

St. Patrick's N.S., Dalkey

## **Critical Incident Policy**

St. Patrick's N.S. aims to protect the wellbeing of our pupils & staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment. The B.O.M., through the Principal, has drawn up the following Critical Incident Management 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'.

Critical incidents may involve one or more students or staff members, their family members or members of the local community.

Examples:

- 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.
- The disappearance of a member of the school community.
- Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism etc.
- A national or regional disaster/incident
- A Critical Incident Management Team has been formed:

Leadership Role:	Mrs Jennie Kirwan (Principal)
Communication Role:	Ms Dawn Galbraith (Deputy Principal)
Student Liaison Role:	Ms Jenny Newton
Chaplaincy Role:	Rev. Bruce Hayes
Family Liaison Role:	P.T.A. Chairperson & 2 Parent Representatives on B.O.M.

### **Record Keeping**

In the event of an incident, each member of the team should endeavour to keep records of phone calls made and received, letters sent and received, meetings held, persons met, interventions used, materials used, etc. *See Appendix.1.*

All records are retained in a manner consistent with our Data Protection Policy.

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### **Confidentiality:**

The management and staff 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 school staff will bear this in mind, and will seek to ensure that students 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 phrase '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.

### **Roles and Responsibilities:**

#### 1. Leadership Role:

##### Intervention

- Confirm the event.
- Activate the Critical Incident Management team.
- Liaise with the Gardaí / Emergency services.
- Lead briefing meetings for staff on the facts as known, give staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions, and outline the routine for the day.
- Express sympathy to family.
- Clarify facts surrounding event.
- Make contact with NEPS psychologist.
- Decide how news will be communicated to different groups (staff, pupils, parents/guardians) outside school.

##### Post Intervention:

- Ensure provision of ongoing support to staff and students.
- Monitor vulnerable students and/or staff.
- Facilitate any appropriate memorial events.
- Review plan.

#### 2. Communication Role:

##### Intervention:

- With Team, prepare a public statement.
- Organise a designated room and person 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.

##### Post Intervention:

- Review and evaluate effectiveness of communication response.

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3. Student Liaison:

Intervention:

- Alert staff to vulnerable students.
- Seek advice from NEPS regarding external supports/ agencies advisable
- Co-ordinate the involvement of agencies.
- Remind agency staff to wear name badges.
- Update team members on the involvement of external agencies.

Post Intervention:

- Monitor students/class most affected.
- Refer to support agency as appropriate.
- Review and evaluate Plan.

4. Chaplaincy Role:

Intervention:

- 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 Intervention:

- Provide follow-up support to families in conjunction with Home School Community Liaison.
- Work in partnership with Critical Incident team.
- Review and evaluate Plan.

5. Family Liaison Role:

Intervention

- Principal to visit home (if appropriate).
- 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.

Post Intervention

- Provide ongoing support to families affected by the incident.
- Involve, as appropriate, the family in school memorial service.
- Offer to link family with community support groups.
- Review and evaluate plan.

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## Action plan

### Short-Term Actions (Day 1)

- Contact appropriate agencies *See Appendix.2.*
  1. Emergency services (if appropriate)
  2. Medical services (if appropriate)  
H.S.E. Psychology Departments/Community Care Services (in consultation with NEPS)
- Immediate contact with family/families.
- It is important to obtain accurate information about the incident. (If appropriate.)
  1. What happened, where and when?
  2. What is the extent of the injuries?
  3. How many are involved and what are their names?
  4. Is there a risk of further injury?
  5. What agencies have been contacted already?
  6. What can be communicated to the School Community and the Media?
- Convene a meeting with Key Staff/Critical Incident Management Team/BOM.
- Ensure that a quiet place can be made for students/staff.
- Organize a staff meeting before school opens, if possible. Invite NEPS psychologist to attend and provide advice on the structure of the day.
- Organize timetable/routine for the day. (Adhering to the normal school routine is important, if this is possible).
- Arrange supervision of students

#### **Media Briefing (if appropriate)**

- Designate a spokesperson. (Leader)
- Gather accurate information
- Prepare a brief statement. (Team)
- Protect the family's privacy.

- Ensure any absent staff members are kept informed.
- Class teachers to take note of any absentees who might need to be contacted, list of friends etc., or any other relevant information and give to the Student Liaison person.
- Liaise with the family regarding funeral arrangements/memorial service.
- The Chaplain/ Principal will liaise with the family, to extend sympathy and clarify the family's wishes regarding the school's involvement in funeral/memorial service.
- Arrange a home visit by two staff representatives within 24 hours, if appropriate (Student Liaison person + Class teacher)
- Have regard for different religious traditions and faiths.

### Medium-Term Actions (24-72 hours)

- Consult with the family regarding appropriate support from the school, e.g. funeral service.
- Preparation of students/staff attending funeral.
- Involvement of students/staff in liturgy if appropriate and if agreed by bereaved family.
- Facilitation of students'/staffs' 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 or pupil 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
  - 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 parents' wishes and school management decisions and in consultation with close school friends.
- School closure (if appropriate)
- Request a decision on this from school management.

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### **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. 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 staff members 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
- 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.



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**Appendix.1.**

**Contact Phone Numbers**

**Emergency services:**

112 / 999

**NEPS:**

Third Floor Trident House, Blackrock, Co Dublin, A94 W3F2.

Tel: 0761 108400 Fax: 01 283 3181

Senior Psychologist: Mr. Richard Hennessy

**TUSLA – Child and Family Agency:**

Social Work Department, Child & Family Agency, Nutgrove Retail Park,  
Churchtown,

Dublin 14

Tel: 01 9213400

Email: [cpwrf.dsew@tusla.ie](mailto:cpwrf.dsew@tusla.ie)



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**Appendix.2.**

**Record Form**

<p><b>Date:</b> <input type="text"/></p> <p><b>Details of Persons recording:</b> <b>Name:</b> _____ <b>Occupation:</b> _____</p> <p><b>Details of Record:</b></p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px;"><p><i>Please note any relevant information</i></p></div> <p><b>Signed:</b> _____ <b>Print Name:</b> _____ <b>Date:</b> _____</p>
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