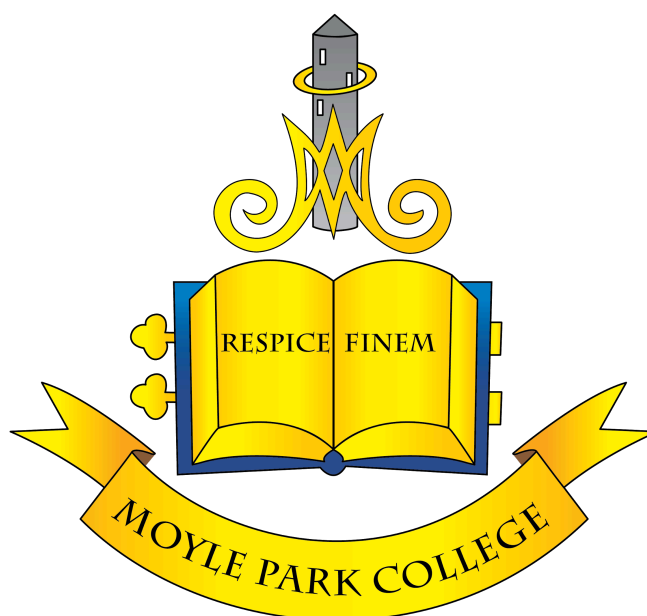


Moyle Park College



Critical Incident Policy

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1. Introduction

Moyle Park College aims to protect the wellbeing of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. The school has 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. This policy was drafted using the NEPS Guidelines and Resource Materials for Schools (DES, 2016)

2. Physical safety

The school has the following practices, procedures and policies in place to safeguard physical safety;

- Evacuation plan formulated
- Regular fire drills occur
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
- Defibrillator available in school and for school tours/ matches
- Supervision in the school
- First Aid Training provided annually to staff.
- School Code of Behaviour is implemented
- Health and Safety Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Child Safeguarding Statement
- Child Safeguarding Policy
- Risk Assessment carried out annually

3. Psychological safety

The management and staff of Moyle Park College 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; anti-bullying; decision making and prevention of alcohol and drug misuse. Promotion of mental health is an integral part of this provision
- Our Wellbeing programme hopes to grow happy, resilient and confident students who value themselves and also their wider community. We want our students to feel connected to and happy in Moyle Park College. Our Wellbeing programme is anchored with, yet not limited to, the following subjects: SPHE, Life Skills in 1st Year, PE, CSPE and Guidance in 3rd Year
- Staff have access to training for their role as SPHE teacher
- Staff are familiar with the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures
- The school has developed links with a range of external agencies.

The school has a clear policy on anti-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 in 2010 for post primary schools.
- Students who are identified as being at risk are referred to the designated staff member (e.g. guidance counsellor or support teacher), concerns are explored and the appropriate level of assistance and support is provided. Parents are informed, and where appropriate, a referral is made to an appropriate agency.
- Staff are informed about how to access support for themselves.

4. Types of a Critical Incidents

Moyle Park College recognises a critical incident to be “an incident or sequence of events that overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school”. Types of incidents might include but are not limited to:

- 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 school community
- Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism, etc.
- The disappearance of a member of the school community

The term ‘suicide’ will not be used without the consent of the family involved or until it has been established categorically that the person’s death was as a result of suicide. The term ‘tragic death’ or ‘sudden death’ should be used instead.

The personal impact of events can be influenced by the degree to which organisations are capable of handling such events. In addition to catering for the physical safety of staff, planning also needs to consider the psychosocial well-being of the school community.

It isn't possible to itemise every possible event. Some can be major, others relatively minor but the impact on individuals can vary enormously. Many incidents that appear to be relatively minor can have distressing consequences for those affected.

While an all-out response may not be necessary in some instances, there will be similarities in both the requirements for management and in the consequences for individuals and the school. Therefore, there is a need to develop a flexible approach to critical and stressful incidents.

By having a plan for dealing with any such incidents, members of the school community can have a role in minimising the impact and helping people return to normal as soon as possible.

The purpose of the plan is to:

- Maintain the normal functioning of the school
- Identify those at risk or in need of support
- Provide support for those who are traumatised or distressed.

5. 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 access to a critical incidence 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.

The Critical Incident Management Team

1. Niamh Cahalane - Principal
2. Christine Kilcoyne - Deputy Principal
3. Trevor Connolly - Deputy Principal
4. Sandra Murray - Guidance Counsellor
5. Tracy Doyle - Guidance Counsellor
6. Deirdre Geraghty - Administrator
7. Rachel Cooney & Laura Sutton -Administrator
8. Peter Gaffney - Caretaker
9. Seán Smith -Health & Safety Officer
10. Olivia Murphy - Chaplain
11. Relevant Year Head
12. Relevant Class Tutor

Staff and Board of Management will be informed of the composition of the CIMT at a meeting at the beginning of each academic year.

6. Roles of the Critical Incident Management Team

Principal (Team Leader)

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
- 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
- Deals with all correspondence with the parent body
- Liaises with the Gardaí
- Advises staff on the procedures for identification of vulnerable students
- Advises staff of the availability of the Employee Assistance Service and gives them the contact number

Staff/Garda liaison: (Deputy Principal 1)

Role

- Ensures that information about deaths or other developments is checked out for accuracy before being shared
- The care of students and staff immediately involved or affected in conjunction with the other Deputy Principal
- Provides materials for staff (from their critical incident folder)
- Keeps staff updated as the day progresses
- Provides opportunity for staff, members of the Board of Management and Parents Association representatives to attend information/training or meetings on issues such as suicide, dealing with grief and first aid.

Community/agency liaison (Deputy Principal 2)

Role

- 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
- Is alert to vulnerable staff members and makes contact with them individually

Student liaison (Year Head & Year Team)

Role

- Coordinates information from tutors and class teachers about students they are concerned about
- Identifying and monitoring students at risk
- Alerts other staff to vulnerable students (appropriately)
- Provides materials for students (from their critical incident folder)
- Assist with gathering accurate information about the incident
- Communication with parents and students
- Looks after setting up and supervision of ‘quiet’ room where agreed

Parent liaison (Counsellor & Management Team)

Role

- Visits the bereaved family with the team leader
- Outline services available to affected students during the first hours
- Arranges parent meetings in collaboration with the Principal
- The care of students and staff immediately involved or affected in conjunction with Deputy Principals
- The care of distressed visitors
- May facilitate such meetings, and manage ‘questions and answers’

- 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)
- Providing rooms for debriefing, parents, quiet room and counselling, reflection and prayer in collaboration with the Deputy Principals
- Liaising with external supports agencies e.g NEPS and the Health Service Executive)

Media liaison (Principal)

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)

Administrators

Role

- Maintenance of up to date telephone numbers and addresses of
 - Students
 - Parents or Guardians
 - Teachers & their Next of Kin details
 - 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
- Liaise with school tour and school trip organisers in compiling a list of students and staff involved in the trip or tour and their contact details as well as any medical information on students involved.
- Manages the 'consent' issues in accordance with agreed school policy

Health and Safety Officer

- Develop and implement clear policies to ensure the safety and well-being of all staff and students.
- Liaises with parents, staff, management, CIMT Team, AEN Team, Core Care Team, Year Teams and external agencies in the provision of their duties.

- Maintain a workplace that is safe and ensure that all areas are monitored. Assist in the preparation of a safety statement and update it annually and ensure that risk assessments are reviewed and updated annually in accordance with the Health and Safety Policy and Safety Statement.
- Assisting the Principal with reports to the Health and Safety Authority and other relevant agencies. Report serious accidents to the Principal, the Board of Management and the Health and Safety Authority.
- Prepare and update procedures to deal with an emergency and communicate these procedures to staff.

Caretaker

- Controlling access to the school premises.
- Maintaining security procedures.
- Maintaining services e.g. heating.
- Liaising with the Principal, Deputy Principals and other members of the Critical Incident Team to ensure the safety of staff and students.

7. Steps to be taken in the case of a school lockdown

If a stranger/shooter/uninvited person who is cause for concern enters the school building or the school grounds the following steps should be taken:

- The person who notices the intruder alerts the Principal/DPs or other senior member of staff. The Principal/ Deputy Principal/ or other senior member of staff enacts the Critical Incident Plan.
- The first senior responder calls 999 and explains the situation.
- A prearranged coded message is made to the school on the PA system to alert staff to the lockdown.
- The agreed coded phrase to alert the lockdown: is **'Code Blue' x 3 times**.
- A message stating **'All Clear' x 3 times** is made once the crisis has been averted.
- If the team does not have access to the intercom room, a message will be sent via text and via email to all staff.
- **Staff/teachers in classrooms/ PE Hall or other specialist rooms:**
Explain to the students that there is a person in the school who should not be there and that he/she is going to take some steps to ensure safety. They explain that students should remain calm and quiet and that the emergency services have been contacted. Explain that they must all remain in the classroom until the emergency services tell them that it is safe to leave.
The teacher should then:
 - Close or lock the door,
 - Close windows and blinds
 - Turn off the lights.
 - Teachers and students should take refuge under their tables.

- **Students/ staff members who are at the toilets:**
 - Lock the cubicle door, sit on the toilet and raise legs onto the toilet. Remain there until emergency services say it is safe to leave.
- **Staff members who are in the staffroom/office:**
 - Lock the door, close windows, take refuge under a table. Remain there until told it is safe to leave by emergency services.
- **Staff/students who are not in the building (PE/School tour):**
 - Contact will be made with the supervising teacher by one of the Deputy Principals to alert them of the lockdown.
 - Do not return to the school and explain to the students that they cannot return to the school at the current time and keep them calm.
 - If already on route back to the school, advise the bus driver to go to the carpark of the local Church in the village until they receive the ‘All Clear’ message from the DP.
- **Breaktime/lunchtime:**
 - If an intruder enters the school grounds, students should be instructed to return to the next class on their timetable. The class teachers will supervise students at this time.
- It will be important to follow the instructions of emergency services once they arrive.

8. Critical Incident Plan

Short-Term Actions (1st Day)

A checklist is provided at the end of this section. The procedures to be followed will depend on the particular incident that has occurred and the particular arrangements in place in a school.

1. Gather accurate information.

Make contact with the bereaved family

It is important to obtain accurate information about the incident; otherwise rumours will take over and add to the distress of those involved. Information should include;

- What happened, where and when?
- What is the extent of the injuries?
- What is the location of those injured and not injured?
- How many are involved and what are their names?
- Is there a risk of further injury?
- What agencies have been contacted already?
- Identify high-risk students

2. Contact appropriate agencies

- Emergency services
- Medical services
- Health Board Psychology Departments/Community Care Services
- NEPS
- BOM
- Trustees
- DES/Schools Inspector
- Report to Health and Safety Authority, if necessary

ENGAGE THE SUPPORT OF RELEVANT AGENCIES TO PROVIDE IMMEDIATE SUPPORT WHERE NECESSARY.

3. Convene a meeting with key staff/Critical Incident Management Team

A list of possible topics to be covered follows.

- Agreeing a statement of the facts for staff; students, parents and the media.
- Delegating responsibilities to the Critical Incident Management Team.
- Appointing someone to handle phone enquiries and to deal with the media.
- Ensuring that a phone line remains open and available for enquiries.
- Organising the timetable/routine for the day (Adhering to the normal school routine is important if this is possible).
- Organising a staff meeting, if appropriate.
- Organise a briefing of all relevant stakeholders.

4. Hold a staff meeting

All staff should be asked to attend, including auxiliary staff. The areas which might be covered are listed below.

- An account of the facts as known.
- An opportunity for staff to express their views and their feelings.
- Discussion with the staff about how the facts will be shared with the students. (There should be an agreed approach to this if possible).
- An outline of the routine for the day.
- Information for staff about which outside agencies have been contacted, or are involved and the support that will be put in place for both students and staff.
- A procedure for identifying vulnerable students.
- Distribution of relevant handout material

5. Organise timetable for the day/ supervision

AS FAR AS POSSIBLE MAINTAIN NORMAL ROUTINES.

6. Inform parents/guardians:

Children directly involved:

- Parents/guardians should be contacted as soon as possible, and this first contact will need to be handled with great sensitivity. The steps involved are set out below.
- Agree who should share information with parents and how this should be done.
- Make a list of parents/guardians who have been contacted and those who still need to be told to avoid duplication of messages.
- Give parents/guardians relevant and factual information.
- Set a room aside for distressed students to meet their parents/guardians.
- Provide support to parents who are on their own when they arrive at the school.
- Give telephone numbers for enquiries.

Students not directly involved:

- The parents of other students in the school should be informed of the incident and that their child may be upset.
- Send a letter to parents stating the facts and brief details of the incident. It may not be appropriate at this point to disclose the names of those involved. (See Appendix 1-3 for sample letter).

7. Inform students

- Careful preparation is important when meeting students to inform them of a critical incident.
- Consideration should be given to the age of the pupils and the optimum group size.
- It is best to do it in class groups or subgroups.
- The suitability of the 'messenger' should also be considered, remembering that it is generally thought that support is best given by the adults known to the child.
- Any outside 'expert' might help by assisting the people undertaking this task to prepare for it and by providing ongoing advice and support as they manage it.
- The nature of the event will clearly have an influence on how students are informed.
- The key points/actions in the process are listed below (in Appendix 9)
- Give facts and avoid speculation. This will help to dispel rumours, which can cause unnecessary stress.
- Allow pupils to ask questions, tell their story and express feelings.
- Help students realise that overwhelming emotions are natural and normal following a critical incident.

8. Organise the reunion of students with their parents, if necessary

- Inform students that their parents/guardians will be collecting them as soon as possible.
- Facilitate distressed students and their parents by providing a private room where they can meet following an incident. This could be a very emotional time.
- Where appropriate offer help with transport, especially for younger children.

9. Make contact with affected/bereaved family if appropriate

10. Report to the Health and Safety Authority where appropriate

Dealing with the media

Prepare a written statement to include:

- The facts about the incident
- What has been done already
- What is going to be done
- Positive information or comments about the deceased person.

All staff are requested to adhere to the school's policy on communicating with the media.

Only the designated person(s) may give interviews, comment, respond to queries, speak to roving reporters at gate or in car park, post on digital media or social media.

Medium-term Actions (24-72 hours)

- Convene a meeting of the Critical Incident Management Team to review the events of the first 24 hours to delegate responsibilities.
- Arrange support for students, staff and parents.
- Update staff, students and the Students' Council.
- Update the DES, the BOM, the Trustees, the Parent's Association and the relevant external agencies.
- Liaise with the family and clarify the school's involvement in funeral / memorial services.
- Plan visits to the injured/family if appropriate
- Confirm the statement for the media, where necessary.
- Plan for the reintegration of students and staff
- Assess the roles of the BOM, the Parents' Association and the Student' Council.
- Consider the legal and financial consequences.

Long Term Actions

- Monitor students and staff for signs of continuing distress.
- Plan the long-term counselling needs of individuals.
- Plan for anniversaries and memorials.
- Evaluate the school's response to the critical incident and amend the Critical Incident Policy appropriately.
- Evaluate the effect on the student / teacher relationships.
- Evaluate the long-term effect on the educational progress of students.
- Ensure the new staff are aware of the Critical Incident Policy and are informed of which students / staff members were affected in any recent incident.
- Ensure that a report is sent to the new school when a student is transferring.

- Evaluate the legal and financial consequences.
- Report to the BOM, the Trustees, the Parents' Association and the DES.

Monitoring, Review and Evaluation

The Critical Incident Policy Committee will review the policy in September of each new school year as an induction for new staff and before the formation of a new Board of Management.

Ongoing review and evaluation will take cognisance of changing information, legislation, developments in the school-based programme and feedback from parents / guardians, teachers and students.

The policy will be revised as necessary in the light of such review and evaluation and within the framework of school planning.

Appendix 1 – Letter to parents regarding a sudden death/accident.

Dear Parents

It is with great sadness that we inform you of a tragic event that has happened. The school has experienced (the sudden death, accidental injury, etc.) of *Name of student(s)*. We are deeply saddened by the deaths/events. Our thoughts are with (*family name*).

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 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 him/her to express feelings.

All children are different and will express their feelings in different ways. Over the course of the coming days, please keep an eye on your child and allow him/her to express their feelings without criticism.

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

(Optional) An information night for parents is planned for (date, time and place). At that time, further information about how to help children in grief will be given.

We have enclosed some contact numbers of outside agencies which you may 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*).

Principal

Appendix 2: Letter to parents regarding a violent death

Dear Parents

It is with great sadness that we inform you of a tragic event that has happened. *A child/young person from the neighbourhood, who is the brother of _____, a student here at school, has died 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 ongoing basis today. Other support personnel (*including psychologists etc, according to actual arrangements*) are available to advise staff in their support of students. 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. 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 they will regret later.

In these times, young people tend to turn to social media to see what others are saying, or to find out more. While social media can be of great consolation, we would urge you to reinforce the need to be extremely sensitive around what your son/daughter might post to others.

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

Principal

Appendix 3: Letter to parents regarding death of a member of staff

Date XXXX

Dear Parents,

It is with great sadness that I am contacting you. We are deeply saddened to have received the news this morning of the sudden death of one of our most esteemed colleagues, XXXX.

Our thoughts are with XXXX's family at this very sad time. XXXX will be deeply missed by all his/her family, friends, colleagues and students.

We will share further information with the school community at a future stage if circumstances permit.

Principal

Appendix 4: Interactions with the media/Social media/website etc

My name is (*Name*) and I am the principal of Moyle Park College. We learned this morning of the death of (one of our students or *Name* of student). This is a terrible tragedy for _____ family (ies), 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 was a (*X*th year) 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 has implemented our Critical Incident Management Plan.

Psychologists from the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) and (insert other information if relevant) have been with us all day supporting and advising teachers in their efforts to assist our students at this time. The teachers have been helping students to deal with the tragic event. The school has been 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.

Principal

Appendix 5: Breaking the news and recovery

- The class teacher, class tutor or other teacher who knows the students should be the person to inform them of the events and lead the classroom session.
- If the teacher feels uncomfortable with this role another staff member may share the task. Teachers should have the opportunity to opt out of this work if they feel unable to handle it and other arrangements should be made for that class group.
- The aim of the session is to break the news to give the students an opportunity to discuss what has happened and to express their thoughts and feelings in a secure environment. The teacher needs to listen and be empathic.
- The session should be age appropriate.

Step 1: Giving the facts and dispelling rumours.

Tell the students in a calm, low key and factual voice

What has happened -

Who was involved -

When it happened -

The plan for the day

Sample Script

I have something very sad I want to share with you. (name of student), who attends our school and was missing, has been found. You will probably be aware, through social media, that he is dead. Yesterday, the Gardaí found his body. They are investigating what has happened and will let us know as soon as they find out more information.

I am feeling very sad about what's happened. Let's spend some time together now helping each other to talk about how we feel about what has happened.

Step 2: Sharing stories

Take some time for discussion. Students may wish to tell their story of the event. As a result they will feel less alone because of their common shared experiences. Assisting them to verbalise their experiences helps their recovery. For those students who find it difficult to verbalise their

experiences, or for students with learning difficulties, it may be helpful to allow them to express their feelings and recount their experiences in other ways. Writing stories or using art can be particularly helpful, especially for younger students.

Sample script

To help us today, we are going to make a memory box for (name of deceased). You can draw a picture of a time you remember with (name of the deceased) or write a poem or a letter to him. If you like we can put these in a nice box and give it to (name of deceased) family sometime soon. This will help them to see how important (name of deceased) was.

Step 3: Normalising the reactions

Tell the children that they will all react differently to what has happened and that there is no right or wrong way. List some possible feelings and reactions. Explain that their reactions are normal responses to abnormal circumstances. Let the students know that the reactions or symptoms will go away in time. Tell them that if the symptoms haven't gone after a few weeks, they should let you or their parents know. In addition to conversations they may have with friends on social media they may need to talk to someone in person about how they are feeling.

Step 4: Advising about Social Media Usage

Discussions may begin with an outline of the various social media currently being used by members of the group. The value of these as a way of keeping in contact with and supporting friends should be acknowledged. Students may be asked for experiences of ways in which such communication has helped them as well as examples of ways in which it has gone wrong. Media involving live communication are generally more conducive to support and less open to misunderstanding than text-based means. Students will be encouraged to consider how much social media usage is too much, particularly late into the night.

Step 5: Empowerment

Help the students to identify strategies that they might use to help manage their reaction, for example, talking to family and friends, getting enough sleep, taking plenty of exercise and

appropriate use of social media - may all help. If appropriate, students can share strategies that have helped them in the past

Step 6: Free Time

After the discussion the teacher may want to allow the student's some free time.

Step 7 Recovery

Normal routines should generally be returned to as soon as possible.

- Students should be encouraged to resume sports and other extra-curricular activities
- Help students to identify or establish some supports; help them to identify who they go to for different kinds of help
- It is appropriate that the class curriculum is adjusted or adapted. For example, teachers should avoid presenting new learning material for a while following an incident as concentration may be impaired
- Use opportunities which arise within ordinary class work, where coping and support can be reinforced
- Students could be encouraged to discuss how to avoid future crisis and lessons learnt from their experiences. There will also be opportunities for structured discussion within the school's social, personal, and health education programmes. Social Personal & Health Education (SPHE) curriculum time is an ideal context in which to offer support.

Appendix 6: Information for teachers and parents regarding adolescent's comprehension of death

Adolescents

- Fully understand the finality, universality and inevitability of death. Their experience of death is similar to adults
- May have a range of feelings: guilt, regret, anger, loneliness etc.
- Death adds to the already confused array of emotions experienced by adolescents
- May appear to not care about the death
- May seek support outside of the family.

How you can help

- *Offer them time to listen*
- *Allow them to express their grief in their own way*
- *Be prepared for mood swings.*
- *Don't feel left out if they seem to value their friends more than their parents*
- *Children's use of social media should be monitored and supported by parents.*

If parents are grieving themselves, they may be emotionally unable to support their other children. In this instance, another supportive adult in the child's life, e.g. other family members, friends, neighbours may need to offer emotional support.

It should be remembered that for children with special educational needs, their understanding of what has happened will be in line with their developmental age.

Stages of grief

Grief is a normal, healthy and predictable response to loss. Although there are distinct phases in the grieving process, people go through these stages in different sequences and at different paces. Generally the grieving process in adults is thought to take about two years, while with children and adolescents it may be over a more extended time-frame with different issues arising as they go through developmental milestones.

Denial, numbness, shock (up to 6 weeks)

- Death of the person may be denied
- Emerging feelings may be suppressed
- Refusal to talk about the death
- Bereaved keeps very busy to avoid thinking about the death
- Bereaved may show signs of confusion and forget everyday routines
- Children in shock may display either silent withdrawal or outbursts of crying

Acute grief/searching and longing for deceased (6 weeks to 4 months)

- Acute sadness – crying
- Physical pangs of pain including loss of appetite and disturbed sleep
- Emotional pain accompanied by dejection, hopelessness, lack of concentration
- Fears of life after death, nightmares, ghosts
- Disorganisation
- Strong guilt feelings and questioning of self and others, particularly in the case of a sudden death
- Feelings of anger at the departed for leaving them
- Bereaved may reject offers to comfort them

Adaptation to life without the deceased (6 months to 18 months)

- People begin to adjust to their lives without the person who is gone
- Sense of isolation
- Fearful of forgetting the deceased
- Less crying and irritability
- Exacerbation of existing personality problems. Children with low self-esteem may be at a greater risk of emotional/behavioural difficulties

Normalisation of life

- Getting on with life
- Returned sense of humour and play
- Able to participate emotionally in new relationships
- Changed relationship with the deceased – able to think of the deceased without pain
- Reduction in physical/emotional symptoms
- Less guilt

Appendix 7: Handouts For Students

How To Cope When Something Terrible Happens

- Reach out – people do care
- Talk to your friends, family and teachers - talking is the most healing medicine
- Remember you are normal and having normal reactions – don't label yourself as crazy or mad
- It is ok to cry
- It is ok to smile
- If your feelings and reactions seem different from those of your friends, remember everyone reacts differently
- When the stress level is high there is a temptation to try to numb the feelings with alcohol and drugs. This complicates the problems, rather than relieving them
- Some people find that writing or drawing is helpful. What about writing a note or letter to the family of the person who died or the person themselves?
- Spend time with people who have a positive influence on you
- Make as many daily decisions as possible. This will give you a feeling of control over your life, e.g. if someone asks you what you want to eat – answer them, even if you're not sure
- Recurring thoughts, dreams or flashbacks are normal – don't try to fight them – they'll decrease over time and become less painful
- Make a special effort to take care of yourself during this time. Try to get some extra sleep, eat nutritious foods and get some exercise, even if it is just a walk
- Sticking to your “normal” routine helps. Structure your time – keep busy
- Take time out – go for a walk or kick a football
- Provide some balance to the negative things that have gone on by doing something special or fun for yourself. Think about something that makes you feel good. Then make it happen – like going to the cinema, listening to music, calling a friend, etc.
- Laughter is good medicine. Watch funny movie or play a silly game with younger children to lighten your spirits

Reactions To A Critical Incident

Following the recent sad event, you may now be experiencing some strong emotional or physical reactions. There is no ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ way to feel but here is a list of difficulties that people sometimes experience following such an event: FEELINGS

FEELINGS	BEHAVIOURAL
Fear Guilt Shame Regret Anger Tearfulness Loneliness Anxiety Mood swings Shock Yearning Numbness Confusion Isolation Insecurity	Nightmares Social withdrawal Over reliance on use of social media Irritability Loss of concentration Forgetfulness Physical/Verbal aggression Misuse of drugs, including alcohol
PHYSICAL	THOUGHTS
Tiredness Sleeplessness Headaches Stomach Problems Bowel/Bladder problems Loss or increase in appetite	Disbelief Denial Sense of unreality Preoccupation with images of the event/person

Appendix 8 – USEFUL CONTACT NUMBERS- needs checking and updating

AGENCY	CONTACT NUMBERS
AN GARDA SÍOCHÁNA	Clondalkin 01-6667600
HOSPITAL	Tallaght 01-4142000 St. James 01-4103000
CHERRY ORCHARD	Family Centre 01-6206000 Child Protection 01-6206388 Bridge House 01-6206493 Duty Social Worker 01-62906387
FIRE BRIGADE	Tallaght 01-2224000
CAMHS	01 867 6315
JIGSAW	Clondalkin 01- 5380087
TUSLA	01-8567704
Education Welfare Officer	Eamon Regan 087-6825293
Child Guidance Clinic Clondalkin	Tom Breen 01-4642504
NEPS PSYCHOLOGIST	Name 087207516
NEPS	Head Office 01-8892700
PIETA HOUSE	Ballyfermot 01-6235606 Lucan 01-6010000
TEENLINE	1800 83 36 34
AWARE	1890 30 33 02
FOCUS IRELAND	Main Office 01-6712555 Helpline 1800 724 724
SAMARITANS	1850 60 90 90
BARNARDOS	Bereavement Counselling 01-4530355
COYLE HAMILTON WILLIS INSURANCE BROKERS	01-6616211
ASTI	01-6040160
TUI	01-4922588

PARISH PRIEST/CLERGY - Fr Brian	01 4593520
DES COMMUNICATION UNIT	01-8734700
STATE EXAMS COMMISSION	090-6442700
EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE SERVICE	1800 411 057
TOP SECURITY - FIRE ALARM	014900333 - password
CONSOLE (BEREAVEMENT)	1800 201890