**Ramsgrange Central National School**

**Critical Incident Policy & Plan**

**Critical Incident Policy**

At all times, Ramsgrange National School aims to protect the wellbeing of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment. The Board of Management, through the Principal, has drawn up the following Critical Incident Management Plan as one element of the school’s policies and plans.

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

**Aim**

The aim of the Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) is “to help school management and staff to react quickly and effectively in the event of an incident, to enable them to maintain a sense of control and to ensure that appropriate support is offered to students and staff”. Having a good plan will also help ensure that the effects on the students and staff will be limited. It will enable the school to return to normality as soon as possible.

**Definition of Critical Incident**

The staff and management of Ramsgrange National School recognises 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, their family members or members of the local community e.g.

* 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.

**Creation of a Coping Supportive and Caring Ethos in the School**

Ramsgrange NS has put systems in place to help to build resilience in both staff and students through our SPHE/RSE programmes, 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**

In the area of physical safety the school has put in place the following:

* Evacuation plan formulated
* Regular fire drills occur
* Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
* General school rules under the school’s behaviour policy to ensure all pupils have a safe environment.
* Parents are informed of official supervision hours (9.20am – 3.00pm).

**Psychological safety**

The management and staff of Ramsgrange National School aims to use available programmes and resources to address the personal and social development of pupils, to enhance a sense of safety and security in the school and to provide opportunities for reflection and discussion.

For example:

* Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is integrated into the work of the school, by addressing issues such as grief and loss; communication skills; stress and anger management; resilience; conflict management; problem solving; help-seeking; bullying and decision making. Promotion of mental health is an integral part of this provision.
* Members of staff have received training for the teaching of SPHE.
* Members of staff are familiar with the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures. The Designated Liaison Person (DLP) is Lorraine Kennedy and the Deputy Designated Liaison Person is Ciara Morrissey.
* Pupils who are identified as being at risk are referred to the Designated Liaison Person, 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.
* The school has a clear policy on bullying and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy.
* Staff members recognise their role in the pastoral care of pupils and colleagues.
* The school has developed links with external agencies – Health Service Executive (HSE), National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) and National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB).

**Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)**

A CIMT has been established in line with best practice. The members of the team were selected on a voluntary basis and will retain their roles for at least one school year. The members of the team will meet annually to review and update the policy and plan.

The members are:

Lorraine Kennedy (Principal), Ciara Morrissey (Deputy Principal), Karen Egan (Secretary)

The CIMT may access, in the Principal’s Office an emergency contact list, school staff contact list and B.O.M. contact list.

All staff members will be asked to record in writing any significant event, and this record will be kept in the Principal’s Office.

**Key Roles and Responsibilities of the CIMT**

* Team Leader
* Garda liaison
* Staff liaison
* Student liaison
* Parent liaison
* Community liaison
* Media liaison
* Administrator

**The Following are the Key Responsibilities of Each Role**

(In the absence of any member of the team, their roles will be assumed by the Principal/Deputy Principal)

**Team Leader – Lorraine Kennedy**

* Alert the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting
* Co-ordinate the tasks of the team
* Liaise with the Board of Management; DES; NEPS;SEC
* Liaise with the bereaved family.

**Garda Liaison – Lorraine Kennedy**

* Liaise with the Gardaí
* Ensure that information about deaths or other developments is checked out for accuracy before being shared.

**Staff Liaison – Ciara Morrissey**

* Lead briefing meetings for staff on facts as known, give staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions and outline the routine for the day
* Advise staff on the procedures for identification of vulnerable students
* Provide support materials for staff as relevant
* Keep records of students seen by external agency staff
* Look after setting up and supervision of ‘quiet’ room where agreed

**Student Liaison – All Team Members**

* Ensure that children are told appropriate information either by Principal, Deputy Principal, or teachers.

**Parent Liaison – Lorraine Kennedy / Ciara Morrissey**

* Arranges visits and/or supports 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.

**Community and Agency Liaison – Ciara Morrissey**

* Maintains up-to-date lists of contact numbers of key parents, such as members of the Parents’ Council, Emergency Support Services and other external contacts and resources.

**Media Liaison – Lorraine Kennedy**

* Anticipates issues that may arise and how they might be handled (interviews, photographers etc.)
* Draws up a press statement, gives media briefings and arranges interviews (as agreed by school management).

**Administrator – Karen Egan**

* Maintains up to date telephone numbers of parents, guardians, teachers and emergency services.
* Takes calls and notes those that need to be responded to.
* Ensures that templates are available and ready for adaptation.
* Prepares and sends out letters, emails etc..in consultation with Principal.
* Photocopies materials.
* 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, materials used, etc. The school secretary will have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, photocopying materials and in sending and receiving all letters etc.

**Confidentiality and Good Language Considerations**

The management and staff of Ramsgrange National School have a responsibility to protect the good name and privacy 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 pupils also do so. 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 Rooms**

This will be determined in the event of a critical incident. The following rooms are likely to be used:

G.P. Room, Principal’s Room, Secretary’s Office, Staff Room.

**Consultation and Communication Regarding the Plan**

* All staff members and parent representatives were consulted in the preparation of this policy and plan.
* NEPS resources were utilised in the drawing up of this policy.
* Each member of the Critical Incident team has a copy of the plan.
* All new and temporary staff will be informed of the details of the plan by Lorraine Kennedy, Principal.
* This policy is available in the Office on request.

**Ratification and Review:**

This policy was approved by the Board of Management in March 2020 and will be reviewed accordingly.

Review dates will be recorded in the minutes of the relevant Board of Management meeting.