

Critical Incident Management Policy

Ratified at BOM Meeting on 17th January 2024

Signed: Chairperson of Board of Management

Signed: Principal

Date:

Date of next review: January 2025

Critical Incident Management Policy

Rush and Lusk Educate Together N.S. aims to protect the well-being of our children and staff by providing a safe, respectful and nurturing environment at all times, as outlined in our school Mission and Vision statements. The Board of Management initially ratified this Critical Incident Management Policy on 23rd February 2011. The policy was reviewed and updated in October 2014, March 2017, June 2020 and subsequently in February 2023. Several resource documents provided to schools were utilised in redrafting, with the key one being “Responding to Critical Incidents; NEPS Guidelines and Resource Materials for Schools” (2016).

Definition of a ‘critical incident’

The staff and management 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 incident might include:

- the death of a member of our school community through accident, violence, suicide or other unexpected death
- an intrusion into the school
- an accident involving members of the school community
- serious damage to the school building (eg. fire, vandalism)
- a serious public health issue, impacting on the school community.

Aim

The aim of the Critical Incident Management policy is

- to help the school management 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 children and staff
- to help ensure that the effects on the children and staff will be limited
- to enable us to effect a return to normality as soon as possible.

As a school our aim is to create a coping, supportive and caring ethos. We have put systems in place for prevention, and also to build resilience in both staff and children, 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

- The school has a Health and Safety statement which is reviewed as needs arise.
- Fire drills occur at least once per term.
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked.
- The BoM ensures that an adequate number of staff members have First Aid training.
- Staff supervision at all entry points and pedestrian crossings where necessary.
- The playground is supervised by teaching staff and SNAs during break times throughout the day.
- External doors are kept closed during school hours, except during break times and when a class is at PE. Access to the building is not allowed unless a person has presented himself/herself at reception.
- The playground rules are revised with the children at the beginning of every new term.
- Children are regularly reminded to move calmly around the school, to use the stairs in a safe way and to hold doors open for others.

Psychological safety

The management and staff aim to use available programmes and resources to address the personal and social development of children, to enhance a sense of safety and security in the school and to provide opportunities for reflection and discussion. These include the following:

- Social, Personal and Health Education 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, prevention of alcohol and drug misuse. Promotion of mental health is an integral part of this provision.
- The staff has access to training for their role in SPHE.
- The staff is familiar with the Child Protection Procedures (2023) and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures. All teaching staff are aware of their role as mandated persons.
- The school has an Anti-Bullying policy and deals with bullying in accordance with this.
- Children who are identified as being at risk are monitored by the class teacher/SEN teacher in conjunction with the Principal. 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 (eg. CAHMS).
- Staff are informed about how to access support for themselves through Spectrum Life (24/7 free phone helpline).

Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)

A CIMT has been established in line with best practice. The members of the team are drawn from the In-school Management Team, together with members of the Board of Management. Where possible, they will retain their roles from January 2024 – November 2027. The members of the team meet annually to review and update the policy and plan. They also will meet in the event of a Critical Incident.

Role	Person	Deputy	
Leadership and Staff Liaison	Noel Reilly Lesley Smyth	Helen O'Reilly	
Communication	Simon McConkey	Sinead McDyer	Margaret Hennessy/ Acting APII
Child Liaison / Counselling	Irene McCormack	Conor Bredin	Marian O' Brien
Family / Community Liaison	Noel Reilly Helen O'Reilly Anna Drennan Michael Kavanagh		
Administrator	Wendy Williams	Ann O' Donoghue	

Each member of the team has access to the Critical Incident resource folder. This is a folder, stored on the shared drive in school, containing an up to date list with contact details of the CIMT, a copy of the policy and the 2016 NEPS Publication 'Responding to Critical Incidents. NEPS Guidelines and Resource Materials for Schools.' This publication contains all resources (e.g. media guidelines, suggested script for principals when talking to staff, list of actions, etc.) that the CIMT may need.

Details of the roles fulfilled by each person on the team are given in the Appendices. In line with best practice, the CIMT will be sensitive to cultural differences and will keep these in mind when responding to and supporting the families involved.

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 secretary will also have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters, photocopying materials etc.

Confidentiality and good name considerations

The management and staff of Rush and Lusk ETNS have a responsibility to protect the privacy and the good name of the people involved in any incident and will be sensitive to the consequences of any public statements. The members of the school staff will bear this in mind and will seek to ensure that the children do so also.

Critical Incident Rooms

In the event of a critical incident, these rooms will be used for the following purposes:

- Principal's office/ Ground floor SEN room – counselling / meeting with individuals
- Special Education Rooms - meeting with individuals / small groups of young children
- Teachers' Resource Room (upstairs) - meeting with individuals/small groups
- Hall – meetings / assembly of larger groups
- Staffroom – meeting staff

Consultation and Communication regarding the plan

All staff were consulted, and their views canvassed in the preparation of the original policy. Parent representatives were also consulted and asked for their comments. The policy can be viewed on the school website ralet.ie, and a hard copy is available on request.

The CIMT members will meet annually at the beginning of the school year to discuss the policy, communication and roles of individuals. Following a critical incident, the team will also meet to conduct a review.

Appendix 1: Roles and Responsibilities of Critical Incident Management Team

Leadership (Noel Reilly, Lesley Smyth, Helen O'Reilly)

- Alert the team members to the crisis and convene a meeting
- Decide on response level
- Coordinate the tasks of the team
- Liaise with Board of Management, DES, NEPS,
- Liaise with the Gardaí
- Ensure that information is checked out for accuracy before being shared
- Protect the confidentiality and the good name of all individuals involved
- Organise an annual meeting of the CIMT at the beginning of every academic year
- Update and maintain access to the Critical Incident folder.

Staff Liaison (Noel Reilly, Lesley Smyth, Helen O'Reilly)

- Work closely with all other team members
- Lead the briefing meeting for staff on the facts as known
- Give staff the opportunity to express feelings and ask questions
- Outline any changes to daily routines
- Advise staff on the procedures for identification of vulnerable children
- Provide materials for staff (from Critical Incident folder)
- Keep staff regularly updated
- Be alert to vulnerable staff members and contact them individually
- Advise staff of the availability of Spectrum Life counselling service (1800 411 057)

Communications (Simon McConkey, Sinead McDyer, Margaret Hennessy/ Acting APIL)

- Work closely with the Team Leader and other team members.
- Consider issues that may arise and how they might be responded to (e.g. children being interviewed, photographers on the premises)
- In the event of an incident, liaise where necessary with all appropriate bodies
- Draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews (as agreed by the Board of Management)
- Maintain up to date lists of contact numbers of:
 - Key parents (PTA)
 - Emergency support services and other external contacts and resources
- Support the Team Leader and Staff Liaison in liaising with agencies in the community for support and onward referral
- Be alert to the need to check credentials of individuals offering support
- Coordinate the involvement of these agencies
- Remind agency staff to wear name badges
- Update team members on the involvement of external agencies

Child Liaison (Irene McCormack, Conor Bredin, Marian O' Brien)

- Work closely with the Team Leader and other team members.
- Alert relevant staff to vulnerable children
- Provide materials for children (from Critical Incident folder)
- Keep a record of children's interactions with external agency staff (eg. counsellors)
- Look after the setting up of 'quiet' room for meeting individuals or small groups of children
- Maintain a record of these meetings

Family/Community Liaison (Noel Reilly, Helen O'Reilly, Anna Drennan, Michael Kavanagh)

- Work closely with the Team Leader and other team members.
- Visit any affected families
- Arrange meetings of the school community, where relevant
- Facilitate such meetings and manage 'questions and answers'
- Manage the consent issues in accordance with agreed school policy
- Set up a room for meetings with individual parents/guardians
- Maintain a record of these meetings
- Provide appropriate materials for parents (from Critical Incident folder)

Administrator (Wendy Williams/ Ann O' Donoghue)

- Work closely with the Team Leader and other team members.
- Maintain up to date contact details of:
 - Parents / guardians
 - Staff
 - Emergency services
- Answer telephone calls and note those that need to be responded to
- Ensure that templates are on the school's system in advance and ready for adaptation
- Prepare and send out correspondence from the school
- Photocopy any materials needed (including resources for Critical Incident folder)
- Maintain records

Appendix 2: Contact Details for Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)

Noel Reilly	Principal Leadership & Staff Liaison Family/Community Liaison	raletprincipal@ralet.ie
Lesley Smyth	Chairperson BoM Leadership and Staff Liaison	lesley.smyth@ralet.ie
Helen O'Reilly	Deputy Principal Leadership & Staff Liaison Family/Community Liaison	
Simon McConkey	In-School Management team Communications	
Sinead McDyer	In-School Management team Communications	
Margaret Hennessy/ Acting APII	In-School Management team Communications	
Irene McCormack	In-School Management team Child Liaison	
Conor Bredin	In-School Management team Child Liaison	
Marian O' Brien	In-School Management team Child Liaison	

Anna Drennan	BoM Parent Nominee Family/Community Liaison	
Michael Kavanagh	BOM Parent Nominee Family/Community Liaison	
Wendy Williams/ Ann O' Donoghue	School secretary Administrator	



Appendix 3: Contact details for Emergency services and external agencies

National Educational Psychological Service - (01) 889 2700

Department of Education and Skills - (01) 889 6400

Irish National Teachers Organisation - (01) 804 7700

Spectrum Life Counselling service - 1800 411 057

Emergency Services/ Fire Brigade - 112 / 999

Gardaí:

Lusk Garda Station - (01) 843 7222

District HQ: Balbriggan - (01) 802 0510



RUSH AND LUSK
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Appendix 4(A):

Short Term Actions (Day 1)

Task	Person(s) responsible
Gather accurate information – what has happened, when, how, where, who was injured or bereaved.	Noel Reilly/ Lesley Smyth/ Helen O'Reilly
Consult guidelines	Noel Reilly/ Lesley Smyth/ Helen O'Reilly
Convene a CIMT meeting	Noel Reilly/ Lesley Smyth/ Helen O'Reilly
Contact External Agencies	Simon McConkey/ Sinead McDyer/ Margaret Hennessy/ Acting APII
Arrange supervision of students	Irene McCormack/ Conor Bredin/ Marian O' Brien
Hold staff meetings/briefings when appropriate	Noel Reilly/ Lesley Smyth/ Helen O'Reilly
Agree schedule for the day	Noel Reilly and all staff
Inform children	Irene McCormack/ Conor Bredin/ Marian O' Brien
Compile a list of vulnerable children	Irene McCormack/ Conor Bredin/ Marian O' Brien
Contact/visit affected family/families	Noel Reilly/ Helen O'Reilly/ Anna Drennan/ Michael Kavanagh
Prepare and agree media statement and deal with media	Simon McConkey/ Sinead McDyer/ Margaret Hennessy/ Acting APII
Inform wider school community	Noel Reilly/ Helen O'Reilly/ Anna Drennan Michael Kavanagh



Appendix 4 (B): Medium Term Actions (Day 2 and following days)

Task	Person(s) responsible
Convene a CIMT meeting to review events	Lesley Smyth/ Noel Reilly/ Helen O'Reilly
Meet external agencies	Simon McConkey/ Sinead McDyer/ Margaret Hennessy or Acting APII
Hold staff meetings/briefings	Noel Reilly/ Lesley Smyth/ Helen O'Reilly
Arrange support for children	Irene McCormack/ Conor Bredin/ Marian O'Brien
Arrange support for staff	Lesley Smyth/ Noel Reilly/ Helen O'Reilly
Arrange support for parents/guardian	Noel Reilly/ Helen O'Reilly/ Anna Drennan/ Michael Kavanagh
Visits to affected families	Noel Reilly/ Helen O'Reilly/ Anna Drennan/ Michael Kavanagh
In the event of a bereavement, liaise with bereaved family regarding attendance at and participation at funeral service	Noel Reilly/ Helen O'Reilly/ Anna Drennan/ Michael Kavanagh
Make decisions about school closure	BOM

Appendix 4 (C): Follow-up -Beyond 72 hours

Task	Person(s) responsible
Monitor children for signs of continuing stress	Irene McCormack/ Conor Bredin/ Marian O' Brien Class teachers, SEN teachers, SNAs
Liaise with agencies regarding referrals	Simon McConkey/ Sinead McDyer/ Margaret Hennessy or Acting AP II/ Irene McCormack/ Conor Bredin/ Marian O' Brien
Plan for return to school of affected children	Irene McCormack/ Conor Bredin/ Marian O' Brien
In the event of bereavement, organise a "memory box" for the family	Those close to bereaved family, CIMT and BoM
Decide on appropriate memorials and anniversaries	Entire CIMT, with BoM
Review response to incident and amend policy	CIMT