

# St. Joseph's NS, Templerrainey, Critical Incident Policy

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## **Introduction:**

In St. Joseph's NS we aim to protect the well being of our pupils and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times and well catered as outlined in our school mission statement.

The BoM through the Principal, Máire Daltúin, has drawn up a Critical Incident Management plan as one of the school's policies and plans. A Critical Incidents Management Team has been established to steer the development and implementation of the plan.

## **Review and Research:**

The CIMT have consulted resource documents available to schools on [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie) including:

- Responding to Critical Incidents Guidelines and Resources for Schools (NEPS 2016)
- Well-Being in Primary Schools – Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion (DES, DOH, HSE 2013)
- Resources available on [ipn.ie](http://ipn.ie)

## **What is a Critical Incident?**

The Staff and Management of St. Joseph's NS recognise a critical incident to be 'an incident or sequence of events that overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school'. Critical incidents may include one or more students or staff members, or members of our local community. Types of incident 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*
- *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*
  
- *A Pandemic e.g. Covid-19*

## **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**

- Evacuation plan formulated
- Regular fire drills occur
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
- Pre-opening supervision in the school yard (09.10-09.20)

- Front gate closed during school hours
- School doors locked during class time
- Health and Safety policy enforced

### **Psychological safety**

The management and staff of St. Joseph's NS 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
- The school has developed links with a range of external agencies such as Springboard, Lucena Clinic, NEPS, HSE
- 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. See DES Circulars 0022/2010 (Primary)
- The school has a clear policy on bullying and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy
- There is a care system in place in the school using the "Continuum of Support" approach which is outlined in the NEPS documents published on 2007 for primary schools.
- Students who are identified as being at risk are referred to the DLP (Máire Daltúin) or the DDLP (Jimmy Doyle) where appropriate. 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.
- 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.

#### **Team leader: Máire Daltúin** **Role**

- 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 and ensures that information is checked out for accuracy before being shared
- 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.

(In the absence of the Team leader, Jimmy Doyle will take the lead)

### **Community/agency liaison (Jimmy Doyle)**

#### **Role**

- 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
- Reminds agency staff to wear name badges
- Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies

### **Student liaison (Ursula Power)**

#### **Role**

- Alerts other staff to vulnerable students (appropriately)
- Provides materials for students (from their critical incident folder)
- Looks after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room where agreed

### **Parent liaison (Nessa Byrne)**

#### **Role**

- 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 folder)

### **Media liaison (Máire Daltúin)**

#### **Role**

- In advance of an incident, will consider issues that may arise and how they might be responded to (e.g. students being interviewed, photographers on the premises, etc)
- 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)

### **Administrator (Sharon White)**

#### **Role**

- 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 texts
- 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.

Sharon White will have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters, photocopying materials, etc.

### **Confidentiality and good name considerations**

Management and staff of St. Joseph's NS have a responsibility to protect the privacy and good name of people involved in any incident and will be sensitive to the consequences of public statements. Members of school staff will bear this in mind, and seek to ensure that students do so also, e.g. 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 word '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 following rooms are designated for the indicated purposes

<b>Room Name:</b>	<b>Designated Purpose:</b>
Staff Room	Main room for meeting staff
Halla	Meetings with students
Halla	Meetings with parents
Computer Room	Meetings with media
Principal's Office	<b>I</b> ndividual sessions with students
Principal's Office	Meetings with other visitors

### **Consultation and communication regarding the plan**

All staff was consulted and views canvassed in the preparation of this policy and plan. Parent/guardian 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 by (Máire Daltúin)  
The plan will be updated annually (November)

<b>Critical Incident Management Team</b>		
<b>Role</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Phone</b>
<b>Team leader:</b>	Máire Daltúin	087 9683541
<b>Garda liaison</b>	Máire Daltúin	087 9683541
<b>Staff liaison</b>	Máire Daltúin	087 9683541
<b>Student liaison</b>	Ursula Power	085 8624994
<b>Community liaison</b>	Jimmy Doyle	086 1036087
<b>Parent liaison</b>	Nessa Byrne	087 2030045
<b>Media liaison</b>	Máire Daltúin	087 9683541
<b>Administrator</b>	Sharon White	086 8013164

**Short term actions – Day 1**

<b>Task</b>	<b>Name</b>
Gather accurate information	M. Daltúin
Who, what, when, where?	
Convene a CIMT meeting – specify time and place clearly	M. Daltúin
Contact external agencies	M. Daltúin / J. Doyle
Arrange supervision for students	U. Power
Hold staff meeting	All staff
Agree schedule for the day	Staff
Inform students – (close friends and students with learning difficulties may need to be told separately)	M. Daltúin / J. Doyle or class teacher if appropriate
Compile a list of vulnerable students	M. Daltúin / J. Doyle / U. Power/ N.Byrne / S. White
Prepare and agree media statement and deal with media	M. Daltúin / J. Doyle Chairperson BOM
Inform parents	M. Daltúin
Hold end of day staff briefing	M. Daltúin

**Medium term actions - (Day 2 and following days)**

Task	Name
Convene a CIMT meeting to review the events of day 1	Team leader
Meet external agencies	J. Doyle / M. Daltúin
Meet whole staff	CMIT
Arrange support for students, staff, parents	CMIT
Visit the injured	N. Byrne / M Daltúin
Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements	M. Daltúin / U. Power / N. Byrne
Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service	CMIT
Make decisions about school closure	BOM



**Follow-up – beyond 72 hours**

<b>Task</b>	<b>Name</b>
Monitor students for signs of continuing distress	Class teachers
Liaise with agencies regarding referrals	J. Doyle
Plan for return of bereaved student(s)	CIMT
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

## EMERGENCY CONTACT LIST

<b>AGENCY</b>	<b>CONTACT NUMBERS</b>
Garda	32304/05
Hospital	
Fire Brigade	32455
Local GPs	32264(Buggle),32617(Foster), 32418(Bentley), 32421(Bothwell)
HSE	39624 (Arklow) 0404 60800
Community Care Team	
Child and Family Centre	Springboard 0402 24828
Child and Family Mental Health Service (CAMHS)	
School Inspector	Ursula Cotter (087) 1329015
NEPS Psychologist	M. Marshall
DES	0906483600
INTO/ASTI/TUI	INTO 01 8047700/1850708708
Clergy	Fr. Michael Murphy
State Exams Commission	
Employee Assistance Service	1800 411 057