

Critical Incident Policy

Gortjordan National School aims to protect the wellbeing of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. We will do this by ensuring that the children attending this school will achieve their potential in every aspect of their development and education. This we will do in a happy, safe and caring atmosphere and in a pleasant and inspiring environment. The Board of Management, through Erica Gibbons, has drawn up a Critical Incident Management Plan 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 Critical Incident Management Plan.

Review and Research

The CIMT should consult resource documents available to schools on www.education.ie and www.nosp.ie, these include:

- Responding to Critical Incidents Guidelines and Resources for Schools (NEPS 2016).
- Suicide Prevention in Schools: Best Practice Guidelines (IAS, National Suicide Review Group (2002).
- Suicide Prevention in the Community - A Practical Guide (HSE 2011).
- Well-Being in Primary Schools - Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion (DES, DOH, HSE 2015).

Other helpful resources include

Barnardos provide resources and advice on www.barnardos.ie/resources,
www.barnardos.ie/teenhelp

The Childhood Bereavement Network (CBN) is a multi-professional federation of organisations and individuals working with bereaved children and young people.
www.irishchildhoodbereavementnetwork.ie

Cruse Bereavement Care exists to promote the wellbeing of bereaved people and to enable anyone bereaved by death to understand their grief and cope with their loss.
www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk

The Professional Development for Teachers (PDST) Health and Wellbeing Team provide support for teachers at primary and post-primary level in physical education (PE), social personal and health education (SPHE) which includes anti-bullying, child protection, mental health and wellbeing, relationships and sexuality education (RSE) and other SPHE related areas. Supports offered to schools include in-service for principals, co-ordinators, teachers of SPHE, whole staff groups; programme planning; school policy development; schools visits.
www.pdst.ie.

The former SPHE Support Service has been integrated into the Health and Wellbeing team of the PDST. Visit www.sphe.ie for further information and to book post-primary SPHE courses.

The National Office for Suicide Prevention (NOSP) was established to oversee the implementation of 'Reach Out' the National Strategy for Action on Suicide Prevention, and to co-ordinate suicide prevention efforts around the country. The NOSP works closely with the HSE Suicide Prevention Officers. Up-to-date contact details for suicide prevention officers can be found on the NOSP website www.nosp.ie

The Irish Association for Suicidology (IAS) sets out to be a forum for all individuals and voluntary groups involved in any aspect of suicidology for the exchange of knowledge gained from differing perspectives and experiences www.ias.ie

Irish Hospice Foundation - www.hospicefoundation.ie

Lifelines supports all people who are affected in anyway by self-injury within the United Kingdom and beyond. It supports people who self-injure, and their family and friends. www.selfharm.org

Winstonswish Foundation, help for grieving children and their families. www.winstonswish.org.uk

Resources and support for those dealing with suicide, depression or emotional distress, particularly teenagers and young adults. www.papyrus-uk.org

A national charity committed to improving the mental health of all children and young people. www.youngminds.org.uk

An Irish website covering all aspects of health, lifestyle, culture and craic. It's an online youth information centre, a magazine, a health clinic, a contact directory, a youth media forum a take action initiative, a community building place and lots more. www.spunout.ie

A site that focuses on issues relating to youth in Ireland today. www.youth.ie

An Australian site that helps young people through tough times. www.reachout.com.au

Mental Health Ireland aims to promote positive mental health and to actively support persons with a mental illness, their families and carers by identifying their needs and advocating their rights. The pro teen matters web magazine, which is created by young people for young people, has information about physical and mental health, frequently asked questions, competitions, jokes and stories. www.mentalhelathireland.ie

Non-judgemental information and support. www.gayswitchboard.ie

HELPLINES

Remind students that if they need someone to talk to, at any time of the day or night, they can ring either:

Childline: 1800 666 666 (free calls)

The Samaritans: 1850 60 90 90 (Local call cost)

Definition of a Critical Incident

The staff and management of **Gortjordan N.S** 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.

Examples of types of Incidents:

- Suicide
- Attempted suicide
- Violent deaths
- Road Traffic Accident
- Accidental Death
- Drowning
- Sudden Death/Illness
- 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
- A major accident/tragedy in the wider community

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 effect a 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

- Regular Fire Drills occur
- Evacuation plan formulated
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked

- Supervision in the school yard during lunch times and break times
- School doors locked during school time.

Psychological safety

The management and staff of GortJordan N.S 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. Some examples include:

- Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) 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 to training for their role in SPHE
- Staff are familiar with the Child Protection Procedures and the name of the Designated Liaison Person
- Books and resources on difficulties affecting the primary school student are available (staff room book shelf)
- Information is provided on mental health in general and such specific areas as signs and symptoms of depression and anxiety
- 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 on 2007 for primary. These documents are available on www.education.ie
- Students who are identified as being at risk are referred to the designated staff member (e.g. class teacher), 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 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. 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:

Gortjordan National School has two full time class teachers, one shared SEN teacher and a part time SNA. Taking account of such practical issues as school size and the number of staff available. Gortjordan N.S will have to double up some roles. Gortjordan N.S also includes some members of the BOM on the team.

CIMP Key Roles

TEAM LEADER : Erica Gibbons (Principal) Elaine Hession (in the absence of Erica)

GARDA LIAISON: Erica Gibbons

STAFF LIAISON: Erica Gibbons/Elaine Hession

PARENT / GUARDIAN LIAISON : Eleanoir Cazabon Regan

COMMUNITY LIAISON: Eleanoir Cazabon Regan

MEDIA LIAISON : Erica Gibbons/Elaine Hession

ADMINISTRATOR: Erica Gibbons/Elaine Hession

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. The school principal 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 Gortjordan N.S 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 confirmed 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

In the event of a critical incident,

The Staff Room - will be the main room used to meet the staff

Individual Classrooms (Junior), (Senior) - for meetings with students

SEN Room - for parents

G.P Hall - for media

Small SEN room - for individual sessions with students

Consultation and communication regarding the plan

All staff were consulted and their views canvassed in the preparation of this policy and plan. Students and parent/guardian representatives were also consulted and asked for their comments. 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 details of the plan by Erica Gibbons. The plan will be updated annually in October of each school year.

This CIMP was updated following a previous plan created in 2011. This CIMP was implemented and approved by the School Board of Management on the 13/03/2018.

It will be reviewed annually each school year.

CHECKLIST FOR REVIEWING THE POLICY AND PLAN

Has serious consideration been given to the school's approach to prevention?

Has the school defined a critical incident and given examples?

Have key roles been clearly identified and the assigned tasks outlined?

Have staff members been nominated to each of the assigned roles/tasks?

Are telephone numbers on contact lists up-to-date?

Have all the staff been consulted about the plan/policy?

Has a date been set for a review of the plan?

Who will be given copies of the plan?

Are the personnel suitable?

Is the Emergency Contact List (Section 11, R21) appropriate and complete?

Are letters and press releases readily available on school headed paper, for adaptation to suit the particular circumstances?

Has contact been made with external agencies?

Has each member of the team compiled their emergency pack (photocopies of relevant

handouts)?

Where will copies of the plan be kept?

Have parents been consulted about the plan?

Have the students been consulted about the plan?