

# Mount Temple Critical Incident Management Policy



## 1. Introduction

Mount Temple's ethos states that:

*All of us are different, all of us are equal.*

*We respect this diversity. We work to create an environment in the school where all members of the school community feel safe and protected, and enjoy learning, teaching, working and extra-curricular activities. We expect tolerance, politeness, courtesy, co-operation and respect for others and their property.*

Mount Temple recognises that traumatic events – such as suicide or the death of a student, staff member or parent – can have a major effect on the school community. A tragedy outside the school community may also affect school life and incidents not involving death may have considerable impact.

### Definition of a Critical Incident

The staff and management of Mount Temple 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*

This policy provides a framework for dealing with any incident or sequence of events which overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of the school. It is based on the values set out above and aims 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.

Mount Temple has also formulated a number of policies and procedures to be followed with a view to ensuring the physical and psychological safety of both staff and students during the normal course of the school day and in the event of a critical incident e.g. Health and Safety Policy, Anti Bullying Policy, Code of Behaviour, Child Protection, etc.

## **2. Critical Incident Management Response Team**

The Response Team is a core group that will provide direction, guidance, containment and support when a critical incident occurs. The response team is assembled by the Principal with members selected on a voluntary basis. Roles are retained for at least one school year. Members may include the Principal, Deputy Principals, Chaplain, Guidance Counsellors, Year Heads, Form Teachers, SNAs and other staff or members of the school community as appropriate. 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.

## **3. Incident Prevention and Management**

Guidelines for identifying and assisting students at risk and for responding to and managing critical incidents are set out in the **Appendix**. However, an overall approach is already followed in the school community. The core values of the school – as outlined in the mission and vision statement above and articulated in the Learning Policy – mean that Mount Temple strives to be a supportive, respectful, caring place for all.

The following, while not exhaustive, are key elements in a school-based approach to prevention and management of critical incidents.

- Pastoral care of at-risk students, including through the pastoral care system (form teachers, year heads) and the care team. The care system in place in the school uses the NEPS "Continuum of Support" approach<sup>1</sup>.
- Provision of counselling and psychological support, both within the school and through outside referral.
- The deepening of religious faith and other beliefs and value systems and the appreciation of the meaning of life, especially through religious education classes, assemblies and acts of worship.
- The promotion and development of positive personal and mental health, especially in SPHE classes by addressing issues such as 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 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.
- Adherence to the school's Health and Safety Policy.
- Staff are informed about how to access support for themselves.
- In-service training provision for staff.
- Staff are informed in the area of suicide awareness and some are trained in interventions for suicidal students.

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<sup>1</sup> NEPS available at: <https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/National-Educational-Psychological-Service-NEPS-/Student-Support-File-Guidelines.pdf> Also Student Support Teams in Post-Primary Schools 2014 available at: [https://www.education.ie/en/ScSee/DES/CSec/DES/Circular/0023/2010/Post-Primary/ircular\\_0023/2010/Post-Primary/Schools-Colleges/Services/National-Educational-Psychological-Service-NEPS-/Student-Support-Teams-in-Post-Primary-Schools.pdf](https://www.education.ie/en/ScSee/DES/CSec/DES/Circular/0023/2010/Post-Primary/ircular_0023/2010/Post-Primary/Schools-Colleges/Services/National-Educational-Psychological-Service-NEPS-/Student-Support-Teams-in-Post-Primary-Schools.pdf)

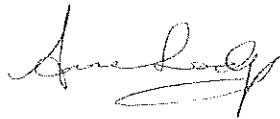
- The school has developed links with a range of external agencies – DNEDATF, Mater, CAMHS, NEPS, Jigsaw, Pieta House.
- Other initiatives, such as Rainbows, dealing with support for those suffering bereavement and loss.
- Inputs to students by external providers are carefully considered in the light of criteria about student safety, the appropriateness of the content, and the expertise of the providers.<sup>2</sup>
- The school has a clear policy on bullying and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy.
- All School Trips are carried out in accordance with the Trip policy.

#### 4. Policy Evaluation

This policy should be reviewed regularly and following a critical incident.

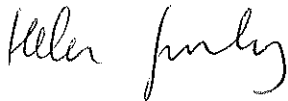
Date of next review: 2022 (or following practice evacuation/lockdown)

Signed:



Rev. Professor Anne Lodge  
Chair of Mount Temple Board of Management  
Date: 3/2/20

Signed:



Ms. Helen Gormley  
Principal  
Date: 3/2/20

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<sup>2</sup> DES Circular 0023/2010 (Post-Primary) available at:  
<https://sphe.ie/downloads/Circulars/DES%20CIRCULAR-0023%20APRIL%202010.pdf>

# Appendices

## APPENDIX I Critical Incident Management Guidelines

### 1. Prevention

#### 1.1 Identifying students at risk

Every member of staff can contribute to identifying students at risk. As they are in daily contact with the students, teachers are best placed to observe potential warning signs of suicidal or self-harming behaviour. In outlining the following signs, it is important to remember that no one factor can offer conclusive evidence, but may be indicative of a student in need.

- Significant change in behaviour, particularly if the student becomes withdrawn
- A fall-off in school performance
- Substance and alcohol abuse
- Episodes of anxiety and depression
- Withdrawal from favourite activities
- Risk-taking or aggressive behaviour evident in the classroom context
- Recent loss or break-up of a close relationship
- Expressing feelings of failure, uselessness, hopelessness or loss of self-esteem - these may be manifest in the written or art work of the student
- Unusual neglect of personal appearance and hygiene
- Preoccupation with or statements about suicide
- Change from depression to sudden elation and no longer preoccupied with suicide

#### 1.2 Referral of student at risk of suicide

Initially, the student will be referred promptly by a staff member to the Guidance Counsellors or Principal. Other staff may also initiate or support referral. In some instances, students may refer themselves directly to the Principal or Guidance Counsellors.

Following initial referral, contact will be made with a parent or guardian, GP, mental health service, social worker, child psychologist/counsellor and NEPS psychologist as appropriate. A fast-track approach must be used through the referral process.

Students may be referred for professional help outside the school and parental liaison with the school, through the Year Head and Guidance Counsellors, is highly desirable.

### 2. Response and Management

After a tragedy or critical incident, the following guidelines should be followed.

#### 2.1 Team Leader - Principal

- Confirm death or incident has occurred – establish and verify the facts
- Mobilise the Response Team, convene meeting, consider appropriate responses and co-ordinate tasks of team.
- Liaise with the Board of Management; DES; NEPS; SEC and external agencies
- Liaise with the bereaved family, express sympathy and assure them of the school's support
- Coordinates the involvement of external agencies

### **Garda liaison : Principal**

- Liaise with the Gardaí
- Verify accuracy of information about deaths or other developments before it is shared

### **Staff liaison: Principal**

- Brief staff generally on facts as known, provide opportunity for staff to express their feelings and ask questions, outline the plan of action for the day.
- Meet with key staff who can offer student support and decide the format for this
- Is alert to vulnerable staff members and makes contact with them individually to give support eg recently bereaved members of staff or those who have had experience of suicide or sudden death in their family
- 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.
- Advises staff of the availability of the EAS and provides the contact number.
- Manages the 'consent' issues in accordance with agreed school policy
- Ensures that sample letters are typed up, on the school's system ready for adaptation

### **Media liaison: Principal**

- 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 prepare a press statement if appropriate, give media briefings and interviews (as agreed by school management)

### **2.2 Student liaison: Year Head, Guidance Counsellors**

- 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

### **2.3 Parent liaison: Chaplain**

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

#### **2.4 Community/agency liaison: Secretarial Staff**

- 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

#### **Administrator Secretarial Staff**

- 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 school's system in advance and ready for adaptation
- Prepares and sends out letters, emails and texts
- Photocopies materials needed
- Maintains records

#### **2.5 Overall Response Team**

- Meet to consider appropriate response
- Prepare a short statement for classes, including a short prayer/reflection if appropriate
- Decide a strategy for communicating and for supporting those who are to deliver the message
- Designate a room(s) for traumatised students to meet with the Chaplain, Guidance Counsellors, Form Teachers or Year Head
- Help to identify vulnerable students and how onward referrals are made
- Assist in drafting an appropriate letter to parents regarding the death or incident and deciding school arrangements
- Consider school involvement in the funeral, respecting family wishes eg guard of honour, readers, prayers
- Liaise with HSE personnel and NEPS psychologist if desired
- At time of inquest, anniversary or significant dates, recognise the support needs of the family and school friends eg arrange family visit a few days prior

#### **2.6 Teaching Staff**

- Read announcement from the Response Team, using the deceased person's name
- Acknowledge the deceased in class. Have a moment's silence or say a short prayer.
- Do not speculate about the death with students. Give honest answers. All questions put by students should be acknowledged. See Critical Incident Folder.
- The topic of suicide may arise and should be addressed, but teachers must keep the focus on suicide in general and not on the death of the specific person. Do not get drawn into arguments with anyone who believes suicide 'is a brave and noble act'. Focus on the loss and pain of those left behind. Discuss normal grief reactions and what students might expect over the following days. Reassure students that anger, guilt, and tears are all part of a normal response.

- Be alert to any mention of copycat tendencies or mention of similar incidents from the recent past and bring such matters to the attention of the Principal, Year Head or Guidance Counsellor
- Avoid 'I know how you feel' statements
- Encourage students to be supportive of each other
- Teachers should feel free to express their own feelings, as professionally appropriate
- Advise students of teachers who are available to help them deal with their fears and worries
- Identify and notify the Response Team of vulnerable students or students who are distressed. These students may need individual support
- Parents or guardians of distressed students should be contacted and advised of the situation before the end of the school day

### **2.7 Special Needs Assistants**

SNAs have a strong, decisive role to play in crisis intervention and may be the closest staff to a student. SNA members of the response team, and other SNAs, will be an integral part of the response, and will be supported in this role.

### **2.8 Other Staff**

Administrative, caretaking and canteen staff also have a crucial role to play in any post-crisis intervention. They will be informed by the Principal or Response Team of the facts of an incident and the messages to students, parents and others in the school community. Appropriate support will also be provided.

### **2.9 State Examinations**

If a critical incident occurs during state examinations, the school will mobilise the Response Team and give support to students as in term time, where practicable.

### **2.10 Outside School Term**

If a critical incident occurs during a holiday period, the school will, if judged appropriate by the Principal or Deputy Principals, contact Response Team members and carry out the following.

- Verify the facts.
- Express sympathy to family and assure them of the support of the school.
- Prepare a statement for the media if appropriate.
- Try and arrange for key members of staff to attend the funeral.
- Consider the involvement of prefects or other students as appropriate eg readings, prayers, guard of honour.
- Prepare a plan for the support of vulnerable students on return to school.

### **Record Keeping**

In the event of an incident each member of the team will keep records of phone calls made and received, letters sent and received, meetings held, persons met, interventions used, material used etc.

*The school secretarial staff* 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 *Mount Temple Comprehensive* 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.



## APPENDIX 2

<b>Critical Incident Rooms</b> In the event of a critical incident, the following rooms are designated for the indicated purposes	
<b>Room Name:</b>	<b>Designated Purpose:</b>
<i>Staff Room</i>	Main room for meeting staff
<i>Classrooms, Counselling Rooms</i>	Meetings with students
<i>YH Room Staff quiet Area Library</i>	Meetings with parents
<i>Principal's Office</i>	Meetings with media
<i>Counselling rooms</i>	Individual sessions with students
<i>Library</i>	Meetings with other visitors

APPENDIX III

<b>Critical Incident Management Team</b>		
<b>Role</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Phone</b>
<b>Team leader:</b>	<i>Principal</i>	
<b>Deputy Team Leader</b>	<i>Deputy Principal</i>	
<b>Garda liaison</b>	<i>Principal</i>	
<b>Staff liaison</b>	<i>Principal</i>	
<b>Student liaison</b>	<i>Guidance Counsellors Year Head Coordinator</i>	
<b>Parent liaison</b>	<i>Chaplain</i>	
<b>Media liaison</b>	<i>Principal</i>	
<b>Administrator &amp; Community Liaison</b>	<i>School Secretarial Staff</i>	

## APPENDIX IV - Plan of action

### Short term actions – Day 1

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

### 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	
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

## APPENDIX V

<b>EMERGENCY CONTACT LIST</b>	
<b>AGENCY</b>	<b>CONTACT NUMBERS</b>
Garda	Clontarf 01 6664800 Head office 01 666000
Hospital	Beaumont 01 8093000 Temple St 01 8784200
Fire Brigade	01 2224000
Local GPs	
HSE	Ballymun 8467000 Summerhill 01 9211500
Community Care Team	Summerhill Tel: 01 921 1500
Child and Family Centre	Ballymun Joy McGlynn 01 8467129
Child and Family Mental Health Service (CAMHS)	North Inner City 01 879 6800 Darndale (01) 8771552 Ballymun 01 846 7219
School Inspector	
NEPS Psychologist	Dublin Region 0761 108673
DES	Damage to schools Deirdre Bane 057 9324442 Evelyn Lynam 057 9324348
Board of Management	Rev Anne Lodge
Clergy	Rev Lorraine Richie Rev Lesley Robinson

State Exams Commission	0906442700 Reasonable Accomodation 090 6442782
Employee Assistance Service	1800 411 057

Parents' Association	
Dublin North East Drugs and Alcohol Task Force	8465070
Jigsaw	8465070

Pieta House (Santry) Pieta House (Collins Ave)	8831000 8840532
Declan Reddy (External Counsellor)	087-----
ASTI	6040160

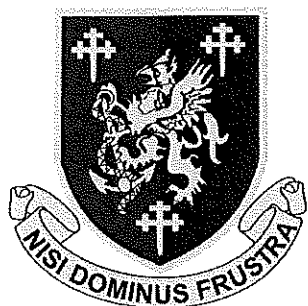
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## Review and Research

The CIMT have consulted resource documents available to schools on [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie) and [www.nosp.ie](http://www.nosp.ie) including:

- Responding to Critical Incidents Guidelines and Resources for Schools (NEPS 2016)
- 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)

## APPENDIX VI – Evacuation Procedure



On hearing the fire alarm the following must be procedure must be followed:

### Students

- Do not panic
- Place and leave bags etc on desks to keep the floor clear.
- Exit the room through the designated fire route, this may be at the back of the classroom.
- Proceed to the Assembly Point, walking quietly in single file and in an orderly manner.
- On arrival at the Assembly Point line up in your form group alphabetically, facing away from the school building.
- If you notice that anyone is missing inform your tutor straight away.
- Keep quiet so that you can hear the roll call and any announcements.
- Do not re-enter the school building until you have been told to do so.
- Make your way back to class using the quickest possible route.

### Staff

- Instruct students to pick up their bags and place them on top of their desks.
- Instruct students to move out of the room using the fire exit and to follow the fire evacuation route.
- Check the room is vacant and close windows and doors, DO NOT LOCK DOOR
- Monitor students on their way out to the Fire Assembly Point
- If you are a Form Tutor register with Pamela and collect your class roll sheet from the office staff.
- Complete and return, the roll sheet to the office staff.
- Inform the Principal or Deputy Principal if any student is missing.
- If you are not a Form Tutor, register with Pamela and help to ensure that students are co-operative and that they are standing in lines.
- If you are not teaching the lesson during the Fire alarm help to keep order when students and staff are instructed to return to class by remaining outside with students while those teaching return to their classroom.

## **APPENDIX VI – Lockdown Procedure**

In the event of an intruder entering the school, it is the responsibility of the member of staff who encounters the intruder to contact a member of the Critical Incident team by phone. The following lock down procedure will be implemented:

- i. A member of the Critical Incident Team will alert the school community of a 'lock down' incident by using the intercom system. The code 'Plan B' will be repeated three times.
- ii. A text message 'Plan B' will be sent (group text on Vsware) to all staff members.
- iii. Teachers will lock their classroom doors, switch off the lights and ensure students are not in front of windows and are behaving in a calm and quiet manner.
- iv. Teachers do not open their classroom doors until the All Clear has been given.
- v. Teachers not in classrooms e.g on pitches will go as quickly as possible to the changing rooms and lock the doors.
- vi. At the end of the lockdown incident a member of the Critical Incident Team will signal the environment is safe by intercom or a text message.
- vii. All staff and students will then assemble on the grass pitch for roll call.

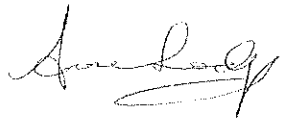


## Consultation and communication regarding the plan

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.

Reviewed and approved by the Board of Management of Mount Temple School.



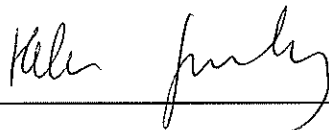
3/2/20

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Rev. Dr. Anne Lodge  
Chairperson of Board of Management

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Date



3/2/20

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Ms. Helen Gormley  
Principal, Mount Temple.

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Date

