

## ASTON VILLAGE EDUCATE TOGETHER NATIONAL SCHOOL

### CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY

Aston Village Educate Together National School aims to protect the wellbeing of its students by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times.

Aston Village ETNS has taken a number of measures to create a coping, supportive and caring ethos in the school. 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 staff and students, both in ordinary time and in the event of a critical incident.

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

Aston Village ETNS recognises a critical incident to be *'an incident 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 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*

#### **Aim**

Recognising that the key to managing critical incidents is planning, Aston Village ETNS has developed this Critical Incident Management Policy and accompanying plan. Our hope is that, in the event of an incident, this plan will help staff to react quickly and effectively and to maintain a sense of control. They should also help us to achieve a return to normality as soon as possible and ensure that the effects on the students will be limited.

## **Creation of a Coping, Supportive and Caring ethos in the school**

Aston Village ETNS has put systems in place to lessen the probability of the occurrence of an incident. These include measures to address both the physical and psychological safety of both staff and students.

### **Physical Safety**

- Evacuation plan formulated
- Regular fire drills
- Fire extinguishers and exits regularly checked
- Pre-opening morning time supervision in the yard
- Rules of the playground

### **Psychological Safety**

Aston Village ETNS aims to create an open and encouraging environment in the school where students can talk about their difficulties and seek help for same -

- SPHE programmes are included in the curriculum
- Our discipline policy includes an approach to bullying
- Staff are informed of difficulties affecting individual students and are aware of and vigilant to their needs
- School is developing a resource library for staff including resources on difficulties affecting the primary school child
- School has developed links with outside agencies which may be contacted in the event of an emergency and for onwards referral of students

### **Critical Incident Management Team**

Aston Village ETNS has set up a CIM team in line with best practice and will maintain this team in the future. The members of this 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 once a year to review and update the plan. Each member of the team has a Ready To Go Pack with relevant materials to be used in the event of an incident.

Team members are listed in Appendix 1.

Names and roles to be displayed in staff room and adjusted if necessary after the yearly review. Key roles have been identified as follows:

### **Team Leader**

- Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting
- Co-ordinates the tasks of the team
- Liaises with the BOM and Dept of Education and Skills
- Liaises with the bereaved /affected family

### **Staff Liaison**

- Leads meeting to brief staff on the facts as known
- Gives staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and outlines the plan for the day
- Advises staff on the identification of vulnerable pupils
- Is alert to vulnerable members of staff and makes contact with them individually
- Provides materials to staff from Ready to Go Pack

### **Student Liaison**

- Liaises with other team members to keep them up-dated with information and progress
- Alerts staff to vulnerable students
- Provides materials for the students from the Ready To Go Pack

### **Parent Liaison**

- Facilitates “questions and answers” meetings
- Meets with individual parents
- Provides materials for parents from the Ready to Go Pack
- Visits the bereaved / affected family with the Team leader

### **Community Liaison**

- Liaises with agencies in the community for support and onward referral
- Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies
- Co-ordinates the involvement of these agencies
- Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of key parents, emergency support services and other external contacts and resources

### **Media Liaison**

- In preparing for the role he/she will consider issues that may arise during an incident and how they might be responded to (i.e. requests for students to be interviewed, photographers on the premises etc).
- In the event of an incident will liaise with the communications section of the Dept of Education and Skills.

Up to date lists of contact numbers of parents or guardians, teachers and emergency support services will be kept in the Secretary's office.

### **Record Keeping**

In the event of an incident each member of the team will keep records of phone-calls made and received, letters/emails sent and received, meetings held, persons met, interventions used, materials used etc. The school secretary will have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters etc.

### **Letter to Parents.**

The team will prepare a brief written statement to include:

- The sympathy of the school community for the affected/family.
- Positive information or comments about the deceased or injured person
- The facts about the incident

- What has been done
- What is going to be done

### **Confidentiality and Good Name consideration.**

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 the pupils do also. (For instance the term 'suicide' will not be used without the consent of the family involved. The phrase "tragic death" or "sudden death" may be used instead).

### **Critical Incident Room.**

In the event of a critical incident the Staff Room upstairs will be the main room used to meet the staff, students, parents and visitors involved.

### **Development and Communication of this Policy and Plan.**

All staff were consulted and their views canvassed in the preparation of the draft plan. Parents representatives were also consulted and asked for their comments. Our school's final policy and procedures in relation to responding to critical incidents has been presented to all Staff and will be reviewed next September 2020.

Each member of the Critical Incident Team has a personal copy as of 15/10/19.

All new staff will be informed of the plan by mid-term break, October 2019.

## **APPENDIX 1 CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM 2019-20**

### **Team Leader - Dermot**

- Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting
- Co-ordinates the tasks of the team
- Liaises with the BOM, PTA and Dept of Education and Skills
- Liaises with the bereaved /affected family

### **Staff Liaison - Pauline**

- Leads meeting to brief staff on the facts as known
- Gives staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and outlines the plan for the day
- Advises staff on the identification of vulnerable pupils
- Is alert to vulnerable members of staff and makes contact with them individually
- Provides materials to staff from Ready to Go Pack

### **Student Liaison - Paul**

- Liaises with other team members to keep them up-dated with information and progress
- Alerts staff to vulnerable students
- Provides materials for the students from the Ready To Go Pack

### **Parent Liaison - Pauline**

- Facilitates “questions and answers” meetings
- Meets with individual parents
- Provides materials for parents from the Ready to Go Pack
- Visits the bereaved / affected family with the Team leader

### **Community Liaison - Des**

- Liaises with agencies in the community for support and onward referral
- Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies
- Co-ordinates the involvement of these agencies

- Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of key parents, emergency support services and other external contacts and resources

#### **Media Liaison - Dermot**

- In preparing for the role he/she will consider issues that may arise during an incident and how they might be responded to (i.e. requests for students to be interviewed, photographers on the premises etc).
- In the event of an incident will liaise with the communications section of the Dept of Education and Skills.

Up to date lists of contact numbers of parents or guardians, teachers and emergency support services will be kept in the Secretary's office and on Aladdin.ie.