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## **Critical Incident Policy for Lavalley N.S.**

### **Introduction**

This policy was drafted by the staff of the school and ratified by the Board of Management, with reference to *"When Tragedy Strikes"* (Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO), 2000) and *"Responding to Critical Incidents"* (National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)). A review of the policy will take place as and when necessary. It is envisaged that the outcomes will lead to a revision of the policy and changes to specific practices as appropriate.

### **Policy Rationale**

The need for the Lavalley N.S. to devise a critical incident policy is primarily to ensure the welfare of the children and staff during and following a critical incident.

### **Aims and Objectives**

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

The aims and objectives of this policy are, to provide guidelines for critical incident management in school, which enable staff to respond quickly and effectively while at the same time maintaining a sense of control, and ensure that normality returns as soon as possible so that the effects on the children and staff are minimised.

### **Critical Incident Management Team**

**The Critical Incident Management Team will consist of members of the Board of Management, the Principal and school teaching staff. The main functions of the**

**Management Team are in the areas of leadership, communication, the provision of counselling services, pastoral care and family liaison.**

### Leadership

- Confirm the event. (Principal/Deputy Principal)
- Inform the Board of Management. (Principal/Deputy Principal)
- Convene the Critical Incident Management Team. (Principal/Deputy Principal)
- Contact the relevant parties. (Critical Incident Management Team)
- Clarify facts surrounding the event. (Critical Incident Management Team)
- Decide how news will be communicated to different groups (staff, children, outside agencies and bodies, media etc.). (Critical Incident Management Team)
- Make contact with relevant agencies. (Critical Incident Management Team)
- Ensure provision of ongoing support to staff and children. (Critical Incident Management Team)
- Facilitate any appropriate memorial events. (Critical Incident Management Team)
- Review and evaluate plan (Principal/Deputy Principal & Board of Management)

### Communication

- Prepare a public statement.
- Organise a designated room to address the media promptly, if necessary.
- Ensure the telephone lines are free for outgoing and important incoming calls.
- Review and evaluate effectiveness of communication response.

### Student Liaison / Counselling

- Address the immediate needs of the children and staff.
- Outline specific services available in school.
- Put in place clear referral procedures.
- Provide information and counselling.
- Provide ongoing support to vulnerable children and staff.
- Monitor the children/class most affected.
- Review and evaluate the Critical Incident Plan.

### Pastoral Role

- Visit the home(s), if appropriate.
- Assist with prayer services, if appropriate.
- Make contact with local clergy, if appropriate.
- Arrange for the provision of spiritual support to children and staff, if appropriate.
- Provide follow-up support to family.
- Review and evaluate the Critical Incident Plan.

### Family Liaison Role

- Coordinate contact with the family, following initial contact by the Principal.
- Consult with the family around the involvement of the school in, e.g. the funeral service.
- Assist with all communication in relation to parents/guardians of any child affected by the critical incident
- Provide ongoing support to bereaved family.
- Involve, as appropriate, the family in school liturgies/memorial services.

- Facilitate a link between family and support agencies/bodies.
- Review and evaluate the Critical Incident Plan.

## **Action Plan**

### **Short-Term Actions**

- Convene a meeting of the Critical Incident Management Team and allocate roles and responsibilities.
- Initiate immediate contact with the family /families.
- Establish the facts and compile an accurate account of what happened.
- Designate a media spokesperson from the school.
- Designate, as required, a quiet place for children and staff, e.g. a Reflection Room and a Meeting Room.
- Consult with outside bodies / agencies.
- Visit the family / families.
- Consult with the family regarding appropriate support from the school, e.g. funeral service.

### **Medium-Term Actions**

- Prepare children and staff for religious service, if appropriate.
- Facilitate school's responses, e.g. sympathy cards, flowers, book of condolence etc.
- Arrange on-going support for individual children, groups of children and parents, if necessary.
- Plan for the re-integration of children and staff, e.g. absentees, injured, siblings, close relatives etc.

### **Long-Term Actions**

- Monitor children and staff for signs of continuing distress.
- Evaluate the school's response to the incident and amend the Critical Incident Plan appropriately.
- Formalise the Critical Incident Plan for the future Inform new staff/new school pupils of incident, on a need to know basis.
- Plan a school memorial service
- Decide on appropriate ways to mark anniversaries.

This policy was reviewed on \_\_\_\_\_

**Ratified by the Board of Management**

**on** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
**(Chairperson, Board of Management)**

