



Critical Incident Policy-St. Joseph's N.S.

Introduction:

In St. Joseph's N.S. we aim to protect the well-being of our pupils and staff by providing a safe, tolerant and well catered for environment as outlined in our school philosophy statement.

The BoM through the Principal, the Staff and the Parents Association has drawn up a critical incident management plan. They have established a Critical Incidents Management Team to steer the development and implementation of the plan.

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"

Examples:

- Death, major illness/outbreak of disease
- Criminal incidents
- Major accidents, serious injury
- Suicide
- Civil unrest, war (refugees may be traumatised by events that happened elsewhere)
- Fire, natural and technological disaster
- Disappearance of student from home or school
- Unauthorised removal of student from school or home.

Critical Incidents Management Team:

Leadership Role: Sé McCarthy/Gráinne Kelly
Communication Role: Sé McCarthy/Gráinne Kelly
Student Liaison/
Counseling Role: Áine Hanevy
Chaplaincy Role: Fr. Stan Deegan
Family Liaison Role: Audrey L'Estrange
Parents Association Rep: Tara O'Connor
B.O.M. Rep: Sé McCarthy/ Audrey L'Estrange
N.E.P.S: Zoe Lipson

The first-named person has the responsibility as defined.

The second-named person assists and assumes responsibility on the absence of the first-named except with regard to the Counseling and Family Liaison Roles where both named parties will assume responsibility together.

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Roles and Responsibilities

Leadership Role:

Intervention

- Confirm the event
- Activate the C.I. response team
- Express sympathy to family
- Clarify facts surrounding event
- Make contact with other relevant agencies
- Decide how news will be communicated to different groups (staff, pupils, outside school)

Postvention

- Ensure provision of ongoing support to staff and students
- Facilitate any appropriate memorial events
- Review Plan

Communication Role:

Intervention

- With Team prepare a public statement.
- Organise designated room to address media promptly
- Ensure telephone line free for outgoing and important incoming calls
- Liaison with relevant outside support agencies

Postvention

- Review and evaluate effectiveness of communication response

Student Liaison/ Counselling Role:

Intervention

- Outline specific services available in school
- Put in place clear referral procedures
- Address immediate needs of staff
- Information
- Counseling

Postvention

- Ongoing support to vulnerable students

- Monitor class most affected
- Refer on, as appropriate
- Review and evaluate Plan

Chaplaincy Role:

Intervention

- Visit home, if appropriate
- Assist with prayer services
- Make contact with local clergy
- Be available as personal and spiritual support to staff

Postvention

- Provide follow-up support to family in conjunction with Home School Community Liaison
- Work in partnership with religious education team
- Review and Evaluate Plan

Family Liaison Role:

Intervention

- Coordinate contact with families (following first contact by principal)
- Consult with family around involvement of school in e.g. funeral service
- Assist with all communication dealing with parents of any student affected by critical incident

Postvention

- Provide ongoing support to bereaved family
- Involve as appropriate family in school liturgies/memorial services.
- Offer to link family with community support groups
- Review and evaluate plan.

Parents Association Representative:

Intervention

- Coordinate contact with Parents Association
- Consult with P.A. regarding involvement of them in activities e.g. funeral service

Postvention

- Involve as appropriate P.A. in school liturgies/memorial services
- Offer to link P.A. with community support groups
- Review and evaluate plan

Board of Management Representative:

Intervention

- Coordinate contact with B.o.M.
- Consult with B.o.M. regarding involvement of them in activities e.g. funeral service

Postvention

- Involve as appropriate B.o.M. in school liturgies/memorial services
- Offer to link B.o.M. with community support groups
- Review and evaluate plan

Action plan

SHORT-TERM ACTIONS (Day 1)

- Immediate contact with family/families.
- Consult with the family regarding appropriate support from the school, e.g. funeral service.
- Ensure that a quiet place can be made for students/staff.
- Rooms will be made available as follows:
- Prayer room: Classrooms
- Individual Meetings: Meeting Room
- Parents: Meeting Room

Media Briefing

- Designate a spokesperson. (Principal)
- Prepare a brief statement. (Team)
- Protect the family's privacy.
- Gather accurate information

- **It is important to obtain accurate information about the incident.**
 1. What happened, where and when?
 2. What is the extent of the injuries?
 3. How many are involved and what are their names?
 4. Is there a risk of further injury?
 5. What agencies have been contacted already?

- **Contact appropriate agencies**
 1. Emergency services
 2. Medical services

3. H.S.E. Psychology Departments/Community Care Services
 4. NEPS
 5. BOM
 6. DES/Schools Inspector.
- **Convene a meeting with Key Staff/Critical Management Team (8.30 a.m.)**
 1. Organize a staff meeting, if appropriate. (9.00 a.m.)
 2. Organize timetable/routine for the day. (Adhering to the normal school routine is important, if this is possible).
 3. Class teachers to take note of any absentees who might need to be contacted, list of friends etc., or any other relevant information and give to the Student Liaison person.
 4. Arrange supervision of students
 - **Liaise with the family regarding funeral arrangements/memorial service.**
 1. The Chaplain/ Principal will liaise with the family, to extend sympathy and clarify the family's wishes regarding the school's involvement in funeral/memorial service.
 2. Arrange a home visit by two or three staff representatives within 24 hours, if appropriate. (Student Liaison Reps + Class teacher)
 3. Have regard for different religious traditions and faiths.

MEDIUM-TERM ACTIONS (24-72 HOURS)

- Preparation of students/staff attending funeral.
- Involvement of students/staff in liturgy if agreed by bereaved family.
- Facilitation of students'/staffs' responses, e.g. Sympathy cards, flowers, book of condolences, etc.
- Ritual within the school.
- **Review the events of the first 24 hours**
 1. Reconvene Key Staff/Critical Incident Management Team. (8.30 a.m.)
 2. Decide arrangements for support meetings for parents/students/staff.
 3. Decide on mechanism for feedback from teachers on vulnerable students.
 4. Have review meeting with Critical Incident Management Team. (3.10 p.m.)
 5. Establish contact with absent staff and pupils.
- **Arrange support for individual students, groups of students, and parents, if necessary.**
 1. Hold support/information meeting for parents/students, if necessary, in order to clarify what has happened.
 2. Give any teacher who feels uncomfortable with involvement in support meetings the choice of opting out.

3. Arrange, in consultation, with outside agencies, individual or group debriefings or support meetings with parental permission. Permission slips to be included in enrolment forms.
- **Plan for the re-integration of students and staff e.g. absentees, injured, siblings, close relative etc.)**
 1. Student Liaison person to liaise with above on their return to school.
 2. Plan visits to injured
 3. Family Liaison person + Class Teacher + Principal to visit home/hospital.
 4. Attendance and participation at funeral/memorial service (To be decided)
 5. Decide this in accordance with parents' wishes and school management decisions and in consultation with close school friends.
 6. School closure
 7. Request a decision on this from school management.

LONGER TERM ACTIONS

- Monitor students for signs of continuing distress.
- **If, over a prolonged period of time, a student continues to display the following, he/she may need assistance from the Health Board.**
 1. Uncharacteristic behaviour
 2. Deterioration in academic performance
 3. Physical symptoms — e.g. weight loss/gain, lack of attention to appearance, tiredness, restlessness
 4. Inappropriate emotional reactions
 5. Increased absenteeism.
- **Evaluate response to incident and amend Critical Incident Management Plan appropriately.**
 1. What went well?
 2. Where were the gaps?
 3. What was most/least helpful?
 4. Have all necessary onward referrals to support services been made?
 5. Is there any unfinished business?
- **Formalise the Critical Incident Plan for the future.**
Consult with NEPS Psychologist
- **Inform new staff/new school pupils affected by Critical Incidents where appropriate.**
 1. Ensure that new staff is aware of the school policy and procedures in this area.
 2. Ensure they are aware of which pupils were affected in any recent incident and in what way.

3. When individual pupils or a class of pupils affected by an incident are transferring to a new school, it would be useful to brief the Principal of the new school.
- **Decide on appropriate ways to deal with anniversaries (Be sensitive to special days and events)**
 1. Anniversaries may trigger emotional responses in students/staff and they may need additional support at this time.
 2. Acknowledge the anniversary with the family
 3. Be sensitive to significant days like Birthdays, Christmas, Mother's Day, and Father's Day.
 - Plan a school memorial service.
 - Care of deceased person's possessions. What are the parent's wishes?
 - Update and amend school records.


Ratification and Review

This policy will be reviewed in January 2028 and amended as necessary by means of a whole school collaborative process.

Critical Incident Policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 19th of June 2025.

Signed: 
Chairperson of Board of Management
Management

Date: 19/6/2025

Signed: 
Principal/Secretary to the Board of

Date: 19/6/25

