

Critical Incident Policy for Our Lady of Lourdes National School

Introduction:

In Our Lady of Lourdes National School we aim to provide a well-ordered, caring, happy and secure atmosphere where the intellectual, spiritual, physical, moral and cultural needs of the pupils are identified and addressed as outlined in our school mission statement.

The BOM through the Principal, the Staff and the Parents Council has drawn up a Critical Incident Management Plan. They have established a Critical Incidents Management Team (CIMT) 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 (Foot & Mouth)
- Criminal incidents (e.g. Dunblane shooting, Shooting at first communion in Ballymun.)
- Major accidents, serious injury (e.g. 'Navan bus crash')
- Suicide
- Civil unrest, war (foreign nationals may be traumatised by events that happened in their country of origin)
- Fire, natural and technological disaster (e.g. school ceiling collapsing in Cork)
- Disappearance of student from home or school (e.g. Midleton incident in Cork)
- Unauthorised removal of student from school or home.
- World events that may affect the student body and/or staff. May be a need for provision of discussion and involvement in ceremonies e.g. 9/11, tsunami

Critical Incident Management Team

Role	Name	Telephone number (home and mobile)
Team Leader / Garda Liaison	James Roberts	Available to staff only
Staff Liaison	Mary Murphy	Available to staff only
Student Liaison	Each Class Teacher	
Parent Liaison /Community Liaison	Edel Jordan (HSCL)	Available to staff only
Media Liaison	James Roberts	Available to staff only
Administrator	Sarah O'Rourke	Available to staff only

Key Responsibilities

Team Leader / Garda Liaison

- Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting
- Coordinates the tasks of the team
- Liaises with the Board of Management; DES; NEPS
- Liaises with the bereaved family
- Liaises with the Gardaí
- Ensures that information about deaths or other developments is checked out for accuracy before being shared

Staff Liaison

- Leads briefing meetings for staff on the facts as known, gives staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions, 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.

Student Liaison

- Alerts other staff to vulnerable students (appropriately)
- Provides materials for students (from their Critical Incident Pack)
- Keeps records of students seen by external agency staff
- Looks after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room where agreed

Community/Agency Liaison

- Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of
 - Key parents, such as members of the Parents Council
 - Emergency support services and other external contacts and resources
- Liaises with agencies in the community for support and onward referral
- Is alert to the need to check credentials of individuals offering support
- Coordinates the involvement of these agencies
- Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies

Parent Liaison

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

Media Liaison

- In advance of an incident, will consider issues that may arise and how they might be responded to
- In the event of an incident, will liaise where necessary with the SEC; relevant teacher unions etc.
- Will draw up a press statement for Chairperson (as agreed by school management)

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
- Ensures that templates are on the schools system in advance and ready for adaptation
- Prepares and sends out letters, emails and faxes
- Photocopies materials needed
- Maintains records

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

- The school has a written Health & Safety Policy
- Regular fire drills occur
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
- Supervision in the school yard takes place at all breaks and at arrival and dismissal
- Front gate locked during school hours to prevent traffic from entering the building
- School doors closed during class time (exception is door at reception)
- Rules of the playground are strictly enforced

Psychological Safety

The management and staff of our school 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 school students 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
- 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

- The school has a clear and comprehensive policy on bullying and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy
- There is a care system in place in the school
- Staff are informed about how to access support for themselves.

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.

Short Term Actions – Day 1

Task	Name
Gather accurate information. Who, what, when, where?	Team Leader – James Roberts
Convene a CIMT meeting – specify time and place clearly	Team Leader – James Roberts
Contact external agencies	Edel Jordan (HSCL)
Arrange supervision for students	Class Teachers
Hold staff meeting	All staff
Agree schedule for the day	CIMT
Inform students – (close friends and students with learning difficulties may need to be told separately)	Sarah O’Rourke as per Critical Incidents Pack
Compile a list of vulnerable students	CIMT liaise with Class Teachers
Contact/visit the bereaved family	James Roberts, Edel Jordan
Prepare and agree media statement and deal with media	CIMT & Chairperson BOM
Inform parents by letter	Administrator Sarah O’Rourke
Hold end of day staff briefing	All Staff

Medium Term Actions - (Day 2 and following days)

Task	Name
Convene a CIMT meeting to review the events of day 1	James Roberts
Meet external agencies	James Roberts, Edel Jordan
Meet whole staff	CIMT

Arrange support for students, staff, parents	Students: Class Teachers Staff: Mary Murphy Parents: Edel Jordan
Visit the injured	James Roberts, Class Teacher
Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements	James Roberts, Edel Jordan
Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service	Sarah O'Rourke to write letter to parents
Make decisions about school closure	BOM

Follow-up – Beyond 72 hours

Task	Name
Monitor students for signs of continuing distress	Class teachers
Liaise with agencies regarding referrals	Pupils (Edel Jordana) Staff (Mary Murphy)
Plan for return of bereaved student(s)	Class Teacher(s) & Edel Jordan
Plan for giving of 'memory box' to bereaved family	CIMT
Decide on memorials and anniversaries	BOM/Staff, parents and students
Review response to incident and amend plan	Staff/BOM

LONGER TERM ACTIONS for CIMT

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. Constant communication with family is essential.

- Uncharacteristic behaviour
- Deterioration in academic performance
- Physical symptoms — e.g. weight loss/gain, lack of attention to appearance, tiredness, restlessness
- Inappropriate emotional reactions
- Increased absenteeism

Evaluate response to incident and amend Critical Incident Management Plan appropriately

- What went well?
- Where were the gaps?
- What was most/least helpful?
- Have all necessary onward referrals to support services been made?
- 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
- Ensure that new staffs are aware of the school policy and procedures in this area
- Ensure they are aware of which pupils were affected in any recent incident and in what way
- When individual pupils or a class of pupils affected by an incident are transferring to a new school, the Principal should brief the Principal of the new school

Decide on appropriate ways to deal with anniversaries (Be sensitive to special days and events)

- Anniversaries may trigger emotional responses in students/staff and they may need additional support at this time
- Acknowledge the anniversary with the family
- Need to 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

AGENCY CONTACT NUMBERS (Principal's Office & Secretary's Office)

AGENCY	CONTACT NUMBERS
GARDA	Bunclody (053) 9377102 Gorey (053) 9430690
WEXFORD GENERAL HOSPITAL	(053) 9153000
FIRE BRIGADE	Bunclody (053) 9377172 Enniscorthy (053) 9333271
LOCAL GPS	Potter's Way Surgery: (053) 9377124
HSE/Community Care Team/ Child and Family Centre/ CAMHS	Wexford Community Care: Community Care Centre, Grogans Road, Wexford. Tel: (053) 9123522
SCHOOL INSPECTOR	Jean Pender Available to staff only
NEPS PSYCHOLOGIST	Deirdre Starr (059) 9165155 Available to staff only
DES	Marlborough Street, Dublin (01) 8896400
INTO	(01) 8047700 LoCall: 1850708708
PARISH PRIEST/CLERGY	Fr. O'Connor (053) 93 77319
EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE SERVICE	1800 411 057

Drawn up by the staff following in-service training by Rita Fitzgerald NEPS on 8th December 2009 for submission to Board of Management at their first meeting in 2010.
Updated 23rd October 2017.

Critical Incidents Pack to include:

- ✓ Booklets "Responding to Critical Incidents – Guidelines for Schools" and "Responding to Critical Incidents – Resource Materials for Schools"

Letters on school notepaper:

- ✓ Consent Letter – Individual or Group Support
- ✓ Consent Letter – Seeking Advance Parental; Agreement to Child Being Seen by a NEPS psychologist
- ✓ Letter to Parents – giving information about a sudden death/accident
- ✓ Letter to Parents – Violent Death
- ✓ Draft Announcement to Media

Classroom Resources following news of a Critical Incident

- ✓ Handout for Teachers (R7)
- ✓ Children's Understanding & Reaction to Sudden Death According to Age (Handout: R8)
- ✓ Stages of Grief (Handout: R9)
- ✓ How To Cope When Something Terrible Happens (Handout: R10)
- ✓ Reactions To A Critical Incident (Handout for Students: R11)
- ✓ Grief After Suicide or Suspected Suicide (Handout: R12)
- ✓ Reintegration of the Bereaved Child in School (Handout: R13)
- ✓ Ways to Help Your Child Through This Difficult Time (Handout: R14)
- ✓ A General Interview Guide for Guidance Counsellors, Chaplains, Other Designated Staff (Handout: R15)
- ✓ Checklist – Students at Risk (Handout: R16)
- ✓ Exploring Suicide Risk – Guidelines for Schools and NEPS (Handout: R17)