

Critical Incident Policy for St. Clare's Primary School

(Reviewed September 2015)



This policy aims to provide information ideas and support to enable St. Clare's Primary school to:

- *Respond to a critical incident in an informed manner;*
- *Create a positive, open, communicative climate where the needs of staff and pupils are met in critical incident situations;*
- *Recognize the types of occurrences which may be critical for the school community;*
- *Develop an understanding of the nature of trauma and its impact on pupils and staff;*
- *Create a safe school environment whereby the physical, social and psychological health of pupils and staff is prioritized;*
- *Develop a policy for dealing with emergencies;*
- *Establish positive working relationships and dialogue with outside agencies thus enabling full and effective collaboration in the event of a critical incident.*

What is a Critical Incident?" A critical incident is any incident or sequence of events which challenges the heart of the school community, overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school and disrupts the normal running of the school"

Examples:

- Death, major illness/outbreak of disease.
- Criminal incidents, violent incidents directly involving the school or in the school community (e.g. Dunblane shooting, Shooting at first communion in Ballymun.)
- Major accidents, serious injury (e.g. 'Navan bus crash')
- Suicide
- Sexual, physical and psychological abuse (where a number of pupils from a school community are affected)
- Civil unrest, war (international pupils may be traumatised by events that happened in their country of origin)
- Fire, natural environmental and technological disaster (e.g. flooding in community, 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 (eg 9/11, Asian Tsunami etc.)

Physical Safety and Psychological Safety

Procedures and practices are in place to ensure the physical and psychological safety of our children and staff while on these premises.

The following policies and procedures address these issues and are available in the school:

- Health and Safety
- Supervision
- Organisational routines
- Fire drill and procedures
- Child protection policy and procedures for dealing with disclosures from children
- Attendance policy
- Anti Bullying policy
- Code of Behaviour
- Agreed procedures to support the smooth day to day running of the school
- School care team which meets monthly to monitor vulnerable children

A core group of staff with First Aid experience will be selected yearly (Appendix 5) as leaders in the case of an emergency. Yard supervision timetables will have one person from this group on duty each day of the week to be available if needed.

THE CRITICAL INCIDENTS MANAGEMENT TEAM

The critical incidents management team can be divided into eight clear roles.

Leadership Role: **Alma Leonard (Principal) or
Marie Brady (Deputy Principal)**

Communication Role: **Alma Leonard (Principal) or Marie Brady (Deputy Principal)**

Student Liaison/ Counselling Role: **Sean Mc Kiernan (SCP), Paula Long (NEPS)**

Chaplaincy Role: **Fr. Peter Okpetu, Fr. Kevin Donohoe**

Family Liaison Role: **Imelda Bradley HSCL (assisted by Sonia Leonard, Eithne Doyle, Marie Brady and Kerrie Miley)**

Parents Association Rep: **Pauline Brady**

B.O.M. Rep: **Marie Brady**

N.E.P.S: **Paula Long**

Support Team: **Kerrie Miley (Coordinator), Imelda Bradley, Sonia Leonard and Eithne Doyle.**

APPENDIX (1): CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM IMMEDIATE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

APPENDIX (2): MEDIUM-TERM ACTIONS (24-72 HOURS)

APPENDIX (3) :LONGER TERM ACTIONS

APPENDIX (4) : EMERGENCY CONTACT LIST

APPENDIX (5): FIRST AID TEAM

Signed: _____ *Mr. Paul Surlis*

Chairman of Board of Management

Signed: _____ *Ms. Alma Leonard*

Principal

Date: _____ August 2016

Appendix 1: Critical Incident Management Team Immediate roles and responsibilities

Role	Name and Number	Immediate Responsibilities	Ongoing Responsibilities
Leadership Role (Team Leader, Garda Liaison)	Alma Leonard /Deirdre Coyle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirm the event. Clarify facts surrounding event/check for accuracy • Activate the Critical Incident response team, convene meeting and co-ordinate tasks. • Liaise with the Gardaí/Emergency services • Liaise with the Board of Management, DES, NEPS, SEC. • Liaises with bereaved family • Make contact with other relevant agencies • Decide how news will be communicated to different groups (staff, pupils, outside school) Prepare a press statement, give media briefings and interviews (as agreed by BOM) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure provision of ongoing support to staff and students • Facilitate any appropriate memorial events • Review Plan
Communication Role (Community/Agency/ Media liaison)	Deirdre Coyle/ Alma Leonard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With Team consider issues that may arise and plan responses e.g. photographers on premises, students being interviewed. • Organise a designated room to address media promptly • Ensure telephone lines are free for outgoing and important incoming calls • Designate mobile numbers for contact • Liaise with relevant outside support agencies for onward referral and co-ordinates involvement • Check credentials of individuals offering support • Maintain contact numbers for key external contacts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and evaluate effectiveness of communication response
Student/Staff Liaison Role	Deirdre Coyle & Kerrie Miley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead briefing meetings for staff on the facts as known, give staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions, outlines the routine for the day • Advise the staff on the procedures for identification of vulnerable pupils • Alert staff to vulnerable pupils • Outline specific services available in the school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide ongoing support to vulnerable students and staff • Keep staff updated • Monitor class most affected

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide materials for staff (from critical incident folder) • Set up and supervise 'quiet' room where agreed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep records of students seen by external agency staff • Review and evaluate Plan
Family Liaison Role (Parent Liaison)	Imelda Bradley HSCL (assisted by Sonia Leonard, Eithne Doyle, Marie Brady, Kerrie Miley)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-ordinate 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 • Arranges parent meetings if held • Manages 'consent' issues in accordance with agreed school policy • Keeps records of parents seen • Organise room for parents meetings • Provides appropriate materials for parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide ongoing support to families affected by the incident • Involve as appropriate the family in school liturgies/memorial services • Offer to link family with community support groups • Review and evaluate plan
Administrator*	School Secretary & Deirdre Coyle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain up to date list of telephone numbers for: Parents or guardians, Teachers, Emergency Services • Takes telephone calls and records • Prepares standard templates/letters on computer • Prepares letters, emails • Photocopies materials • Maintains records as appropriate • Update policy and names/ numbers in September of each year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and update data and documentation

Chaplain	Fr. Peter Okpetu Fr. Kevin Donohoe	Intervention Stage <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Visit home(s), if appropriate• Assist with prayer services• Make contact with other local clergy• Be available as personal and spiritual support to staff Post Incident Stage <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide follow-up support to families in conjunction with Home School Community Liaison• Work in partnership with Critical Incident team• Review and Evaluate Plan	
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Appendix (2) MEDIUM-TERM ACTIONS (24-72 HOURS)

Put in place appropriate arrangements to deal with days immediately following the incident

- Preparation of students/staff attending funeral.
- Involvement of students/staff in liturgy if agreed by bereaved/affected family/families.
- Facilitation of students'/staffs'/families' 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.
- Arrange, in consultation, with outside agencies, individual or group debriefings or support meetings with parental permission.
- Plan for the re-integration of students and staff e.g. absentees, injured, siblings, close relative etc)
- Student Liaison person to liaise with above on their return to school.

Plan visits to injured or directly affected persons as appropriate

- HSCL + Class Teacher + Principal to visit home/hospital.
- Attendance and participation at funeral/memorial service (To be decided)
- Decide this in accordance with parents' wishes and school management decisions and in consultation with close school friends.

Arrange for school closure (if appropriate)

- Request a decision on this from school management.

Appendix (3) LONGER TERM ACTIONS

Monitor students for signs of continuing distress

- If, over a prolonged period of time, a student continues to display any of the following symptoms/ behaviours, he/she may need assistance from the Health Board. Constant communication with family is essential. Behaviours may include: uncharacteristic behaviours, 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.
 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? E.g. inquests, legal proceedings

Crisis response teams need to end their involvement properly with validation from others

- A facilitated meeting or debriefing may help to bring closure
- Formalise the Critical Incident Plan for the future

Inform new staff/new school pupils affected by Critical Incidents where appropriate

1. Ensure that new staff are made 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, 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)

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.

The school might consider adopting the following recommendations:

The specific needs of children following traumatic events should be recognized within the context of the education system. Critical incident management should be an integral part of normal school management practice. Resources should be allocated for education of staff, parents and pupils in loss, grief and the development of good coping skills.

Appendix (5) First Aid team