

Critical Incident Policy

"The key to managing critical incidents is planning". This policy has been formulated by Douglas Rochestown Educate Together National School (ETNS) to provide procedures to follow in the event of a critical incident, as per the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) Guidelines, Responding to Critical Incidents

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School Details:

Name: Douglas Rochestown Educate Together National School

Address: Carr's Hill, Douglas, Cork

Telephone: 021 489 0122 / 085 2428753

Email: info@dretns.ie

Roll Number: 20413N

Principal: Dr. Alan Sheehan

The school premises consist of the area within the school boundaries/fence at Carr's Hill.
School start/end times are as follows:

Start Time:	End Time:
8.30 am	1.10 pm/2.10 pm

The school doors open at 8.20am. The school provides supervision of pupils within the school grounds only from 8.20am – 1.20pm for Junior and Senior Infants and from 8.20am – 2.20 pm for all other Classes. Please note that no responsibility is accepted for anyone in the areas outside the school fencing. Please also note that no responsibility is accepted for pupils arriving before 8.20am or for supervising pupils after 1.20pm/2.20pm.

General Information:

Douglas Rochestown ETNS is under the patronage of Educate Together. It is based on four key principles: Child-centered, Co-educational, Democratic and Equality-based.

Douglas Rochestown ETNS follows the curricular programmes prescribed by the Department of Education and Science, which may be amended from time to time, in accordance with Sections 9 and 30 of the Education Act (1998).

Douglas Rochestown ETNS aims to protect the wellbeing of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. The school has, through the principal Alan Sheehan, 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 plan.

What is a critical incident?

NEPS suggests the following definition:

“A critical incident is any incident or sequence of events which overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of the school”

This may involve one or more students or staff members, or members of the 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

The first three weeks following an incident is a time of vulnerability for staff and students. This can be a challenging time for the school community and may call on all of its resources to deal with the event.

Research suggests that an effective response by the school during the first 48 hours is crucial. It is therefore important for a school to prepare a Critical Incident Management Plan (CIMP).

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 effects on the students and staff will be limited. It should enable us to effect a return to normality as soon as possible.

Creation of a coping supportive and caring environment

We have put systems in place to help 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

Douglas Rochestown ETNS aims to ensure that the school is a safe environment (see Child Protection Policy, Code of Behaviour and Health and Safety Policy/Safety Statement). We have outlined potential Health and Safety concerns, as well as guidelines for school outings, in our curricular plans. We also undertake the following procedures:

- Doors of the sports hall for supervised assembly are closed at 8.40am. Access thereafter is via the office.
- Regular fire drills (at least once a term)
- Hazard identification
- Fire exits are unobstructed and regularly checked
- Pre-opening supervision in the sports hall by members of the Leadership and Management Team from 8.20-8.30am
- Rules of classroom and playground regularly revised.

Psychological safety

The management and staff of Douglas Rochestown ETNS 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. Key to this is our ethos, which is based on respect for all members of our school community. We also utilise the following methods:

- 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 resolution; 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. The following programmes are used: Walk Tall, Stay Safe, and RSE.
- Staff have access to training for their role in SPHE.
- Staff are familiar with the Child Protection Procedures and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures and are aware of the identity of the Designated and Deputy Designated Liaison Person.
- Information is provided on mental health issues.
- Staff are informed in the area of suicide awareness.
- Douglas Rochestown ETNS has developed links with a range of external agencies – Gardaí, HSE, NEPS
- Input 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.
- Douglas Rochestown ETNS has a clear anti-bullying policy and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy.
- Students who are identified as being at risk are referred to the Principal, concerns are explored and the appropriate level of assistance and support is provided. Parents/guardians are informed, and where appropriate a referral is made to an appropriate agency.
- Staff are informed about how to access support for themselves.

Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)

A CIMT has been established in line with best practice. The personnel selected are suitable in terms of their personal and practical skills. This team will meet annually to update and review the plan. By identifying the key tasks that arise in the aftermath of an incident, the school will decide on the roles and who will be responsible for different tasks. The Principal will play a key role, being responsible for many of the tasks. Certain administrative tasks need to be carried out on an ongoing basis so that communication is speedy and effective in the event of a critical incident.

The members of the team were selected on a voluntary basis and will retain their roles for at least one school year. 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

The key roles are as follows:

- Team Leader
- Garda Liaison
- Staff Liaison
- Student Liaison
- Parent Liaison
- Community Liaison
- Media Liaison
- Administrator

Due to the fact that we are a developing school these roles will be assigned to the Principal and special duties post holder as follows:

- Principal (Alan Sheehan): Team Leader, Garda Liaison, Media Liaison
- Deputy Principal (Erica Murphy): Parent Liaison
- Kevin Higgins: Community Liaison
- Ciara Lynch: Student Liaison
- Julie Field: Staff Liaison

Team Leader

- Alerts team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting
- Coordinates the tasks of the team
- Liaises with the Board of Management; DES; NEPS
- Liaises with the bereaved family

Garda Liaison

- Liaises with the Gardaí
- Ensures information about deaths or other developments is checked out for accuracy before being shared

Staff Liaison

- Leads briefing meetings for staff on the facts known, gives staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions, outlines the routine for the day
- 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
- Is alert to vulnerable staff members and makes contact with them individually
- Advises them of the availability of the EAS and gives them the contact number

Student Liaison

- Alerts other staff to vulnerable students (appropriately)
- Provides materials for students (from their critical incident folder)
- Keeps records of students seen by external agency staff
- Looks after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room where agreed

Community Liaison

- Maintains up-to-date lists of contact numbers of - Key parents, such as members of the Parents Association - 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

Parent Liaison

- Visits the bereaved family with the team leader
- Arranges parent meetings, if held
- May facilitate such meetings, and manage 'questions and answers'
- Manages the 'consent' issues in accordance with agreed school policy
- 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)

Media Liaison

- 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 relevant teacher unions etc.
- Will draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews (as agreed by school management)

Administrator

- 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 schools system in advance and ready for adaptation
- Prepares and sends out letters, emails and faxes
- Photocopies materials needed
- Maintains records

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. Alan Sheehan will 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 Douglas Rochestown Educate Together NS 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 that students do so also. For instance, 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.

Critical Incident Room

In the event of a critical incident ,

- the staff room will be the main room used to meet the staff
- the classroom for meetings with students
- the staff room for parents
- the office for media
- the classroom for individual sessions with students
- the office for other visitors

Ratification and Review

The policy was ratified by the school manager on 16th October 2013. It was reviewed by the Board of Management on 14th October 2015.

The policy was reviewed by the Board of Management on 7th June 2016.

The policy was reviewed by the Board of Management on 20th September 2017.

The policy was reviewed by the Board of Management on 29th August 2018.

The policy was reviewed by the Board of Management on 21st November 2018.

The policy was reviewed by the Board of Management on 18 May 2022.

The policy was reviewed by the Board of Management on 27th September 2023.

Our school's policy and plan in responding to critical incidents is presented to staff annually at a staff meeting. Each member of the critical incident team has a personal copy of the plan. All new and temporary staff will be informed of the details of the plan by Alan Sheehan. The plan will be reviewed annually going forward.

Communication:

The policy has been made available to school personnel via the school website (www.dretns.ie). A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department of Education and Skills and the patron (Educate Together) if requested.

Appendix 1 Critical Incident Plan

Critical Incident Management Team

<i>Role</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Telephone Number (home and mobile)</i>
Team Leader	Alan Sheehan	
Garda Liaison	Alan Sheehan	
Staff Liaison	Julie Field	
Student Liaison	Ciara Lynch	
Parent Liaison	Erica Murphy	
Community Liaison	Kevin Higgins	
Media Liaison	Alan Sheehan	
Administrator	Alan Sheehan	

Short term actions – Day 1

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

Medium term actions – (Day 2 and following days)

<i>Task</i>	<i>Name</i>
Convene a CIMT meeting to review the events of day 1	Alan Sheehan
Meet external agencies	Alan Sheehan/Erica Murphy
Meet whole staff	Alan Sheehan
Arrange support for students, staff, parents	Alan Sheehan/Erica Murphy/Kevin Higgins/Ciara Lynch/Julie Field
Visit the injured	Alan Sheehan/Erica Murphy
Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements	Alan Sheehan
Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service	All staff
Make decisions about school closure	Board of Management

Follow-up – Beyond 72 hours

<i>Task</i>	<i>Name</i>
Monitor students for signs of continuing distress	Class teachers
Liaise with agencies regarding referrals	Erica Murphy
Plan for return of bereaved student(s)	Alan Sheehan/Erica Murphy
Plan for giving of 'memory box' to bereaved family	Alan Sheehan/Erica Murphy
Decide of memorials and anniversaries	BoM/Staff, parents and students
Review response to incident and amend plan	Staff/BoM
Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service	All staff

Appendix 2 Emergency Contact List

(To be displayed in staff-room and school office)

AGENCY	CONTACT NUMBERS
Garda	999 / 112 Douglas Garda Station: (021) 485 7670 Togher Garda Station: (021) 494 7120
Hospital	Cork University Hospital: (021) 492 2000 South Infirmary Victoria University Hospital: (021) 492 6100
Fire Brigade	999 / 112
Local GPs	Dr. Greg Murphy: (021) 489 1865 Dr. Jean O'Connell: (021) 489 1865 Dr. Dave Matson: (021) 489 1111 Dr. Paul O'Keeffe: (021) 489 1111
HSE	South Lee Social Work Department: (021) 492 3001
CAMHS/Child and Family Centre	Brothers of Charity Southern Services: 021 4556200
School Inspector	Gráinne Cull
NEPS Psychologist	Dr. Hollie Hayes: (021) 453 6358
DES	Athlone: (090) 648 3600 Dublin: (01) 889 6400 Tullamore: (057) 932 4300
INTO	National Office: 1 804 7700 Chair of Cork City South-East: Mr. Ian Horgan: 086 358 2699
Employee Assistance Service	1800 411 057