



CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY

Aims of the Policy

St. Catherine's National School aims to protect the well being of its students by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. We have also formulated a number of policies and procedures to be followed with a view to ensuring the physical and psychological safety of both staff and students during the normal course of the school day and in the event of a critical incident.

Such policies and procedures include

- Health and Safety Policy
- First Aid team
- Regular Fire Drills
- Anti Bullying Policy
- Code of Behaviour
- S.P.H.E Programme
- Pre-opening supervision in the school yard
- Provision of staff training and resources

Definition of a critical incident

Critical incident is any incident/sequence of events, which overwhelms the mechanism of the school and disrupts the running of the school.

Critical incidents may involve students, staff, the school or the local community. e.g.

- Death, major illness/outbreak of disease
- Criminal incidents
- Major accidents, serious injury
- Suicide (child or family member)
- Civil unrest, war (foreign nationals may be traumatised by events that happened in their country of origin)
- Fire, natural and technological disaster
- Disappearance of student from home or school
- Unauthorised removal of student from school or home.
- Major international incidents - may be a need for provision of discussion and involvement in ceremonies

Critical Incidents Management Team

<i>Leadership Role</i>	Ger O Sé/Fidelma Carroll*
<i>Garda Liaison</i>	Joe Dunne
<i>Staff Liaison</i>	Gráinne McDermott
<i>Student liaison</i>	Fiona Carrig; Amanda Murphy; Caroline Deery
<i>Community (agency) Liaison</i>	Fidelma Carroll
<i>Family Liaison</i>	Regina Dunne
<i>Media Liaison</i>	Paul O' Hare/ Ger Ó Sé
<i>Administrator</i>	Anne Doolan
<i>Chaplain</i>	Fr Peter O' Connor
<i>Parents Association</i>	Hannah Hughes
<i>BoM Rep</i>	Paul O' Hare
<i>NEPs</i>	Paula Dunne

*The first-named person has the responsibility as defined. The second-named person assists and only assumes responsibility on the absence of the first-named. However, the CIM team is interchangeable

depending on the incident. The team will meet annually (in October) to update and review the plan. Team members will be assembled from suitable volunteers agreed upon by the adult school community. The CIM team will be reviewed annually and those who wish to step down or get involved may be accommodated.

Roles and Responsibilities

Leadership Role:

Intervention

- Confirm the event
- Activate the Critical Incident response team
- Express sympathy to family
- Clarify facts surrounding event
- Make contact with other relevant agencies e.g. health and safety authority
- Decide how news will be communicated to different groups (staff, pupils, outside school)

Postvention

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

Roles and Responsibilities continued....

Garda Liaison:

- Liaises with the Gardai
- Ensures information is checked for accuracy

Staff Liaison:

- Liaises with staff on the facts as known
- Gives staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions
- Advises staff on procedures for identification of vulnerable students
- Keeps staff updated as the incident progresses
- Is alert to vulnerable staff members
- Advises staff of the availability of Employee Assistance Service(EAS)

Student Liaison/ Counselling Role:

Intervention

- Outline specific services available in school
- Put in place clear referral procedures
- Address immediate needs of students
- Organise supervision of the students on day of incident
- Provide information
- Provide counselling
- Looks after setting up and supervision of quiet room where agreed

Postvention

- Provide ongoing support to vulnerable students
- Monitor class most affected
- Refer on, as appropriate
- Review and evaluate Plan

Community (Agency) Liaison:

- Maintains the list of key contact number
- Liaise with relevant outside support agencies
- Checks credentials of individuals offering support
- Ensure telephone lines are free for outgoing and important incoming calls

Family Liaison Role:

Intervention

- Coordinate 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

Postvention

- Provide ongoing support to families affected by the incident
- Involve as appropriate family in-school liturgies/memorial services.
- Offer to link family with community support groups
- Review and evaluate plan.
- Keeps records of meetings with parents
- Ensures the templates of appropriate letters are on the school system and ready for adaptation

Media Liaison:*Intervention*

- With Team, prepare a public statement with accurate information, expressing sympathy for the affected parties.
- Organise a designated room to address media promptly

Postvention

- Ensure up to date facts are accurate
- Review and evaluate effectiveness of communication response
- Subsequent statements if necessary will be prepared by the CIM team saying what has been done and what is going to be done

Administrator:

- Maintain up to date contacts of
 - Parents/guardians
 - Teachers
 - Emergency services
- Ensures all letters are ready in the school system and ready for adaption
- Prepares and sends out letters, emails and faxes
- Keeping telephone lines free for outgoing and important incoming calls
- Takes telephone calls and notes those that need to be responded to by the appropriate team members
- Maintains records of phone calls, letters, meetings and other details relevant to the incident

Chaplaincy Role:*Intervention*

- Visit home(s), if appropriate
- Assist with prayer services
- Make contact with other local clergy
- Is available as personal and spiritual support to the school community using a designated quiet room

Postvention

- Provide follow-up support to families in conjunction with Home School Community Liaison
- Works in partnership with Critical Incident Management team
- Reviews and Evaluate Plan

Parents Association Rep:

- Represents parents' concerns and wishes re the school's response to the critical incident.
- Works in association with the team leader

B.O.M. Rep:

- Represents B.O.M.'s concerns and wishes re the school's response to the critical incident.
- Works in association with the team leader

N.E.P.S:

- Provides information and advise to management and staff as they come to terms with the situation
- Is available for consultation for school staff as they support the students
- Works with teachers to identify students who are most in need of support
- Develops procedures for reviewing their needs and onward referral if necessary

Confidentiality and Record Keeping

All team members will keep written records of phone calls, letters, meetings, interventions etc.

Other members of the school community who may receive information about the incident will record and relate this information to the CIM team

Where relevant and appropriate, the CIM team and outside agencies will have access to the records.

St. Catherine's is mindful of its responsibility to protect the privacy and good name of both the school and of people involved in any incident.

The members of the school staff will be sensitive to the consequences of any public statements and will seek to ensure the students are aware and mindful of what they say.

Short-term Actions (1st Day)

- The leader of the CIM team will implement roles of all CIM team members.
- Ensure the safety of students, staff and visitors.
- The family/families involved will be consulted regarding appropriate support from the school, e.g. funeral service.
- Staff Liaison will consult with and inform staff of the incident
- Accurate information will be gathered (complete an incident report form).
- Inform the students as appropriate.
- Students with special needs and/or cultural differences will be informed about the incident in an appropriate manner.
- Appropriate agencies will be contacted and support organised.
- The DES, B.O.M., and Parents Association will be contacted to support the secretary in handling phone enquiries and manning the reception office and front door.
- Prepare a media statement.
- Supervision of students in school will be arranged.
- The team will consult with students who may be affected by the cancellation of events for example, a match or class outing.
- Identify high-risk students.
- Discuss the issue of consent for students who may need to be seen by a psychologist and arrange for the consent form to be photocopied and sent to parents.
- A record should be kept of all students seen by school staff or external agencies.
- A quiet place will be made available for students and/or staff.
- Rooms will be made available as follows:
 - Prayer room
 - Individual Meetings
 - Parents
- Agree on time of next CIM team meeting.
- Have a whole staff meeting at the end of the day to keep all staff aware of unfolding events and allow for questions and concerns to be raised.
- Maintain as normal a day as possible

Medium term actions (24hrs-72hrs)

- Review what has been done to date.
- Make a decision about school closure.
- List tasks for the day and assign roles e.g. media; contact with bereaved family; attendance and participation in religious service.
- Meet with the whole staff at agreed times.
- Prepare for possible involvement in religious service if agreed with the family.
- Facilitate the responses of staff and students e.g., flowers, get-well/sympathy cards, Mass bouquets etc.
- Organise a memorial in the school if appropriate.
- Establish links with absent staff and students.
- Review the schedule for the day and next few days.
- Go through the list of students and staff who may be vulnerable and review how they are doing.
- Develop a plan to monitor all students over the next few weeks, especially those considered to be vulnerable.
- Arrange support for students and staff as necessary and appropriate, using teachers and outside agencies.
- Arrange permission slips for students to attend such support meetings.
- Plan for the re-integration of affected students and staff.
- Plan visits to the injured/families as deemed appropriate.

Longer term actions

- Meet with appropriate staff to review the list of affected staff and students.
- Identify who will be responsible for recording, seeking parental permission, and arranging follow-up referrals for support.
- Ensure all staff members are familiar with Responding to Critical Incidents – Guidelines for Schools (DES)
- Discuss referral procedures and when an onward referral may be indicated.
- Monitor students for signs of continued distress.
- Ensure the adult staff are aware of signs of distress a student may present e.g. physical symptoms, increased absenteeism, uncharacteristic behaviour.
- Inform new staff members of the Critical Incident Plan and procedures.
- Plan an appropriate school memorial event.
- Decide on appropriate ways to mark anniversaries of the Incident.
- Be sensitive celebrating significant days e.g., Christmas, Mother's Day, Father's Day etc.
- If a child affected by the incident is moving to another school encourage parents to inform the principal of the new school.

- Allow for the family to return to the school to get their child's possessions, perhaps put in a 'memory box'.
- Review the Critical Plan and amend if necessary.
- Ensure all Emergency and School contacts details are up to date?
- Decide where the Critical Incident Plan will be stored and who will have a copy.
- Decide when the Critical Incident Plan will be next reviewed.
- Consult with the NEPS psychologist.

Resources

1. Silver Linings: Community Crisis Response (Rainbows)
2. Responding to Critical Incidents – Resource Materials for Schools (DES)
3. Responding to Critical Incidents – Guidelines for Schools (NEPS)
4. When Tragedy Strikes - Guidelines for effective Critical Incident management in schools (INTO & UTU)

Ratified by the Board of Management

Date: December 2014

Signed:

Date for Review: December 2015