



Critical Incidents Policy



Tang N.S.

Roll Number 08037Q

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Introduction:

In Tang National School we aim to protect the wellbeing of our pupils and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times as outlined in our school philosophy statement.

The Board of Management, through the Principal and the Staff, has drawn up a critical incident management plan as one element of the school's policies and plans. They have established a Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) to steer the development and implementation of the Critical Incident Management Plan (CIMP).

What is a Critical Incident?

'A critical incident is any incident or sequence of events which overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school and disrupts the running of the school'. Critical incidents may involve one or more students or staff members, or members of our local community.

Examples:

- Family bereavements
- Death of a student, teacher or parent.
- School fire or explosion, flooding or severe weather
- Severe physical violence in the school
- An intrusion into the school
- Accident on a school trip, in a school building or outside on school grounds
- Accident/tragedy in the wider community
- Disappearance of a member of the school community
- Major illness/outbreak of disease (COVID, Foot & Mouth)
- Unauthorised removal of student from school or home.
- World events that may affect the student body and/or staff e.g. COVID 19, 9/11, tsunami

Aim of the Plan

The aim of the Critical Incident Management Plan (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. The plan will also help ensure that the impact on students and staff will be limited and enable us to effect a return to normality as soon as possible.

Creation of a Coping Supportive and Caring Ethos in the School

Tang National School has put systems in place to help to build resilience in both staff and students through our SPHE/RSE programs and our Child Protection and Bí Cinealta Policies, 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
- Yard supervision – at break times and during the arrival/dispersal times
- General school rules under the school's code of behaviour policy to ensure all pupils have a safe environment.

Psychological safety

The management and staff of Tang National School also 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)

- It is integrated into the work of the school. It is addressed in the curriculum by including 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
- Staffs have access to training for their role in SPHE through continuous professional development with OIDE, teacher education centres, Child First with Tusla and Stay Safe Training via OIDE and CPSMA.
- Staffs are familiar with the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures
- Books and resources on difficulties affecting the primary school student are available
- The school has developed links with a range of external agencies e.g. HSE/Community Care/NEPS/TUSLA
- Inputs to students, parents and teachers 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 e.g. RSE Facilitators, Anti Bullying Talks and Workshops
- The school has a clear Bí Cinealta policy and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy
- There is a support system in place in the school using the "Continuum of Support" approach which is outlined in the NEPS documents published on 2007 for primary schools. Students who are identified with additional needs or as being at risk are referred to the designated staff member (e.g. support teacher, DLP, DDLP). 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.
- Staffs are informed about how to access support themselves e.g. Professional Development and training, Employee Assistance Service.

Critical Incident Management Team

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.

See Appendix 1 – for Critical Response Team Members which is updated on as required as boards of management or staff members change.

Each member of the team has access to the schools Critical Incident Management Folder which include all of the following:

- A copy of Tang National Schools Critical Incident Policy
- A copy of the Critical Incident Management Team/and the Key Roles
- An emergency contact list/school staff contact list
- A copy of the NEPS Responding to Critical Incidents Guidelines which outlines the duties of each team member
- A copy of the Board of Management members & contacts
- An Action Plan Template.

Critical incident rooms

In the event of a critical incident,

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

Classroom and the GP Hall - for meetings with students

The GP Hall - for parents

The GP Hall - for media

Learning Support Room 1 - for individual sessions with students

Learning Support Room 2 - for other visitors

Response Plan

1. Establish the Facts: The members of the team will gather as soon as possible to establish the facts regarding the crisis – this may involve contacting others such as hospitals, Gardaí, Parents & Guardians. Team member roles and responsibilities will be definitively assigned.

2. An Outline Immediate Response: The team will need to agree an immediate plan of action which may involve:

- Agreeing on a common statement with regard to the crisis
- Deciding how the news will be communicated to staff, pupils, parents and other groups
- Informing students and staff
- Contacting parents
- Visiting the home of the student/teacher to agree on how to communicate details of the incident where applicable
- Organising a school assembly or Prayer service, in consultation with the Patron
- Alerting outside agencies such as NEPS, Samaritans, HSE.
- Communicating with other schools where necessary.

3. Inform: It is vital that all those needing information receive it as soon as it is practicable. The team will agree on a common statement. Such a statement will reduce the spread of rumour. All staff will be alerted and informed in the first instance. Students will then be told as quickly as possible in no larger than normal class size groupings. In the case where an accident has occurred on a school trip, the family members directly involved will be contacted in person by a member of the Crisis Response Team. In the case of a suspected suicide, great care should be taken not to use the term 'suicide' until it has been established categorically that the death was a result of suicide.

4. Liaising with the Press: If there are enquiries from the press, the Team Leader and Media Liaison will agree a prepared communication for the press and the Media Liaison is the only person to communicate with the press.

In preparing a press statement, the following priorities will apply:

- The sensitivities and needs of those affected directly by the crisis.
- The non-release of names, addresses and telephone numbers.
- The statement will only deal with known facts.
- Consider likely questions and a response to them.

5. Others to be informed: Contact may also be made with the HSE Crisis Service and if appropriate, the school's insurance company and other concerned agencies will be informed.

6. Arrangements: Whether the school will remain open or will close after a critical incident has occurred will depend on the judgement of the Principal and management following consultation with the school staff. If the decision is to close the school, it will only be done after informing the students and parents about the incident. Parents, students and staff will be kept updated of arrangements or changes in routines where necessary.

7. Record Keeping: All team members will keep written records of phone calls, letters, meetings, interventions etc. Each class teacher will have their own file on hand for the duration of response plan and thereafter all records will be filed and kept in the School Office.

8. Confidentiality: The school is conscious of its responsibility to protect the privacy and good name of people involved in any incident and will be sensitive to the consequences of any public statements.

9. Follow up: The school will provide ongoing support to staff and pupils. The students/class who are most affected and vulnerable will be referred to any relevant agencies (in consultation with the parents). Monitor the students/class most affected, in conjunction with class teacher. Provide follow-up support to families (link to community support groups) if appropriate. The school will decide on appropriate ways to deal with anniversaries and be sensitive to significant days i.e. Birthdays/Mother's Day /Father's Day etc.

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.

All new and temporary staff will be informed of the details of the plan by the principal.

The Response Plan will be reviewed regularly, being especially cognizant of changes to the Critical Incident Management Team when staff or boards change.

Implementation & Review

This policy will be reviewed and amended as the need arises.

Ratification & Communication

This policy was communicated to and ratified by the Board of Management of Tang National School at its meeting held on 22nd October 2025. The policy will be updated again as needed.

Signed: Caitríona Behan
Principal

Date: 22nd October 2025

Signed: John Burke
On behalf of the Board of Management

Date: 22nd October 2025