Glenasmole National School

CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY

Glenasmole NS aims to protect the well being of its students by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. (See our mission statement) Our school has taken a number of measures to create a coping, supportive and caring ethos. 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.

This policy was formulated at a School Development Planning session on 10/10/07. Staff members present: Mary McColgan (Acting Principal), Mary Winters, Catherine Mulleady Support: Fiona Dunne SDPS

Reviewed January 2022 at a staff meeting

Introduction

The Critical Incident Management Plan for Glenasmole NS was devised ;
  a. as a result of a need to have a coherent response procedure in place in the event of a critical incident
  b. to make all staff aware of the outlined response procedure in the event of a critical incident.

What is a Critical Incident?
Glenasmole 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."[1]

Critical incidents may involve one or more pupils, staff, the school, or our local community. Such crises may include

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[1] Source: Responding to Critical Incidents in Schools – National Educational Psychological Services NEPS.

- *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*
- *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*

Aim

Recognising that the key to managing critical incidents is planning, Glenasmole 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 and staff will be limited.

Creation of a coping supportive and caring ethos in the school

We 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:

(See Health & Safety statement)
- We have an evacuation plan formulated and this is posted at the door of each room
- Regular fire drills occur – generally twice a term during the school year
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
- We have an Arrivals and Departures policy which outlines arrangements for supervision outside school hours.
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- We have a Code of Behaviour which outlines acceptable behaviour in the school building and playground
- We have a Supervision policy for pre-opening, break, lunch and home times
- We have an Administration of Medicines policy outlining medication that children can self administer if necessary e.g. inhalers and emergency medication that staff can administer eg Jext/Epipen, inhalers.

Psychological safety

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

- We have an anti-bullying policy in place
- 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, decision making, and alcohol and drug prevention.
- Staff are informed of difficulties affecting individual students and are aware and vigilant to their needs.
- Staff have access to books and resources on difficulties affecting the primary school child.
- The school has developed links with outside agencies, which may be contacted in the event of an emergency and for onward referral of students.

The Critical Incident Management Team will convene as an immediate priority in the aftermath of a Critical Incident occurring in order to prioritise and organise tasks in hand. While undertaking their duties, the team shall maintain the normal routine of school as far as possible for classes not immediately affected by the incident.

<u>Administrative Tasks</u>
- ➤ Maintenance of up to date lists of contact numbers of
  - Parents or guardians
  - Teachers
  - Emergency support services

- ➤ Telephone calls need to be responded to, letters sent and materials photocopied.

Record Keeping
In the event of an incident each member of the team will keep detailed records of phone calls made and received, letters sent and received, meetings held, persons met, interventions used, material used etc. The school secretary will have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters, photocopying materials, etc.

Letter to Parents
The critical incident team 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 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 pupils do so also. [For instance, the term 'suicide' will not be used without the consent of the family involved or until it has been established categorically that the person's death was a result of suicide. The phrases 'tragic death' or 'sudden death' may be used instead.]

Critical Incident Room
In the event of a critical incident, the staff room will be the main room used to meet the staff, students, parents and visitors involved.

Resource Documents

'Responding to Critical Incidents – Advice and Information Pack for Schools
(National Educational Psychological Service)

'When Tragedy Strikes', Guidelines for Effective Critical Incident Management in Schools
(INTO)

Critical Incident Management Team

Glenasmole NS has set up a Critical Incident Management Team in line with best practice[2] and will maintain this team in future. The members of the 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. Each member of the team has a Ready-to-Go Pack with relevant materials to be used in the event of an incident.

Members – the Principal, Deputy Principal Assistant Principal and Chairperson of the Board of Management.

The roles of the team have been identified as follows and are assigned at an initial meeting following any incident. (See Appendix A)

Team Leader
Staff Liaison
Student Liaison
Parent Liaison
Community Liaison
Media Liaison

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[2] A critical incident team "is a group of individuals from the staff of the school who know the community, the students and each other well enough to make the necessary decisions called for when an incident occurs" (Mary Schoenfeldt).

Development and communication of this policy and plan

All staff were consulted and their views canvassed in the preparation of the draft plan. Parent representatives were also consulted and asked for their comments. Our school's final policy and procedures in relation to responding to critical incidents has been presented to all staff. Each member of the critical incident team has a personal copy.

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

Signed: ..._Breeda Doyle_..................
  For and behalf of Board of Management

Date: Ratified ...27/4/2022...

Appendix A

In the event of a critical incident the responsibilities of each role-holder will be as follows.

Team Leader

➢ Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting.
➢ Coordinates the tasks of the team.
➢ Liaises with the Board of Management and Department of Education and Science.
➢ Liaises with the bereaved family.

Staff Liaison

➢ Leads meetings to brief staff on the facts as known, gives staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and outlines the routine for the day.
➢ Advises staff on the identification of vulnerable students.
➢ Is alert to vulnerable staff members and makes contact with them individually.
➢ Provides materials to staff from the Ready to Go Pack (Appendices and the Responding to Critical Incidents Guidelines and Resources for School Doc).

Student Liaison

➢ Liaises with other team members to keep them updated with information and progress.
➢ Alerts staff to vulnerable students.
➢ Provide materials for students from the Ready-to-Go-Pack (Appendices and the Responding to Critical Incidents Guidelines and Resources for School Doc).

Community Liaison

➢ Liaises with agencies in the community for support and onward referral.
➢ Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies.
➢ Coordinates the involvement of these agencies .
➢ Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of
    o Key parents, such as members of the parents council
    o Emergency support services and other external contacts and resources.

Parent Liaison

➢ Facilitates 'questions and answers' meetings.
➢ Meets with individual parents.
➢ Provides materials for parents from the Ready go Go Pack (Appendices and the Responding to Critical Incidents Guidelines and Resources for School Doc).
➢ Visits the bereaved family with the team leader.

Media Liaison

➢ In preparing for the role, s/he will consider issues that may arise during an incident 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 Communications Section in the DES.

Roles Assigned 2022/2023