

CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY

Drawn up in 2008. Reviewed 2012 and amended March 2016 and June 2018, reviewed and amended May 2020. Ratified by BOM on 24/06/2020

CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY

RATIONALE

Over the past few years there has been an increase in the number of critical incidents experienced by schools. In times of tragedy, everyone needs support. This includes pupils, families, staff members, indeed the whole school community. Incidents such as accidental deaths and deaths due to violence, deaths due to illness of a family member, suicide or suspected suicide are extremely traumatic and need to be dealt with and responded to in a sensitive and timely manner.

The key to managing a critical incident effectively is planning. Having a plan enables the school community to react quickly to maintain a sense of control. It also ensures that normality returns as soon as possible and that possible negative effect on students and staff are limited. With this intention in mind, members of the school community of Harold's Cross National School have drawn up the following plan, taking cognizance of guidelines laid down in "*Responding to Critical Incidents*", "*Children First Guidelines*" and "*When Tragedy Strikes*" and "*Weaving Well Being*" manuals.

OBJECTIVES

- To preserve and develop a coping, supportive and caring ethos in the school in a proactive manner.
- To provide direction, advice and information to management and staff for dealing with critical incidents.
- To promote the physical/psychological mental health of all by creating effective care systems.
- To prepare emergency plans which can be mobilised in the event of a critical incident enabling staff to react quickly and effectively

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DEFINITION OF A CRITICAL INCIDENT

A critical incident is any incident or sequence of events which overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of the school and disrupts its usual running and which has a severe immediate impact and possible long term effect on the individuals/groups involved.

Examples of critical incidents include:

- Death of a member of the school community, i.e. child, parent, staff member.
- Major illness.
- Major epidemic e.g. Covid-19, resulting in school closure and the mental effect it can have on pupil/parental and staff wellbeing.
- Disappearance of a child from home or school.
- Unauthorised removal of a child from home or school.
- Accident involving child, parent, staff member on or off the school premises.
- Suicide/attempted suicide of a member of the school community.
- Sexual, physical or psychological abuse.
- Violent attack on a member of the school community.
- Criminal intent.
- Serious damage to school through fire, flood or vandalism.

AIMS

The aims of the Critical Incident Policy is to help school management and staff to react quickly and effectively in the event of a critical incident occurring. It will enable us to maintain a sense of control and ensure that appropriate support is afforded to pupils and staff and the wider school community.

To ensure that the school's plan is effective and that we return to normality as soon as possible, systems have been put in place to help build resilience in both staff and students thus preparing

them to cope with possible future critical events. These measures address both the physical and psychological safety of the school community and the mental wellbeing of staff/pupils and parents.

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PHYSICAL SAFETY

- Regular fire drills are carried out.
- Fire Exits and extinguishers are checked regularly.
- Training is given to staff in the use of fire extinguishers.
- School gates/doors are kept locked or operate on an intercom system.
- Rules are in place for personal safety in the playground and while moving through the school.
- Staff to follow clearly defined guidelines for dismissal and assembly of pupils.
- A safety plan has been drawn up and is regularly reviewed.
- First Aid training for Staff.
- Social distancing measures in place during exceptional circumstances such as that of an epidemic e.g. see Covid-19-epidemic guidelines policy.

PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

- Use is made by all staff of the following programmes - *Weaving Well-being, Stay Safe, Anti-Bullying, Walk Tall, RSE, SPHE* to enhance a sense of safety and security to provide opportunities for reflection and discussion and to build confidence and self-esteem.
- Areas such as communication skills, anger management, problem solving, bullying, seeking help, making choices are addressed in programmes such as *Weaving Well-Being, Walk Tall, Stay Safe, RSE, Circle Time and SALT Programme*.
- A Care Team has been established to identify, monitor and support pupils at risk socially, emotionally and behaviourally.

- The “*Rainbows Programme*” is provided to pupils who have suffered bereavement through death of a loved one, separation of parents or loss of someone close to them. It is provided 2 -3 times a year and focuses on the different age groups - junior, middle and senior classes.
- Child Protection Guidelines have been drawn up and each teacher supplied with a copy.
- In-house professional development for staff has been provided in areas such as *Weaving Well-being, Walk Tall, Stay Safe and Circle Time*.
- Books and resources on difficulties affecting children are available. Key members of the Critical Team have attended courses on *Weaving Well-being Walk Tall and Child Protection*.
- The school has developed links with the following agencies:
 - (i) Enable Ireland, Tallaght, Dublin 24
 - (ii) Child Guidance Clinic (St. James’s Hospital), James’s Street, Dublin 8
 - (iii) Lucena Clinic, Orwell Road, Rathgar, Dublin 6
 - (iv) Child, Family Centre, Lucan, Co. Dublin
 - (v) Barnardos, Christchurch Square, Dublin 8
 - (vi) Rainbows, Loreto Centre, Crumlin Road, Dublin 12
 - (vii) NEWB, 16-22, Green Street, Dublin 7
 - (vii) Health Services - various
 - (ix) Community Garda, Dublin 6 and 12
 - (x) Drugs Task Force, Crumlin, Dublin 12
- The school has a clear policy on bullying and deals with bullying in accordance with these guidelines.
- Staff are informed about how to access support for themselves.

In the event of a lock down (due to an epidemic like Covid 19), Management should be kept informed and should adhere to recommendations from the Department of Education and from the INTO in relation to prioritising Staff, Parents and Pupil well being. A policy will be drawn up to deal with the critical incidents arising from such epidemics.

CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY

THE CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM OF HAROLD'S CROSS NS

Leadership Role:	Ms. Bernadette Kehoe, Principal Ms. Breeda Boland (Mr. Mark Glynn), Deputy Principal
Pupil Liaison Role:	Maria McGeough
Home School Community Liaison Co-ordinator:	Elizabeth Clarke.
Board of Management Representative Chaplaincy Role:	Fr.Alex Conlan
Parents' Association Representative :	Jessica Farnan

ROLE OF TEAM MEMBERS

Team Leader - Principal (In her absence Deputy Principal)

- Alerts the team members of the crisis and convenes a meeting.
- Co-ordinates the tasks of the team.
- Liaises with the Board of Management (BOM), Department of Education and Science (DES), National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) etc.
- Liaises with the family/individuals concerned.
- Liaise with Gardai verifying facts and developments.
- Liaise with the media - response to incidents, statements, interviews.
- Decides how news will be communicated to different groups (staff, pupils, outside school).
- Ensures provision of ongoing support to staff and students.
- Facilitates any appropriate memorial event.
- Reviews Plan.

Pupil Liaison Role

- Depending on the nature of the incident the Pupil Liaison person, in consultation with the Principal and Deputy Principal will decide what information is to be disclosed to the pupils. Clear facts will be given to those classes who are mature enough to assimilate information.
- The students will be informed on a class by class basis where necessary.
- The level of support and back up available to students will be made known to them.
- The school's routine for the day will be explained to pupils.
- Those students whom it is felt would be particularly affected by an event will be given pastoral and emotional support by members of the Care Team. Designated teachers will be notified by the Student Liaison Person. This list is amended on an annual basis (September) and reviewed throughout the year.
- Inform staff of which students may be particularly affected or those who may need psychological support - brothers, sisters, friends.
- A record to be kept of all students seen by staff and agencies external to the school.
- It may be a very vulnerable time for pupils following a funeral of a pupil, a member of a pupil's immediate family or staff member who has died suddenly. Pupils and parents should be encouraged to come back to school for support - tea and coffee to be provided by members of the PTA.
- Parents to be advised to be particularly alert to their children's whereabouts over the following days. They might encourage their children to gather in each other's homes as the safety of all children is very important at this time.

Home School Community Liaison Co-ordinator Role

- The Home School Community Liaison Co-ordinator (HSCL) if available will attend the initial meeting of the Core Team.
- In the event of a child requiring psychological support the HSCL person will inform the parent(s)/guardian(s) and obtain their signature.
- If the parent(s)/guardian(s) were unavailable and the child absolutely requires psychological support, then the HSCL should note all her efforts to make contact and continue until actual contact is made.

- The HSCL will maintain up to date lists of contact numbers of:
 - (i) Key parent(s)/guardian(s).
 - (ii) Emergency support services and other external contacts and resources.
 - (iii) Liaise with agencies in the community for support and onward referral.
 - (iv) Be alert to the need to check credentials of individuals offering support.
 - (v) Co-ordinate the involvement of these agencies.
 - (vi) Remind agency staff to wear name badges.
 - (vii) Up date the principal and team members on the involvement of external agencies.

Chaplaincy Role

- Visit home, if appropriate.
- Assist with prayer services if appropriate
- Make contact with local clergy.
- Be available as personal spiritual support.

Drawn up in 2008. Reviewed 2012 and amended March 2016 and June 2018. Reviewed and amended by staff in May 2020

Ratified by the BOM on 24/06/2020

ACTION PLAN FOR CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM AT HAROLD'S CROSS NATIONAL SCHOOL

INITIAL ASSESSMENT OF THE INCIDENT - TEAM LEADERS

In the event of a critical incident occurring within the school community, the Principal and Deputy Principal will assess and clarify the level of response necessary. This in no way diminishes the seriousness of any particular event but rather will assist in deciding on appropriate interventions and supports needed. Obviously each incident will be assessed in the light of its own circumstances and measures implemented accordingly.

Depending on the outcome of the evaluation a range of actions/procedures will be taken-

- As much factual, accurate information as possible will be put together.
- A meeting of the Core Team (Principal, Deputy Principal Pupil Liaison and HSCL) members will be convened and tasks assigned.
- The Department to be contacted regarding guidelines to be put in place in exceptional circumstances e.g. pandemic
- The school is to draw up guidelines, after consulting the department, to adhere to when dealing with exceptional circumstances such as an epidemic e.g. Covid 19
- The whole staff will be informed where possible as a group and if not, individually.
- Contact will be made with the family and suggestions will be offered as to how the school can provide support. Approval will be sought from the family/individual as to what they want to be made known.
- The Principal will be aware of any particular student who may be particularly distressed for whatever reasons and support will be provided.
- If necessary agencies may be contacted if outside support is required (Deputy Principal).
- Normal school routines will be maintained as far as is possible.

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INITIAL MEETING OF CORE TEAM OF HAROLD'S CROSS NATIONAL SCHOOL

- Details of the event to be shared.
- Facts for disclosure to be agreed on - they must be clear, age appropriate and consistent.
- It will be decided how best to break the news.
- If agencies need to be contacted, these will be decided on.
- Procedures will be planned for the day maintaining normal school routine when at all possible thus providing structure and a sense of safety/security for vulnerable/affected individuals/groups.
- Normal procedures will be put in place by staff to deal with exceptional circumstances such as that of an epidemic e.g. Covid-19-social distancing guidelines.
- The text for a letter to parents will be agreed upon.
- How best to deal with the media will be discussed and a statement prepared.
- Rooms which may need to be used i.e. for family, staff pupils, media, outside agencies etc, will be decided on.
- Pupils requiring psychological support to be identified and parents informed and the consent form signed.
- Where parent(s)/guardian(s) are not available to sign the form(s), verbal consent should be obtained. If a parent/guardian is not contactable, the Principal, in consultation with the Psychologist should decide what is in the best interests of the child. If the student is seen without consent parents must be contacted as soon as possible.

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<i>CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM</i>			
<i>Role</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Telephone Number(s)</i>	
Team Leader Team Leader in absence of Principal	Bernadette Kehoe Breeda Boland/Mark Glynn		087 238 0882 086 360 2241 087 933 5192
Garda Liaison	Bernadette Kehoe Breeda Boland/Mark Glynn		087 232 0882 086 360 2241 087 933 5192
Staff Liaison	Bernadette Kehoe Breeda Boland/Mark Glynn		087 232 0882 087 996 2152 087 933 5192
Pupil Liaison	Maria McGeough/Care Team		
Parent Liaison	HSCL-Elizabeth Clarke		01 4922321
Community Liaison	HSCL-Elizabeth Clarke		01 4922321
Media Liaison	Bernadette Kehoe Breeda Boland/Mark Glynn		087 238 0882 087 996 2152 087 933 5192
Administrator			01 4922321

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<i>SHORT TERM ACTIONS - DAY 1</i>	
<i>Task</i>	<i>Name</i>
Gather accurate information	Bernadette Kehoe (Breeda Boland/Mark Glynn)
Who, what when, where?	Bernadette Kehoe (Mark Glynn/Breeda Boland)
Convene a CIMT meeting - specify time and place clearly	Bernadette Kehoe (Mark Glynn/Breeda Boland)
Contact external agencies	Bernadette Kehoe (Mark Glynn/Breeda Boland), Elizabeth Clarke
Arrange supervision for pupils	Bernadette Kehoe (Mark Glynn/Breeda Boland)
Hold staff meeting	All Staff
Agree a schedule for the day	Bernadette Kehoe (Mark Glynn/Breeda Boland), Maria McGeough
Inform students - (close friends and students with learning difficulties may need to be told separately)	Bernadette Kehoe, Maria McGrouh Care Team members
Compile a list of vulnerable students	Bernadette Kehoe, (Mark Glynn/Breeda Boland), Care Team members, Elizabeth clarke
Contact/visit the bereaved family	Bernadette Kehoe (Mark Glynn/Breeda Boland), Fr. Alex Conlan
Prepare and agree media statement and deal with media	Bernadette Kehoe (Mark Glynn/Breeda Boland)

Inform Parents	Bernadette Kehoe (Mark Glynn/Breeda Boland)
Hold end of day staff briefing	Bernadette Kehoe (Mark Glynn/Breeda Boland)
<i>Medium Term Actions - (DAY 2 and following days)</i>	
<i>Task</i>	<i>Name</i>
Convene a CIMT meeting to review the events of day 1	Bernadette Kehoe (Mark Glynn/Breeda Boland)
Meet external agencies	Bernadette Kehoe (Mark Glynn/Breeda Boland) Elizabeth Clarke
Meet whole staff	Bernadette Kehoe (Mark Glynn/Breeda Boland)
Arrange support for students, staff, parents	Bernadette Kehoe (Mark Glynn/Breeda Boland), Maria McGeough, Fr. Alex Conlan, Elizabeth Clarke
Visit the injured	Bernadette Kehoe (Breeda Boland), Fr. Alex Conlan
Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements	Bernadette Kehoe Mark Glynn/Breeda Boland), Father Alex, Elizabeth Clarke
Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service with family	Bernadette Kehoe (Mark Glynn/Breeda Boland), Family
Make decisions about school closure	Board of Management

<i>Follow up - beyond 72 hours</i>	
<i>Task</i>	<i>Name</i>
Monitor students for signs of continuing distress	Class Teachers

Liaise with agencies regarding referrals	Bernadette Kehoe Mark Glynn/(Breeda Boland), Elizabeth Clarke
Plan for return of bereaved student(s)	Bernadette Kehoe (Mark Glynn/Breeda Boland)
Plan for giving of 'memory box' to bereaved family	Bernadette Kehoe (Mark Glynn/Breeda Boland),
Decide on memorials and anniversaries	BOM/Staff, parents and pupils
Review response to incident and amend Plan	Staff/BOM

<i>Procedures for dealing with the sudden death of a pupil</i>	
<i>Task</i>	<i>Name</i>
Confirm the information received relating to the death is correct	Bernadette Kehoe (Mark Glynn/Breeda Boland)
Inform management and staff of a pupil's death	Bernadette Kehoe (Mark Glynn/Breeda Boland)
Contact relevant professional bodies i.e. NEPS, HSE, Social Worker	Bernadette Kehoe (Mark Glynn/Breeda Boland), Elizabeth Clarke
Contact Gardai	Bernadette Kehoe (Mark Glynn/Breeda Boland)
Meet with Critical Incident Team. Team will be involved with the following tasks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting family - Principal and HSCL . Counsellor if available. • Meeting pupils - Ms. McGeough Ms. Kehoe (Mark Glynn,Breeda Boland) • Meeting staff - Bernadette Kehoe, Mark Glynn/Breeda Boland • Meeting members of the wider community - Bernadette Kehoe, Mark Glynn/Breeda Boland,Elizabeth Clarke • Consult with principals of other schools - Bernadette Kehoe • Contact all students not at school - Ms. McGough • Contacting parents - HSCL 	Bernadette Kehoe (Mark Glynn/Breeda Boland), Teachers, HSCL ,
Take calls from concerned parents, troubled pupils, staff members	Bernadette Kehoe (Mark Glynn/Breeda Boland)
Local Press - inform press you will make statement later when we have all the facts	Bernadette Kehoe

	(Mark Glynn/Breeda Boland)
<p>Visit family of the deceased in order to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sympathise and empathise with family. • Ascertain the circumstances surrounding the death. • Enquire what assistance, if any, was expected from the school community. This could include the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o a guard of honour o photographs o art or other work projects the pupil had done o staff and friends to visit home • Important to note that they may want any involvement. 	Bernadette Kehoe (Mark Glynn/Breeda Boland), Elizabeth Clarke
Staff Meeting	Bernadette Kehoe (Mark Glynn/Breeda Boland)
<p>Meeting involving staff - possibly, parents, PTA members, psychologist.</p> <p>Aim of the meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform. • Identify anyone who was particularly upset/ whose wellbeing is affected • Help pupils cope with the feelings associated with death. <p>Points that could be discussed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empathise and acknowledge (needless) tragic death - Bernadette Kehoe (Mark Glynn/Breeda Boland). The role of psychologist - Psychologist. • 	Bernadette Kehoe (Mark Glynn/Breeda Boland), HSCL PTA members
Special attention should be given to the deceased pupil's class. Staff who are comfortable doing so and who know the pupil well should check how things are with the students and give them time to listen, console, pray(if appropriate) write their sentiments or whatever helps the situation.	All Staff
A room should be made available for anyone who needs the time and space to sit alone.	Bernadette Kehoe (Mark Glynn/Breeda Boland)
Psychologist / Counsellor should be available throughout the day to meet with students, staff and parents. They will also be required in the following weeks to help and advise in relation to any at risk students or those finding it difficult to cope.	Bernadette Kehoe (Mark Glynn/Breeda Boland)
Pupils advised that Principal, Staff, Counsellor available at any time if they wish to speak about any concerns that they may have.	Bernadette Kehoe (Mark Glynn/Breeda Boland), Maria McGeough
<p>One month later:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Critical Incident Team will review events occurring since previous meeting. 2. Review status of at risk students. 	Bernadette Kehoe (Mark Glynn/Breeda Boland),

3. Review and evaluate entire crisis plan. 4. Plan additional meetings as necessary, two months later: 1. Possibly hold a liturgy for deceased. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite parents of deceased. • Involve his/her class and close friends in the preparation and planning of the Liturgy. 2. Ongoing help available to any student who needs it. 3. Possibly plant a tree in school grounds as a memorial.	Care Team, Maria McGeough
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REVIEW AND EVALUATION

The Critical Incident Policy will be reviewed in respect of each individual incident and amendments made as necessary.

COMMUNICATION

All members of staff will be furnished with a copy and parents will be made aware that copies of the Policy are available in the Office.

REFLECTION

The Policy was reviewed and updated in February 2016 by staff and members of the BOM. Changes were ratified on 7th March, 2016. Reviewed and Amended May 2020.

Ratified by the BOM on 24th June 2020

<i>Emergency Contact List</i>	
<i>Agency</i>	<i>Contact Numbers</i>
<i>Garda</i> Terenure Garda Station Sundrive Road, Garda Station Confidential Line (Freefone)	999, 112 01 666 6400 01 666 6600 1800 666 111
<i>Hospital(s)</i> Our Lady's Children's Hospital, Crumlin, Dublin 12 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency Department • Patient Support Unit • Social Work Department St. James's Hospital (NCH), Tallaght, Dublin 24 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency Department • Social Work Department Reception -Noeleen Denner/Patricia Conway James's Hospital, James's Street, Dublin 8 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency Department • Social Work Department 	01 409 6100 01 409 6326 01 409 6715 01 409 6356 01 414 2000 Ring switchboard on main line above for Emergency Dept 014142462 01 410 3000 01 416 2774 01 4162220
<i>Fire Brigade</i> Dublin Fire Brigade, Townsend St HQ Dublin Fire Brigade, Chief Fire Officer - Dennis Keeley	999, 112 01 2224000
<i>Local GPS</i> Dr. Costello, 35 Sundrive Road, Dublin 12 Dr. King, 172 Sundrive Road, Dublin 12 Dr. O'Connell, 351 Crumlin Road, Dublin 12 Dr. Synnott, 144 Old County Road, Dublin 12 Dr. Wiehe, 36 Sundrive Road, Dublin 12	01 492 5947 01 453 4671 01 455 6858 01 455 4684 01 492 5947
<i>HSE/Community Care Team(s) and Family Centres</i> Enable Ireland, Tallaght, Dublin 24 <i>HSE</i> Old County Road, Crumlin, Dublin 12 Terenure, Dublin 6W Child and Family Centre, St. James's Hospital, Dublin 8 <i>Lucena Clinic</i> , Orwell Road, Dublin 6 <i>School Inspector</i>	01 8727155/462 6304 017957300 014904648 01 4543710 014923596/01 463 5500

<i>Emergency Contact List - Continued</i>	
<i>Agency</i>	<i>Contact Number</i>
NEPS - Head Office, 24-27 North Frederick Street, Dublin 1 NEPS South Western Area, 50 Tower Road, Clondalkin, Dublin 22 Psychologist - Arthur O' Reilly	01 889 2700 01 461 4824
DES - Marlborough Street, Dublin 1 <i>Tusla</i> Address: Floors 2-5, Brunel Building,, Heuston South Quarter, St John's Rd W, Kilmainham, Dublin	01 889 6400 (01) 771 8500
INTO , 36 Parnell Square, Dublin 1	01 804 7700 Locall: 1850 708 708
Parish Priest/Clergy Fr. Alex Conlan, PP Our Lady of the Rosary, Harold's Cross Road, Dublin 6W	01 496 5055
Employee Assistance Service	1899 411 957

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