

## Brannoxtown CNS

### Critical Incident Policy

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Brannoxtown Community National School (CNS) is a primary school under Patronage of the Kildare and Wicklow Education and Training Board (KWETB). Brannoxtown CNS opened in September 2018 with a new Principal, Dr. Sarah FitzPatrick. Brannoxtown CNS operates within the regulations laid down by the Department of Education and Skills (DES) and follows the Primary School Curriculum (DES, 1999) which may be amended from time to time, in accordance with the Education Act (1998, Sections 9 and 30). The Board of Management, Principal and staff fully subscribe to the principles of partnership, accountability, inclusion, respect for diversity, parental choice and equality in developing and implementing all school policies.

#### 1. Introduction

Brannoxtown CNS aims to protect and promote the well-being of children and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment. This document outlines the Brannoxtown CNS policy to recognise and respond to a Critical Incident impacting the life of school including its staff and children. The management and staff of Brannoxtown CNS recognise a *Critical Incident* as an incident or event or sequence of events that overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school. Critical incidents may involve one or more children or staff members and/or members of our local community. The following are some examples of a Critical Incident:

- 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 a member/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.

#### 2. Acronyms

CAMHS	Children and Adult Mental Health Services
CNS	Community National School
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CIMT	Critical Incident Management Team
DES	Department of Education and Skills
DOH	Department of Health
DLP	Designated Liaison Person
EAS	Employee Assistance Service
HSE	Health Service Executive
NEPS	National Educational Psychological Service
SPHE	Social, Personal and Health Education
SET	Special Education Teacher

#### 3. Review and Research

This Critical Incident policy has been developed in line with the national policy document, *Responding to Critical Incidents: NEPS<sup>1</sup> Guidelines and Resources for Schools* (DES, 2016), including the resources for responding to critical incidents listed

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<sup>1</sup> The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) works in partnership with teachers, parents and children in identifying educational needs. They offer a range of services aimed at meeting these needs, for example, supporting individual students (through consultation and assessment), special projects and research.

in the final section (p. 95-96). This policy was also informed by *Well-Being in Primary Schools: Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion* (DES, HSE, DOH 2015) and the HSE publication, *Suicide Prevention in the Community - A Practical Guide* (HSE 2011). In developing this policy, staff have also reviewed updated information and templates available to schools concerning their Critical Incident Policy on the national websites for: [DES](#), [NEPS](#) and the [Health Service Executive \(HSE\) Education Programme](#).

#### 4. Levels of Response

Three levels of critical incident and response have been identified with level 3 representing the most challenging and significant level of response:

- **Response Level 1:** Death of a student or staff member who was terminally ill; death of parent<sup>2</sup> or sibling; or fire or damage to school property.
- **Response Level 2:** Sudden death of a student or staff member.
- **Response Level 3:** An accident/event involving a number of students; a violent death; an incident with high media profile; or an event that involves a number of schools.

#### 5. Policy Aim

This Critical Incident policy aims to help Brannoxtown CNS management and staff to react quickly and effectively in the event of an incident, to enable us to maintain a sense of control in complex and demanding circumstances, and to ensure that appropriate support is offered to students and staff. Having a good plan should help minimise the negative effects of a critical incident on school children and staff. The policy should also enable us to effect a return to normality as soon as possible.

#### 6. Physical and Psychological Safety

All staff are responsible for contributing to a supportive and caring ethos at Brannoxtown CNS. We support all children to be as well as they can be physically and psychologically (personally and socially) and to develop positive outlooks on learning and life. This includes thinking positively as well as developing resilience and resourcefulness in the face of difficulty or when things go wrong.

##### **Physical Safety**

Brannoxtown CNS school policies and practices include the following measures to safeguard children's physical wellbeing:

- Evacuation plan in place
- Regular fire drills completed
- Fire exits and extinguishers regularly checked
- School yard supervision rota duties specified
- School gate closed during school hours
- School doors locked during class time<sup>3</sup>
- Supervision during specific activities and excursions increased
- Rules of the playground and designated areas of play assigned

##### **Psychological Safety**

The management and staff of Brannoxtown CNS currently use a range of programmes and resources to support children's personal and social development, to promote a sense of safety and security in the school and to provide opportunities for ongoing reflection, discussion and improvement. The following are some of the policies, curricula, programmes, interventions and processes currently implemented in our

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<sup>2</sup> Throughout this policy and all school policies, the word *parent* includes children's legal guardians.

<sup>3</sup> This measure is in line with best practice to safeguard children and to minimize risk of harm by an intruder or uninvited guest to Brannoxtown CNS while school is in session.

school:

- The two key **Child Protection Policies** for our school, *Child Safeguarding Statement* and *Child Safeguarding Risk Assessment any Potential Harm* (both policies updated, January 2020) are regularly reviewed and updated to ensure all measures necessary are undertaken to identify and minimise risk of harm to children at our school. All staff are familiar with national **Child Protection Guidelines**, their own responsibilities as Mandated Persons and the procedures on how to proceed with any suspicions or disclosures.
- The school has clear **policies and practices to promote Positive Behaviour and Anti-Bullying**. Our school is a bully-free zone. Families sign a Behaviour Contract at the beginning of each school year. Regular school-wide interventions through the year, e.g., Friendship Week, provide opportunities to reaffirm the school's values and ensure the whole school community understands and subscribes to the school's values: respect, effort, teamwork and ambition.
- **The Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) Curriculum** provides guidance for our school to place children's social, personal and health development to the forefront of all we do. The curriculum and its programmes addresses 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. Promotion of mental health is an integral part of this provision.
- School staff have engaged with CPD opportunities for using a range of **educational programmes and interventions to promote children's wellbeing** during all eight primary years. Some of the programmes currently in use at the school and for which staff have experience and expertise include:
  - Friends for Life
  - Incredible Years
  - Weaving Wellbeing
- Brannoxtown CNS uses the **Continuum of Support framework** (DES, 2007). The Continuum of Support is a problem-solving model of assessment and intervention that enables our school to gather and analyse student data as well as to plan and review the progress of individual children. Using the framework, we can look at a child's needs in context and implement a range of resources to respond to each child's particular needs as early as possible ensuring that children with the greatest level of need have access to the greatest levels of support. This approach is also supported by information and engagement with external professionals, as required.
- The school has links with a range of **external agencies/providers who support and promote children's wellbeing** including:
  - National Educational Psychology Service (NEPS)
  - Children and Adult Mental Health Services (CAMHS)
  - Health Service Executive (HSE) Primary Care Services.
  - Kilcullen GardaíInputs to students by all **external providers** are carefully considered in the light of criteria about student safety, the appropriateness of the content, and the expertise of the providers.
- **Students who are identified as being at risk** are referred to the Designated Liaison Person (DLP), the school Principal. Concerns are examined and the appropriate level of assistance and support is identified and provided. This is set out through the *Listen, Protect, Connect, Model and Teach* approach to helping students in time of crisis or emergency set out in the document, *Responding to Critical Incidents* (NEPS, 2016, p.92-94). Parents are informed, and where appropriate, a referral is made to an appropriate agency.

- Information and supports are shared with staff on mental health in general and such specific areas as signs and symptoms of depression and anxiety. **Staff are informed and supported in accessing help for themselves.** Staff are informed in the area of suicide awareness and some are trained in interventions for suicidal students.

### 7. Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) Roles and Responsibilities

At the time of writing, the Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) includes all four staff at Brannoxtown CNS: Principal, Assistant Principal II, Special Education Teacher (SET) and the School Secretary. Members of the team were selected on a voluntary basis. All will retain their roles for at least one school year (to March 2021). Each member of the team has a dedicated critical incident folder which contains a copy of this policy and plans and materials particular to their role, to be used in the event of an incident. The team will meet annually to review and update this policy.

Role	Responsibilities
<b>Principal<sup>4</sup></b>	
<b>Team Leader</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Alerts team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting.</li> <li>Coordinates the tasks of the team.</li> <li>Liaises with the Board of Management, DES, NEPS and external agencies, as appropriate.</li> <li>Liaises with the bereaved family.</li> </ul>
<b>Staff Liaison</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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.</li> <li>Advises staff on the procedures for identification of vulnerable students.</li> <li>Provides materials for staff (for their Critical Incident Folder).</li> <li>Keeps staff updated as the day progresses.</li> <li>Is alert to vulnerable staff members and makes contact with them individually.</li> <li>Advises them of the availability of the EAS and gives them the contact number.</li> </ul>
<b>Community and Agency Liaison</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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.</li> <li>Liaises with agencies in the community for support and onward referral.</li> <li>Is alert to the need to check credentials of individuals offering support.</li> <li>Coordinates the involvement of these agencies.</li> <li>Reminds agency staff to wear name badges.</li> <li>Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies.</li> </ul>
<b>Garda Liaison</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Liaises with the Gardaí.</li> <li>Ensures that information about deaths or other developments is checked out for accuracy before being shared.</li> </ul>
<b>Media Liaison</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Considers issues that may arise and may advise on the school's response to these (e.g. students being interviewed, photographers on the premises, etc).</li> <li>Draws up a press statement and may give media briefings and interviews (as agreed by school management).</li> </ul>

<sup>4</sup> As always, the Principal will act in accordance with, and will consult with, the patron, KWETB.

Role	Responsibilities
<b>Assistant Principal II</b>	
<b>Student Liaison:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May co-ordinate information from teachers about students for whom they are concerned.</li> <li>• Alerts other staff to vulnerable students (as appropriate).</li> <li>• Provides materials for students (from their critical incident folder).</li> <li>• Maintains student contact records.</li> <li>• Looks after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room where agreed.</li> </ul>
<b>Special Education Teacher (SET)</b>	
<b>Parent Liaison:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visits the bereaved family with the team leader</li> <li>• Arranges parent meetings, if held</li> <li>• May facilitate such meetings, and manage 'questions and answers'</li> <li>• Manages the 'consent' issues in accordance with agreed school policy</li> <li>• Ensures that sample letters are typed up, on the school's system and ready for adaptation</li> <li>• Sets up room for meetings with parents</li> <li>• Maintains a record of parents seen</li> <li>• Meets with individual parents</li> <li>• Provides appropriate materials for parents (from their critical incident folder)</li> </ul>
<b>School Secretary</b>	
<b>Administrator:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintains up-to-date telephone numbers of parents, teachers and emergency services.</li> <li>• Takes telephone calls and notes those that require response.</li> <li>• Ensures that templates are on the schools system in advance and ready for adaptation.</li> <li>• Prepares and sends out letters, emails and texts and photocopies materials needed.</li> <li>• Maintains all records required.</li> </ul>
<b>Records Management:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Receives and logs telephone calls, sends letters, etc. regarding the critical incident and supports members of the CIMT to do the same. 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.</li> </ul>

## 8. Confidentiality and good name considerations

Management and staff of Brannoxtown Community National School have a responsibility to protect the privacy and good name of anyone involved in any incident and will be sensitive to the consequences of public statements. Members of school staff will bear this in mind and seek to ensure that students do so also. For example, the word *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.

## 9. Critical Incident Rooms

The following Critical Incident Rooms have been identified and designated for the purposes indicated in the table below, in the event that regular classes are not in-session:

<b>Critical Incident Rooms</b>		
<b>Designated Purpose</b>	<b>New School Building (if classrooms are free)</b>	<b>1885 School Building (if new building in use)</b>
Main room for meeting staff Meetings with other visitors	Room 4 (Staff Room)	Classroom
Meetings with students and sessions with individual students	Room 2 (Junior Room)	Resource Room/Office
Meetings with parents	Room 3 (SET Room)	Kitchen
Meetings with media	Room1 (Senior Room)	Front Office

## 10. Appendix Items

The following three Appendix items are included with this policy. All staff have a copy of the policy and appendix items. The policy is published on our website without the appendix items as these include personal contact information for school staff.

- Appendix A: Contact details for Critical Incident supports (agencies, organisations).
- Appendix B: Contact details for the Critical Incident Management Team.
- Appendix C: Critical Incident Action Plan Template.

## 11. BCNS Critical Incident Policy: Monitoring and Reviewing

All staff were consulted in the preparation of this draft policy and plan. Each member of the Critical Incident Management Team has a personal copy of the plan and has contributed her contact information (Appendix B). Consultation and engagement with parents is planned for May 2020.

### a. Success Criteria

Practical indicators of the success of this policy will be evident in a high level of understanding of the purpose of the policy and knowledge of the procedures/steps to be undertaken in responding to a critical incident involving staff and/or students or families of Brannoxtown CNS. Members of the Critical Incident Management Team will be aware of their specific roles and responsibilities and those of team-members. It is hoped that our school, and all schools, could avoid incidents or events that threaten to overwhelm the school's normal coping mechanism. However, we accept that if challenged to respond to a critical incident, the school's capacity to safeguard students and staff and to positively contribute to the wellbeing of the school community at a time of challenge/crisis, will be the ultimate determinant of the success of this policy.

### b. Implementation and Timetable for Review

This updated, draft policy will apply with immediate effect at Brannoxtown CNS (from March 2020). This Critical Incident Policy was the focus of discussion and engagement by staff in March 2020 and is scheduled for consultation with parents and ultimately approval of the Board of Management in May 2020. It is subject to regular review and amendment.

### c. Ratification and Communication

Following discussion and engagement with Brannoxtown CNS staff, with parents of children enrolled at Brannoxtown CNS (May 2020) and with members of the Brannoxtown CNS Board of Management (May 2020), this Critical Incident Policy was finalised and published on the school's website. Hardcopies of the policy are available to parents on request.

This Critical Incident Policy was adopted by the Board of Management of Brannoxtown

CNS at their meeting on 12th May, 2020.

Signed: 

Date: 12<sup>th</sup> May, 2020

Ms. Deirdre O'Donovan  
Chairperson

Signed: 

Date: 12<sup>th</sup> May, 2020

Dr. Sarah FitzPatrick  
Principal

## Appendix A

### Contact details for Critical Incident supports (agencies and organisations)

Support Agency/Organisation	Contact
<i>Gardaí</i>	Kilcullen Garda Station Main Street, Kilcullen Co. Kildare. R56 C527 Phone: 045-481212
<i>Naas Hospital</i>	045 849500/045 897221
<i>Naas Fire Station</i>	045 879 964
<i>General Practitioner</i>	Dr. Deirdre Collins, GP Kilcullen Family Practice Main Street, Kilcullen Co. Kildare. Phone: 045-481818
<i>DES School Inspector</i>	Caitriona Ní Bhriain, DES Primary Inspector Phone: 087-4557591 Email: Caitriona_NiBhriain@education.gov.ie
<i>National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)</i>	NEPS Block A, Maudlin's Hall, Dublin Road, Naas Co. Kildare. W91 R9XT Phone: 0761-108620
<i>Employee Assistance Service</i>	1800 817 435
<i>Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO)</i>	01 804 7700
<b><i>HSE Children and Family Services in Kildare/West Wicklow: Tusla</i></b>	
<i>Children and Family Services</i>	Child and Family Centre, Kill Co. Kildare Phone: 045-877 731
<i>Children's Disability Network Teams</i>	Mid Kildare Network Disability Team Enable Ireland Building Jigginstown, Naas Co. Kildare Phone: 045-875676
<i>Community Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Services</i>	Linn Dara Mid Kildare CAMHS 9 Sycamore House, Millennium Park, Naas Co Kildare. Phone: 045 873 880
<i>Kildare and West Wicklow Primary Care Psychology Service (Catchment Area: Newbridge and Kilcullen)</i>	Newbridge Primary Care Centre Aras Slainte, Station Road, Newbridge Co. Kildare. Phone: 045-491900
<b><i>Religious Leaders/Clergy</i></b>	
<i>Catholic Archdiocese of Dublin, Kilcullen Church</i>	Fr. Niall Mackey Phone: 087-6788075
<i>Brannockstown Baptist Church</i>	Fr. Richard Blaney Phone: 045-483808; 089-2585026

Appendix B  
**Contact details for members of the Brannoxtown CNS  
Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)**

Team Member and Roles	Contact
<p><b>Principal</b></p> <p><i>Team Leader</i> <i>Staff Liaison</i> <i>Community and Agency Liaison</i></p>	<p>Sarah FitzPatrick Dowdingstown Woods Twomilehouse Naas Co. Kildare W91 VOTD Phone: 087-1124310; 087-9675170 Email: <a href="mailto:sarahfitzpatrick@kwetb.ie">sarahfitzpatrick@kwetb.ie</a></p>
<p><b>Assistant Principal II</b></p> <p><i>Student Liaison</i></p>	<p>Dawn Heffernan Levitstown Maganey Co. Kildare R93 A7N6 Phone: 083 0652754 Email: <a href="mailto:dawnheffernan@kwetb.ie">dawnheffernan@kwetb.ie</a></p>
<p><b>Special Education Teacher</b></p> <p><i>Parent Liaison</i></p>	<p>Anne Marie Roche 23A The Lawns, Abbeylands, Clane, Co. Kildare W91 N922 Phone: 0877732847 Email: <a href="mailto:annemarioche@kwetb.ie">annemarioche@kwetb.ie</a></p>
<p><b>School Secretary</b></p> <p>Administrator Records Management</p>	<p>Liz Kavanagh Brannoxtown Community National School Brannockstown, Co. Kildare, W91 NY67 045 483729 Email: <a href="mailto:brannoxtowncns@kwetb.ie">brannoxtowncns@kwetb.ie</a></p>
<p><b>KWETB Director of Schools</b></p> <p><i>Advisor to Principal</i></p>	<p>Rory O'Toole Director of Schools Kildare and Wicklow Education and Training Board (KWETB) Level 5, Áras Chill Dara Devoy Park Naas Co. Kildare Phone: 045-988000; 086-8061941 Email: <a href="mailto:roryotoole@kwetb.ie">roryotoole@kwetb.ie</a></p>

## Appendix C Critical Incident Action Plan Template

This Action Plan is a Template. It relates to a student bereavement.

### **Short term actions: Day 1**

Task	Responsible
1. Gather and collate accurate information (Who, what, when, where?)	Sarah, Principal Liz, School Secretary
2. Convene a CIMT meeting	Sarah, Principal
3. Contact external agencies	Sarah, Principal Liz, School Secretary
4. Arrange supervision for students	Dawn, APII
5. Hold staff meeting <sup>5</sup>	All staff
6. Agree schedule for the day	All staff
7. Inform students (close friends and students with learning difficulties may need to be told separately)	Dawn, APII
8. Compile a list of vulnerable students	Dawn, APII
9. Prepare media statement and liaise with media	Sarah, Principal
10. Inform parents on advice of Parent Liaison (Anne Marie)	Sarah, Principal
11. Hold end of day staff briefing	Sarah, Principal

### **Medium-Term Actions: Day 2 and subsequent days**

Task	Responsible
12. Convene CIMT meeting to review the events of day 1	Sarah, Principal
13. Meet external agencies	Sarah, Principal
14. Hold staff meeting	All staff
15. Arrange support for students, parents and staff	Dawn, APII (Students) Anne Marie, SET (Parents) Sarah, Principal (Staff)
16. Visit the injured	Sarah, Principal
17. Liaise with bereaved family re. funeral arrangements	Anne Marie, SET Sarah, Principal
18. Agree attendance and participation at funeral service	Dawn, APII (Students) Anne Marie, SET (Parents) Sarah, Principal (Staff)
19. Make decisions about school closure	Board of Management

<sup>5</sup> This step will apply when our school staff increases. At the time of writing, all staff are members of the CMIT.

**Follow-up: Beyond 72 hours**

Task	Responsible
20. Monitor students for signs of continuing distress	Dawn, APII All Staff
21. Liaise with agencies regarding referrals	Sarah, Principal
22. Plan for return of bereaved student(s) on advice of Student Liaison (Dawn)	Sarah, Principal
23. Plan to give 'memory box' to bereaved family	Dawn, APII
24. Decide on memorials and anniversaries	All staff
25. Review response to incident and amend plan	All staff