

Donabate-Portrane



Educate Together

CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY AND PLAN

Donabate Portrane Educate Together N.S. aims to protect the well-being of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. As our mission statement declares

“Donabate Portrane Educate Together National School (DPETNS) is a child centred, co-educational, multi-denominational and democratic primary school under the patronage of Educate Together. We aim to provide a learning environment that encourages and promotes the holistic development of each and every child attending our school, allowing them to give of their best and do their best. We aspire to create an inclusive atmosphere which values each member of the school community for the contribution they make to school life. Children, parents and staff work in partnership based on mutual respect and best practise to make this vision a reality.”

This Critical Incident Management Plan (CIMP) has been drawn up with the approval of the Board of Management as one element of the school’s policies and plans.

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

Definition of Critical Incident

The staff and management of DPETNS 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 sudden death of a member of the school community through accident, violence, suicide or suspected suicide.
- An intrusion into the school.
- A road traffic accident involving members of the school community.
- An accident or tragedy in the wider community.
- Serious damage to the school building or grounds through fire, flood, vandalism etc.
- The disappearance of a member of the school community.
- A drowning incident involving a member of the school community.
- The sudden illness of a member of the school community.

- An attempted suicide involving a member of the school 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. Implementation of the plan should help ensure that the effects on students and staff will be limited. It should enable us to affect 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 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.

1. **Physical Safety.** The following are some examples of how the school seeks to promote and ensure physical safety
 - Evacuation plan formulated
 - Regular fire drills
 - Fire exits and fire extinguishers are regularly checked
 - Front gate locked during school hours
 - Supervision on yard prior to school opening.
 - Buzzer system to enter school during school hours
 - Building is alarmed
 - CCTV cameras
 - Implementation of the Health and Safety policy.
 - Health and safety officer appointed on BOM
 - Health and safety staff representative appointed
 - Staff participate in regular first aid training

2. **Psychological safety**
 - Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is integrated into the work of the school. It is addressed in the curriculum by dealing with issues such as grief and loss; communication skills; stress and anger management; resilience; conflict resolution; problem solving; help-seeking; bullying; decision making and prevention of drug and alcohol abuse.
 - Positive mental health plays an integral part in the school community, with the inclusion of mental health issues within SPHE and participation in Positive Mental Health Month.
 - Staff are familiar with the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures and details of how to proceed with suspicions and disclosures
 - Books and resources on difficulties affecting the primary student are available
 - The school has a clear policy on bullying and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy
 - There is a buddy system in place where older children act as buddies to younger children
 - Peer mediation is available to students. 6th class students are trained in this

- Rainbows (for children who have experienced loss through separation or death) is run once a year in the school and is offered to all classes
- The provision of staff training and resources are made available.
- The provision of support for staff members.
- Developed links with external agencies. (NEPS/ HSE/ Mater CAMHS/ Community Gardaí/ NEWB)

Critical Incident Management Team

A CIMT has been established in line with best practice. The members of the team are selected on a voluntary basis and will retain their roles for at least one school year. The members of the team will meet as required. The members of the team will also meet annually to review and update the policy. Each member of the team has a dedicated critical incident folder, which contains a copy of the policy and plan, and any materials deemed necessary or helpful to be used in the event of an incident.

Roles (see appendix 1 for names)

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; DES; NEPS
- Liaises with the bereaved family
- Liaises with the Gardaí
- Ensures that information about deaths or other developments is checked for accuracy before being shared

In the absence of the Team Leader the Staff Liaison rep will take the lead.

Staff Liaison:

- Leads briefing meetings for staff on the facts as known, gives staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions, outlines a routine for the day
- Advises staff on the procedures for identification of vulnerable children
- Provides materials for staff (e.g. from critical incident folder)
- Keeps staff updated as the day progresses
- Is alert to vulnerable members of staff and makes contact with them individually
- Advises them of the availability of the EAS and gives them the contact number.

Student Liaison:

- Alerts other staff to vulnerable students
- Provides materials for students (e.g. from their critical incident folder)
- Keeps records of students seen by external agency staff
- Looks after setting up and supervision of a “quiet” room if necessary
- Maintains student contact records.

Community/agency liaison:

- Maintains up-to-date lists of contact numbers of key parents e.g. 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 check the credentials of individuals offering support
- Coordinates the involvement of these agencies
- Reminds staff to wear name badges
- Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies

Parent Liaison:

- Visits the bereaved family with the team leader as necessary
- Arranges parent meetings, if necessary
- May facilitate such meetings, and manage “questions and answers” sessions
- Manages “consent” issues if they arise in accordance with agreed school policy
- Ensures sample letters are prepared and available on the school’s IT system.
- Sets up room for meetings with parents
- Maintains a record of parents seen
- Meets with individual parents
- Provides appropriate material for parents (e.g. from their critical incident folder)

Media Liaison:

- In advance of an incident, will consider issues that may arise and how they may 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:

- Maintenance of up-to-date telephone numbers of parents/guardians, staff and emergency services.
- Takes telephone calls and notes those that need to be responded to.
- Ensures that templates are on the school system and ready for adaptation.
- Prepares and sends out letters, emails and texts.
- Photocopies materials needed
- Maintains records

(Roles may be doubled up as deemed appropriate.)

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 school secretary/ies will have a key role in receiving and logging phone calls, sending letters, photocopying materials etc.

Confidentiality

The management and staff of DPETNS 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 consents to its use. 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 staffroom will be the main room used to meet the staff
- Classrooms for meetings with students
- Assembly hall/Area 9 for parents
- Assembly hall/Principals office for media
- Support room for individual sessions with students
- Assembly hall/Principals office for other visitors

Consultation and communication

All staff were consulted and their views taken into account in the preparation of this policy and plan. Students and parents representatives were also consulted and asked for their opinions.

Our school’s final policy and plan in relation to responding to critical incidents has been presented to all staff.

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 staff liaison.

The plan will be updated annually in September to reflect changes in staffing, school layout etc.

The plan will be reviewed every two years.

Appendix 1

Roles (2018/2019)

Team Leader: Maeve Corish

Staff Liaison: Susan Clarke

Student Liaison: Karen Coghlan

Parent Liaison:

Media Liaison:

Community Liaison:

Administrators: Lynda Drysdale/Angela McGettrick