



Woodstock
Educate Together National
School

CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY



1. Introduction:

Woodstock Educate Together National School aims to protect the well-being of its students and staff by providing a safe, secure and nurturing environment at all times. The school has formulated a number of policies e.g. Well-being Statement & Policy, Anti-Bullying Policy, COVID-19 Response Plan, Health & Safety Policy, Code of Positive Behaviour with a view to ensuring the physical and psychological safety of staff and students. Our Mission Statement is: *“Woodstock Educate Together strives to cultivate a welcoming, secure and nurturing learning and teaching environment, aiming to equip each child with the confidence and skills to reach their unique potential. We aspire to excellence in an atmosphere of collaboration, openness and respect. Woodstock ETNS is energised by the principle that “educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all.”*

With the recognition of the role of Woodstock ETNS in:

- Promoting Mental Health & Well-being and in creating effective Care Systems
- In being proactive I preparing for Critical Incidents – Responsive not reactive
- In responding to the diversity & intensity of Critical incidents that may arise within our schooling community.

The Board of Management, through Nicola Martin (Principal), has drawn up a Critical Incident Management Plan (CIMP) as one element of the school’s policies and plans. This is informed by the NEPS Publication -

<https://assets.gov.ie/40700/21b5193521d147c890b4309fe4bfce9d.pdf>

& COVID 19 Specific Critical Incidents support documents:

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2. Review & Research:

The Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) have consulted resource documents available to schools on www.education.ie and www.nosp.ie (National Office for Suicide Prevention) including:

- Responding to Critical Incidents Guidelines and Resources for Schools (National Educational Psychological Service, (NEPS, 2016)
<https://www.cypsc.ie/fileupload/Neps%20Critical%20Incidents%20Resource%20Material%20Schools.pdf>
- Suicide Prevention in Schools: Best Practice Guidelines (International Auditing Standards (IAS), National Suicide Review Group (2002)
<https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/4/mental-health-services/nosp/>
- Well-Being in Post-Primary Schools Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention (Department of Education and

Key
Components
in Successful
Responses to
Critical
Incidents

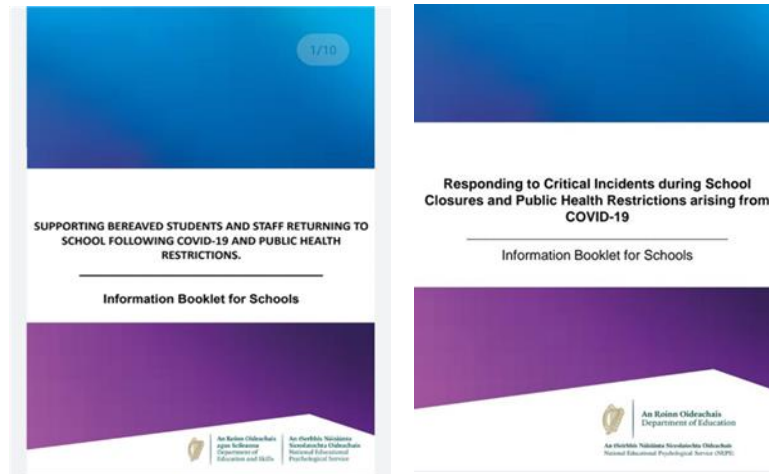


Science (DES), Department of Health (DOH), Health Service Executive (HSE, 2013)

- Well-Being in Primary Schools-Guidelines 3 for Mental Health Promotion (DES, DOH, HSE, 2015)

<https://assets.gov.ie/41241/b59549d33653430ba47312e5357311d1.pdf>

COVID19 specific resources- Living documents:



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3. What is a Critical Incident?

Woodstock ETNS recognises a critical incident to be *an incident or sequence of events that overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school and disrupts the running of the school (NEPS 2016)*. Critical Incidents may involve one or more pupils, staff, the school, or our local community. Types of incidents might include:

- **The death of a member of the school community through sudden death, accident, terminal illness or suicide.**
- **An intrusion into the school which has an adverse impact on school community.**
- **An accident/tragedy in the wider school community.**
- **Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism etc.**
- **The disappearance of a member of the school community.**
- **An accident involving members of the school community.**
- **A physical attack on staff member(s) or student(s).**
- **An accident or tragedy outside the school community which impacts on school community.**

Aim: Responsive not Reactive (**Critical Incidents Management Plan**). The aim of the CIMP is to help school management and staff to react responsively and effectively in a timely manner to 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. Planning is therefore not only vital but enables a responsive rather than reactive actions to be



implemented –

4. **Step 1: The 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.

Woodstock ETNS has recently updated the following policies in order to be prepared in the case of a critical incident occurring in the community; COVID-19 Response Plan, Health & Safety policy, Child Safeguarding Statement, Well-being Statement & Policy, Physical Intervention procedures.

- Evacuation plan formulated
- Regular fire drills occur
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
- Pre-opening supervision in the school yard (8.35-8.45am)



- Front gate closed during school hours
- External school doors closed during class time
- Rules of the playground: Dealt with under our Health & Safety Policy, Code of Behaviour and Anti-Bullying Policy. Children are supervised at all times during breaks (10:30-10:45 & 12:30-12:55) and also for 10 minutes before school opens.

Psychological Safety/Well-Being:

Woodstock ETNS aims to create an open and encouraging environment in the school where students can talk about their difficulties and seek help for them.

Environment/Staff training/Nurturing student resilience & coping skills/promoting Well-being

- SPHE programmes & The Learn Together Curriculum are integral to the DES curriculum addressing issues such as; grief & loss, communication skills, stress & anger management, resilience, conflict management, problem solving, help-seeking, decision-making and alcohol and drug prevention. An integral aspect of our provision is the promotion of Mental Health & Well-being.
- Well-Being in Primary Schools (2015) & Wellbeing Toolkits (2020)- mindfulness at school. (2023) Well-being framework & statement are being devised.
- The school has a clear policy on Positive Behaviour and deals with 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 (available on www.education.ie).
- Staff are familiar with the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures.
- Information is provided on mental health in general and some specific areas such as signs and symptoms of depression and anxiety- Well-being Room.
- Students who are identified as being at risk are referred to the designated staff member (Principal, Nicola Martin) concerns are explored and the appropriate level of assistance and support is provided. Parents are informed, and where appropriate, a referral is made to an appropriate agency.

Staff training/ Support links/Outside agencies:

- Staff are informed on a need to know basis of difficulties affecting individual students and are aware and vigilant to their needs, respecting individual privacy.
- Under our Anti-bullying policy respect for LGBTI+ students is celebrated as all diversity based on our code of visible, voiced & valued- i.e. Pride, Family Diversity books in the children's library.
- Staff training - Woodstock ETNS Promotes Restorative Practices, having a Positive Behaviour & Anti-Bullying policy. To enhance its integration staff CPD is facilitated. Staff are trained as Friends for Life Facilitator & Nurture School training is to be commenced in 2021.
- Staff have ready access to books and resources on difficulties affecting the primary school child.
- The school has developed links with outside agencies, including NEPS, Cancer Support Ireland, Child and Family Services. They may be contacted in the event of an emergency and for onward referral of students.
- Staff are informed about how to access support for themselves. EAS- Wellbeing Together Employee Assistance Service (EAS) - Email: eap@spectrum.life/ Freephone: 1800411057/ WhatsApp: Text 'Hi' to 087 369 0010/ SMS: Text 'Hi' to 087 369 0010

5. **Step 2: Define a critical Incident** – A critical incident is “any incident or sequence of events which overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school” (NEPS 2016)* **Please ref to point 3**

6. **Step 3: Recruit a Critical Incidents Management Team & define roles:**

WHAT IS A CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM?

“It is a group of individuals from the staff of a school who know the community, the students, and each other well enough to make the necessary decisions called for when an incident occurs”. (School Crisis Response Teams: Lessening the Aftermath – Schoenfeldt).

With this in mind, Woodstock ETNS has set up a Critical Incident Management Team which will grow as the school develops. Currently Nicola Martin (Teaching Principal) of this 2 teacher school will maintain this team in future.

It is envisioned that the members of the team who are selected on a voluntary basis will retain their roles for at least one school year. The members of the team will meet once a

year to review and update the plan. Each member of the team has a “Response Pack” with relevant materials to be used in the event of an incidents.

The goal of the CIMT team is three fold:

- To reduce the immediate & long-term detrimental impact on students & teacher & families;
- To return the school to the pre-incident state as soon as possible and
- To recognize that the first 48hrs are crucial with a vulnerability thereafter of at least 3 weeks

Roles: In the event of a critical incident the responsibilities of each role-holder will be as follows:

Team Leader – Nicola Martin (Principal)- SECTION 11 of Responding to Critical Incidents

- Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting
- Co-ordinates the tasks of the team
- Liaises with the Board of Management
- Liaises with the bereaved/affected family.
- Contacts NEPS (Rachel Coughlan)
- Advises staff on the identification of vulnerable students
- Is alert to vulnerable staff members and makes contact with them individually.
- Provides materials to staff from “Response Pack”
- Meets with individual parents
- Provides materials/resources for parents
- Visits the bereaved family.

Staff Liaison – Nicola Martin(Principal)/ Gráinne Ni Chuinn (Assistant Principal)

- Leads briefing meetings for staff on the facts as known, gives staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions, outline 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. Ensures that information about deaths or other developments is investigated for accuracy before being shared.

- 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 (Assistant Principal: Gráinne Ni Chuinn & relevant Class Teacher)

- Alerts other staff to vulnerable students (appropriately).
- Maintains student contact records.
- Looks after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room where agreed.

Community Liaison (Principal Nicola Martin/Assistant Principal, Grainne Ni Chuinn)

- 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.
- *With due diligence facilitates 'questions and answers' meetings.

*In preparing for the role, she/he will consider issues that may arise during the incident and how they might be responded to (e.g. students being interviewed, photographers on premises etc.) In the event of an incident, will liaise where necessary with the Communications Section in the DES.

Media Liaison (Principal: Nicola Martin/ Assistant Principal: Gráinne Ni Chuinn)

- Keeping in mind the definition of a critical incident, the media liaison will consider issues that could arise and how they might be responded to (e.g. students being interviewed, photographers on the premises, etc.).
- In the event of an incident, the media liaison will liaise where necessary with the DES; relevant teacher unions etc.
- The media liaison will draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews (as agreed by school management).



Administrative Tasks (Sinead Todd)

- In the case of a critical incident, Secretary might be called in over holidays.
- Maintenance of up to date lists of contact numbers – Parents often don't inform the school when they change address or phone numbers. From now on any note that goes out will always ask for change of address or phone number.
- Emergency Support Services to be displayed in Office and Staff Room.
- Maintenance of up to date telephone numbers of guardians/teachers/Emergency services.
- Takes telephone calls and notes for those that need to be responded to.
- Ensures that templates are on the school's system in advance and ready for adaptation.
- Prepares and sends out letters, emails and texts.
- Photocopies materials needed.
- Maintains records.

Record Keeping Overview: Each CMIT member will keep detailed records of phone calls made and records of phone calls made and received, meetings held, persons met, interventions used, material used etc. The **school secretary** (Sinead Todd) will have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters, photocopying materials etc.

A letter will be sent to parents based on the sample one attached and will include:

- The sympathy of the School Community.
- Positive information or comments about the deceased/injured person(s)
- The facts of the incident
- What has been done
- What is going to be done

Confidentiality and good name considerations

The school has 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 see to ensure that pupils do also.

STEP 4- Procedures: INTERVENTION:

Critical Incident Rooms - In the event of a critical incident, the following rooms are designated for the indicated purposes

Room Name:	Designated Purpose:
Staff Room	Main room for meeting staff
Well-being room/ assigned classroom 1	Meetings with students
Staff Room/Well-being room	Meetings with parents
Assigned Room 2	Meetings with media
Principal Office/ Well-Being Room	Individual sessions with students
Room 3	Meetings with other visitors

Critical Incident Management Team		
Role	Name	Phone
Team Leader	Nicola Martin	0876233475
Garda Liaison	Nicola Martin	
Staff Liaison	Nicola Martin /Gráinne Ni Chuinn	
Student Liaison	Gráinne Ni Chuinn & relevant Class Teacher & SNA Linda Norman	
Community Liaison	Nicola Martin /Gráinne Ni Chuinn	
Parent Liaison	Nicola Martin	
Media Liaison	Nicola Martin /Gráinne Ni Chuinn	
Administrator	Sinead Todd	



Critical Incident Room : In the event of a critical incident, the Meeting Room will be the main room used to meet the staff, students, parents and visitors involved – Subject to change.

Step 4 Short term actions – Day 1

Task	Name
Gather accurate information	
Who, what, when, where?	
Convene a CIMT meeting – specify time and place clearly	
Contact external agencies (NEPS)	
Arrange supervision for students	
Hold staff meeting	All staff
Agree schedule for the day	
Inform students – (close friends and students with learning difficulties may need to be told separately)	
Compile a list of vulnerable students	
Prepare and agree media statement and deal with media	
Inform parents	
Hold end of day staff briefing	

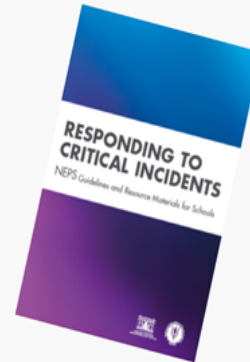
The Resources Section @

<https://assets.gov.ie/40700/21b5193521d147c890b4309fe4bfce9d.pdf>

offer templates & informed research to help support schools:

Resource Materials for Schools

- R5 A classroom session following news of a critical incident
- R5 Children's understanding and reaction to death according to age
- R7 Stages of grief
- R8 How to cope when something terrible happens (hand-out for students)
- R9 Reactions to a Critical Incident
- R10 Grief after suicide
- R 12 Ways to help your child through this difficult time (hand-out for parents)
- Checklist: Students at Risk
- R14 Exploring suicide risk
- R15 FAQs for Principals
- R16 FAQs for Teachers
- R17 FAQs for Parents
- R18 Media - FAQs
- Critical Incident Management template for school plan



Medium term actions - (Day 2 and following days)

Task	Name
Convene a CIMT meeting to review the events of day 1	Team leader
Meet external agencies (NEPS)	
Meet whole staff	
Arrange support for students, staff, parents	
Visit the injured	
Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements	
Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service	
Make decisions 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	
Plan for return of bereaved student(s)	
Plan for giving of ‘memory box’ to bereaved family	
Decide on memorials and anniversaries	BOM/Staff, parents and students
Review response to incident and amend plan	Staff/BOM

STEP 5: 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/guardian representatives were also consulted and asked for their comments.
- The Woodstock ETNS final policy and plan in relation to responding to critical incidents has been presented to the BoM & 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 the principal: Nicola Martin
- . The plan will be updated annually (September 2022)

Review

This policy will be review annually at the commencement of each academic year. In addition, it will be reviewed following any critical incident and use of the procedure.

Ratification:

This Policy was ratified by the Board of Management on _____



Some Useful Links:

<https://hospicefoundation.ie/>

<https://www.barnardos.ie/>

<https://anamcara.ie/>

<https://spunout.ie/>

<https://www.childhoodbereavement.ie/schools/>

<https://www.rainbowsireland.ie/>

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/4/mental-health-services/nosp/about/>

<https://www.childline.ie/>

<https://www.samaritans.org/ireland/samaritans-ireland/>

HELPLINES Remind students that if they need someone to talk to, at any time of the day or night, they can ring either:

Childline: **1800 666 666 (free calls)**

The Samaritans: **1850 60 90 90 (Local call cost)**

OR Email: hello@spunout.ie