

Critical Incident Management Policy Headford Primary School

This Critical Incident Management Policy was drawn up by School Leadership team in September 2025.

It aims to ensure that the school and Board of Management discharges its duty of care to all pupils in the school by providing them with an environment that is safe, secure and conducive to the learning and the well-being of the children in the school. The school asks parents to join us in ensuring that this continues.

Definition of a Critical Incident

Headford Primary School recognises a critical incident to be an incident or sequence of events that overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of the school and disrupts the day to day running of the school. Critical incidents may involve one or more students or staff members, or members of our local community.

Types of incidents might include;

- The unexpected death of a member of the school community through accident, violence or illness.
- An accident involving members of the school community.
- An accident or tragedy in the wider community.
- 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.

Level	Example	NEPS Supports Available
1.	Death of a pupil/staff member who was terminally ill; death of a parent/sibling; fire in school NOT resulting in serious injury; serious damage to school property	Call NEPS psychologist for advice by phone
2.	Sudden death of a student or staff member	Contact NEPS psychologist for advice. Depending on the incident, at least 1 NEPS psychologist may visit school.
3.	Accident involving a number of students/staff; a violent death; an incident with a high media profile or involving a number of schools	NEPS are available in an advisory/support capacity and will visit school. In rare and serious incidents, NEPS psychologist may attend parent meeting or assist in setting up in drop-in centre

Aim of the Critical Incident Management Policy

The aim of the CIMP is to help the school management and staff to react quickly and effectively in the event of an incident, to enable us to maintain a sense of leadership and calmness and to ensure that appropriate support is offered to students, parents and staff. It should enable us to affect a return to normality as soon as possible as well as endeavouring to ensure that no further trauma occurs where possible.

Physical and Psychological Safety

This policy re-enforces the elements of the school ethos which advocates the provision of a safe and secure learning environment for each child and ensuring a duty of care at all times when the school is in operation.

The Physical Safety of pupils and staff is a priority for the Board of Management, and robust measures have been put in place to ensure no children or staff members are put at risk:

- A comprehensive school Safety Statement has been drawn up whereby all hazards are identified and remedial measures are outlined. (See Health and Safety Statement)
- Headford Primary School complies in full with the Children's First Act of 2015. We update our Child Safeguarding Statement and Written Assessment of Risk annually. These are displayed in the school foyer. They are also available on the school website. The school principal is the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and the Deputy Principal is the Deputy Designated Liaison Person (DDLDP).
- The school is insured under **Allianz**, with Marsh Ireland Ltd. acting as insurance broker and adviser on related matters.
- Each classroom teacher regularly instructs his/her class on issues relating to safety in the classroom /playground.
- Certain procedures are already in place in the event of accidents.
- Evacuation plans have been formed and are updated annually and more often if needed.
- Regular fire drills occur.
- Administration of Medicines policy is in place

The Psychological Safety of pupils and staff is a priority for the Board of Management; the school has developed policies and uses programmes to address the personal and social development of students. The psychological safety of each child is developed through:

- Our School Ethos.
- Social, Personal and Health Education.
- The Stay Safe Programmes.
- Relationships and Sexuality Programmes.
- Additional SPHE programmes such as Walk Tall
- Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment
- SEN Policy.
- Our Code of Behaviour
- Our Anti- Bullying Policy/ Bí Cineálta
- Our Acceptable Usage Policy
- External agency support- NEPS, Family Support Services, Gardai/ Community Guards

Critical Incident Management Team

The Principal, Deputy Principal, Teachers and Chairperson of Board of Management form the school's Critical Incident Management Team. All of the staff act in a supporting role in the event of a critical incident. Their role is to steer the development and implementation of the plan in line with best practice. The Board of Management and the school body respect the fact that teachers directly affected by such incidents may wish to withdraw from the Critical Incident Staff Support team.

Critical Incident Management Team Roles

Team Leader: Principal

Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes meeting

- Co-ordinates the tasks of the team.
- Liaises with the BOM, Archbishop's House, DES, NEPS as necessary.● Liaises with the bereaved family if applicable
- Liaises with principal and BOM other local schools if necessary
- Leads briefing meetings for staff on the facts as known, gives staff members an opportunity to express feelings and ask questions, outlines the routine for the day.

Garda Liaison: Principal

- Liaises with the gardai as appropriate.
- Ensures that information about deaths or other developments is checked for accuracy before it is shared.

Staff Liaison: Deputy Principal

- Advises staff on procedures for identification of vulnerable students.
- Provides materials for staff (R5/R6/R7 + appendix 14 Self-care for staff)
- Keeps staff updated as the day progresses.
- Is alert to vulnerable staff members and makes contact with them individually where possible.
- Advises new and temporary staff of the contents of the plan
- Advises them of the availability of the Employee Assistance Programme service and gives them the relevant contact details
<https://www.gov.ie/en/service/23acf5-employee-assistance-service/>

Student Liaison: Privileged Post Holders Claire Dolan/Grace Dooley

- Support class teachers in identifying and supporting vulnerable children
- Provide relevant materials and books for vulnerable students
- Keep files on students seen by external agencies R1
- Look after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room were agreed
- Monitor vulnerable children in the days, weeks and months following the incident R14

Parent Liaison Deputy Principal

- Visits the bereaved family with the principal or another member of staff as deemed appropriate
- Arranges parent meeting as appropriate.
- May facilitate such a meeting and manage 'questions' and 'answers'
- Manages the 'consent' issues in accordance with agreed school policy
- Ensures Critical Incident Policy letters are ready for adaptation
- Sets up room for meetings with parents
- Meets individual parents
- Maintains a record of parents seen
- Provides appropriate materials for parents

Community /Agency Liaison: Deputy Principal

- Maintains up to date list of relevant contact numbers
- Liaises with agencies in the community for support and onward referral
- Checks credentials of individuals offering support
- Co-ordinates the involvement of these agencies

Media Liaison: Chairperson of Board of Management

- Will liaise with the media, INTO
- Will draw up a press statement; give media briefings and interviews as appropriate and in a format agreed by the school management
- Will liaise with school community (staff and families) regarding respectful use of social media (as per Acceptable Usage Policy)

Administrators: Privileged Post Holders Claire Dolan/Grace Dooley

- Maintenance of up-to-date telephone numbers of parents/guardians, teachers, emergency services. (Admin through Aladdin)
- Takes telephone calls and notes those requiring a response (Ass P1)
- Ensures that critical incident letters are ready (Admin)
- Prepares and sends out letters/emails (Ass P1)
- Maintains records (Ass P1) Guidelines R1

Development and Communication of this Plan

All staff (including new and temporary staff) are made aware of the plan

Record Keeping

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, materials used etc. R20 will be used as the overall Management Template.

Other Templates are available in the Guidelines and referred to throughout this policy.

The school secretaries have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending

letters, photocopying materials etc. Depending on the nature and severity of the incident, the relief secretary may be asked to assist.

Confidentiality

The management and staff of Headford Primary School have a responsibility to respect and protect the privacy and good name of the people involved in any incident and will be sensitive to this when dealing with all aspects of a critical incident. All staff and pupils will be expected to follow the school's Acceptable Usage Policy in relation to online/social media activity. **Procedures to be followed (Records kept using R20 template)**

Short term actions (1st day)

1. Gather accurate information
2. Contact appropriate emergency agencies using the emergency numbers list
3. Convene meeting with Critical Incident Management Team (sample agenda in Guidelines p.22/23) to:

- Agree statement of facts for staff (sample script Guidelines p.24/25) students, parents
- Delegate responsibilities to the team
- Agree statements and decide who will take responsibility for telephone / email communication etc.
- Organise school routine/ timetable (adhering to the normal routine as much as possible)
- Decide on the need of outside professionals
- Decide who and how to inform parents (See Sample Letters)
- Decide which phone line will be kept open for emergency information

Informing Pupils

In general, and where possible, the class teacher shares appropriate information with pupils.

- Consideration will be given to age etc.
- Information will be given in class groups
- Agreed facts will be given to avoid speculation
- Give reminder about AUP "*Students must not post or share personal information about pupils, staff or other members of the Headford Primary School community on social media*"
- Pupils will be allowed to ask questions, tell their stories and express feelings R5
- Students will be helped to realise their emotions are natural and normal following a critical incident
- A period of silence/reflection/prayer will be organized.

Medium term actions (24-72hours)

- Review the events of the first 24 hours
- Arrange support for students or staff as necessary
- Request school closure from BOM as necessary

Longer Term Actions

- Monitor students for signs of continuing distress
- Consign important dates, events anniversaries to the yearly school calendar
- Decide on appropriate ways to deal with anniversaries, etc.
- Evaluate the response to the incident and amend the plan as appropriate

Contacts/ Documents which may be required in the event of a Critical Incident

- list of all staff contacts and next of kin (P/DP/Admin only)
- list of all Board of Management, Parents Association (PP/DP /Admin only)
- list of all local community and emergency contacts
- Current Student database (Admin/P/DP/AP1)
- NEPS Letter for parents to inform them about Critical Incident R2/R3
- NEPS Permission for child to see NEPS psychologist letter (red office)
- Sample announcement to the media R4. Also, Guidelines p.46 Dos and don'ts in dealing with the media
- Advice for parents of how to help their child R12
- Advice for parents/staff re children's reaction and stages of grief R5/R6/R7

Resources:

NEPS Guidelines and Resources

<https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/National-Educational-Psychological-Service-NEPS-/Responding%20to%20Critical%20Incidents.pdf>

https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&url=https%3A%2F%2Fassets.gov.ie%2F40700%2F21b5193521d147c890b4309fe4bfce9d.pdf&psig=AOvVaw3Cy0bEP9vKkDu9O3FUw25t&ust=1728027872405000&source=images&cd=vfe&opi=89978449&ved=0CAQ Qn5wMahcKEwjot-LY2_GIAxUAAAAAHQAAAAAQBA

Hard copy of above:

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)

Irish Childhood Bereavement Network <https://www.childhoodbereavement.ie/>
(Videos especially helpful)

Additional templates available at: -

<https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/National-Educational-Psychological-Service-NEPS-/Critical-Incidents.html>

Signed: Fr. Ray Flaherty
Fr. Ray Flaherty
(Chairperson of BOM)

Signed: Mary Mc Nelis
Mary Mc Nelis
(Principal/Secretary of BOM)

Date: 20/10/25

20/10/25

Agency	Contact number
Garda Station 999 or 112	Headford 093-35412 Tuam 093-70840
Galway Hospital UHG Galway Merlin Hospital Galway Clinic	091-524222 091 544 544 091-785000 091-785999 1800 283 999
Fire Brigade 999 or 112	Tuam 01-02345679 Galway 091-570900
Medical Centre	Dr. Alan 093-35720 Dr. Val 093-35740
HSE Primary Care CAHMS Resource Officer for the prevention of Suicide.	Galway 091-753887 Shantalla 091-546009 091-775877 + 091-775931 Mary O'Sullivan 091 - 864473
School Inspector	Dara Mannion
NEPS Psychologist	091-864518 01-8650701
DES	Athlone 090-6483600 057-9324300
INTO	01-8047700
Parish Office (Sharon) Fr. Ray Flaherty	093-35448 087-9779684
Employee Assistance Service	0818-008120
Tusla Child & Family Agency John Donnellan	091-511236
Tusla Education Office	01 7718500