

**ST. JOSEPH'S NATIONAL SCHOOL,
BOYERSTOWN**

Critical Incident Policy



Co-Ordinator: Vice Principal
Review: September 2018

St Joseph's National School
Boyerstown
Navan

CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY

St. Joseph's National School aims to protect the wellbeing of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. The Board of Management, through the Principal, Mr Cathal O'Bric, has drawn up a critical incident management plan as one element of the school's policies and plans.

We have established a Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) to steer the development and implementation of the plan.

Team members 2018/2019

Mr Cathal O'Bric	- Principal
Miss Margaret O'Brien	- Vice-Principal
Mrs. Úna Conlan	- Class Teacher
Ms. Niamh Quinn	- Class Teacher
Mrs. Naz Corrigan	- Class Teacher
Ms. Áine Dalton	- Learning Support Teacher
Ms. Shawna Sherlock	- Resource Teacher
Mrs. Majella Murray	- S.N.A
Mrs. Nuala Ivory	- Secretary

Mr Liam Brady – Chairman Board of Management

Teams meets annually to update and review plan.

The staff and management of St Joseph's National School 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 some of the following:

- The death of a member of the school community through accident, violence, suicide or suspected suicide or other unexpected death
- An intrusion into the school
- An accident involving members of the school community
- An accident/tragedy in the wider community
- Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism, etc.
- The disappearance of a member of the school community

Aim

The aim of the 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. Having a good plan should also help ensure that the effects on the students and staff will be limited. It should enable us to effect 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

Examples of what St. Joseph's N.S. is doing to ensure physical safety

- 1.** Evacuation plan formulated.

Evacuation Plan

All teachers lead their classes out of the classroom and proceed to the fire drill stations facing the front windows of the classrooms. Teachers bring a class list with them and call roll on reaching the fire drill station. No other items are brought by teacher or pupils from the classroom or cloakroom or hall.

2. Regular fire drills occur
3. Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
4. Front gate locked during school hours
5. Rules of the playground are regularly revised.

Psychological safety

The management and staff of St. Joseph's N.S. 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.

1. 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 provision.
2. Staff have access to training for their role in SPHE.
3. Staff are familiar with the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures.
4. Books and resources on difficulties affecting the primary school student are available.
5. Information is provided on mental health in general and such specific areas as signs and symptoms of depression and anxiety.
6. Staff are informed in the area of suicide awareness.
7. The school has developed links with a range of external agencies.
8. 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.
9. The school has a clear policy on bullying and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy.

10. There is a care system in place in the school. 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 e.g. family doctor

11. Staff are informed about how to access support themselves

*** Employee Assist Tel: 1800 411057.**

Critical Incident management Team (CIMT)

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. 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.

Roles

Team Leader-Principal Team Leader	Cathal O’Bric
Deputy Team Leaders	Margaret O’Brien ,
Garda Liaison	Cathal O’Bric
Staff Liaison	Margaret O’Brien
Assistant Staff Liaison Officer	Áine Dalton
Parent Liaison	Nazanine Corrigan
Assistant Parent Liaison Officer	Úna Conlan
Community Liaison	Cathal O’Bric/Niamh Quinn
Assistant Community Liaison Officer	Shawna Sherlock
Media Liaison	Cathal O’Bric
Administrator	Secretary

1 Team Leader

- Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting.
- Co-ordinates the tasks of the team.
- Liaises with the Board of Management, DES, and NEPS.
- Liaises with the bereaved family.

2 Garda Liaison

- Liaises with the Gardaí.
- Ensures that information about deaths or other developments is checked out for accuracy before being shared.
- Liaises with agencies in the community for support and onward referral.
- Is alert to the need to check credentials of individuals offering support.
- Co-ordinates the involvement of these agencies.
- Reminds agency staff to wear name badges.
- Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies.

3 Staff Liaison

- Leads briefing meetings for staff on the facts as known, gives staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions, and outlines the routine for the day.
- Advises staff on the procedures for identification of vulnerable students.
- Provides materials for staff (from their critical incident folder).
- Keeps staff updated as the day progresses.
- Is alert to vulnerable staff members and makes contact with them individually.
- Advises them of the availability of the EAS and gives them the contact number.

4 Community/agency liaison

- Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers Key parents, such as members of the Parents Council and Emergency support services and other external contacts and resources,
- Ensures that templates are on the schools system in advance and ready for adaption,
- Prepares and sends out letters, emails and faxes,
- Photocopies material needed,
- Maintains records.

5 Parent Liaison

- Visits the bereaved family with the team leader.
- Arranges parent meeting, if held.
- May facilitate such meeting, and manage 'questions and answers'.
- Manages the 'consent' issues in accordance with agreed school policy.
- Ensures the sample letters are typed up on the school's system and ready for adaptation.
- Sets up room for meeting with parents.
- Maintains a record of meeting with parents.
- Maintains a record of parents seen.
- Meets with individual parents.
- Provides appropriate materials for parents (from their critical incident folder)

6 Media Liaison

- In advance of an incident, will consider issues that may arise and how they might respond to (e.g. Students being interviewed, photographers on the premises)
- In the event of an incident, will liaise where necessary with the relevant teacher, unions etc.

- Will draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews (as agreed by school management)

7 Administrator

- Maintenance of up to date telephone numbers of
 - Parents or Guardians
 - Teachers
 - Emergency services
- Takes telephone calls and notes those that need to be responded to.

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. The school secretary will have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters, photocopying materials, etc.

Confidentiality and good name considerations

The management and staff of St. Joseph's N.S. have 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 students do so also. For instance, 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 it. The phrases 'tragic death' or 'sudden death' may be used instead. Similarly the word suicide should not be used until it is legally established.

Critical Incident Rooms

In the event of a critical incident, the staff room will be the main room used to meet the staff, parents, media, other visitors and individual sessions with the students. The P.E. Hall will be the main room used for meeting with students and large groups of parents.

Consultation and communication regarding the plan

All Staff were consulted and their opinions canvassed in the preparation of this policy and plan. Students and parents 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. The plan will be updated annually (September)

CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEMPLATE FOR SCHOOL PLAN

Short Term Actions (1st Day)

Summary checklist for principals

1. Gather the facts - Who? What? When? And Where?
2. Contact appropriate agencies
3. Convene the Critical Incident Management Team
4. Organise for the supervision of students
5. Inform Staff
6. Agree on a statement of facts
7. Identify high risk students
8. Appoint someone to deal with phone enquiries
9. Organise timetable for the day

MAINTAIN THE NORMAL ROUTINE WHEN AT ALL POSSIBLE

10. Inform parents/guardians
11. Inform students
12. Make contact with the bereaved family
13. Organise support
14. Respond to the media

MEDIUM – TERM ACTIONS

(24 – 72 HOURS)

- Review events of first 24 hours
- Arrange support for individual students, groups of students and parents, if necessary
- Plan for the reintegration of students and staff (e.g. Absentees, injured, siblings, close relative etc.)
- Liaise with the family regarding funeral arrangements/memorial service.
- Attendance and participation at funeral/memorial service.
- School closure

(Request decision on this from school management and school inspector).

LONGER TERM ACTIONS

- Monitor students for signs of continuing distress.
- Evaluate response to incident and amend the critical incident management plan appropriately.
- Formalise the critical incident plan for the future.
- Inform new staff/new school pupils affected by critical incidents where appropriate.
- Decide on appropriate ways to deal with anniversaries.

DEALING WITH THE AFTERMATH OF A SUICIDE OR A SUSPECTED SUICIDE

- Family – staff member contacts family to establish facts and family's wishes about how death should be described.
- Organise home visit by 2 staff members.
- Staff
- Students
- Indicators of high risk students.
- Assess for suicide potential (Responding to Critical Incidents Booklet p14-16)

RESOURCE DOCUMENTS FOR USE BY SCHOOLS IN THE EVENT OF A CRITICAL INCIDENT

(NEPS - Responding to critical incidents advice and information pack for schools

pg. 17 - 26)

- How teaching can support students in school following a critical incident.
- A classroom session following a critical incident.
- Grief – different stages/phases in the grieving process.
- The range of “normal” reactions to a critical incident.
- Guidelines for input with pupils on coping with their reactions to a critical incident – feelings and thoughts, physical/behaviour reactions, what can help?
- Guidelines for meeting with parents.

CLASSROOM SESSION FOLLOWING A CRITICAL INCIDENT

- Provide facts, dispel rumours.
- Share stories.
- Share thoughts and feelings.
- Normalisation of thoughts and feelings.
- Empowerment – help students identify strategies that they can use to help manage symptoms e.g. talking to family and friends, getting enough sleep, exercise etc.
- Closure – end session by focusing on the future. Reiterate the message that their reactions are normal responses to abnormal circumstances.

Appendix 3

LETTER TO PARENTS (1)

(Sample letter in the event of a tragedy)

Dear Parents,

The school has experienced (*the sudden death, accidental injury*) of one of our students. We are deeply saddened by the death/events.

(Brief details of the incident, and in the event of a death, perhaps some positive remembrances of the person lost)

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 that he/she may like to discuss with you. You can help your child by taking time to listen and encouraging them to express their feelings. It is important to give them truthful information that is appropriate to their age.

If you would like advice or assistance you may contact the following at the school. (Details)

Yours sincerely,

Appendix 4

LETTER TO PARENTS (2)

(Sample letter requesting consent for involvement of outside professional/s)

Dear Parents,

Following the recent (tragedy/death of X) we have arranged professional support for students in school who need particular help.

(X.....) is available to help us with this work. This support will usually consist of talking to children, either in small groups or on a one-to-one basis and offering reassurance and advice as appropriate.

Your son/daughter has been identified as one of the students who would benefit from meeting with the psychologist. If you would like your child to receive this support please sign the attached permission slip and return it to the school by.....

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

Yours sincerely,

.....

I/We consent to having our daughter/son met by a psychologist employed by the Minister for Education and Science.

I/We understand that my daughter/son may meet the psychologist(s) in an individual or group session depending on the arrangements which are thought to be most appropriate.

Name of Student: -----

Class/Year: -----

Date of Birth: -----

I would like my daughter/son-----to avail of the support being offered by the psychologist.

Signed----- (Parent/Guardian)

Responding to critical incidents advice and information pack for schools

Appendix 1

Emergency Contact List

Please display this in the staff room and on the office notice board.

Garda	999	046 9021445
Ambulance	999/112	
Fire Brigade	999/112	
Hospital		046 9021210
Local Gps (Dr. on Call)		1850 777 911
Health Board/Child and Family Centre		046 9021595
BOM Chairperson – Mr Liam Brady		087 7404469
School Divisional Inspector – Mrs Elizabeth Sheridan		
DES - Communications Unit 8896570		01-8892181/01
NEPS Psychologist Office		046 9093310
SENO – Dervla Mulligan		046 9075539
INTO		01-8047700
Clergy/Pastor Care Fr. A. Doyle		086 6772348/ 046-9073805
Local Counselling Service - Knightsbridge, Trim (Child & Adolescence Mental Health Service)		046 9420800
Social Worker and Family Therapist		046 9079350
Employee Assistance Service		1800 411 057

Appendix 2

USEFUL CONTACT NUMBERS

Barnardo's	01- 4530355
The Samaritans	1850 609090
ChildLine	1800 666666
Parent line	1890 927277
Aware	01 - 6766166
National Suicide Bereavement Support Network	024 95561
Rainbows	01-4734175
The Bereavement Counselling Service Dublin	
Bereavement Counselling Service	01 6767727

<http://homepage.eircom.net/nsbsn>

Irish website for people bereaved by suicide lists support groups.

Ratification of Policy

This policy will be reviewed by the Board of Management once in every school year.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on

Signed: _____
Chairperson of Board of Management

Signed: _____
Principal

Date: _____

Date: _____

Date of next review: September 2018

The Board further endorses the Principal Cathal O’Bric as the school DLP and Margaret O’Brien as Deputy DLP.

On behalf of the Board of Management:

_____ (Chairperson) Date: _____

