**Critical Incident Policy**

**September 2022**

Grace Park Educate Together National School (GPETNS) aims to protect the well-being of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times, in line with the Educate Together ethos of the school. The Board of Management, through consultation with the staff of GPETNS has drawn up a Critical Incident Management Plan as one element of the school’s policies and plans.

**Review and Research**

The CIMT have consulted resource documents available to schools on www.education.ie and www.nosp.ie including:

* Responding to Critical Incidents Guidelines and Resources for Schools (NEPS 201 6)
* Suicide Prevention in Schools: Best Practice Guidelines (IAS, National Suicide Review Group        (2002)
* Suicide Prevention in the Community - A Practical Guide (HSE 2011)
* Well-Being in Post-Primary Schools Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention (DES, DOH, HSE 2013)
* Well-Being in Primary Schools - Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion

(DES, DOH, HSE 201 5)

**Defining the term ‘critical incident’**

The staff and management of GPETNS 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 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
* An accident/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
* A sudden school closure due to a health pandemic

**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**

GPETNS has a range of agreed plans and procedures in place to ensure physical safety in the school environment. These include:

* Evacuation plan formulated
* Regular fire drills occur
* Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
* Pre-opening supervision in the school yard
* Front gate locked during school hours
* School doors locked during class time
* Rules of the playground – Kind hands, kind feet, kind words.
* Sharp corners around the building have extra padding applied.
* Regular handwashing and good hygiene are taught and encouraged. All staff to ensure that good hygiene practice is implemented around the school.
* Ensure there are adequate First Aid supplies, suitable personal protective equipment and hand hygiene supplies in the school. This will be monitored on a weekly basis. students are encouraged to bring in their own little bottles of hand and at select times in the day teachers will ensure they are used. (before/after food/yard etc)
* Social distancing markers and posters to be in place around the school.

**Psychological safety**

The management and staff of GPETNS 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.

* Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is integrated into the work of the school. It is addressed in the curriculum by addressing 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. 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 Guidelines and Procedures and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures
* 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 are trained in interventions for suicidal students
* The school has developed links with a range of external agencies – HSE, TUSLA, NEPS, and liaise with the school NEPS psychologist; Nollaig Carberry.
* 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 0022/2010 (Primary)
* The school has a clear policy on bullying 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. 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. support teacher), 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 are informed about how to access support for themselves and are aware of the counselling support services available to them and their families.
* H.S.E. health guidelines are made available to parents on a regular basis and as required.

**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.

**Team leader: Niamh**

**Role**

* 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; SEC
* Liaises with the bereaved family
* Liaises with the Gardaí
* Ensures that information about deaths or other developments is checked out for accuracy before being shared
* In the event of a sudden school closure the team leader will inform the school community once informed by the Department of Education. The team leader will ensure staff and children are resourced appropriately for distance learning before leaving the school.
* In the event of the team leader being absent then this job falls to the next person in seniority on the staffing list. Niamh, Liana, APII etc Refer to staff seniority list in the staff room and on the Teachers shared drive.

**Staff liaison:  Liana**

**Role**

* 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 EAS and gives them the contact number.
* Ensure adequate supplies of personal protective equipment and hand hygiene supplies are available to staff.
* Ensure the wellbeing of staff in the event of a sudden school closure. Help staff to resource themselves appropriately for the next phase of work whether is it remotely or from the school building.

**Student liaison**: Liana

**Role**

* 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
* Ensure that personal protective equipment is available to students if required.
* Ensure that stocks of supplies for hand hygiene are available to students.
* Ensure the wellbeing of all students in the event of a sudden school closure. Check in with staff for any children needing support here.

**Community/agency liaison:  Tracy**

**Role**

* Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of
  + Key parents, such as members of the Parents Council/BOM members
  + 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
* Inform the relevant community links in our school of the sudden school closure.

**Parent liaison: Niamh**

**Role**

* Visits the bereaved family with the team leader
* Arranges parent meetings, if held
* May facilitate such meetings, and manage ‘questions and answers’
* Manages the ‘consent’ issues in accordance with agreed school policy
* Ensures that sample letters are typed up, on the school’s system and 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)
* Inform the parents of the sudden school closure and be available to support if needed.

**Media liaison: Niamh, Liana**

**Role**

* 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; relevant teacher unions etc.
* Will draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews (as agreed by school management)
* Keep up to date with the latest news from the media in the event of a sudden school closure.

**Administrator: Tracy**

**Role**

* Maintenance of up to date telephone numbers of
  + Parents or guardians
  + Teachers
  + Emergency services
* Takes telephone calls and notes those that need to be responded to
* Ensures that templates are on the schools system in advance and ready for adaptation
* Prepares and sends out letters, emails and texts
* Photocopies materials needed
* Maintains records
* All administrators will check in with Tony and Caroline to ensure we have adequate supplies of Personal protective equipment, hand sanitizer and soap available to the school community.
* Be available to respond to anything additional resources that are needed in the event of a sudden school closure.

**Record keeping: All staff members**

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.

Sylvia Mc Loughlin will have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters, photocopying materials, etc.

**Confidentiality and good name considerations**

Management and staff of GPETNS have a responsibility to protect the privacy and good name of people involved in any incident and will be sensitive to the consequences of public statements. Members of school staff will bear this in mind, and seek to ensure that students do so also, e.g. the term ‘suicide’ will not be used unless there is solid 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.

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| **Critical Incident Rooms**  In the event of a critical incident, the following rooms are designated for the indicated purposes | |
| **Room Name:** | **Designated Purpose:** |
| Staffroom | Main room for meeting staff |
| Assembly area, classrooms, depends on the case | Meetings with students |
| Niamh’s Office /Hall | Meetings with parents |
| Hall | Meetings with media |
| Nurture Room/Meadow | **I**ndividual sessions with students |
| Rooftop Terrace | Meetings with 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/guardian 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 the Deputy Principal and the NQT mentor.

The plan will be updated annually each September.

**Ratification and communication:**

This plan was ratified by the Board of Management of Grace Park ETNS on 15 September 2021 and will be reviewed in September 2023

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Chairperson B.O.M Grace Park ETNS

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| **Critical Incident Management Team** | | |
| **Role** | **Lead** | **Other** |
| **Team leader:** | Niamh Cullen | Liana Cassin |
| **Garda liaison** | Niamh Cullen | Liana Cassin  Adam McAuley  Ciara Savage |
| **Staff liaison** | Liana Cassin | Niamh Cullen |
| **Student liaison** | Niamh Cullen | Danielle Hassett  Liana Cassin |
| **Community liaison** | Dave Flynn, [Claire O'Leary](mailto:claire@graceparketns.com) | Niamh, Liana |
| **Parent liaison** | Niamh Cullen |  |
| **Media liaison** | Niamh Cullen |  |
| **Administrator** | [Tracy Lowry](mailto:tracyl@graceparketns.com) |  |

**Short term actions – Day 1**

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| **Task** | **Name** |
| **Gather accurate information** | Niamh/Liana |
| **Who, what, when, where?** | Niamh/Liana |
| **Convene a CIMT meeting – specify time and place clearly** | Niamh/Liana |
| **Contact external agencies** | Dave and Claire |
| **Arrange supervision for students** | Liana, Yvonne, Niall |
| **Hold staff meeting** | **All staff** |
| **Agree schedule for the day** | Niamh/Liana/Ciara |
| **Inform students – (close friends and students with learning difficulties may need to be told separately)** | Niamh/Liana |
| **Compile a list of vulnerable students** | Danielle Claire and Stevie |
| **Prepare and agree media statement and deal with media** | Niamh/Adam/Ciara |
| **Inform parents** | Niamh/Liana |
| **Bereavement rituals: Funeral restrictions and alternative goodbyes** | Niamh |
| **Hold end of day staff briefing** | Niamh/Liana |
| **Pick appropriate supportive resource from the list of resources in this policy and make a recommendation.** | Niamh/Liana/BOM |

**Medium term actions - (Day 2 and following days)**

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| **Task** | **Name** |
| Convene a CIMT meeting to review the events of day 1 | Niamh |
| Meet external agencies | Niamh |
| Meet whole staff | Niamh/Liana |
| Arrange support for students, staff, parents | Danielle/Liana/Stevie |
| Visit the injured | Niamh/Liana |
| Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements | Niamh/Liana/Class Teacher |
| Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service | Niamh |
| Make decisions about school closure | BOM |
| Check in to see if a recommended supportive resource was beneficial and see if there needs to be a review or any amendments made. | Claire |

**Follow-up – beyond 72 hours**

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| **Task** | **Name** |
| Monitor students for signs of continuing distress | Class teachers/Danielle |
| Liaise with agencies regarding referrals | Niamh/Liana |
| Plan for return of bereaved student(s) | Class Teacher/Niamh/Liana |
| Plan for giving of ‘memory box’ to bereaved family | Niamh/BOM |
| Decide on memorials and anniversaries | BOM/Staff, parents and students |
| Review response to incident and amend plan | Staff/BOM |

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| EMERGENCY CONTACT LIST | |
| **AGENCY** | **CONTACT NUMBERS** |
| Ballymun Garda Station | 01 666 4400 |
| Hospitals:  Beaumount Hospital  The Mater Misericordiae University Hospital  Temple Street Children’s Hospital | 01 809 3000  01 803 2000  01 878 4200 |
| Fire Brigade:  North Strand Fire Station | 999 / 112 |
| HSE | 041 6850300 |
| Community Care Team  Susan Bergin Access Officer  Ballymun HealthCare Facility, Dublin 9. | 01 846 7350 |
| Child and Family Centre:  TUSLA | 01 771 8500 |
| Child and Family Mental Health Service (CAMHS) | 01 879 6800 |
| School Inspector:  Fiona Rushe | 087 121202  01 889 65 23 |
| NEPS Psychologist:  Nollaig Carberry | 087 249 7933 |
| DES: | 01 889 6400 |
| INTO | 01 804 7700 |
| Educate Together | 01 429 2500 |
| Employee Assistance Service | 1800 411 057 |

**Supportive Resources for grief**

Below is a sample of online resources to support young people who have

experienced loss and grief. These resources are intended to complement NEPS’ existing publication ‘Responding to Critical Incidents-NEPS Guidelines and Resource Materials for Schools’.

**a) Coronavirus and Bereavement**

The Irish Hospice Foundation have developed practical and easily accessible materials for the Irish context, and include resources and supports available from organisations such as the HSE, DES and websites such as RIP.ie. There are also topic specific resources addressing issues such as ‘Planning a funeral in exceptional times’, ‘Grieving in exceptional times’ and ‘Helping children grieve during COVID-19 restrictions’ Winston’s Wish is a British childhood bereavement charity with a very comprehensive website. Their COVID-19 page has useful resources, such as ‘How to say goodbye when a funeral isn’t possible’, ‘Telling a child someone has died

from coronavirus’ and ‘Managing grief in isolation’

**b) General Bereavement**

Rainbows is a free, voluntary service that supports children and young people with separation and bereavement. Support programmes for children and young people at both primary and post-primary level are available for students three months (minimum) after the experience of a loss. Further information and resources are available at their website. Barnardos provide wide-ranging services to families, including support around bereavement. There is a downloadable e-book and links to various services

available on their website. The Irish Childhood Bereavement Network is a member organisation where families, professionals and schools can obtain information, guidance and support from various professionals. In addition to resources and supports, courses are available for professionals to develop their skillset in supporting bereavement.

**c) Suicide and Bereavement**

The National Office for Suicide Prevention (NOSP) is the body responsible for co-ordination and implementation of the national strategy for suicide prevention. As well as general information and resources, the site includes details on regional contacts for Suicide Resource Officers/Samaritans etc., details of various training programmes, and how professionals can access ‘Urgent Help’ at times of crisis. Headspace is an Australian organisation for youth mental health. Their website has very practical materials for supporting those who have lost a loved one through suicide.

**d) SEN and Bereavement**

Mencap have materials for explain loss and death to people with learning

disabilities and includes literature for specific aspects such as ‘What can I do to feel

better’ and ‘Going to a funeral