




# Critical Incident Policy

January 2023

North Dublin Muslim National School



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## **Introduction**

The school policy on Critical Incident Management was revised in December 2021. The policy was discussed as a whole school staff and ratified by the Board of Management of the school. This policy forms the basis of the school's response to the occurrence of a critical incident within our school community. It informs all staff and management of how our school will respond to a critical incident and the roles of staff and management in managing a critical incident.

## **Overview**

The North Dublin Muslim National School aims to protect the well-being of its students by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. We have taken a number of measures to create a coping, caring and supportive ethos in the school. These measures include implementing programmes such as Stay Safe, Walk Tall, You Can Do It and an actively enforced Anti-Bullying policy.

The school has, also, formulated a number of policies and procedures to be followed, with a view to ensuring the physical and psychological safety of our school community, both in ordinary time and in the event of a critical incident. These include regular fire drills, vigilant yard supervision, monitoring of entrances/exits in school and working in conjunction with our Child Protection Policy and our Health and Safety policy.

## **What is a Critical Incident?**

National Educational Psychological Services (NEPS) recognises a critical incident to be 'any incident or sequence of events which overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of the school.' Critical incidents may involve one or more pupils, staff, the school, or our local community.

Types of incidents, that would be considered critical, might include:

- The death of a member of the school community for any reason
- An intrusion into the school
- An accident/tragedy in the wider school community
- Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism etc.
- The disappearance of a member of the school community
- An accident involving members of the school community
- Physical attack on a staff member or pupil.

## **Aims**

Recognising that the key to managing critical incidents is planning, North Dublin Muslim National School has developed this Critical Incident Management Policy. Our hope is that, in the event of an incident, that this policy will help staff to react quickly and effectively and to maintain a sense of control. This policy should also help us to achieve a return to normality as soon as possible and ensure the ongoing health of our school community.

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

We have put systems in place to lessen the probability of an occurrence of an incident. These include measures to address both the physical and psychological safety of both staff and pupils.

#### ***Physical Safety***

- Regular fire drills occur
- Adherence to the Code of Behaviour
- Our evacuation plan is prominently displayed and practiced in all classrooms and school areas
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
- Entrances doors to the school are closed during school times
- Adherence to the Health and Safety Policy
- Safety rules during yard time are in place

#### ***Psychological Safety***

- SPHE programmes are followed to address issues such as grief and loss, stress and anger management, conflict management, problem solving, help-seeking, decision making and substances issues.
- We actively implement our Anti-Bullying Policy in our school
- Staff members are informed of difficulties affecting individual students, on a need-to-know basis and are aware and vigilant to their needs as required
- Adherence to the Dignity in the Workplace policy.

#### **Emergency Contact Numbers:**

The following numbers are displayed in the staffroom and the secretary's office for use in case of emergencies.

Gardaí (Cabra Station):	01 666 7400
Mountjoy Garda Station:	01 666 8600
Ambulance/Fire Brigade:	999/112
TUSLA:	01 635 2500
Department of Education:	01 889 6400
Centric Health:	01 513 2828
Cabra Medical Centre:	01 830 0116
IFI (Islamic Foundation Ireland):	01 453 3242
Mater Hospital:	01 803 2000
Temple Street Hospital:	01 878 4200
Connolly Hospital:	01 646 5000
National Educational Psychological Services (NEPS):	01 889 2700

### **Critical Incident Management Team**

A critical incident team is a group of individuals from the staff of the school who know the community, the students and each other well enough to make the necessary decisions called for when the incident occurs. The North Dublin Muslim National school has set up a Critical Incident team in line with best practice and this policy will be reviewed and updated as required with their co-operation and collaboration.

#### ***Roles***

Key roles have been identified and assigned as follows:

- |                                      |                                       |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| • Team Leader                        | Principal                             |
| • Garda and Agency Contact           | Principal                             |
| • Staff Contact                      | Deputy Principal                      |
| • Media Contact Administrator        | Principal                             |
| • Family Contact                     | Principal and Ger Field               |
| • Student Contact                    | Assistant Principal I                 |
| • Other staff contacts               | Assistant Principal IIs & Adil Zeghni |
| • Nominee of the Board of Management | Qaasim Hafidh Abdul                   |
| • Nominee of the Parents Association | Secretary of the Parent's Association |

<u>Roles 2022/2023:</u>	Principal:	Eoin Walsh
	Deputy Principal	Aidan Kelly
	Assistant Principal I	Suzanne Wehrly
	Assistant Principal IIs	Elaine Faughnan
		Kirstin Feeney
		Niamh O'Hara
		Olivia Roe

In the event of a team member's absence, his/her role will be taken on by the staff member acting up.

In the event of a critical incident the responsibilities of each role-holder will be as follows:

#### ***Team Leader***

- Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting
- Coordinates the tasks of the team
- Contacts National Educational Psychological Services (NEPS), if appropriate.
- Liaises with the Board of Management and Department of Education
- Liaises with the affected families

#### ***Staff/Media Liaison***

- Leads meeting to brief staff on the facts as known, gives staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and outlines the routine for the day
- Advises staff on the identification of vulnerable students
- Is alert to vulnerable staff members and makes contact with them individually
- In preparing for the role, he/she will consider issues that may arise during the incident 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 Communications Section in the Department of Education.

### ***Family Liaison***

- Facilitates 'Questions and Answers' meetings with families
- Meets with individual parents
- Visits the affected families with the team leader
- Prepares a letter for all parents that will express the sympathy of the school community, give the facts, advise the parents of relevant supports
- Maintains up to date list of contact numbers of key parents such as members of the Parents' Association

### ***Student Liaison***

- Liaises with other team members to keep them updated with information and progress
- Alerts staff to vulnerable students
- Assist with administrative tasks

### **Administrative Tasks**

Certain administrative tasks need to be carried out in advance. Details of these are below:

- Contact details should be regularly updated and maintained so that communication is speedy and effective in the event of a critical incident.
- Numbers should be available for: students, parents, guardians, staff members and emergency contacts.
- The emergency contact list above will be kept in agreed location. In our school, these will be displayed in the staffroom and the secretary's office.
- A copy of the layout of the school building should be displayed in key places, with exits highlighted in adherence with Health and Safety regulations.
- Templates for letters to parents and templates for press releases should be prepared and available. These should be 'ready-to-go' and on the school computer system and the Google Drive so that they can be adapted quickly when an incident occurs.
- An emergency pack which includes a small number of key documents for members of the Critical Incident Management team, should be readily accessible in the event of an emergency e.g. emergency contact lists, checklist for first 24 hours, layout of school buildings. These will include action plans based on the NEPS Guidelines and Resource Materials for Schools.

### **Administration in the Course of an Incident**

- The school mobile phone will become a dedicated telephone line, which will be kept free for important outgoing and incoming calls
- The staff room and support rooms when needed will be used for various purposes, including, individual and group support sessions.
- The principal's office will become a designated point where a log of events and telephone calls made and received will be kept
- All offers of help should be logged – the name of the agency, what they are offering, a contact name and number through the secretary's office. These agencies may be contacted later if appropriate
- Arrangements will be agreed for dealing with normal school business among the in-school management team.

## **Action Plans**

The following is a suggested action plan in the case of a critical incident. Many of the steps will be dependent on the nature of the critical incident.

### **Initial Action Plan (General)**

- Gather accurate information: It is important to obtain accurate information about the incident; otherwise rumours may take over and add to the distress of those involved.
- Establish the facts: What has happened? When it happened? How it happened? The number and names of students and staff involved; are there other schools involved? the extent of the injuries; and the location of those injured.
- Contact appropriate agencies
- Convene a meeting with key staff/Critical Incident Management Team.
- Depending on the incident it is advisable to arrange an evening or early morning meeting to ensure that the team is well prepared and has a plan in place for the school day ahead
- Meet with staff
- Identify vulnerable children that may need to be monitored or checked on during this time
- End of the day session with teachers

### **Initial Action Plan (Principal)**

- Gather the facts - what has happened, when, how, where, and who is injured or dead
- Consult Responding to Critical Incidents: Guidelines and Resource Materials for Schools
- Is it an incident requiring a NEPS Response at Level 1, 2 or 3?
- Who do I need to call, referring to the emergency list displayed and kept in school?
- Meet with the other Critical Incident Management Team
- Meet with other agencies, if involved, to agree roles and procedures
- Have administration staff photocopy appropriate literature
- Arrange for the supervision of students
- Agree content of communication for school social media site, if appropriate
- Address the staff meeting
- Identify vulnerable students and those in the school community requiring more general support
- Draft a media statement
- Prepare for a media interview
- Draft a letter to parents
- Meet with the CIMT to review the day and arrange an early morning meeting for the following day
- Meet with the staff group
- Make contact with the affected family/families
- Maintain the routine if at all possible

### **Medium-Long Term Action Plan (General and Principal)**

- Meeting with the CIMT and other agencies
- Meeting with whole staff
- Meet with appropriate staff to review the list of affected staff and students.
- Identify who will be responsible for follow-up
- Prepare for the return of bereaved student(s)
- Discuss what to do with respect to events that the deceased student would have been part of
- Discuss referral procedures and when an onward referral may be indicated

- Discuss what the school will do in memory of the student(s).
- A representative from the school should liaise with the family/ies of the deceased regarding the memorial. Remember that whatever policy or precedent the school sets at this time may need to apply to all future deaths
- Return personal belongings to the family or families.
- Mark the school’s calendar in advance with the anniversary date. Plan for anniversaries as appropriate
- Screen for students who may need to be referred on
- Evaluate the school’s response to the incident and amend the Critical Incident Management Plan appropriately
- Review the whole school approach to promoting health and wellbeing and student support using appropriate resources

**Confidentiality and Good Name Considerations**

The school has 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 pupils also do so. **After consultation with the Board of Management, only the designated person will talk to the media.**

**Policy Communication**

- A hardcopy of the Critical Incident policy is kept in the principal’s office and is available for viewing by appointment.
- The policy is readily available on the school’s Google Drive and school website.
- All new and temporary staff are informed of the details of the plan through their initial mentor meetings in the school.

**Ratification and Review**

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management in January 2023 and will be reviewed in the 2023/2024 school year, or sooner if deemed necessary.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Chairperson

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Principal