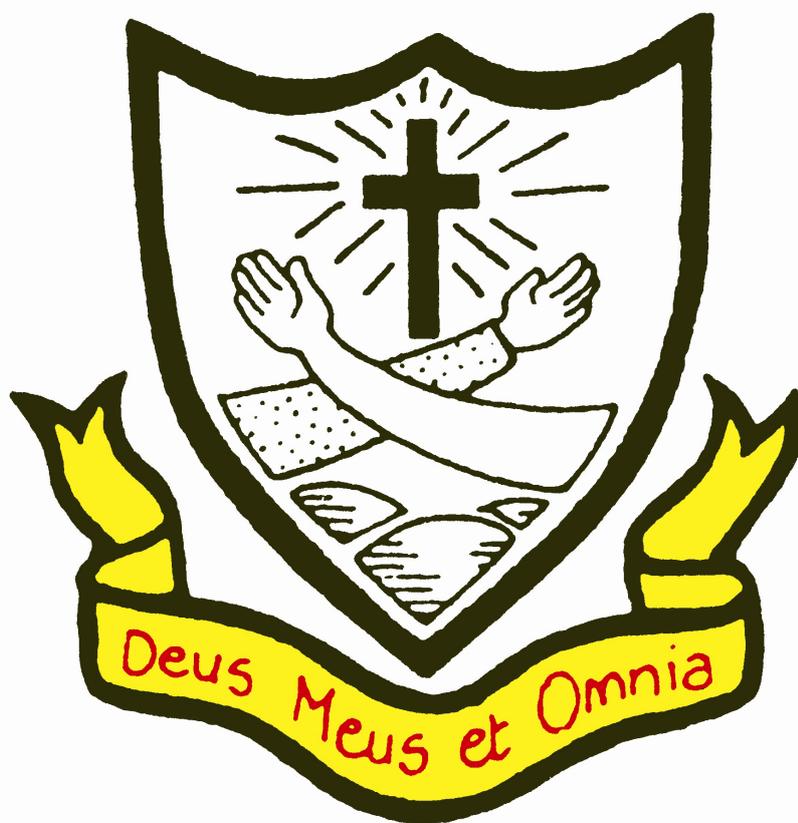


CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY



St. Clare's Primary School
Harold's Cross
Dublin 6W

Roll Number 16651H

St. Clare's Primary School Critical Incident Policy

Introductory Statement

This policy has been formulated and drafted by the Board of Management of St. Clare's Primary School following the publication of Responding to Critical Incidents in Schools which requires all schools to have a critical incident management policy in place.

Rationale and School Ethos

St. Clare's Primary School in its Mission Statement aims to protect the well-being of its pupils by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. St. Clare's Primary School is a co-educational, Convent Catholic Primary School. We in St. Clare's aim to create an ordered and orderly environment in which children feel secure, in which self-esteem is fostered and in which they can make progress at their work. We aim at a general education, which embodies high academic standards allied to a broad range of experience, which will develop the whole child and prepare him/her for the demands of further education and the rapidly changing society in which we now live.

St. Clare's Primary School has taken a number of measures to create a coping, supportive and caring ethos in our school. We have formulated a number of policies and procedures to be followed with a view to ensuring the physical and psychological safety of staff and pupils, both in ordinary times and in the event of a critical incident.

Review and Research

The Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) has consulted resource documents available to schools on www.education.ie and www.neps.ie including:

- Responding to Critical Incidents during School Closures and Public Health Restrictions arising from COVID-19 Information Booklet for Schools (NEPS 2020)
- 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)

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Critical Incident

St Clare's Convent Primary School recognises a critical incident to be 'an accident or sequence of events that overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school and disrupts the running of the school. Critical incidents may involve one or more pupils, staff, the school or our local community. Types of incidents might include:

- The death of a member of the school community through sudden death, accident, terminal illness or suicide
- An accident involving pupil(s) or staff on or off the school premises
- A physical attack on a staff member and/or staff members
- A physical attack on a pupil(s) An intrusion into the school
- Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism etc.
- The disappearance of a member of the school community
- An accident/tragedy in the wider community

Aim

The aim of the Critical Incident Management Policy 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 & Caring Ethos in the School

Systems have been established 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

Our school carries out the following to ensure the physical safety of all school members on the school premises (*see Health & Safety Statement*)

- Parents and pupils use the pedestrian path and marked walkways provided

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- Lines enter the school under supervision in an orderly and controlled manner; Line-up is according to classroom number (**see Supervision Policy**)
- A security system operates on all entrance/exit doors to the school. Outside of assembly and dismissal times, entry to the school is via the main entrance only
- The gate to the playground is locked at 8:50 a.m. daily prohibiting access to the playground
- The gate to the playground is locked and the school is alarmed when vacant
- Staff shall not open Fire Exits to allow parents and or/pupil(s) enter the building
- During the school day parents, pupils and visitors must report to the main office
- Late arrivals, early collection and late collections recorded and signature required.
- Supervision is provided before class commences and during break times
- Only staff cars, delivery vehicles and vehicles with permits are permitted at any time in the school grounds
- At 13:30 and 14:30 the teachers will escort the pupils along the pedestrian path to the gate where parent(s)/guardians will be re-united with their child/children
- Parents are not to block the entrance to main gate while waiting for the dismissal of the pupils
- The same procedures apply for pupils attending extra-curricular activities and/or After Care
- Pupils wear the high visibility jacket coming to and going home from school
- Fire Drills are conducted regularly. Evacuation procedures are clearly displayed in all classrooms and general purpose areas
- All Fire Exits are checked quarterly.
- All Fire Extinguishers are checked on yearly basis.

Psychological safety

St. Clare's aims to create an open and encouraging environment in the school where pupils can talk about their difficulties and seek help for the same. The management and staff of St. Clare'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.

- 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

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- conflict management
- problem solving
- help-seeking
- bullying
- decision making
- prevention of alcohol and drug misuse

Promotion of mental health is integral to the development of a supportive and caring ethos in St. Clare's.

- Staff have access to training for their role in SPHE
- Staff are familiar with the Children First 2015 and *Children First National Guidance for Protection and Welfare of Children 2017* and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures
- Books and resources on difficulties affecting the primary school pupil are available
- Information is provided on mental health in general and such specific areas as signs and symptoms of depression and anxiety
- Some staff are trained to deliver the Friends for Life programme.
- Staff are informed in the area of suicide awareness and some are trained in interventions for suicidal students
- The school has developed links with a range of external agencies:
 - NEPS
 - Tusla
 - Garda Síochána
 - Lucena Clinic
 - Educational Welfare Service
 - CAMHS
 - Health Service Executive (HSE)
- 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 in accordance with DES Circular 0022/2010
- St. Clare's has an anti-bullying policy and deals with incidents of bullying in accordance with this policy

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- There is a Pastoral Care system in place in the school using the "Continuum of Support" approach which is outlined in the NEPS document available on www.education.ie
- Students who are identified as being at risk are referred to the appropriate personnel where concerns are explored and the appropriate support provided
When required a referral is made to an external agency
- Staff are informed about how to access support for themselves

Critical Incident Management Team

A Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) has been established in line with best practice. The members of the team include the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) Middle Leadership Management Team (MLMT) and others selected on a voluntary basis who 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.

Team leader Principal – Mrs. Spring

Role

- Alerts the 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

(Note – The Deputy Principal Mrs. Liston will act as Team Leader in the absence of the Principal)

Garda liaison: Principal – Mrs. Spring

Role

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

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Staff liaison Ms. Moran

Role

- 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
- 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 [Spectrum.Life](https://www.spectrum.life) <https://www.spectrum.life>

Student liaison Ms. Moran

Role

- co-ordinate information from teachers about students they are concerned about
- Alerts other staff to vulnerable students
- Provides materials for students (from their critical incident folder)
- Maintains student contact records (R1)
- Prepare the Assembly Hall as necessary

Community/agency liaison Ms. Moran

Role

- Maintain 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
- Liaise with agencies in the community for support and onward referral
- Is alert to the need to check credentials of individuals offering support
- Coordinate the involvement of these agencies
- Remind agency staff to wear name badges
- Update team members on the involvement of external agencies

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Parent liaison Mrs. Spring

Role

- Visit the bereaved family with the team leader
- Arrange parent meetings, if held
- May facilitate such meetings, and manage 'questions and answers'
- Manage the 'consent' issues in accordance with agreed school policy
- Ensure that sample letters are typed up, on the school's system and ready for adaptation
- Sets up room for meetings with parents
- Maintain a record of parents seen
- Meet with individual parents
- Provide appropriate materials for parents (from the critical incident folder)

Media liaison Mrs. Spring

Role

- 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 DES; relevant teacher unions etc.
- Draw up a press statement and give media briefings and interviews as agreed.

Administrator (School Secretary)

Role

- Maintenance of up to date telephone numbers of
 - Parents or guardians
 - Teachers
 - Emergency Services
- Take telephone calls and notes those that need to be responded to
- Ensure that templates are on server and ready for adaptation
- Prepare and send letters, emails and texts

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- Photocopy materials needed
- Maintain records

Record keeping CIMT

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 school 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 St. Clare's Primary School have a responsibility to protect the privacy and good name of people 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, e.g. 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	
In the event of a critical incident, the following rooms are designated for the indicated purposes	
Room Name	Designated Purpose
<i>Staff Room</i>	Main room for meeting staff
<i>Library</i>	Meetings with students
<i>Room 23</i>	Meetings with parents
<i>Principal's Office</i>	Meetings with media
<i>Room 14</i>	Individual sessions with students
<i>Principal's Office</i>	Meetings with other visitors

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Consultation and communication regarding the plan

St. Clare's Critical Incident Management 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.

This policy was reviewed by the Board of Management on 23.09.2021

Signature: *Sr. Mercedes Boen*
Chairperson Board of Management

Date: 23.09.2021

Date of next review September 2022

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Critical Incident Management Team		
Role	Name	Phone
Team leader	Mrs. Spring	01 4963237
Garda liaison	Mrs. Spring	01 4963237
Staff liaison	Mrs. Liston	01 4963237
Student liaison	Ms. Moran	01 4963237
Community liaison	Ms. Moran	01 4963237
Parent liaison	Mrs. Spring	01 4963237
Media liaison	Mrs. Spring	01 4963237
Administrator	Mrs. Walsh	01 4963237

Short term actions – Day 1

Task	Name
<p>Gather accurate information</p> <p>It is crucial that the school has the correct information regarding the crisis. Therefore, it is important that involved staff gather to establish the facts – this may involve contacting others such as hospitals, Gardaí, parents.</p>	All Staff
Who, what, when, where?	
Convene a CIMT meeting – specify time and place clearly	Principal
Contact external agencies	Deputy Principal
Arrange supervision for students	Middle Leadership Management Team (MLMT)
Hold staff meeting	Deputy Principal
Agree schedule for the day	CIMT

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<p>Inform students – (close friends and students with learning difficulties may need to be told separately) Information to students should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be communicated in a sensitive manner • Give the facts as they are known • Highlight the support that will be available • Indicate the actions that are planned 	Assistant Principal
<p>Compile a list of vulnerable students</p>	SEN Team
<p>Prepare and agree media statement and deal with media In preparing a press statement thought should be given to the following suggestions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priority to be given to the sensitivities and needs of those affected directly by the crisis • The non-release of names, addresses and phone numbers • Rely on facts and avoid speculation • Consider likely questions and a response to them • Agree with the press a time for briefings if this is necessary in an ongoing situation • Nominate a specific location for press briefings • It is recommended that this Press Statement be simple and brief. If appropriate, it should express the sorrow of the entire school community at the sudden death or illness of one of their members and it should extend sympathy to the bereaved family. This statement should be adhered to, and not elaborated on, in all communications with the media and it should be familiar to every member of the school staff. 	Principal
<p>Inform parents</p>	Principal Deputy Principal
<p>Contact Chairperson of the Board of Management</p>	Principal Deputy Principal
<p>Hold end of day staff briefing</p>	Principal Deputy Principal

Medium term actions - (Day 2 and following days)

Task	Name
Convene a CIMT meeting to review the events of day 1	Principal
Meet external agencies	Ms. Moran
Meet whole staff	CIMT
Arrange support for students, staff, parents	Ms. Moran
Visit the injured	Mrs. Spring
<p>Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements</p> <p>The involvement of students in any funeral or other services needs to be discussed. This requires invitation, planning and review. The families involved need to be consulted, the students invited to take part, time given to prepare for this participation and, finally, a debriefing of those concerned. While it would be appropriate for the deceased student's classmates to attend the funeral, it may be inappropriate for large numbers of students to be present. The presence of large numbers of young people at such highly charged events could prove to be inappropriate as well as being upsetting for individual students and for the parents of the deceased student.</p> <p>At all times the rights of the deceased family to privacy must be respected.</p>	Mrs. Spring
<p>Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decide what form of representation is appropriate. It is essential where possible, to consult the family concerned. Do not presume that the bereaved family will want a very public presence by the school. • Prepare students ahead of the funeral. For some this may be the first occasion they have been exposed to a major grief. 	Mrs. Spring

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For those students who wish, encourage and assist them to write a personal message of sympathy. Consider also a common expression from students and/or staff. • Check with funeral directors the arrangements concerning floral tributes. Any accompanying messages should be handwritten. • If possible, representatives of the school should visit the home of the bereaved. If students request to visit the home, phone ahead to check that this is appropriate. Visiting the bereaved may be distressing – support those involved. • Pupils wear the school uniform when attending or participating at the funeral. 	
<p>Make decisions about school closure</p> <p>Whether the school will remain open or will close as a mark of respect to the bereaved family will depend on the judgement of the Principal, management and the Department of Education and Skills following consultation with the school staff. If the decision is to close the school, it is advisable to do so ONLY after informing the bereaved family and of the routine which the school will follow over the coming days. Parents should be formally notified of the school closure.</p>	BOM

Follow-up – beyond 72 hours

Task	Name
Monitor students for signs of continuing distress	Class teachers
Liaise with agencies regarding referrals	Ms. Moran
Plan for return of bereaved student(s)	Mrs. Spring
Plan for giving of 'memory box' to bereaved family	Mrs. Spring
Decide on memorials and anniversaries	Principal Deputy Principal
Review response to incident and amend plan	CIMT

EMERGENCY CONTACT LIST

AGENCY	CONTACT NUMBERS
Gardaí	999/112
Garda Terenure	01 6666700
Garda Rathmines	01 666400
Hospital	999/112
Hospital St. James	01 4103000
Fire Brigade Dolphin's Barn	999/112 01 2224000
Local GPs Dr. Regina Bradford	01 4966025
HSE	01 6486500
Community Care Team Terenure	01 4904648
Child and Family Centre/Lucena Clinic	01 4923596
Child and Family Mental Health Service (CAMHS)	01 8796800
School Inspector Peadar O'Muirí	01 8896553
NEPS Psychologist	076 1108440
DES	(09064)83600
INTO	(01) 8047700 / 1850 708708
Clergy Harold's Cross	(01)4965055
SPECTRUM.LIFE	1800 411 057

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APPENDIX 1 Principal's Checklist

The following is a checklist of things to consider on the morning of a tragedy. They are not written in order of what must come first etc. It is important for a Principal to take time to plan what he/she must do and what is appropriate to say to all concerned.

- Take time to let the news sink in
- Call a meeting of the CIMT, include Year Head and Tutor.
- Put together as much factual information as possible
- Inform staff what has happened
- Discuss school routine for the first day with the staff
- Identify particular students who may need to be told individually, e.g. close friends, relatives etc.
- Inform the pupils of the event and explain that this is something that everyone will find difficult to cope with. Explain school routine for the day and outline support and back-up for the students.
- Contact NEPS, CAMHS, Chairperson of the board of management and the patron.
- Make contact with the family.
- Meet with key staff who can offer student support and decide on the format.
- Decide on any other arrangements which need to be made on the first day, e.g. a short religious service.
- Check in with staff in the staff room during the day and keep abreast of what is happening in the school.
- Be aware of members of staff who may be particularly distressed, e.g. staff who are recently bereaved themselves or who have had prior experience of a similar tragedy.
- Encourage staff to come to you during the day and let you know how things are going
- Find out details of the funeral etc. and communicate this to staff and students.
- At the end of the first day review events with staff and make plans for the following day.
- Make staff aware of students who are particularly vulnerable and what supports will be available for them.
- If there is a likelihood of interest from the media discuss a strategy to deal with any such requests.
- Liaise with Principals if the incident involves a student(s) who has sibling(s) in another school(s)

Appendix 2 Staff Support

The Employee Assistance and Wellbeing Programme for Teachers and Special Needs Assistants is provided by [Spectrum.Life](#) under the logo of 'Wellbeing Together: Folláinne Le Chéile'.

Under the EAS, employees have a dedicated free-phone confidential helpline 1800 411 057 available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year providing advice on a range of issues such as wellbeing, legal, financial, mediation, management support etc.

Where required, short-term counselling is available to employees and their families (over the age of 18 years and living at home).

A bespoke wellbeing portal and app which offers access to podcasts and blogs on topics around wellbeing and mental health, family life, exercise and nutrition is also available.

In addition, online cognitive behavioural therapy is provided.

As part of the services provided by [Spectrum.Life](#) a Mental Health Promotion Manager is available to develop and deliver evidence based mental health and wellbeing initiatives to reduce stigma and improve mental health literacy and to increase engagement with the service.

[Spectrum.Life](#) will also be providing a series of webinars and presentations to promote staff wellbeing in schools as schools reopen and during the upcoming school year.

Website: www.spectrum.life.ie

ADDENDUM

Responding to Critical Incidents

during

School Closures and Public Health Restrictions

arising from

COVID-19

**ACTION PLAN FOR CRITICAL INCIDENT
during
School Closures and Public Health Restrictions
arising from COVID-19**

Short Term Actions – Day 1

Task	Name
Establish accurate facts <i>Who, what, when, where?</i>	Mrs. Spring
Convene a CIMT meeting virtually - specify date and time clearly	Mrs. Spring
Conduct an initial assessment of the incident, decide what level of response is required and agree an Action Plan	CIMT
Contact Chairperson of the Board of Management	Mrs. Spring
Contact appropriate agencies	Mrs. Spring
Decide who needs to be contacted directly – staff/students/others and by what means: text/email/letter/notice on website	CIMT
Identify vulnerable students and consider how to connect with them:- phone call to parents and/or speaking to students directly	SEN Team
Notify staff via school administration system of the initial Action Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make separate contact with staff who may be vulnerable • Remind staff of the availability of <i>Spectrum.Life</i> https://www.spectrum.life • Agree a tie for a follow-up staff meeting for updates and reflection on shared experiences • Draw teachers' attention to <i>Teacher Wellbeing and Self Care during Covid-19 school closure</i> • Share with staff any resources being forwarded to parents. 	Mrs. Spring Ms. Moran
Notify parents via the school administration system <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remember to respect family privacy and avoid references to the cause of death • Bear in mind it is not usual practice for a school to inform the school community of the death of a parent • Manage social media as per guidelines (R22). 	Mrs. Spring Ms. Moran

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft a media statement if necessary (Appendix 1) • Distribute resources 'for parents sharing sad news with their child' as appropriate outlined on page 7 <u>'Responding too Critical Incidents during School Closures and Public Health Restrictions arising from COVID-19'</u> 	
<p>Connecting with students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In accordance with school policy, some staff may link directly with students via telephone, video link or email. • Remind students that maintaining communication is important for wellbeing and encourage them to keep in touch with close family and friends whilst observing HSE guidelines. • Remind students that others are available to provide support. • Reassure students of their resilience and ability to cope. • Encourage them to think of times and ways that they have coped in the past and to identify attributes that have helped them during difficult times. 	<p>Ms. Moran</p> <p>SET Teachers</p>
<p>Bereavement rituals: Funeral restrictions and alternative goodbyes</p> <p>The designated CIMT member(s) should liaise with the bereaved family regarding the funeral service and, where appropriate, a memorial service.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remind students that they are not alone in their grief and that everyone shares the loss of not being able to participate in our usual rituals and togetherness i.e. visiting the family, attending the funeral etc. • Reassure students that the bereaved family understands the need to comply with Public Health restrictions and that a commemorative service will take place at a later date. • Invite students to think of alternative ways to express sympathy e.g. sending a card to the family, lighting a candle, prayer, message of condolence, etc. • Remind students to be considerate and sensitive when posting messages on any social media platform. • Encourage students to participate individually, but collectively in any bereavement ritual being organised e.g. streamed funeral service, lighting a candle at a particular time during the ceremony, playing music, etc. <p style="text-align: center;">At all times the rights of the deceased family to privacy must be respected.</p>	<p>Mrs. Spring</p> <p>Ms. Moran</p>

**Medium Term and Follow Up Actions
(Day 2 and following days)**

Task	Name
<p>Convene a further Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) meeting virtually to review what has been done and to identify new tasks needed.</p>	<p>Mrs. Spring</p>
<p>Update staff virtually on any new information</p>	<p>Mrs. Spring</p>
<p>Continue to provide support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to link in with students, especially more vulnerable students. • Remind students that others are available to provide support e.g. teachers, guidance counsellors, close family, friends and/or online supports. • Advise students to use practical approaches to manage anxiety. Share DES resources and advice for young people during COVID-19:- using breathing techniques, relaxation techniques, coping statements, doing exercise, etc. • Support students to create action plans and to break down problems into small, realistic and manageable steps. • Encourage students to try to spot any unhelpful thoughts and to 'reframe' them to a more helpful thought. • Encourage them to identify positive, self-soothing strategies with prompts such as 'What will help?' or 'What can I do now?' Further resources www.yourmentalhealth.ie • Advise parents and students against making big life changes or hasty decisions at this challenging time. • Advise parents to make a referral to their GP should their child show signs of severe emotional stress (R14) 	<p>Mrs. Spring Ms. Moran SEN Team</p>

Follow-Up Actions

Task	Name
Discuss and review the status of any student referrals made to outside agencies	Mrs. Spring
Prepare for how the school might support all students and staff when schools reopen, in particular those who have been bereaved	Mrs. Spring
Review response to incident and amend plan	CIMT