



**Deele College  
Raphoe**

**Critical Incident Policy**  
*(Updated 11<sup>th</sup> March 2020)*

*This Policy has been reviewed and approved by the Board of Management of Deele College at their meeting on Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> of March, 2020.*

**Proposer:**

**Seconder:**

**Chairperson of the Board of Management:**

**Principal:**

**Date of Approval:**



## Deele College Critical Incident Policy

*Based on Responding to Critical Incidents Resources for Schools.  
National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS).*

Deele College aims to protect the well-being of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. Our Mission Statement affirms that we are:

***“A Caring Learning Community, we promote mutual respect in a safe and happy School, where the fulfilment of each individual’s potential is out goal”.***

The Board of Management, through Mr. Joe Boyle, has drawn up a Critical Incident Management Plan (CIMP) 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 Critical Incident Management Plan (CIMP).

### **Review and Research**

The CIMT should consult resource documents available to schools on [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie) and [www.nosp.ie](http://www.nosp.ie), these include:

1. Responding to Critical Incidents Guidelines and Resources for Schools (NEPS 2016).
  2. Suicide Prevention in Schools: Best Practice Guidelines (IAS, National Suicide Review Group (2002).
  3. Suicide Prevention in the Community - A Practical Guide (HSE 2011).
  4. Well-Being in Post-Primary Schools Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention (DES, DOH, HSE 2013).
  5. Well-Being in Primary Schools - Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion (DES, DOH, HSE 2015).
- Other useful documents may be found on websites listed on pages 95 and 96 of the Responding to Critical Incidents - NEPS Guidelines and Resource Materials for Schools.



## What is a “Critical Incident”

The staff and management of Deele College 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. Make a list for your plan using examples as follows:

- 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.

## 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 effects on the 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 to 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

Include some specific examples of what the school is doing at this point. You might also refer to your Health & Safety policy

- Evacuation plan formulated
- Regular fire drills occur
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
- Pre-opening supervision in the school yard (possibly include details)
- Front gate locked during school hours
- School doors locked during class time
- *Rules of the playground – include details.*



## Psychological safety

The management and staff of (name of school) 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.

Include specific examples as appropriate.

Some suggestions follow:

- Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is integrated into the work of the school. 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 their role in SPHE
- Staff are familiar with the Child Protection Procedures and the name of the Designated Liaison Person
- Books and resources on difficulties affecting the primary/post primary school student are available
- Information is provided on mental health in general and such specific areas as signs and symptoms of depression and anxiety
- Staff are informed in the area of suicide awareness and some have attended specialist training such as ASIST provided by the HSE
- The school has developed links with a range of external agencies – please see Appendix 1 for a list these agencies
- Inputs to students by external providers are carefully considered in the light of criteria about student safety, the appropriateness of the content, and the expertise of the providers. See DES Circulars 0023/2010 (Post-Primary)
- 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 on 2007 for primary schools and 2010 for post primary schools. See also Student Support Teams in Post Primary Schools (2014). These documents are available on [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie)
- Students who are identified as being at risk are referred to the designated staff member (e.g. guidance counsellor or support teacher), 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 (a summary of this support is set out in R 23)
- Staff are informed about how to access support for themselves.



## Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)

A CIMT has been established in line with best practice. 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 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.

## Preparation of CIMP

**Roles:** *Schools need to make arrangements for assigning roles, taking account of such practical issues as school size and the number of staff available. Many schools will double up of roles. Schools might wish to consider including one or more members of the BOM on the team as well as members of the school's Student Support team.*

*The key roles which need to be covered are as follows:*

- Team Leader - Principal, Deputy Principal or Acting Principal on the day
- Garda Liaison - Principal, Deputy Principal or Acting Principal on the day
- Staff Liaison - - Principal, Deputy Principal or Acting Principal on the day or the HSCL Ms Patrice Gallagher
- Student Liaison - Guidance Counsellors – Ms Brady and Ms F Friel
- Parent / Guardian Liaison - HSCL Ms Patrice Gallagher and Guidance Counsellor G. Brady and Ms F Friel
- Community Liaison - HSCL Ms Patrice Gallagher
- Media Liaison - Donegal ETB
- Administrators - Ms A. Mulrine, Ms F Corry and Ms D Cannon.

Other members of the CIMT team maybe the relevant Year-head of the students involved, Ms Sinead Hegarty and Ms Fiona Creagh (Religion Department), Ms Tara Friel (SPHE Co-ordinator), Ms Carmel Mulligan (SEN Co-ordinator) and the SNAs of any students involved.

*Outlined below are some points on the key responsibilities of each role. A note on helpful qualities for each role can be found in the text box.*

### Team Leader

*A person who carries authority and can make decisions during a crisis (e.g. school closure, attendance at memorial services, etc.)*

- Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting
- Co-ordinates the tasks of the team
- Liaises with the Board of Management; DES; NEPS; SEC; ETB
- Liaises with the bereaved family.



### **Garda Liaison**

*(This may be seen as part of the team leader's role)*

- Liaises with the Gardaí
- Ensures that information about deaths or other developments is checked out for accuracy before being shared.

### **Staff Liaison**

*A staff member known and trusted by the staff*

- 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 Scheme (EAS) and gives them the contact number.

### **Student Liaison**

*A trusted and familiar figure to the students. A bigger school may need a number of such people*

- At post-primary level, may co-ordinate information from tutors and year heads about students they are concerned about
- Alerts other staff to vulnerable students (appropriately)
- Provides materials for students (from their critical incident folder)
- Maintains student contact records (R1)
- Looks after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room where agreed.

### **Community / Agency Liaison**

*Someone with good contacts with agencies and relevant individuals in the community*

- Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of
  - Key parents, such as 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 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.

### **Parent/Guardian Liaison**

*Someone known to parents. This person should be comfortable speaking before a large group and have skills to manage emotional reactions of individual or groups of parents*

- Visits the bereaved family with the team leader
- Arranges parent meetings, if held
- May facilitate such meetings, and manage 'questions and answers' sessions



- Manages the 'consent' issues in accordance with agreed school policy
- Ensures that sample letters are prepared and available on the school's IT system ready for adaptation
- Sets up room for meetings with parents
- Maintains a record of parents seen
- Meets with individual parents
- Provides appropriate materials for parents (from their critical incident folder)

### **Media Liaison**

- All incidents will be referred to the Donegal ETB for any media statements or interviews.
- 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 the SEC; the Donegal ETB and relevant teacher unions etc.
- Will provide the Donegal ETB with relevant information needed to draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews.

### **Administrator**

- Maintenance of up to date telephone numbers of
  1. Parents or guardians
  2. Teachers
  3. Emergency services
- Takes telephone calls and notes those that need a response
- Ensures that templates are available on the school's IT system and ready for adaptation
- Prepares and sends out letters, emails and texts
- Photocopies materials as 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, material used etc.

The school secretaries Ms Anouska Mulrine, Ms Fidelma Corry and Ms Donna Cannon 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 Deele College 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

- The Staff room will be the main room used to meet the staff.
- The Guidance Counsellor's office and the Library for meetings for individual sessions with students.
- The Principal's Office for parents and for individual visitors.
- Music Room - for media.
- Deputy Principal / HSCL Office - for other visitors.

### **Consultation and Communication regarding the plan**

All staff were consulted and their views canvassed in the preparation of this policy and plan. Students and parent representatives were also consulted and asked for their comments.

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 Mr. Joe Boyle.

The plan will be updated annually; *January 2021 will be the date for the next update.*





### Checklist for Reviewing the Policy and Plan

Item	Item	Checked	By Who?
1	Has serious consideration been given to the school's approach to prevention?		
2	Has the school defined a critical incident and given examples?		
3	Have key roles been clearly identified and the assigned tasks outlined?		
4	Have staff members been nominated to each of the assigned roles/tasks?		
5	Are the personnel suitable?		
6	Has each member of the team compiled their emergency pack (photocopies of relevant handouts)?		
7	Has contact been made with external agencies?		
8	Is the Emergency Contact List (Section 11, R21) appropriate and complete?		
9	Are letters and press releases readily available on school headed paper, for adaptation to suit the particular circumstances?		
10	Are telephone numbers on contact lists up-to-date?		
11	Have all the staff been consulted about the plan/policy?		
12	Has a date been set for a review of the plan?		
13	Who will be given copies of the plan?		
14	Where will copies of the plan be kept?		
15	Have parents been consulted about the plan?		
16	Have the students been consulted about the plan?		