

John Scottus Primary School
Critical Incident Policy
Approved 3 June 2015; next review June 2016

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1. Introduction:

In John Scottus Primary School we aim to protect the wellbeing of our pupils and staff by providing a safe, tolerant and well catered for environment as outlined in our school philosophy statement.

The BoM through the Principal, the Staff and the Parents Association has drawn up a Critical Incident Management Plan. They have established a Critical Incident Management Team to steer the development and implementation of the plan.

What is a Critical Incident?

'A critical incident is any incident or sequence of events which overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school and disrupts the running of the school'.

Examples:

- Death, major illness/outbreak of disease (Foot & Mouth)
- Criminal incidents (e.g. Dunblane shooting, Shooting at first communion in Ballymun.)
- Major accidents, serious injury (e.g. 'Navan bus crash')
- Suicide
- Civil unrest, war (foreign nationals may be traumatised by events that happened in their country of origin)
- Fire, natural and technological disaster (e.g. school ceiling collapsing in Cork)
- Disappearance of student from home or school (e.g. Middleton incident in Cork)
- Unauthorised removal of student from school or home.
- World events that may affect the student body and/or staff. May be a need for provision of discussion and involvement in ceremonies e.g. 9/11, tsunami

Critical Incidents Management Team:

	<u>Responsible</u>	<u>Substitute</u>
Team Leader	Mary Telford	Cónall Clancy
Communications	Cónall Clancy	Niall Callaghan
Staff Liaison	Niall Callaghan M Rd Aine Monaghan N Rd	Mgt Dempsey M Rd Aoife Reddan N Rd
Student Liaison/ Counselling role	Elizabeth Haines N Rd Jeanne Murphy N Rd Annie van de Belt N Rd	Aine Monaghan N Rd Michelle McKeown M Rd Mary Kelleher M Rd
Parent Liaison	Sandra O'Neil N Rd Margaret Telford M Rd	Brigid Mallon N Rd Siobhan Griffin M Rd
Family Liaison	Mary Telford Principal	Deputy Principal
Parent Association Rep	Tabitha Wood	Noreen Griffin
Administrator	Sandra O'Neil N Rd Margaret Telford M Rd ???	Brigid Mallon N Rd Siobhan Griffin M Rd
Patrons Rep	Brendan Tangney	Colleen Dube
Board of Management Rep	Shane Connolly	Mike Spratt

Due to the fact that the Primary school is located in two buildings it is necessary to have two people named responsible for Staff and Student liaison roles together with Parent liaison and administration roles.

JSS PRIMARY STAFF : order of seniority

In the event of personnel being out sick, then we will go to staff in order of seniority in the school.

Mrs Telford

Aine Monaghan

Elizabeth Haines

Annie van de Belt

Niall Callaghan

Conall Clancy

Margaret Dempsey

Mary Kelleher

Bernadette Wynne

Yvonne Diffley

John Flaherty

Julie Russell

Darren

Niamh Fitzharris

Rebecca Carroll

Jeanne Murphy

Aoife Reddan

Frank Gibney

Marion Flaherty

Laura O'Callaghan

Maura Connaughton

Michelle McKeown

Ciara Quinn

Rachel Skelton

??? please check order

Please note that this list changes regularly but it is done to the best of our knowledge at the time of drafting.

NB Names of staff/ reps to be re-confirmed as being correct at time of final draft of CIP.

Notes :

As class teachers have less freedom to move than Learning Support staff, in allocating specific roles our first port of call has been to the Learning Support team.

There is no expectation that any member of the CIP team be deemed an Expert in their allocated area. That role will generally be filled by NEPS personnel.

Please note that suggested Actions are not prioritised but are a bullet list to be checked. Priorities will change depending on nature of incident.

As much as possible, keep to single point of communication for all in order to keep control of the accuracy of information being communicated

2.1 Roles and Responsibilities

Team Leader:

Intervention

- Confirm the event and gather accurate information
- Activate the Critical Incident response team and call meeting. Specify time and place clearly.
- Clarify facts surrounding event, who, what, when, where so as to avoid rumours
- Contact the Chairman of the Board of Management **and Board of Trustees.**
- Liaise with the Gardaí/Emergency services
- Make contact with relevant agencies NEPS etc. Arrange to meet as appropriate.
- Arrange supervision for students;
- Agree Schedule for the day
- Organise timetable. Maintain normal school routine where possible. Organise special cleaning if necessary
- Identify high risk / vulnerable students
- Organise support for students and staff. Ensure that a quiet place can be made for students/staff

Communication – Ensure the following

- Decide how news will be communicated to different groups (staff, pupils, outside school) media etc.
- Who do I need to call personally? Appoint somebody to deal with phone enquiries and agree what is being said

Staff

- Inform staff, convene staff meeting, if appropriate Lead briefing meetings for staff on the facts as known, (outline the routine for the day, personnel required etc.
- Agree on statement of facts

Families

- Immediate contact with family/families
- Contact / visit family to express sympathy
- Inform parents/guardians and students (close friends and students with learning difficulties may need to be told separately.
- Draft letter to parents

Postvention :

- Reconvene critical incident management team
- Check how each person on team is coping
- Ensure provision of ongoing support to staff and students and develop plan for going forward
- Review list of vulnerable students
- Visit the injured
- Consult with the bereaved family regarding funeral attendance, etc Consult with the family regarding appropriate support from the school, e.g. funeral service
- Facilitate any appropriate memorial events
- Review Plan and previous days actions daily
- Draw up schedule of actions required today, outstanding items

- Make decision about school closure - BOM
- give staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions
- Evaluate Plan, what went well, what gaps, what was helpful or not
- Review Plan with external agencies
- Have all necessary onward referrals to support services been made
- Plan for the return of bereaved / injured students
- Decide on future Memorials / Anniversaries

Is there any unfinished business ?

-

2.2 Communication Role:

Intervention

- With Team, prepare a media statement and deal with media
- Refer to Media Briefing, see Appendices **page 19**
- Organise a designated room to address media promptly - A4
- Respond to media
- Ensure telephone lines are free for outgoing and important incoming calls
- Designate mobile numbers for contact / outgoing calls
- Liaise with relevant outside support agencies
- Note what done, when, who contacted etc
- Note any offers of help received

Postvention

- Review and evaluate effectiveness of communication response

2.3 Student Liaison/ Counselling Role:

Intervention

- Liaise with NEPS regarding their participation, personnel and counselling for staff, parents and pupils
- Address immediate needs of staff
- Advise the staff on the procedures for identification of vulnerable pupils
- Alert staff to vulnerable pupils
- Outline specific services available in the school
- Put in place clear referral procedures and develop plan for going forward
- Decide on mechanism for feedback from teachers on vulnerable students
- Provide materials for staff (from critical incident folder)
- Provide information to parents and students (copying from resource books etc)
- Provide counselling to students and staff
- Liaise with external agencies as appropriate
- Close friends and special needs pupils may need to be told separately

Postvention

- Monitor class most affected
- Monitor students for signs of continuing distress, physical, emotional, absenteeism etc
- Refer as appropriate
- Provide ongoing support to vulnerable students
- Arrange support / information / de-brief meetings for students as appropriate
- Plan for giving of "Memory Box" to bereaved family
- Facilitation of students responses eg Sympathy cards, flowers, Book of Condolences etc
- Review response to incident and evaluate and amend Plan
- Decide on memorials and anniversaries

- Plan for re-integration of students and staff ie absentees, close friends, siblings, injured etc and liaise with them on return
- Ensure new staff are aware of any children who were involved in incident, be sensitive to anniversaries etc.
- Liaise with external agencies as appropriate

2.4 Chaplaincy

Fr Fatchna McCarthy, St Mary's, Haddington Road. 01 660 0075

Rev. Andrew McCrosskerry, St Bartholomew's Church. 01 269 4813

Sheikh Yahya el al Hussein, Imam, tel 01 4533242

Are available to parents and staff, if required, as follows

Intervention :

- visit home(s) if appropriate
- assist with prayer services
- make contact with other local clergy
- be available as personal and spiritual support to staff
- awareness of different religions, beliefs etc.

Postvention

- provide follow up support to families in conjunction with the Home School Community Liaison
- work in partnership with Critical Incident team
- review and evaluate plan

2.5 Family Liaison Role:

Intervention

- Co-ordinate contact with families (following first contact by Principal)
- Consult with family around involvement of school in e.g. funeral service and agree on attendance and participation
- Assist with all communication dealing with parents of any student affected by critical incident

Postvention

- Provide ongoing support to families affected by the incident
- Involve as appropriate the family in school liturgies/memorial services
- Offer to link family with community support groups
- Review and evaluate plan

3. ACTIONS

SHORT TERM ACTION PLAN

- Collect as many facts about incident as possible. Agree information to be shared with parents /students / media etc.
- Gather CIP team for meeting and delegate responsibilities
- Contact BOM liaison
- Contact appropriate agencies
 1. Emergency services 999 or 112
 2. Medical services Irishtown HSE 232 0600
 3. H.S.E. Community Care Baggot St 661 1571
 4. NEPS 01 2833928.
 5. DES/Schools Inspector : Noreen Kavanagh 087 256 9901
Brendan Doody 087 659 2201
 6. NCSE David Lonergan 087 694 9558
 7. NEPS Psychologist Joanne Frehill 707 4425 / 087 6160777
Richard Hennessey 087 415 8857

- Share full details of the event with team
- Contact grieving family
- Discuss how to deal with media. Prepare media statement for fax/email and briefings.
- Organise timetable/routine for the day. (Adhering to the normal school routine is important, if this is possible)

- Make decisions about school closure and school inspector
- School closure / routines /calendar events etc
- Arrange supervision of students, merge classes etc.
- Additional personnel required, supervision/support/admin etc
- Identify vulnerable students
- Inform parents / students / media
- Plan a whole staff briefing (including all ancillary staff).
- Ensure any absent staff members are kept informed

- Class teachers to take note of any absentees who might need to be contacted, list of friends etc, or any other relevant information. This is to be given to the Student Liaison person
- Agree text of letter to be sent to parents
- Keep records of all students seen by staff or agencies. Who told what/when/by whom
- Agree next meeting time for tomorrow
- Review outstanding items from today
- Liaise with the family regarding funeral arrangements/memorial service. The Principal will liaise with the family, to extend sympathy and clarify the family's wishes regarding the school's possible involvement in funeral/memorial service
- Arrange a home visit by two staff representatives within 24 hours, if appropriate. (Student Liaison person + Class teacher)
- Have regard for different religious traditions and faiths

AGENDA FOR FIRST CIMT MEETING

- Share full details of the event
- Agree on the facts. These will need to be relayed in a clear, appropriate and consistent manner by all staff to students.
- Discuss what agencies have been contacted and discuss whether there are additional ones to be informed.
- Phone lines may become jammed, agree on which phone line is to be kept open for outgoing and incoming emergency calls. Try to use mobiles for outgoing calls.
- When a number of external agencies are involved co-ordination will be needed and procedures need to be agreed (NEPS may take this on)
- Plan procedures for the day
- Discuss issues relating to school routine,
- May wish to consult student about scheduled items i.e. trip, matches what they wish.
- Discuss how to break news to relatives and close friends and who should do this. (must be done separately)
- Discuss how to break news to rest of students, class groups are often best.
- Discuss how to identify vulnerable students
- If students of various religions, nationalities this needs to be taking into consideration
- Plan a whole staff briefing (including all ancillary staff). May be done in two groups
- Agree text of letter to be sent to parents
- Discuss how to deal with media. Prepare media statement for fax/email and briefings.
- Delegate responsibilities to appropriate team member
- Discuss which rooms are available to external agencies (A4, B7, B10 ?)
- Quiet room to be made available to students and provide tissues, soft toys, rugs etc
- Discuss issue of consent for student who may need to be seen by psychologist
- If a general letter was sent out by school, check if any parents sent negative reply
- Keep records of all students seen by staff or agencies (one person collate)
- Agree next meeting time
- Agree a time for a follow up staff meeting at the end of the day. Allows Principal to update staff on any developments. Also allows time for preparation for following day and staff to wind down

- If unable to hold meetings in the school Principal might need to send somebody in their place so they can be at school for decisions.

MEDIUM-TERM ACTIONS (24-72 HOURS)

- Preparation of students/staff attending funeral
- Involvement of students/staff in liturgy if agreed by bereaved family
- Facilitation of students/staffs responses, e.g. Sympathy cards, flowers, Book of Condolences, etc.
- Ritual within the school
- Review the events of the first 24 hours
- Reconvene Key Staff/Critical Incident Management Team
- Decide arrangements for support meetings for parents/students/staff
- Decide on mechanism for feedback from teachers on vulnerable students
- Have review of Critical Incident Management Team meeting
- Establish contact with absent staff and pupils
- Arrange support for individual students, groups of students, and parents, if necessary
- Hold support/information meeting for parents/students, if necessary, in order to clarify what has happened
- Give any teacher who feels uncomfortable with involvement in support meetings the choice of opting out
- Arrange, in consultation, with outside agencies, individual or group debriefings or support meetings with parental permission
- Plan for the re-integration of students and staff e.g. absentees, injured, siblings, close relative etc)
- Student Liaison person to liaise with above on their return to school.
- Plan visits to injured
 - Family Liaison person + Class Teacher + Principal to visit home/hospital
 - Attendance and participation at funeral/memorial service (To be decided)
 - Decide this in accordance with parent's wishes, school management decisions and in consultation with close school friends
- School closure (if appropriate)
- Request a decision on this from school management

LONGER TERM ACTIONS

Monitor students for signs of continuing distress.

If over a prolonged period of time, a student continues to display the following, he/she may need assistance from the Health Board. Constant communication with family is essential.

- Uncharacteristic behaviour
- Deterioration in academic performance
- Physical symptoms — e.g. weight loss/gain, lack of attention to appearance, tiredness, restlessness
- Inappropriate emotional reactions
- Increased absenteeism

Evaluate response to incident and amend Critical Incident Management Plan appropriately

- What went well?
- Where were the gaps?
- What was most/least helpful?
- Have all necessary onward referrals to support services been made?
- Is there any unfinished business?

Formalise the Critical Incident Plan for the future

- Consult with NEPS Psychologist
- Inform new staff/new school pupils affected by Critical Incidents where appropriate
- Ensure that new staffs are aware of the school policy and procedures in this area
- Ensure they are aware of which pupils were affected in any recent incident and in what way
- When individual pupils or a class of pupils affected by an incident are transferring to a new school, the Principal should brief the Principal of the new school

Decide on appropriate ways to deal with anniversaries (Be sensitive to special days and events)

- Anniversaries may trigger emotional responses in students/staff and they may need additional support at this time
- Acknowledge the anniversary with the family
- Need to be sensitive to significant days like Birthdays, Christmas, Mother's Day, and Father's Day
- Plan a school memorial service
- Care of deceased person's possessions. What are the parent's wishes?
- Update and amend school records

Monitor students for signs of continued distress	Class teachers	
Liaise with agencies regarding referrals	Principal / L Support	
Plan for return of bereaved student/s	Principal / L Support	

Plan for giving of memory box to bereaved family	Principal / Class teacher	
Decide on memorials and anniversaries	BOM, Staff, Parents & Pupils	
Review response to incident and amend plan	Staff / BOM	

Longer term Actions Checklist :

	Who	Done
Re-convene CIMT meeting to review actions Day 1 and actions taken		
Make a decision about school closure		
List tasks for the day and appoint personnel		
List items to be addressed by Principal and staff meeting		
Review previous 24 hours		
Review schedule for the day		
Decide arrangements for support meetings for parents / students / staff		
Go through list of students and staff who may be vulnerable and review		
Decide on mechanism for feedback from teachers on vulnerable students / staff		
Develop plan for monitoring students going forward		
Establish contact with absent staff / students		
Meet whole staff and check supports in place for individual students / groups of students / parents / teachers		
Arrange support / information meetings for students / parents		
Give any teacher who feels uncomfortable with involvement in support meetings the choice to opt out		
Visit the injured : Family liaison person+ Class teacher + Principal to visit home / hospital		
Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements		
Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service in accordance with parent's wishes, school management decisions and in consultation with close school friends.		
Preparation of students / staff attending funeral / involvement in funeral if agreed by bereaved family		
Facilitation of student / staff responses eg Sympathy cards, flowers, Book of Condolences etc		

Plan for the re-integration of students and staff eg absentees, injured, siblings, close friends etc. Student Support person to liaise with these.		
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4. POLICY APPROVAL & REVIEW DATES

Approved by the Board of Management of John Scottus School on :

.....May 2015

Review Date: May 2016

5. Appendices

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Critical Incidents Management Team:

Leadership Role:	Mary Telford (Principal)	086 823 57 85
Communication Role:	Mary Telford	086 823 57 85
And	Cónall Clancy (Deputy Principal)	085 234 5791
	Niall Callaghan (Assistant Principal)	087 635 7338
Staff Liaison	Niall Callaghan	087 635 7338
	Aine Monaghan	086 832 6501
	Margaret Dempsey	086 109 7583
	Aoife Reddan	086 816 3103
Student Liaison/ Counselling Role:	Jeanne Murphy	086 218 3501
	Elizabeth Haines	086 381 6625
	Annie van de Belt	086 818 5445
	Aine Monaghan	086 832 6501
	Mary Kelleher	087 949 3266
	Michelle McKeown	085 713 3030
Parent Liaison:	Sandra O' Neil	087 927 2809
		Home : 283 3850
	Margaret Telford ???	08
And	Siobhan Griffin	085 711 2800
	Bridget Mallon	087 253 6919
Parents Association Rep:	Tabitha Woods	086 822 9868
	Noreen Griffin	085 230 1993
B.O.M. Rep:	Shane-Louise Connolly	088 388 3535
and	Mike Spratt	087 683 7354

Patron Rep :

Brendan Tangney

087 418 5466

Home : 283 0998

Colleen Dube

087 905 1222

Emergency Contact Numbers

Ambulance		999 Or 112
Garda	Irishtown Station	(01) 666 9600 or 999
Hospital – Children Hospital - Adults	Temple St Children’s Hospital St Vincent’s University Hospital, Elm Park, D4	01 878 4200 (01) 221 4000
Fire Brigade	Donnybrook Fire Station, Main Street, Donnybrook, D4	(01) 673 4000 999
Local G P	Dr O’Grady, Donnybrook	(01) 269 3347
Safety Officer	Michael Delaney	087.667 0788
Health & Safety issues	John Flaherty	087.243 5493
First Aider	Sandra O’Neil	087 927 2809
Child Protection issues	Mrs Mary Telford	086 826 5785

Department of Education / NEPS etc

DES/Schools Inspector :	Noreen Kavanagh Noreen_kavanagh@education.gov.ie	087 256 9901
	Brendan Doody Brendan_doody:@education.gov.ie	087 659 2201
NCSE	David Lonergan	087 694 9558
NEPS head office	Neps_blackrock@neps.gov.ie	01 283 3928
NEPS Psychologist	Joanne Frehill	707 4425 / 087 6160777
Richard Hennessey		087 415 8857

School closure	Jimmy Dolan School Governance Section.	Tel: 090 / 6483723 schoolgovernance@education.gov.ie
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Buildings

SPES Building Manager N Rd	Peadar O'Suilleabhainn,	086 815 0642
Builder	Peadar refer	
Plumber	Peadar refer	
Electrician	Dave Cotter	087 051 5888
Building Manager M Rd	Geert van de Belt	086 173 4394
Bord Gais		1850 20 50 50
Electricity Ireland		1850 372 999
Dublin City Council		670 6186
Dangerous Buildings		670 3316
Insurance Brokers	DM Insurance	272 0499

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Chairperson of the Board of Management Austin Colfer
 087 278 6739
Austin.colfer@lht.dlh.de

Chairperson of Board of Patrons Brendan Tangney
 087 418 5466
Tangney@tcd.ie

Health Board/Child and Family Centre Irishtown HSE
 01 232 0600

 Baggot Street Community Hospital
 01 661 1571

Clergy/Pastoral Care Fr Michael McGoldrick, Avila
 643 0200

Rev McCrosskerry, St Bartholomew's
269 4813

Fr Fatchna McCarthy/ Pat Claffey & Michael Collins
St. Mary's Haddington Road
01 660 0075

Sheikh Yahya el al Hussein,
Imam,
South Circular Road Mosque
01 4533242

Local counselling services Baggot Street Community Hospital
01 6618740 / 668 1742

Barnardos 01-4530355

The Samaritans 116 123

Childline 1800 666666

Parentline 1890 927277

Aware 01-6766166

1890 303302

National Suicide Bereavement Support Network

024-95561

Rainbows 4734175 for children dealing with grief & loss

The Bereavement Counselling Service 01-8391766

Bereavement Counselling Service 01-6767727

ISPCC 01 – 679 4944

Media Numbers :

The Irish Times 01 675 8000

Irish Independent : 01 705 5333

RTE : 01 208 3111

Trish Murphy : 087 234 0666
trish.murphy@eircom.net

INTO : 01 804 7710
1850 708 708

IPPN : 1890 212 223

Media Briefing (if appropriate)

- Principal will be spokesperson (Leader) and may seek advice from Colleen Dube or Trish Murphy if appropriate.
- Gather accurate information
- Prepare a brief statement (Team)
 - Mary Telford, Conall Clancy, Niall Callaghan, Colleen Dube, Trish Murphy
- Clear statement with BOM
- Protect the family's privacy
- It is important to obtain accurate information about the incident
 1. What happened, where and when, who was involved?
 2. What is the extent of the injuries?
 3. How many are involved and what are their names?
 4. Is there a risk of further injury?
 5. What agencies have been contacted already?

Do's and Don'ts of dealing with media :

Do write a press statement	
Do consider contacting the INTO etc for advice and guidance	
Do use careful and sensitive language	
Do keep it short	

Do regard everything as recorded and quotable (generally the media will)	
Do ask whether there will be the possibility of editing the interview	
Do ask in advance for an outline of the questions that you will be asked	
Do avoid sweeping statements and generalisations	
Do avoid being drawn into speculation	
Do protect families privacy	
Don't go into personal details of those involved	
Don't read the statement to camera	
Don't engage in rambling discussions afterwards	
Don't use "No comment"	
Don't respond to quote from others	
Don't answer any questions you don't know the answer to	
Don't make "off the record" comments	

Sample announcement to the Media :

My name is Mary Telford and I am the Principal of John Scottus Primary School. We learned this morning of the death of (one our students or name of student). This is a terrible tragedy for family /families, our school and our community. We are deeply saddened by these events. Our sympathy and thoughts are with (name) family and friends.

Name of student/students..... with a (.... A x year boy....) and will be greatly missed by all who knew him.

We have been in contact with his / her parents and they have requested that we all understand their need for privacy at this difficult time.

Offers of support have been pouring in and are greatly appreciated. Our school have implemented our Critical Incident Management Plan.

Psychologists from the National Educational Psychological Services (NEPS) and (.....insert other information if relevant) have been with us all day supporting and advising teachers in their efforts to assists our students at this time.

The teachers have been helping students to deal with this tragic event.

The school is open to parents, to support them and to offer them advice and guidance.

We would ask you to respect our privacy at this time.

Thank you.

LETTER TO PARENTS (1)
(Sample letter in the event of a tragedy)

Dear Parents,

The school has experienced (*.....the sudden death, accidental injury*) of one of our students. We are deeply saddened by the death/events.

(Brief details of the incident, and in the event of a death, perhaps some positive remembrances of the person lost.....)

We have support structures in place to help your child cope with this tragedy. *(Elaborate.....)*

It is possible that your child may have some feelings that he/she may like to discuss with you.

You can help your child by taking time to listen and encouraging them to express their feelings.

It is important to give them truthful information that is appropriate to their age.

If you would like advice or assistance you may contact the following people at the school. *(Details.....)*

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Mary Telford
Principal

LETTER TO PARENTS (2)

(Sample letter requesting consent for involvement of outside professional/s)

Dear Parents,

Following the recent (tragedy, death of X) we have arranged professional support for students in school who need particular help. (X) is available to help us with this work. This support will usually consist of talking to children, either in small groups or on a one-to-one basis and offering reassurance and advice as appropriate.

Your son/daughter has been identified as one of the students who would benefit from meeting with the psychologist. If you would like your child to receive this support please sign the attached permission slip and return it to the school by.....

If you would like further information on the above or to talk to the psychologist, please indicate this on the slip or telephone the school.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Mary Telford
Principal

.....

I/We consent to having our daughter/son met by a psychologist employed by the Minister for Education and Science.

I/We understand that my daughter/son may meet the psychologist(s) in an individual or group session depending on the arrangements which are thought to be most appropriate.

Name of student:

Class/Year:

Date of Birth:

I would like my daughter/son to avail of the support being offered by the psychologist.

Signed.....(Parent/Guardian)

**Sample letter to parents (3)
sudden death / accident**

Dear Parents

The school has experienced (the sudden death. The accidental injury etc) of We are deeply saddened by the death/s/events.

Brief details of the incident, and in the event of death, perhaps some positive remembrances of the person lost.

Our thoughts are with (family name)

We have support structures in place to help your child copy with this tragedy (elaboration)

It is possible that your child may have some feelings and questions that he/she may like to discuss with you. It is important to give factual information that is appropriate to their age.

You can help your child by taking time to listen and by encouraging them to express their feelings. All children are different and will express their feelings in different ways. It is not uncommon for children to have difficulty concentrating or to be fearful, anxious or irritable. They may become withdrawn, cry, complain of physical aches and pains, have difficulty sleeping or have nightmares. Some may not want to eat. These are generally short term reactions. Over the course of the days to come, please keep an eye on your child and support them in expressing their feelings.

Although classes will continue as usual, I anticipate that the next few days will be difficult for everyone.

? An information night for parents is planned fortime/place. At that time, further information about how to help children in grief will be given.

We have enclosed some information which you might find useful in helping your child through this difficult time

If you would like advice you may contact the following people at the school (details)

Yours sincerely

Mrs Mary Telford
Principal

**Sample letter to parents (4)
violent death :**

Dear Parents

I need to inform you about a very sad event that has happened.

(Give accurate information about the incident but avoid using the word murder as this will not be established until the court case is completed)

A child / young person from the neighbourhood, who is a brother of A student here in the school, was killed as a result of A violent attack, violent incident in the street etc) earlier this week. We are all profoundly saddened by his death.

We have shared this information and have had discussions with all of our students so that they know what has happened. School staff members have been available for students on an on-going basis today. Other support personnel (... Including psychologists etc. according to actual arrangements.) are available to advise staff and, where necessary, to talk to students. This support will continue to be available for (... Appropriate length of time).

The death of any young person is tragic, but a violent death is even more difficult. It is hard to have to teach our children about the violence in our world and to accept that sometimes we do not have the power to prevent it.

This death may cause a variety of reactions in your child. Some children / young people may be afraid for their own life and for the lives of those they love. Take time to listen to their fears and reassure them that what has happened is rare.

We have enclosed some additional information that may be useful during this time.....

The media are in the vicinity of the school and may approach you or your children. You need not respond to their questions if you are approached. We will not allow the media to interview your child at school and our general advice is that you should not let your children be interviewed. They are not mature enough to judge what to **say and may say something that they will regret later.**

If planned..... a support meeting for parents is planned for Date/place.... At this time we can talk further about how to help **our children and ourselves.**

Our thoughts are with (family name) and with each of you.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Mary Telford
Principal

Contact Numbers : **Bold indicates done as at 26-01-15.**

***All teachers to have key telephone numbers in their personal mobiles (ie Parent Rep, Mrs T, M Rd, N Rd)

** New Principal will require full information pack.

All Parents contact details, names, address, phones and emails are in folder located

In Northumberland Road office

**In Principal's home

In Mrs Telford's office, Northumberland Road

In Secondary School office, Morehampton Road

In Staff Room in Northumberland Road

In Staff room C5/6 M Rd.

In the Finance office, M Rd

** Put all parents details on Cloud / Dropbox for all teachers – to be actioned

** All teachers to have all class parents telephone numbers on their mobile phoned – to be actioned

** All parents to be reminded of the need to have their mobile phone turned on at all times children are under care of school – to be actioned

Teachers contact details

Full contact sheet for staff in folder in Northumberland Road office

Each teacher has their own contact sheet for parents

In Secondary school office, Morehampton Road

In Staffroom C5/6 M Rd

**In Principal's home

In Finance office, M Rd.

** All parents to be given their class representative's mobile number in case of emergency. Rep will maintain contact with class teacher.

All Parent Representatives have full contact details for their own class and each other.

Parent Representative contact details

In Northumberland Road office (noticeboard)

In Morehampton Road office

In Mrs Telford's office (noticeboard)

In C5 / C6 staffroom

At Principal's home

With each class teacher

In folder in staff room N Rd

Emergency Services contact numbers are located as follows :

On noticeboard in Staffroom, Northumberland Road

With office in Morehampton Road

**On noticeboard in each class room with each class teacher

On noticeboard in Principal's office

On noticeboard in Primary school office, Northumberland Road
In Secondary School office, M Rd
In C5/C6 staffroom M Rd
**In Principal's home

Critical Incident Personnel list :

On noticeboard in Staffroom, Northumberland Road
With office, M Rd
On noticeboard in each class room with each class teacher
On noticeboard in Principal's office
On noticeboard in Primary school office, Northumberland Road
In Principal's home

Copy of Critical Incident Policy document – to be actioned

M Rd office
Principals home
Secretary's home
Cloud / dropbox

TEACHER CHECK LIST :

Building exit layout clearly available in classroom (being prepared SPES & GvdBelt)	
Parent contact list available to teacher in classroom	
CIP personnel contact details in classroom	
Key numbers in personal mobile ie Office, M Rd, Mrs T, Parent Rep, CIP personnel, all class parents	
Give mobile number to Class Reps for use in case of emergency (only)	
Emergency numbers clearly available in classroom	
Check that you know where contact numbers are in office and staffroom	
If leaving the building : Ensure you have mobile phone with your with key numbers on it.	
In event of being locked out/ unable to get back to N Rd the plan is : If at SportsCo : remain there and make contact with N Rd or M Rd If at Herbert Park go to M Rd (or Telford's home 11 Morehampton Road) and use their contacts If unable to get to M Rd or N Rd or Telford's home, remain at Herbert Park, at the bandstand beside astroturf. If on a bus trip, remain with bus and try to return to N Rd or M Rd or Telford's home If unable to get to N Rd, M Rd (or Telford's home) then bring group to nearest Garda station. Make contact with CIP personnel	
If unable to make contact with N Rd, M Rd or CIP personnel ie no mobile coverage; remain with children and make your way back to N Rd (or M Rd or Telford's home 11 Morehampton Road) or Garda station as applicable. If no Garda station within reach, try local Church, Library, Hotel, B & B etc	

If in a new location ie Trips, please check Fire exit routes and availability of assistance – number for centre manager etc.	

TEACHERS FAQ

Q. I would like to opt out of support type work for personal reasons. Is this OK?

A. Because students need to be with people they know and trust, it has been found that their teachers are the best people to support them in school in times of distress. **Accordingly, all teachers and other school staff members are encouraged to help the students at these times, as long as they themselves are in a position to do so.**

Q. I have no qualifications to help out in this area. Don't you think the job should be left to the experts?

A. You probably have more skills here than you realise. Your experience, competence and skills as a teacher and as an expert in dealing with children and young people are invaluable. Most importantly, the students know you. Experience shows that people grieve best with someone they know. Pupils need a safe environment in which to grieve and that security is often provided by the familiar face of the teacher in the first instance.

Q. What should I do in the classroom that could be helpful?

A. You should acknowledge the situation and clarify the facts, as they are known. Honesty is essential. Encourage questions so that the students have a clear understanding. You should try to establish normal routines as soon as possible – but balance this with allowing students opportunities to discuss the incident and to express their thoughts and feelings. Encourage them to resume extra-curricular activities and help them to identify where they can go to for support. Encourage them to be supportive of one another.

Q. What are the signs of grief that I may notice in students?

A. After bereavement a student may become withdrawn or aggressive, show anger, have mood swings or lack concentration. Try to handle all these changes with patience, do not seem surprised by them and do not get cross (See Appendix 4). If pupils come from a background where there is family breakdown, serious illness, alcohol or drug related difficulties, then you need to watch out for them.

Q. What skills do I have that are important?

A. Listening skills are probably the most important as people who have experienced loss or trauma generally feel that talking helps them to cope with their feelings. When it is clear that a student wants to talk, try to make the time. Be reassuring and patient while gently encouraging them to talk about the loss. Reassure the student that you are there to help.

Q. Is there any one important thing I should say?

A. Yes – emphasise that grieving is a normal healthy process following a critical incident. It is the person’s way of coping with the event. People often need this kind of reassurance because of their confused state.

Q. What if I think that some students are not grieving normally?

A. There is no such thing as a ‘correct’ way to grieve. Some people cry, some laugh, some show no reaction. The important thing is that all these different ways are natural and normal and you should try to help the pupil understand this

Q. Is it a good idea to organise a classroom session following a critical incident?

A. Some schools do and they have found this to be very effective. There are notes on working in this way included in the pack. An advantage here is that students may feel safe and secure with their classroom teacher rather than being with an adult they do not know.

Q. What should I do if I feel that a student needs more professional support?

A. Discuss the issue with the Principal or guidance counsellor. They in turn may wish to discuss it with the NEPS psychologist and the parents. The outcome may be a referral through the GP to the appropriate service.

Q. What is the overall message in helping bereaved children?

A. You will get through this difficult time and we are here to help if you need support. Take care of yourself and look out for each other. Talk to us if you or a friend needs help.

Q. When should I get back to a normal teaching routine with a class?

A. It is important to give students sufficient time and space to share their feelings and come to terms with what has happened. However, it is also important to move towards a normal routine as soon as possible. Getting on with the regular and familiar pattern of school life helps reduce stress. Avoid introducing new material in the immediate aftermath of an incident or bereavement as grief and shock can interfere with concentration and motivation. It is often a good idea to ask the students themselves about returning to the normal routine.

Q. What do I do about the empty chair/a student’s belongings etc?

A. A helpful strategy might be to involve students in a discussion about what to do about the chair. This might also present an opportunity to move to a new phase in the process. With regard to belongings, it might be useful to put together a folder of the student’s work for the parents. This could be given to them at an appropriate time.

Q. Is there a danger that by talking about suicide you make it an option for others?

A. Talking about the death helps people to make sense of what has happened. People can cope with the truth. It is important to talk about how a person can get to the point where suicide *seemed* to be an option but to emphasise that it is not a good option. There is always help available if a person can take the step of reaching out for it.

RESOURCES FOR SCHOOLS

INTO/Ulster Teacher Union (2000).

When Tragedy Strikes: Guidelines for Effective Critical Incident Management in Schools.

ASTI (1997).

Guidelines for Schools on How to Respond to the Sudden Unexpected Death of a Student.

City of Dublin VEC Psychological Services.

Coping with a Major Crisis.

City of Dublin VEC Psychological Service.

When Something Terrible Happens...

Pat Donnelly, Barnardos (2002).

Someone to Talk To: A Handbook on Childhood Bereavement.

Luke Monaghan (1999).

Suicide Bereavement and Loss: Perspective and Responses.

Siobhan Foster Ryan and Luke Monaghan (2001).

Echoes of Suicide.

The Irish Association of Suicidology, National Suicide Review Group (2002).

Suicide Prevention in Schools: Best Practice Guidelines.

William Yule and Anne Gold (1993).

Wise Before the Event. Coping with Crises in Schools.

Pub. Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation.

Available from Solas, Barnardos Christchurch Square, Dublin 8.

Death – Helping Children Understand.

RESOURCES FOR CHILDREN

G. Perkins and L. Morris (1991).
Remembering Mum.

Pub. A & C Black (Children under 7 years).
J.M. Krementz (1991).
How It Feels When a Parent Dies.
London: Orion Children's Books (age 7 – 11).

S. Wallbank.
My Father Died and My Mother Died.

Cruse – Bereavement Care (11 years –).
Judith Bisignano (1991).
Living with Death (A Workbook for 12 – 15 year olds).
Pub. Good Apple, USA.

Noirin Hynes and Margarita Synott.
Death and Dying: A Resource Pack.
Available from the Marino Institute of Education.

Suggested titles from Helen Sholdice :

Margaret Wild & Freya Blackwood
Harry and Hopper
Explores the shock of grief when Harry loses his beloved dog. It shows the sustaining power of love.

Douglas Wood
Grandad's Prayers of the Earth
Grandad teaches his grandson there are many ways to pray and when Grandad dies, the boy needs to hear these prayers and to find the words to make his own prayers

Oliver Jeffers
The Heart and the Bottle
Story of a girl who loses her father and puts her heart in a bottle to keep it safe. However, things seem emptier than ever so the girl finds a way to get her heart back.

Douglas Durant
Always and Forever
Story of a family of animals who lose their beloved fox. Shows how they are helped to remember fox was still there, always and forever.

Martin Waddell

We love Them

Story about the loss of a beloved animal told in a domestic setting that bears repeated reading.

RESOURCES FOR PARENTS

Helen Fitzgerald (1992).
The Grieving Child – A Parent’s Guide.

Pub. Simon and Schuster, New York.

Christy Kenneally.
Sorry for Your Trouble – Helping the Bereaved (a tape).

Allison Wertheimer.
A Special Scar: The Experience of People Bereaved by Suicide.

Pub. Routledge, London 1991.

Sharry, John & Reid, Peter & Donohue, Eugene (2001).
When Parents Separate: Helping Your Children Cope.

Pub. Veritas Publications, Abbey Street, Dublin.

USEFUL WEBSITES :

SPHE Regional Development Officers	www.sphe.re
Suicide Prevention Officers	www.nosp.ie
The childhood bereavement Network	www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk
Cruse Bereavement care	www.crusebereavement care.org.uk
National Office for Suicide Prevention	www.nosps.ie
Irish Association for Suicidology	www.ias.ie
Irish Hospice Foundation	www.hospice-foundation.ie
Support for people who self-injure and their family	www.selfharm.org
Support for grieving children and parents	www.winstonswish.org.uk
Support for suicide, depression or emotional distress	www.papyrus-uk.org
Mental health of children and young people	www.youngminds.org.uk

Other Resources in Principal's Office

DES Responding to Critical Incidents guidelines for schools

DES Responding to Critical Incidents Resource Materials for Schools

NEPS Responding to Critical Incidents advice and information pack

Office of Emergency Planning: Preparing for Major Emergencies

Same in N Callaghan office (NC please inform office if require anything from here)