
* Keeps records of students seen by external agency staff
* Looks after setting up and supervision of ‘quiet’ room where agreed

**Community/Agency Liaison (A. Walsh)**

* Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of
  + Key parents, such as members of the Parents Council

- 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
* Co –ordinates the involvement of these agencies
* Reminds agency staff to wear name badges
* Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies

**Parent Liaison (Class Teacher)**

* Visits the bereaved family with the team leader
* Arranges parents meetings, if held
* May facilitate such meetings, and manage ‘question and answers’
* Ensures that sample letters are typed up, on the school’s system and ready for adaptation
* Sets up room for meetings with parents
* Maintains a record of parents seen
* Meets with individual parents
* Provides appropriate materials for parents

**Media Liaison (Principal)**

* 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 relevant teacher unions etc.
* Will draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews (as agreed by school management)

**Administrator (Pam Cooney, Secretary)**

* Maintenance of up to date telephone numbers of
  + Parents or Guardians
  + Teachers
  + Emergency services
* Takes telephone calls and notes those that need to be responded to
* Prepares and sends out letters, emails and faxes
* Photocopies materials needed
* Maintains records

**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, material used etc.

The secretary (Pam Cooney) will have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters, photocopying materials etc.

**Letter to Parents**

The principal will prepare a brief, written statement to include:

* The sympathy of the school community for the affected/bereaved family
* Positive information or comments about the deceased/injured persons(s)
* The facts of the incident
* What has been done
* What is going to be done

**Confidentiality and Good Name Considerations**

The management and staff of Ballyadams National School have 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 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’ and ‘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,

* The staff room will be the main room used to meet the staff
* The Learning Support room (s) for meeting students
* The office for parents
* The Learning Support room for individual sessions with students
* The Office for other visitors

**Consultation and Communications regarding the Plan**

Staff members were consulted in the preparation of this policy and plan. Parents’ representatives were also consulted and asked for their comments.

Our school’s final policy and plan in relation to responding to critical incidents has been presented to all staff including a sheet outlining the persons responsible for different duties. This document is in each teacher’s Staff Information Folder.

All new and temporary staff will be informed of the details of the plan by the principal.

**Timeframe for Review**

This plan will be updated every two years. The next review is due in September 2019.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_