

## **Defining a Critical Incident**

Dominican College, Sion Hill aims to protect the well-being of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. The Board of Management, through Sheila Drum, has drawn up a Critical Incident Management Plan as one element of the school's policies and plans.

## **Review and Research**

The CIMT have consulted resource documents available to schools on [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie) and [www.nosp.ie](http://www.nosp.ie) including:

- 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 Post-Primary Schools Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention (DES, DOH, HSE 2013)

The staff and management of Dominican College, Sion Hill recognise a critical incident to be "an incident or sequence of events that overwhelms the normal coping mechanism 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:

- Bereavement
- Suicide of a student, teacher, parent
- Death of a staff member or student
- Serious illness of a close relative of student/staff
- School fire, explosion or other emergency
- Serious violence or threat of same in the school/school community
- The disappearance of a member of the school community
- Intrusion into the school
- An accident on a school trip.

## **Aim**

The aim of the Critical Incident Management Policy is to help school management and staff to react critically and effectively in the event of an incident, to enable us to maintain a sense of control and to ensure the 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 affect a return to normality as soon as possible.

## Creation of a coping supportive and caring ethos in the school

We have put systems in place 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

- Evacuation plans are formulated
- Regular fire drills occur
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
- Pre-opening supervision in the school (8:00am – 8:45am)

### Psychological safety

The management and staff of Dominican College, Sion Hill 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; 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
- Staff have access to training for their role in SPHE
- Staff 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/post primary school student are available
- Information is provided on mental health in general and such specific areas as signs and symptoms of depression and anxiety
- 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
- 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. See DES Circulars, 0023/2010 (Post-Primary)
- The school has a clear policy on bullying and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy
- There is a care 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 and 2010 for post primary schools. See also Student Support Teams in Post Primary Schools (2014). These documents are available on [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie)
- Students who are identified as being at risk are referred to the designated staff member (e.g. guidance counsellor or support teacher), 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.
- Staff are informed about how to access support for themselves.

### **Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)**

A Critical Incident Management Team (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. 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.

#### **Chairperson/ Team Leader – School Principal**

- Ensures that information about deaths and other developments is checked out for accuracy before being shared
- Alerts team members to the crises and convenes a meeting
- Activates the CIM plan
- Contacts and informs BOM of incident
- Liaises with DES; NEPS; SEC
- Ensure that information is disseminated to all members of the school community in the event of a critical incident.
- Liaises with the bereaved family
- Liaises with Gardaí
- Makes decisions during a crises e.g. school closure, attendance at memorial services

#### **Staff Liaison Deputy Principal -**

- Keep the school running as normally as possible.
- Make rooms available for: Counselling, Chaplain/Reflection, Parents/Public to meet.
- Frees up teachers who are: helping out with students, helping the coordinator and facilitator, affected by the situation.
- Continue with school administration but in unusual circumstances.
- Liaises with Principal regarding communications to staff, students, and public.
- Organises a 'communication-to-all-staff' system when dissemination of information is required outside school time.
- Organises a 'Bulletin Board' in the staffroom during the critical incident and to update where necessary.

#### **Students' Liaison/ Parents' Liaison Year Heads and Pastoral Care Team**

The Facilitator is usually the Year Head of the relevant student group affected by the Critical Incident.

- To work closely with the tutors in order to identify specific needs within the school.
- Works closely with the Deputy Principal to relay information regarding: extra classrooms which may be needed, changes in classrooms, changes required re staff.
- Oversees the delivery of the response to the students.
- Visits the bereaved family with the team leader/chairperson.
- Alerts other staff to vulnerable students.
- Looks after setting up and supervision of quiet room where agreed.
- Arranges parents meetings if held.

### **Community /Agency Liaison Counselling Coordinator**

- Liaises with agencies in the community for support and onward referral.
- Coordinates the involvement of these agencies.
- Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies.
- To support teachers in their implementation of the response in the classroom.
- To provide counselling/emotional support to students and staff affected by the incident.
- To ensure follow up and evaluation towards best practice in critical incident response.

### **Chaplin/Spiritual Role/RE Department**

- Liaise with local parish in the case of a death.
- Contact local parish re funeral arrangements.
- Liaise with parish and home with regard to school involvement in liturgy.
- Organise students/staff to be involved in funeral is invited to do so.
- Work with RE team to provide prayer for the affected group as soon as possible.
- Establish 'quiet' or prayer space in the school.

### **Media Liaison**

- In advance of an incident, considers issues that may arise and how they might be responded to (e.g. students being interviewed).
- Liaises where necessary with the SEC, relevant teacher unions etc.
- Draws up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews (as agreed by school management).

### **Co-ordinator**

- Ensuring that each person/group understands and is fully briefed on his/her role within the response.
- Responsibility for the updating procedures where appropriate and for keeping staff informed of such changes.
- To liaise with the office staff re accessing up-to-date records of telephone numbers (school term and holiday), mobile phone numbers, home addresses and e-mail addresses of all CIM team members.
- To liaise with office staff re accessing all contact details of all staff members.
- Maintain an up-to-date list of emergency contact telephone numbers. Emergency contact details should be made available in the staff room/principal's office, staff/student members
- Ensures that templates are on the school system in advance and ready for adaptation

## Administrator

- Maintenance of up to date telephone numbers of Parents/Guardians/Teachers so communication is speedy and effective in the event of a critical incident.
- Takes telephone calls and notes those that need to be responded to
- Prepares and sends out letters, emails and texts
- Photocopies materials needed

### **The Critical Incident Management Team**

Team Leader	Sheila Drum (Principal)
Staff Liaison	Gerry Killion (Deputy Principal)
Community Agency Liaison	Paul O' Brien
Students' Liaison	Gerry Killion, Sheila Drum, Ciara Morris, Elaine Kelty,
Parents' Liaison	Ciara Morris, Elaine Kelty, Gerry Killion, Sheila Drum
Media Liaison	Orla Condren, Ruth Stokes
Coordinator	Eleanor Nilan
Chaplin/RE Department	Nicole Brady, Jacinta Keogh
Administator	Sarah Canning, Mags Flood, Imelda Cronin

The following staff/agencies may also be involved as the CIMT see fit  
Pastoral Care team, NEP, School Secretary, Caretaker(s)

### **Confidentiality and good name considerations**

Management and staff of Dominican College Sion Hill 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 Management Team

Role	Name and email address	Telephone number
Chairperson/ Team Leader	Sheila Drum <a href="mailto:sheila.drum@sionhillcollege.ie">sheila.drum@sionhillcollege.ie</a>	Sheila Drum 086 024 3075
Deputy Principal Staff Liaison/ Garda Liaison	Gerry Killion <a href="mailto:gerry.killion@sionhillcollege.ie">gerry.killion@sionhillcollege.ie</a>	Gerry Killion 086 869 4385
Co-ordinator	Eleanor Nilan <a href="mailto:eleanor.nilan@sionhillcollege.ie">eleanor.nilan@sionhillcollege.ie</a>	Eleanor Nilan 086 828 8263
Administrator	Imelda Cronin/ Mags Flood/ Sarah Canning <a href="mailto:imelda.cronin@sionhillcollege.ie">imelda.cronin@sionhillcollege.ie</a> <a href="mailto:mags.flood@sionhillcollege.ie">mags.flood@sionhillcollege.ie</a> <a href="mailto:sarah.canning@sionhillcollege.ie">sarah.canning@sionhillcollege.ie</a>	Sarah Canning 083 449 1944 Mags Flood 087 410 6967 Imelda Cronin 086 891 7976
Parents' liaison/ Students' Liaison Year Heads	Ciara Morris/Elaine Kelty <a href="mailto:ciara.morris@sionhillcollege.ie">ciara.morris@sionhillcollege.ie</a> <a href="mailto:elaine.kelty@sionhillcollege.ie">elaine.kelty@sionhillcollege.ie</a> Gerry Killion <a href="mailto:gerry.killion@sionhillcollege.ie">gerry.killion@sionhillcollege.ie</a> Sheila Drum <a href="mailto:sheila.drum@sionhillcollege.ie">sheila.drum@sionhillcollege.ie</a>	Ciara Morris 087 133 2070 Elaine Kelty 086 197 3007 Gerry Killion 086 869 4385 Sheila Drum 086 024 3075
Guidance Counsellor/Counselling Staff	Paul O' Brien <a href="mailto:paul.obrien@sionhillcollege.ie">paul.obrien@sionhillcollege.ie</a>	Paul O' Brien
Chaplin/Spiritual Role/RE Department	Nicole Brady/Jacinta Keogh <a href="mailto:nicole.brady@sionhillcollege.ie">nicole.brady@sionhillcollege.ie</a> <a href="mailto:jacinta.keogh@sionhillcollege.ie">jacinta.keogh@sionhillcollege.ie</a>	Nicole Brady 086 1559107 Jacinta Keogh 087 959 6943
Media Liaison	Orla Condren/Ruth Stokes Sheila Drum <a href="mailto:sheila.drum@sionhillcollege.ie">sheila.drum@sionhillcollege.ie</a> <a href="mailto:orla.condren@sionhillcollege.ie">orla.condren@sionhillcollege.ie</a> <a href="mailto:ruth.stokes@sionhillcollege.ie">ruth.stokes@sionhillcollege.ie</a>	Sheila Drum 086 024 3075 Orla Condren 085 725 1155 Ruth Stokes

<b>Critical Incident Rooms</b>		
<b>In the event of a critical incident, the following rooms are designated for the indicated purposes</b>		
<b>Room Name</b>	<b>Designated Purpose</b>	
Staff room	Main Room for meeting Staff	
Oratory	Meeting with Students	
Pastoral Care Room	Meeting with Parents	
Deputy Principal's Office	Meeting with the media	
TY Office	Individual sessions with students	
Principals' Office	Meeting with other visitors	

### **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. 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 Eleanor

The plan will be updated annually. (Each September)



## School Plan

### Short term actions – Day 1

<b>Task</b>	<b>Name</b>
<b>Gather accurate information</b>	Principal/Deputy Principal Sheila Drum, Gerry Killion
<b>Who, what, where, when?</b>	Principal/Deputy Principal – Sheila Drum, Gerry Killion
<b>Convene a CMIT meeting – specify time and place clearly</b>	Principal/Deputy Principal – Sheila Drum, Gerry Killion
<b>Contact external agencies</b>	Counselling Coordinator Paul O Brien
<b>Arrange supervision for students</b>	Deputy Principal – Gerry Killion
<b>Hold staff meeting</b>	All staff
<b>Agree schedule for the day</b>	CIMT
<b>Inform students – (close friends and students with learning difficulties may need to be told separately)</b>	Elaine, Kelty, Ciara Morris, Sheila Drum Gerry Killion
<b>Compile list of vulnerable students</b>	All staff
<b>Contact/visit the bereaved family</b>	Sheila Drum
<b>Prepare and agree media statement</b>	Sheila Drum, Ruth Stokes, Orla Condren
<b>Inform parents</b>	Sheila Drum, Gerry Killion
<b>Hold end of day staff meeting</b>	Gerry Killion, CIMT

## Medium Term actions – (Day 2 and following days)

<b>Convene CMIT meeting to review the events of day 1</b>	<b>Team Leader/CIMT</b>
<b>Meet external agencies</b>	Sheila Drum
<b>Meet whole staff</b>	Gerry Killion
<b>Arrange support for student, staff, parents</b>	Sheila Drum
<b>Visit the injured</b>	Sheila Drum, Gerry Killion, Elaine Kelty, Ciara Morris
<b>Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements</b>	Elaine Kelty, Ciara Morris, Sheila Drum. Gerry Killion, Nicole Brady, Jacinta Keogh
<b>Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service</b>	Pastoral Care Team
<b>Make decisions on school closure</b>	BOM

## Follow up – beyond 72 hours

<b>Monitor students for signs of continuing distress</b>	Year Heads/ All subject teachers
<b>Liaise with agencies regarding referrals</b>	Principal, Deputy Principal, Guidance Counsellor Sheila Drum, Gerry Killion, Paul O'Brien
<b>Plan for return of bereaved student(s)</b>	Principal, Year Head, Pastoral Care team
<b>Plan for giving 'memory box' to bereaved family</b>	RE department - Nicole Brady, Jacinta Keogh
<b>Decide on memorials and anniversaries</b>	BOM/Staff, parents and students
<b>Review response to incident and amend plan</b>	BOM, CIMT, Staff

Plan for the return of absent students and staff

Plan for reintegration of siblings, close relatives, injured students, involved in the incident is developed by the Pastoral Care Team and the relevant Year Heads



### Emergency Contact Numbers

AGENCY	CONTACT NUMBERS
GARDA (Blackrock)	(01)666 5200
HOSPITAL (ST. VINCENTS HOSPITAL)	(01)221 4358
FIRE BRIGADE	999
LOCAL GPs	Dr. Ide Delgary (01) 278 9369 Blackrock Medical Centre (01) 288 8363 Rockcourt Medical Centre (01) 278 870
HSE	185 241 850
CAMHS	(01)803 4793
NEPS PSYCHOLOGIST	(01)889 2700
DES	(01)889 6400
ASTI	(01)604 1060
PARISH PRIEST/CLERGY	(01)283 1593
STATE EXAMINATIONS COMMISSION	(090) 644 2700
EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE SERVICE	1800 411 057



### Sample letter to parents – Sudden death/accident

Dear Parents,

The school has experienced (*the sudden death, accidental injury, etc.*) of *Name of students(s)*. We are deeply saddened by the *deaths/events*.

Our thoughts are with (*family name*).

We have support structures in place to help your child cope with this tragedy. (**Elaborate**). It is possible that your child may have some feelings or questions that she may like to discuss with you. It is important to give factual information that is appropriate to their age.

You can help your child by taking time to listen and by encouraging her to express feelings. All children are different and will express their feelings in different ways. It is not uncommon for children to have difficulty concentrating or be fearful, anxious, or irritable. They may become withdrawn, cry, complain of physical aches and pains, have difficulty sleeping or have nightmares. Some may not want to eat. These are generally short term reaction. Over the course of the coming days, please keep an eye on your child and allow him/her to express their feelings without criticism.

Although classes will continue as usual, I anticipate that the next few days will be difficult for everyone.

(**Optional**) An information night for parents is planned for (*date, time and place*). At that time, further information about how to help children in grief will be given.

We have enclosed some information which you may find useful in helping your child through this difficult time.

Young people frequently turn to social media to see what others are saying, or to find out more. At these times it is important that you monitor their use and engage with them about what they read. We urge you to emphasise and reinforce the need to be extremely sensitive and careful about what they post.

If you would like advice you may contact the following people at the school (**details**).

Principal's signature

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### Sample letter to parents – Violent Death

Dear Parent/ Guardian

I need to inform you about a very sad event that has happened.

A **child/young person** from the neighbourhood, who is the **sister/ brother of (name of student), a student here at school, was killed as a result of (a violent attack, violent incident in the street etc.)** earlier this week. We are all profoundly saddened by his death.

We have shared this information and had discussions with all of our students so that they know what has happened. School staff members have been available for students on an on-going basis today. Other support personnel (including psychologists etc., according to actual arrangements) are available to advise staff in their support of students.

The death of any young person is tragic, but a violent death is even more difficult. It is hard to have to teach our children about the violence in our world and to accept that sometimes we do not have the power to prevent it.

This death may cause a variety of reactions in your child. Some children/young people may be afraid for their own life and for the lives of those they love. Take time to listen to their fears and reassure them that what has happened is rare.

We have enclosed some additional information that may be useful during this time.

The media are in the vicinity of the school and may approach you or your children. You need not respond to their questions if you are approached. We will not allow the media to interview your child at school and our general advice is that you should not let your children be interviewed. They are not mature enough to judge what to say and may say something they will regret later.

In these times, young people tend to turn to social media to see what others are saying, or to find out more. While social media can be of great consolation, we would urge you to reinforce the need to be extremely sensitive about what your daughter might post to others. Our thoughts are with **(family name)** and with each of you.

Sincerely,

Principal's name

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### Sample announcement to media

My name is (**Name**) and I am the principal of (**Name**) School. We learned this morning of the death of (**one of our students or Name of student**). This is a terrible tragedy for \_\_\_\_\_ family(ies), our school and our community. We are deeply saddened by these events. Our sympathy and thoughts are with (**Name**) family and friends.

Name of **student/students was a (5th year girl)** and will be greatly missed by all who knew her.

We have been in contact with her parents and they have requested that we all understand their need for privacy at this difficult time.

Offers of support have been pouring in and are greatly appreciated. Our school has implemented our Critical Incident Management Plan.

Psychologists from the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) and (insert other information if relevant) have been with us all day supporting and advising teachers in their efforts to assist our students at this time.

The teachers have been helping students to deal with the tragic event.

The school has been open to parents to support them and to offer them advice and guidance. We would ask you to respect our privacy at this time.

Thank you.

Principal's name

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## **Sample Teacher Communication Text Message**

### **Student Death**

Dear Staff,

It is with great sorrow that I inform you of the death of one of our student's \_\_\_\_\_ in class \_\_\_\_\_ due to a \_\_\_\_\_. This is a huge loss for \_\_\_\_\_'s family, our school and the community. The School's Critical Incident Management Team have met to plan our response.

### **Sample Parent Communication Text – Student Death.**

Today, with great sadness we learned the death of one of our \_\_\_\_\_ Year Students. Our thoughts and prayers are with \_\_\_\_\_'s family during this difficult time. Further communication will follow in due course.



Sample letter requesting consent for involvement of outside Professionals

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Follow the recent (tragedy/death of X) we have arranged specialised support for students in the school who need particular help.. (X) is available to help us with this work. The support will usually consist of talking to the students either in small groups or on a one to one basis, and offering reassurance and advice as appropriate.

Your daughter has been identified as one of the students who would benefit from meeting with (X). If you would not like your daughter to receive this support please sign the attached slip and return to the school by\_\_\_\_\_.

If you would like further information on the above or if you would like to talk to the psychologist, please indicate this on the slip, or contact the school.

Principal

\_\_\_\_\_

I/We do not wish our daughter to meet with\_\_\_\_\_.

I/We understand that my daughter may meet with \_\_\_\_\_ in an individual/group session, depending on the arrangements that are thought most appropriate.

Name of Student: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_





This can be used to help explore a student's reaction to a critical incident and how it is impacting on them. It can help the student to express their thoughts, feelings and emotions in a safe environment with a caring adult.

We are concerned about how things are going for you. Our talk today will help us to discuss what's going well and what's not going so well. If you want me to keep what we talk about between me and you, I will do that— except for those things that I need to discuss with others in order to help you. For example, if you or someone else is at risk in any way, I could not keep that confidential. My job is to help and I will need to do something about it.

In answering, please provide as much detail as you can. At times, I will ask you to tell me a bit more about your thoughts and feelings.

STUDENT'S NAME \_\_\_\_\_ BIRTH DATE \_\_\_\_\_ AGE SEX M/F CLASS / YEAR \_\_\_\_\_

1. Where were you when the event occurred?
2. What did you see or what did you hear about what happened?
3. How are you feeling now?
4. How will your life be different now?
5. What could you/they have done?
6. Has anything like this happened to you or any of your family before?
7. Do you think anyone could have done something to prevent it? Yes No Who?
8. How well do you know those who were hurt or killed?
9. What bothers you the most about what happened?
10. How do you think this will affect your family in the days to come?

11. Thinking back on what happened;

	Not at all	A little	More than a little	Very
How angry do you feel about it?	1	2	3	4
How sad do you feel about it?	1	2	3	4
How guilty do you feel about it?	1	2	3	4
How scared do you feel?	1	2	3	4

12. Do you use social media to keep in touch with friends?

13. Which friends and who at home can you talk to about this?

14. What do you usually do when you need help with a personal problem?

15. What changes have there been in your life or routine because of what happened?

16. What are you going to do when you leave school today? If you are uncertain, let's talk about what you should do.

## **A CLASSROOM SESSION FOLLOWING NEWS OF A CRITICAL INCIDENT**

Normally, the class teacher, class tutor or other teacher who knows the students should be the person to inform them of the events and lead the classroom session. Students generally feel safe and secure with someone they know. If the teacher feels uncomfortable with this role another staff member may share the task. Teachers should have the opportunity to opt out of this work if they feel unable to handle it and other arrangements should be made for that class group.

The aim of the session is to break the news to give the students an opportunity to discuss what has happened and to express their thoughts and feelings in a secure environment. The teacher needs to listen and be empathic.

The session needs to be tailored to the age and developmental level of the class group. The outline of the session is as follows:

### **STEP 1 Giving the facts and dispelling the rumours**

Tell the students in a calm, low key and factual voice

- What has happened?
- Who was involved?
- When it happened?
- The plan of the day?

### **Sample Script**

I have something very sad I want to share with you. The factual information agreed upon by the staff e.g. (name of student), who attends our school and was missing, has been found. You will probably be aware, through social media, that he is dead. Yesterday, the Gardaí found his body. They are investigating what has happened and will let us know as soon as they find out more information.

### **STEP 2 Sharing stories and allowing and encouraging the sharing of thoughts and the expressions of feelings**

Take some time for discussion. Students may wish to tell their story of the event. As a result they will feel less alone because of their common shared experiences. Assisting them to verbalise their experiences helps their recovery. For those students who find it difficult to verbalise their experiences, or for students with learning difficulties, it may be helpful to allow them to express their feelings and recount their experiences in other ways. Writing stories or using art can be particularly helpful, especially for younger students. A number of materials that can be used are suggested in Section 11, R24. Give the students a choice as to how they want to represent their experiences. Have a box of tissues at hand. Sample script To help us today, we are going to make a memory box for (name of deceased). You can draw a picture of a time you remember with (name of the deceased) or write a poem or a letter to him. If you like we can put these in a nice box and give it to (name of deceased) family sometime soon. This will help them to see how important (name of deceased) was.

### **STEP 3 Normalising the reactions**

Tell the children that they will all react differently to what has happened and that there is no right or wrong way. List some possible feelings and reactions, (see R9). Explain that their reactions are normal responses to abnormal circumstances. Let the students know that the reactions or symptoms will go away in time. Tell them that if the symptoms haven't gone after a few weeks, they should let you or their parents know. In addition to conversations they may have with friends on social media they may need to talk to someone in person about how they are feeling. Depending on the incident and the age of the students distribute handouts

### **STEP 4 Worries**

#### **Sample script**

You may be worried about (name of the deceased) - that they might be sad or lonely or hungry or cold. When someone dies they don't feel cold or hungry or feelings like that anymore. You may be worried that the same thing could happen to you or someone in your family. What happened to (name of deceased) doesn't happen very often. If the classmate has been ill, you could say. He was very sick and the chances of this happening to someone else you know are low.

### **STEP 5 Advising about social media**

Discussions may begin with an outline of the various social media currently being used by members of the group. The value of these as a way of keeping in contact with and supporting friends should be acknowledged. Students may be asked for experiences of ways in which such communication has helped them as well as examples of ways in which it has gone wrong. Media involving live communication such as Skype or Viber are generally more conducive to support and less open to misunderstanding than text-based means. Students will be encouraged to consider how much social media usage is too much, particularly late into the night

### **STEP 6 Empowerment**

Help the students to identify strategies that they might use to help manage their reaction, for example, talking to family and friends, getting enough sleep, taking plenty of exercise and appropriate use of social media - may all help. If appropriate, students can share strategies that worked for them in other stressful situations or brainstorm ideas as to what might help. Overall, it is important to help the students regain a sense of control.

### **STEP 7 Closure**

End the session by focusing on the future. Depending on the nature of the incident, help the class/group decide what they would like to do about various issues, e.g., what to do about the person's empty chair, about writing cards or letters. Reiterate the message that their reactions are normal responses to abnormal circumstances

### **STEP 8 Free time**

After the discussion the teacher may want to allow the student's some play time in the playground or free time in the classroom or an agreed area, depending on the age. Help the students to identify strategies that they might use to help manage their reaction, for example, talking to family and friends, getting enough sleep, taking plenty of exercise and appropriate use of social media - may all help. If appropriate, students can share strategies that worked for them in other stressful situations

or brainstorm ideas as to what might help. Overall, it is important to help the students regain a sense of control.

### **STEP 9 Recovery**

It may be useful to continue to do these activities at intervals during the days following and to intersperse them throughout the curriculum in the coming days. Normal routines should generally be returned to as soon as possible.

- Students should be encouraged to resume sports and other extra-curricular activities
- It is appropriate that the class curriculum is adjusted or adapted. For example, teachers should avoid presenting new learning material for a while following an incident as concentration may be impaired
- Use opportunities which arise within ordinary class work, where coping and support can be reinforced
- Students could be encouraged to discuss how to avoid future crisis and lessons learnt from their experiences. There will also be opportunities for structured discussion within the school's social, personal, and health education programmes. Social Personal & Health Education (SPHE) curriculum time is an ideal context in which to offer support

## Evaluation

Evaluation is a vital part of the process of maintaining a viable critical Incident Strategy. Crisis management can only develop with analysis of past incidents, feedback in the light of past responses and systematic evaluation of all protocols in place.

Issues to be aware of in the light of effective evaluation include:

- The confidence of the Crisis Management Team in their roles in the event of an incident
- Was internal communication effective between staff?
- Were all staff furnished with accurate facts and kept updated on a consistent basis? • Was the overall communication strategy successful?
- Was information disseminated quickly to avoid speculation and rumour?
- Was there adequate and effective communication with the family involved? • What lessons could be learned from an analysis of this strategy?
- Was feedback obtained from staff as to whether they felt sufficiently equipped to deal emotionally and physically with the incident?
- Was there sufficient guidance and support to individual teachers, staff and students? • Were students adequately supervised during the Crisis Meeting?
- Was there sufficient Pastoral Care provided to deal with the incident?
- Was communication with the media effective?
- Have all necessary referrals to support services been made?
- Were external support agencies met with for feedback in the aftermath of the incident?
- Were all expenses incurred met and dealt with in a timely manner?
- What amendments need to be made to any further crisis management incidents in the light of the review of this incident?

