

**Harold's Cross Educate Together National
School**

Whole School Policy

Critical Incident Policy & Plan

Introduction and Rationale:

Harold's Cross Educate Together National School aims to protect the wellbeing 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, in consultation with the staff of HXETNS, has drawn up a Critical Incident Management Plan (CIMP) as one element of the school's policies and plans.

Our aim is to establish a Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) to steer the development and implementation of the CIMP.

The staff and management of HXETNS 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, for example;

- 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
- a major accident/tragedy in the wider community
- serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism etc.

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 impact on students and staff will be limited. It should enable us to 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:

Harold's Cross ETNS has a range of agreed plans and procedures in place to ensure physical safety in the school environment. These include:

- evacuation plan
- regular fire drills
- fire exits and extinguishers regularly checked
- pre-opening supervision in the school yard (8:20am – 8:30am)
- school gates closed during school hours
- school doors locked at all times
- school and classroom safety rules
- yard rules
- DSCETNS being on the same grounds

Psychological Safety:

The management and staff of HXETNS 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.

These include:

- Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) curriculum is integrated into the work of the school. 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 are addressed in the SPHE curriculum. Promotion of mental health is an integral part of this provision.
- Staff have access for training for their role in SPHE, and training was provided on the implementation of the new Stay Safe programme in August 2017.
- Staff are familiar with the Child Protection Procedures and the name of the Designated Liaison Person and Deputy Designated Liaison Person.
- Books and resources on difficulties affecting primary school students are available
- Information is provide on mental health in general
- The school has developed links with a range of external agencies including HSE, Tusla and NEPS.
- 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 anti-bullying policy and deals with incidents of 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 2007 for Primary Schools.
- 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/carers 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

Critical Incident Management Team:

A CIMT has been established in line with best practice. The members of this team were selected on a voluntary basis and will retain their role 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.

Preparation of CIMP:

Roles:

HXETNS recognises the importance of making arrangements for assigning roles in the school, taking account of practical issues such as school size and the number of staff available. The following are key roles for the 2019/20 school year.

| Role: | Duties to be undertaken: | Named personnel: |
|--------------------|--|-------------------------|
| Team Leader | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting • Coordinates the tasks of | Cian |

| | | |
|------------------------|---|---------------|
| | <p>the team</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaises with the BOM, NEPS, Tusla etc. • Liaises with bereaved family • Liaises with Gardaí • Ensures that information about deaths or other developments is checked for accuracy before information is shared | |
| Staff Liaison | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 procedures for identification of vulnerable students • Provides material for staff (from critical incident folder) • Keeps staff updated as the day progresses • Is alert to vulnerable staff members and makes contact with them individually • Advises staff of the availability of support services to them (i.e. Inspire Counselling service) | Ruth |
| Student Liaison | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides materials for students (from their critical incident folder) • Alerts relevant staff to vulnerable students • Maintains student contact records (R1) • Looks after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room where agreed | Cian and Ruth |
| Parents Liaison | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visits the bereaved family with the team leader • Arranges meetings, where necessary • May facilitate such meetings with the team leader and manage | Cian |

| | | |
|--------------------------|--|------|
| | <p>'questions and answers' session</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensures that sample letters are prepared and available on school computers/drive and are ready for adaptation • Sets up room for meeting with parents/carers • Maintains a record of parents seen • Provides appropriate material for parents (from their critical incident folder) | |
| Community Liaison | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of parents, members of Board of Management, PTA, emergency support services and other external agencies • Liaises with agencies in the community for support and onward referral • Is alert to the need of check credentials of individuals offering support • Co-ordinates the involvement of agencies • Reminds agency staff to wear identification badges • Updates team leader and team members on the involvement of external agencies | Cian |
| Media Liaison | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 relevant teacher unions and external agencies • Will draw up a press statement for approval by | Cian |

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| | the team leader and will give media briefings and interviews (as agreed by school management) | |
| Administrator | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintains up to date telephone numbers of parents/carers, teachers and emergency services • Takes telephone calls and notes those that need a response • Ensure that templates are available on the school's IT system/google drive and are ready for adaptation • Prepares and sends out letters, emails and texts, in consultation with the team leader • Photocopies materials as needed • Maintains relevant records | Cian |

Record Keeping:

In the event of an incident each member of the team will keep records of phone calls made and received, letters emails and texts sent and received, meetings held, persons met, interventions used, material used etc. a school secretary will have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters, photocopying materials etc. as is outlined in the above administrator and community liaison role.

Confidentiality and good name considerations:

The management and staff of HXETNS have a responsibility to protect the privacy and 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 students do so also. For instance, the term 'suicide' will not be used unless there is confirmed information the 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 words 'murder' should not be used until it's legally established that a murder was committed. The term 'violent death' may be used instead.

Critical Incident rooms:

HXTNS recognises the importance of the availability of space to facilitate CIMP team members and related activities, in the event of a critical incident. The following school spaces have been designated for such:

| Activity: | Designated space: |
|--|---|
| Room used for staff | Staffroom |
| Rooms for meeting students | Shared Space/assembly area or individual classrooms (dependent on individual cases) |
| Room for parents | Classroom 2 |
| Room for media | Classroom 2 |
| Room for individual sessions with students | Classroom 2 |
| Room for visitors - | Classroom 2 |

Consultation and communication regarding the plan:

All staff were consulted and their views canvassed in the preparation of this policy and plan. Parents/carers were also consulted and asked for their comments. The attention of all staff was drawn to 'Responding to Critical Incidents' NEPS guidelines and to the available information and resources on the NEPS website.

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 policy by Cian.

A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department of Education and Skills and the Patron, if requested. Hard copies of this, and all school policies, are available at the school on request.

Ratification of the plan:

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on, and will be reviewed in .

Signed: (Chairperson, BOM)

Signed: Cian Gleeson (School Principal)

Date:

Date of next review: October 2020