



Critical Incident Policy

Roll No: 18377A

Principal: Geraldine Burke

Deputy Principal:

Chairperson: Brian Shinnick

Critical Incident Policy

St. Joseph's N.S. aims to protect the well-being of its students by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. We have taken a number of measures to create a coping, supportive and caring ethos in the school. We have formulated a policy 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?

St. Joseph's N.S. 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 pupil, 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 unplanned death
- An intrusion into the school
- An accident or 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:

At St. Joseph's N.S. we recognise that the key to managing critical incidents is planning. We have developed a Critical Incident Management Policy and an accompanying plan. Our hope is that in the event of a critical incident occurring our staff will react quickly and effectively, maintain a sense of control and return to normality as soon as possible after a potential critical incident and ensure that the effects on the students and staff would be limited.

Creation of a coping, supportive and caring ethos in the school:

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

Physical Safety:

We have included into our Health and Safety Policy:

- Evacuation plan in the event of a fire (see fire drill)
- Regular fire drills occur (termly)
- Fire Exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
- Pre-opening morning time supervision starts at 8.40 a.m. and is the responsibility of the principal. If the principal is unavailable it becomes the responsibility of the deputy principal
- Children cannot be taken from school during school hours without informing the principal or secretary. There will be a sign-out book for parents when removing children from school early.
- Pupils are regularly reminded of the rules of the playground. These rules are reviewed and discussed at staff meetings

Psychological Safety:

We have created an open and encouraging environment in the school where students can talk about their difficulties and seek help.

- We have a comprehensive anti-bullying policy that is reviewed on an annual basis
- Our mission statement specifies that all children will be given equal hearing
- S.P.H.E. programmes are included in the curriculum to address issues such as grief and loss, communication skills, stress and anger

management, conflict management, problem solving, help seeking, decision making, alcohol and drug prevention, mental health and wellness and suicide

- All staff are informed of the difficulties effecting students, and are aware and vigilant to their needs
- All staff have access to books and resources on difficulties effecting the primary school child
- The school has developed links with outside agencies such as the clergy, N.E.P.S., H.S.E., school nurse, cigire and the I.N.T.O
- The staff will be cognisant of the differing needs of international pupils and those with special educational needs
- Staff will be made aware of the Employee Assistance Service and its corresponding Freephone Number 1800-411-057

Critical Incident Management Team

A critical incident management team is a group of individuals from the staff who know the community, the students, and each other well enough to make the necessary decisions for when an incident occurs. 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 once a year to review and update the plan. Each member of the team has a dedicated critical incident pack with relevant materials to be used in the event of an incident.

Roles:

Key Roles have been identified and assigned

The team includes:

Team Leader: Geraldine Burke

Staff Liaison: Mahon O’Keeffe

Pupil Liaison: Geraldine Burke

Community Liasion: Brian Shinnick

Parent Liaison: Geraldine Burke

Media Liason: Mahon O’Keeffe

Administrative Tasks: Mary Murphy

Health & Safety: John McCarthy

In the event that a critical incident occurs the responsibilities of each role-holder will be as follows:

Team Leader:

1. Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting
2. Coordinates the tasks of the team
3. Liaises with the Board of Management and DES
4. Liaises with the effected staff/family member

Staff Liaison:

1. Leads meetings to brief staff on the facts as known, gives staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and outlines the routine of the day
2. Advises staff on the identification of vulnerable students
3. Is alert to vulnerable staff members and makes contact with them individually.
4. Provides materials to staff from Critical Incident Pack

Pupil Liaison:

1. Liaises with other team members to keep them updated with information and progress
2. Alerts staff to vulnerable students
3. Provides materials for students from the Critical Incident Pack

Community Liaison:

1. Liaises with agencies in the community for support and onward referral
2. Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies
3. Co-ordinates the involvement of these agencies
4. Is elert to check the credentials of individuals offering support

Parent Liaison:

1. Facilitates 'questions and answers' meeting
2. Meets with individual parents
3. Provides materials for parents from Critical Incident Pack
4. Visits the bereaved family with another team member

Media Liaison:

1. In preparing for the role, he/she will consider issues that may arise during an incident and how they might be responded to (e.g. students being interviewed, photographers on the premises, etc.)
2. In the event of an incident will liaise where necessary with the communications section of the DES

Administrative Tasks:

1. Maintenance of an up to date list of contact numbers of: Parents/ Guardians, Teachers, Emergency support services
2. Telephone calls need to be responded to, letters sent and materials photocopied
3. To do list:
 - Contact Parents/Guardians
 - Contact A&E Services
 - Contact Fr. Brian.....life or death situation
 - Contact Principal or Deputy principal
 - Contact Class Teacher
 - Contact First Aid Person/Health and Safety Officer
 - Contact the I.N.T.O.

Record Keeping

In the event of an incident each member of the team will keep detailed 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.

Letters to Parents:

Deputy Principal will prepare a brief written statement to include:

- The sympathy of the school community for the affected/bereaved family
- Positive information or comments about the deceased/injured person(s)
- The facts of the incident
- What has been done?
- What is going to be done?

Confidentiality and Good Name Considerations

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 see to ensure that pupils do so also. (For instance the term 'suicide' will not be used without the consent of the family involved or until it has been established categorically that the person's death was the result of suicide. The phrases 'tragic death' or 'sudden death' may be used instead)

Critical Incident Room

In the event of a critical incident, the principal's office will be the main room used to meet the staff, students, parents and visitors involved.

Development and Communication of the Policy and Plan

All staff were consulted and their views canvassed in the preparation of the draft plan. Parent representatives were also consulted and asked for their comments. Our schools final policy and procedures in relation to responding to critical incidents has been presented to all staff members and the Board of Management. Each member of the Critical Incident Team has a personal copy. All new and temporary members of staff will be informed of the details by Mary Murphy. The policy was drafted in 2012 and reviewed in October 2015.

The team members will be updates on an annual basis and the policy reviewed on an annual basis from 2017

The DES handbook 'Responding to Critical Incidents' is kept on file in the Principal's office and will be used as a reference when dealing with issues such

as grief, bereavement and pupil and staff concerns in the aftermath of Critical Incidents.

