CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY

St. Brigid's National School, Ballysax aims to protect the wellbeing of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. The Board of Management, through the principal Ms. Esther Reddy, has drawn up a Critical Incident Management Plan (CIMP) as one element of the school's policies and plans.

Review and Research
Resource documents available to schools on www.education.ie and www.nosp.ie were used for research, including:

Responding to Critical Incidents Guidelines and Resources for Schools (NEPS 2016).

Other useful documents found on websites listed in Appendix A

What is a 'critical incident'?

The staff and management of St. Brigids NS, Ballysax recognise a critical incident to be "an accident 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. Examples of Critical Incidents can include:

- The death of a member of the school community through accident, violence, suicide or suspected suicide or other unexpected death.
- An intrusion into the school.
- An accident involving members of the school community.
- A major accident/tragedy in the wider community.
- Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism, etc.
- A major accident/tragedy in the wider community.

Aim
The aim of the CIMP is to help school management and staff to react quickly and effectively in the event of an incident, to enable us to maintain a sense of control and to ensure that appropriate support is offered to students and staff. Having a good plan should also help ensure that the impact of students and staff will be limited. It should enable us to effect a return to normality as soon as possible.

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.

Physical safety
In the area of physical safety, the school has put in place the following:

- Evacuation plan formulated
- Regular fire drills occur
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
- Pre-opening supervision in the school yard
- Front gate closed during school hours
- External school doors locked during class time
- Coded entry on Front Door
- All other exit doors are closed after entry/exit.
- Rules of the playground - See Appendix B, Safety procedures on yard.
- General school rules under the school's behaviour policy to ensure all students have a safe environment.

Psychological safety
The management and staff of St. Brigid's NS, Ballysax 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.

- Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is integrated into the work of the school by addressing it in the curriculum. 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 are addressed in the SPHE curriculum. Promotion of mental health is an integral part of this provision.
- Staff have access to training for the role in SPHE.
- Staff are familiar with the Child Protection Procedures and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures. The Designated Liaison Person (DLP) is Ms. Esther Reddy and the Deputy DLP is Ms. Maria Jones.
- Books and resources on difficulties affecting the primary school students are available (ie books on grief and loss, worrying etc)
- Information is provided on mental health in general.
- The school has developed links with a range of external agencies - NEPS, HSE and TÚSLA.
- Inputs to students by external providers are carefully considered in the light of criteria about students safety, the appropriateness of the content, and the expertise of the providers.
- The school has a clear anti-bullying policy and deals with incidents of bullying in accordance with this policy.
- There is a care system in place in the school using the "Continuum of Support" approach which is outlined in the NEPS documents published in 2007 for primary schools.
- Students who are identified as being at risk are supported by a trusted member of staff, concerns are explored and the appropriate level of assistance and support is provided.

Parents/guardians are informed, and where appropriate, a referral is made to an appropriate agency.

- Staff are informed about how to access support for themselves. The employee Assistance Programme provided by Inspire Workplaces provides support for staff.

Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)

A CIMT has been established in line with best practice. The in-school management and the school secretary are members of the CIMT. The members of the team will meet annually to review and update the policy and plan. Each member of the team has a dedicated critical incident folder. This contains a copy of the policy and plan and materials particular to their role, to be used in the event of an incident.

Team Leader:	Ms. Esther Reddy, Principal
Garda Liaison and Community Liaison:	Ms. Aelish Collins, Deputy Principal
Staff Liaison:	Ms. Monica Donohoe, Assistant Principal
Student Liaison and Parent/Guardian Liaison:	Ms. Maria Jones, Assistant Principal
Media Liaison:	Ms. Esther Reddy, Principal and BOM
Administrator:	Mrs. Louise Fennelly, School Secretary

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

Team Leader: Ms. Esther Reddy, Principal

- Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting
- Coordinates the tasks of the team
- Liaises with the Board of Management, DES; NEPS
- Liaises with the bereaved family

In the absence of the team leader, Ms Aelish Collins will assume the role.

Garda Liaison and Community Liaison: Ms. Aelish Collins, Deputy Principal

- Liaises with the Gardaí.
- Ensures that information about deaths or other developments is checked out for accuracy before being shared.
- Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers
    - Key parents, such as members of the Parent Teacher Association
    - Emergency support services and other external contacts and resources.
- Liaises with agencies in the community for support and onward referral, ie NEPS.
- Is alert to the need to check credentials of individuals offering support
- Coordinates the involvement of these agencies
- Reminds agency staff to wear name badges
- Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies.

Staff Liaison: **Ms. Monica Donohoe, Assistant Principal**

- 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 (from their critical incident folder)
- 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 the Employee Assistance Service (EAS) and gives them the contact number

Student Liaison **Ms. Maria Jones, Assistant Principal**

- Alerts other staff to vulnerable students (appropriately)
- Provides material for students (from their critical incident folder)
- Maintains student contact record (R1)
- Looks after setting up and supervision of a 'quiet' room where agreed if necessary.

Parent/Guardian Liaison: **Ms. Maria Jones, Assistant Principal**

- Visits the bereaved family with the team leader
- Arrange meetings with parents /guardians if necessary
- Meets with individual parents/ guardians
- Provides appropriate materials for parents/ guardians (from their critical incident folder)
- Maintains a record of parents/ guardians seen
- Sets up room for meeting with parents/ guardians
- May facilitate such meetings, and manage 'questions and answers' sessions
- Manage the 'consent' issues in accordance with agreed school policy
- Ensures that sample letters are prepared and available on the school's IT system for adaptation

Media Liaison: **Ms. Esther Reddy, Principal and BOM**

- 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 relevant agencies, gardaí etc
- Will draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews (as agreed by school management).

Administrator: **Mrs. Louise Fennelly, School Secretary**

- Maintenance of up to date telephone numbers of
    - Parents/guardians
    - Teachers

    - Emergency Services
- Takes telephone calls and notes those that need a response
- Ensures that templates are available on the schools IT system and ready for adaptation
- Prepares and sends out letters, emails and texts
- Photocopies materials are 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, emails and texts sent and received, meetings held, persons met, interventions used, materials used etc. The school secretary, Mrs. Louise Fennelly will have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters, photocopying materials etc.

Confidentiality and good name considerations
The management and staff of St. Brigid's NS, Ballysax 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 confirmed information that death was due to suicide, and that the family involved consents to its use. The phrases 'tragic death' or '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
Staff Room / Main Hall will be the main room used to meet the staff
Classrooms or School Hall for meeting with students
School Hall/ Classroom 3 for parents
School Hall / Classroom 3 for media
SEN room / Classroom 3 for individual sessions with students
Principal's Office for other visitors

Communication regarding the plan
Our school's final policy and plan in relation to responding to critical incidents will be distributed to all staff via email and will be available on the staff G-Suite.
It will also be distributed to parents/guardians via email and on the school website
http://stbrigidsballysax.com/
Each member of the critical incident team has a personal copy of the plan.
All new and temporary staff will be informed of the details of the plan by Ms. Esther Reddy.
The plan will be updated annually in October.

CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEMPLATE FOR SCHOOL PLAN

CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM

Role	Name and Email Address	Telephone Number
Team Leader	Esther Reddy principal@stbrigidsballysax.com	087 945 0634
Garda Liaison	Aelish Collins resource1@stbrigidsballysax.com	087 134 7468
Staff Liaison	Monica Donohoe resource3@stbrigidsballysax.com	087 296 5050
Student Liaison	Maria Jones juniorinfants@stbrigidsballysax.com	087 755 3721
Parent/Guardian Liaison	Maria Jones juniorinfants@stbrigidsballysax.com	087 755 3721
Community Liaison	Aelish Collins resource1@stbrigidsballysax.com	087 134 7468
Media Liaison	Esther Reddy principal@stbrigidsballysax.com	087 945 0634
Administrator	Louise Fennelly office@stbrigidsballysax.com	087 214 7754

SHORT TERM ACTIONS - DAY 1

Task	Name
Gather accurate information	Esther Reddy, Aelish Collins and BOM
Who, what, when, where?	Esther Reddy, Aelish Collins and BOM
Convene a CIMT meeting - specify time and place	Esther Reddy
Contact external agencies	Aelish Collins
Arrange supervision for students	Maria Jones
Hold staff meeting	Monica Donohoe

Agree schedule for the day	All staff
Inform students - (close friends and students with learning difficulties may need to be told separately)	Maria Jones and Monica Donohoe
Compile a list of vulnerable students	Maria Jones and Monica Donohoe
Contact/visit the bereaved family	Esther Reddy, Maria Jones and Aelish Collins
Prepare and agree media statement and deal with the media	Esther Reddy and BOM
Inform parents/guardians	Maria Jones
Hold end of the day staff briefing	Monica Donohoe

MEDIUM TERM ACTIONS - (DAY 2 AND FOLLOWING DAYS)

Task	**Name**
Convene a CIMT meeting to review the events of day 1	Esther Reddy
Meet external agencies	Aelish Collins
Meet whole staff	CIMT
Arrange support for students, staff, parent/guardians	Maria Jones and Monica Donohoe
Visit the injured	Esther Reddy and Aelish Collins
Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements	Esther Reddy and Aelish Collins
Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service	CIMT
Make a decision about school closure	BOM

FOLLOW-UP BEYOND 72 HOURS

Task	Name
Monitor students for signs of continuing distress	Class Teachers
Liaise with agencies regarding referrals	Aelish Collins
Plan for return of bereaved student(s)	CIMT
Plan for giving of 'memory box' to bereaved family	CIMT
Decide on memorials and anniversaries	BOM/Staff, parents and students
Review response to incident and amend plan	Staff/BOM

EMERGENCY CONTACT LIST

AGENCY	NAME	CONTACT NUMBERS
GARDAÍ Community Garda	 Brian Carroll	045 - 440180 (Newbridge) 0858063579
HOSPITAL AMBULANCE	Naas County Hospital National Children's Hospital, Tallaght Midland Regional Hospital Portlaoise	045-849500 01-4142000 057-8621364 999
FIRE BRIGADE	Newbridge	045 - 454800
LOCAL GP	Dr. Gerard Caffrey	045-441633
HSE/Primary Care Team/Primary Care Centre/ CAHMS/Resource Officer for Suicide Prevention		045-880400 (Naas) 045-908500 (Kildare)
SCHOOL INSPECTOR	Ms. Margaret Dunning	Margaret_Dunning@education.gov.ie 087-6545100

NEPS PSYCHOLOGIST	Ms. Ailsa Seoighe	alisa_seoighe@education.gov.ie 087-455 3932
DES		090-6483600 (Athlone)
INTO		01-8047700
PARISH PRIEST	Fr. Barry Larkin	045441586
EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE SERVICE		1800 411 057

This Child Safeguarding Statement was reviewed and adopted by the Board of Management on_____

Signed: Elizabeth Smith Chairperson of Board of Management

Date: 14-11-22

Signed: Esther Reddy Principal/Secretary to Board of Management

Date: 14/11/2022.