



St. John of God N.S., Kilmore Road, Artane, Dublin 5

Critical Incident Management Policy and Plan

Introductory Statement

This Critical Incident Policy and Plan was initiated at a staff meeting in September 2008. At that meeting the following members of staff indicated an interest in formulating the school's Critical Incident Management Policy/Plan – Miss Maeve O'Doherty, Miss Doreen Kelly, Miss Nessa Clarke, Miss Tara Kelly, Miss Eleanor Fitzgerald and Miss Elaine Kinsella.

The Critical Incident Management Team will be led by the Principal. The Team will steer the development and implementation of the plan.

Rationale

St. John of God G.N.S. aims to protect the wellbeing of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times.

St. John of God G.N.S. acknowledges the uniqueness of each child, and we strive, through our programmes and planned learning activities, to contribute to all aspects of each child's development – emotional, spiritual, social, cultural, creative, aesthetic and moral, as well as intellectual. In drawing up this policy and plan the school strives to ensure the physical and psychological health of all in our school community.

Definition of Critical Incident

The staff and management of St. John of God G.N.S. 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

- 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
- A non fatal accident involving members of the school community
- An accident/tragedy in the wider community but affecting the school
- 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 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 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 formulated a Health and Safety Policy
- An evacuation plan has also been formulated
- Regular fire drills occur
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
- School doors are locked during school hours
- The school yard is supervised during all break periods

Psychological safety

The management and staff of St. John of God G.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.

- Social, Personal and Health Education is integrated into the work of the school. It is addressed in the curriculum as set out in the school plan for S.P.H.E.
- Staff are familiar with the Child Protection Guidelines and procedures and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures
- The school has links with NEPS, the local Gardai, through participation in the Garda Liaison Scheme, the parish of Ardlea, other schools in the area through participation in the School Completion Programme and through the Home School Community Liaison scheme, etc.
- The school has a clear policy on bullying and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy.
- Staff are informed of the Teacher Support Programme - Carecall

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 indefinitely. 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 which 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 | Ms. Aoife McNicholas | Principal |
| • Garda Liaison | Ms. N. Clarke | Teacher |
| • Staff Liaison | Ms. Sinead Feery | Deputy Principal |
| • Student Liaison | All Class Teachers | |
| • Parent Contact | Ms. Aisling Gleeson | HSCL Co-ordinator |
| • Community / Agency Contact | Ms. Aoife McNicholas | Principal |
| • Media Contact | Ms. E. Kinsella | Teacher |
| • Administrator | Ms. G. Carberry | School Secretary |
| • B.O.M. Rep | Ms. Tara Kelly | |

Responsibilities of each role

Team Leader

- Confirms the event
- 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 – to express sympathy etc.

Garda Liaison

- Liaises with the Gardaí
- Ensures that information about deaths or other developments is checked out for accuracy before being shared

Family Liaison

- Co-ordinate contact with family
- Consult with family regarding involvement of school e.g. in funeral arrangements
- Assist with all communication dealing with parents/guardians or any student affected by critical incident

Postvention

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

Staff Liaison

- Leads brief 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
- 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 Employee Assistance Scheme - Carecall and gives them the contact number

Student Liaison

- Class teachers communicate information to the pupils as decided by the CIMT
- Class teachers liaise with principal on monitoring vulnerable pupils

Community/ Agency Liaison

- Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of
 - ❖ Key Parents, such as members of the Parents' Association
 - ❖ 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
- Reminds agency staff to wear name badges
- Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies

Parent Liaison

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

Media Liaison

- Will give consideration to issues that may arise and how they might be responded to (e.g. pupils being interviewed, photographers on the premises etc.) In the event of an incident will liaise where necessary with INTO etc.
- Team Leader will act as spokesperson
- Gather accurate information
 - ❖ What happened, where and when?
 - ❖ What is the extent of the injuries?
 - ❖ How many are involved and what are their names?
 - ❖ Is there a risk of further injury?
 - ❖ What agencies have been contacted already?
- Contact appropriate agencies
 - ❖ Emergency services
 - ❖ Medical services
 - ❖ H.S.E. Psychology Departments/Community Care Services/NEPS
- Protect the family's privacy
- Will draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews (as agreed by school management)

Administrator

- Maintains 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 school system in advance and ready for adaptation
- Prepares and sends out, in consultation with the principal, letters, emails, faxes
- Photocopies materials needed
- Maintains records

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, material used etc.

Ms. Geraldine Carberry, 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. John of God G.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 pupils 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 its use. The phrases 'tragic death' or 'sudden death' may be used instead. Similarly the term 'murder' should not be used until it is legally established that a murder was committed. The term 'violent death' may be used instead.

Critical Incident Rooms

In the event of a critical incident

- The Staff Room will be the main room used to meet the staff
- Class rooms will be used to meet the pupils or in the case of a general assembly of the pupils the general purpose room will be used

- Parents will meet/be met in the Parents' Room
- The media will be met in the G.P. room
- A learning support room will be used for meeting individual pupils
- Other visitors will use the school library

Consultation and communication regarding the plan

All staff were consulted and their views canvassed in the preparation of this policy and plan. Members of the Parents' Association were also consulted and asked for their comments.

When finalised and adopted by the Board of Management of the school this policy and plan will be presented to all staff. This plan will be placed on Common Files to which all teaching staff have access. A hard copy will be placed on the Principal's File and in the Secretary's Office.

The plan will be updated annually in January each year by the members of the team.

B.O.M. Representative -Working closely with team leader

- Convene a meeting with Key Staff/Critical Management Team
- Organize a staff meeting, if appropriate
- Ensure any absent staff members are kept informed
- Organise timetable/routine for the day. (Adhering to the normal school routine is important, if this is possible)
- Class teachers to take note of any absentees who might need to be contacted, list of friends etc, or any other relevant information. This is to be given to the team leader.
- Arrange supervision of students
- Liaise with the family regarding funeral arrangements/memorial service
- Arrange a home visit by two staff representatives within 24 hours, if appropriate. (H.S.C.L. Co-Ordinator and Class teacher)
- Have regard for different religious traditions and faiths

Medium Term Actions (24-72Hours) in the Event of a Critical Incident

- Preparation of students/staff attending funeral
- Involvement of students/staff in liturgy if agreed by bereaved family
- Facilitation of students/staff responses, e.g. sympathy cards, flowers, Book of Condolences, etc.
- Ritual within the school
- Review the events of the first 24 hours
- Reconvene Key Staff/Critical Incident Management Team
- Decide arrangements for support meetings for parents/students/staff
- Decide on mechanism for feedback from teachers on vulnerable students
- Have review of Critical Incident Management Team meeting
- Establish contact with absent staff and pupils
- Arrange support for individual students, groups of students, and parents, if necessary
- Hold support/information meeting for parents/students, if necessary, in order to clarify what has happened
- Give any teacher who feels uncomfortable with involvement in support meetings the choice of opting out
- Plan for the re-integration of students and staff e.g. absentees, injured, siblings, close relative etc).
- Plan visits to injured
 - Family Liaison person + Class Teacher + Principal to visit home/hospital
 - Attendance and participation at funeral/memorial service (To be decided)

- Decide this in accordance with parent's wishes, school management decisions and in consultation with close school friends
- School closure (if appropriate). 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. Regular communication with the 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 affected by Critical Incidents, where appropriate
- Ensure that new staff 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, if appropriate

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
- Care of deceased person's possessions. What are the family's wishes?
- Update and amend school records

Consultation and Communication Regarding the Plan

All staff were consulted and their views canvassed in the preparation of this policy and plan. The Parents' Association Committee members were also consulted and asked for their comments.

Each member of the Critical Incident Team has a personal copy of the plan and supporting folders. The plan is available to all teaching staff on Common Files.

All new and temporary staff will be informed of the details of the plan by Ms. S. Feery, Deputy Principal, who has responsibility for the induction of new staff.

This plan will be reviewed in January every year.

This plan was ratified by the Board of Management of St. John of God Primary School on 17th December 2012.

Signed: Sr. Helen Maher
Chairperson Board of Management

Date: 17th December 2012