

# Rathcoole ETNS

## Critical Incident Policy

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### Introduction to this Policy

Rathcoole Educate Together N.S. aims to protect the wellbeing of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times.

Rathcoole Educate Together National School (Rathcoole ETNS) is a child-centered, coeducational, equality-based and democratic primary school under the patronage of Educate Together.

We aim to provide a learning environment that encourages and promotes the holistic development of each and every child attending our school, allowing them to achieve their full potential. We aspire to create an inclusive atmosphere which values each and every member of the school community.

Children, parents/guardians and staff work in partnership based on mutual respect and best practise to make this vision a reality.

### 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, and/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

### Aims of this Policy

Rathcoole 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 Board of Management and staff, drawn up a critical incident management plan (CIMP) as one element of the school's policies and plans.

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.

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

### **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*

Rathcoole 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:

- Regular fire drills (at least once a term)
- Hazard identification and risk analysis
- Fire exits are unobstructed and regularly checked
- Rules of classroom and playground regularly revised.
- Ensuring gates to school yard and internal doors are closed/locked where appropriate
- Internal doors on fob lock
- Security alarm on the building and monitoring company for the site out of school hours.
- Staff participate in regular Health and Safety, First Aid and other associated training

#### *Psychological safety*

The management and staff of Rathcoole 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.
- Rathcoole 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.
- Playground Friends encourages 'buddy' style assistance for playground-based problems.
- Nurture forms a vital part of our school, and vulnerable children in at-risk groups are identified for targeted intervention.
- Restorative Practice is in effect throughout the school, along with a strong emphasis on making positive connections and relationship building.
- Zones of Regulation/Emotional Regulation Training encourages development of emotional literacy, thus beginning the conversation about feelings, emotions and how to deal with them appropriately.
- Staff wellbeing is of vital importance and is given priority
- Staff are informed about how to access support for themselves and this is clearly displayed in the staff room
- The school achieved Amber Flag status for it's involvement in positive Mental Health Awareness Promotion.

### **Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)**

A CIMT has been established in line with best practice. The members of the team are selected on a voluntary basis and will retain their roles for at least one school year. The members of the team will meet as required. The members of the team will review the policy and plan as required. Each member of the team has a dedicated critical incident

folder. This contains a copy of the policy and plan and any materials deemed necessary or helpful to be used in the event of an incident.

## **Preparation of CIMP**

*Roles (see appendix for names)*

The key roles are as follows:

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

### Duties of CIMT Members

#### *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  
Ensures staff wear name labels for identification purposes

### *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 (see appendix)

### *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 (see appendix)
- 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 and emails
- Photocopies materials needed
- Maintains records

Roles may be doubled-up, where required

### **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 secretary 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 Rathcoole ETNS 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.

### **Ratification and Review**

The policy was ratified by the school manager on 28<sup>th</sup> November 2022.

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.

A copy of this policy is available on the Staff Drive. A hard copy is available in the Office. A Critical Incident Folder has been added to the ISM Drive, which includes the policy, the NEPS handbook with relevant documents and information, and the Next of Kin list for staff.

All new and temporary staff will be informed of the details of the plan by management.

The policy has been made available to school personnel via the school website.

A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department of Education and Skills and the patron (Educate Together) if requested.

The plan will be reviewed annually.

## **Appendix 1**

### Critical Incident Management Team

<i>Role</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Telephone Number</i>
<b>Team Leader</b>	Gemma Maher	
<b>Garda Liaison</b>	Gemma Maher	
<b>Staff Liaison</b>	Lorraine O'Connell	
<b>Student Liaison</b>	Gemma Maher Sarah Kelly	
<b>Parent Liaison</b>	Lorraine O'Connell Sarah Kelly	
<b>Community Liaison</b>	Gemma Maher	
<b>Media Liaison</b>	Gemma Maher	
<b>Administrator</b>	Michelle Clarges	

## Appendix 2

### Actions in the event of a Critical Incident

#### Short term actions – Day 1

<i>Task</i>	<i>Name</i>
Gather accurate information	Gemma Maher
Who, what, when, where?	Gemma Maher
Convene a CIMT meeting – specify time and place clearly	Gemma Maher
Contact external agencies	Gemma Maher
Arrange supervision for students	Lorraine O’Connell
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)	Gemma Maher
Compile a list of vulnerable students	Sarah Kelly
Contact/visit the bereaved family	Gemma Maher Lorraine O’Connell Austin O’Sullivan
Prepare and agree media statement and deal with media	Gemma Maher Educate Together Head Office
Inform parents	Gemma Maher
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	Gemma Maher
Meet external agencies	Gemma Maher



Meet whole staff	Gemma Maher
Arrange support for students, staff, parents	Gemma Maher Lorraine O'Connell Sarah Kelly
Visit the injured	Gemma Maher Lorraine O'Connell Austin O'Sullivan
Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements	Gemma Maher Lorraine O'Connell
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	Gemma Maher
Plan for return of bereaved student(s)	Gemma Maher
Plan for giving of 'memory box' to bereaved family	Gemma Maher Lorraine O'Connell Sarah Kelly
Decide of memorials and anniversaries	BoM/Staff, parents and students
Review response to incident and amend plan	ISM Team/Board of Management

### Appendix 3

Emergency Contact List  
(to be displayed in the staff room and school office)

AGENCY	CONTACT NUMBERS
Garda	999 / 112 Rathcoole Garda Station: 01 – 666 7900 Community Garda: colm.m.byrne@garda.ie Clondalkin Garda Station: 01 – 666 7600 Tallaght Garda Station: 01 – 666 6000
Hospital	Tallaght University Hospital: 01 – 414 2000 Crumlin Children’s Hospital: 01 – 409 6100 Temple Street Children’s Hospital: 01 – 878 4200
Fire Brigade	999 / 112
Local GPs	Swiftbrook Medical Centre: 01 – 630 8877 Saggart Medical Centre: 01 – 458 6805 Citywest Medical Centre: 01 – 469 3630
HSE	Social Work Dept HSE: Tusla – Chamber House 01 468 6267
CAMHS	Lucena (Belgard Road): 01 452 6333 Cherry Orchard: 01 – 795 6350/80
School Inspector	<a href="mailto:Margaret_dunning@education.gov.ie">Margaret_dunning@education.gov.ie</a>

NEPS Psychologist	08 (personal number so will be added after approval)
DES	Athlone: (090) 648 3600 Dublin: (01) 889 6400 Tullamore: (057) 932 4300
INTO	National Office: 1 804 7700 / Lo-call: 1850 708 708 Dublin West Branch Contact: John Paul O'Keefe 087 - 6381917
Employee Assistance Service	1800 411 057
INTO Care-Call	0808 800 002

## Appendix 4

### Critical Incident Rooms

#### In the event of a critical incident:

- Snowdrop Room will be the main room used to meet the staff
- Classrooms for meetings with students
- Gemma's Office for individual parent meetings
- 1<sup>st</sup> Class classroom for group parent meetings
- Yard/Reception area for media
- Gemma's Office for individual sessions with students
- Gemma's office for other visitors