



# LEIXLIP

Educate Together National School

Roll Number: 20526D

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## **Critical Incident Policy**

July 2020

## Introduction

Leixlip Educate Together N.S. aims to protect the wellbeing of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times.

Leixlip Educate Together National School (Leixlip ETNS) is a child-centered, coeducational, equality-based 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 achieve their full potential. We aspire to create an inclusive atmosphere which values each and every member of the school community.

Children, parents/guardians and staff work in partnership based on mutual respect and best practise to make this vision a reality.

## Critical Incident Plan

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 Leixlip ETNS recognise a critical incident to be:

“An incident or sequence of events that overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school”  
[NEPS, 2015]

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 accident or violence
- An intrusion into the school
- An accident involving members of the school community
- An accident or 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
- Serious illness or death of a member of the school community as a result of a global pandemic (Covid-19)

## 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. Following 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
- Buzzer system to enter school during school hours
- Building is alarmed
- 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.
- Staff are familiar with the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures and details of how to proceed with suspicions and disclosures and are aware of their responsibilities as Mandated Persons
- Age-appropriate 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
- As the school grows, a buddy system will be put in place where older children act as buddies to younger children
- Peer mediation will be available to students as we grow in the future.
- Staff are informed of courses or supports for themselves
- Staff will be trained in and engage in restorative practice

## 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 review the policy and plan as required. Each member of the team has a dedicated critical incident folder. This 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 Chairperson will take the lead until the school grows**

### Staff Liaison (the Team Leader will also assume this role until the school grows)

- 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

### Pupil 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

#### 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”
- Manages “consent” issues if they arise in accordance with agreed school policy
- 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, 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 faxes
- 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 will have a key role in receiving and logging phone calls, sending letters, photocopying materials etc.

### **Confidentiality**

The management and staff of Leixlip ETNS 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 pupils 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 • Staff room for parents
- Principal’s office for media
- Staffroom/office for individual sessions with students
- Staff Room/Principal’s office for other visitors

**In the event of a critical incident in relation to Covid-19 the above meetings will be held on-line using the school’s Zoom or other appropriate online meeting forum. Social distancing and hand hygiene will be expected during physical briefings.**

#### **Consultation and communication**

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

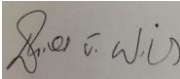
Our school’s final policy and plan in relation to responding to critical incidents has been presented to all staff.

Each member of the critical incident team has a personal copy of the plan.

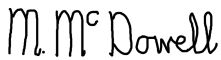
All new and temporary staff will be informed of the details of the plan by staff liaison.

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

The plan will be reviewed every two years.

Signed: 

(Chairperson BOM) Date: July 8<sup>th</sup> 2020

Signed: 

(Principal) Date July 8<sup>th</sup> 2020

## **Appendix 1 - Roles (2020/21)**

**Team Leader and Staff Liaison: Mary McDowell (Principal)**

**Pupil Liaison: Mary McDowell and Niamh Haughton**

**Parent Liaison: Orla Matthews**

**Media Liaison: Donie Wiley**

**Community Liaison: Lindsay Mahon**

**Administrator: Debbie Moriarty**