

# **Critical Incident Policy**

## **Critical Incident Management Plan**

### **Background:**

“While very few schools will experience a major crisis, most schools at some time or other experience traumatic situations such as the sudden death of a student or teacher due to an accident or illness. The key to managing a critical incident is planning. Schools that have developed a Critical Incident Management plan, report being able to cope more effectively in the aftermath of an incident. Having a plan enables staff to react quickly and effectively and to maintain a sense of control. It may also ensure that normality returns as soon as possible and that the effects on students and staff are limited. It is therefore important for all schools to prepare a Critical Incident Management Plan”. *Responding to Critical Incidents, Advice and Information Pack for Schools, NEPS, 2004*

### ***Creation of a coping, supportive and caring ethos in the school:***

In the school’s mission statement, we state that we endeavour to provide a caring atmosphere where pupils’ needs are addressed.

- As far as is possible, this school provides a physically and psychologically safe environment.
- The school has agreed procedures and policies in place re:
  - Arrival and dismissal of pupils
  - Child Protection
  - Code of Behaviour and Anti-Bullying
  - Health and Safety
  - GDPR
  - School Outings
  - Substance use
- Pupils are enabled to develop their communication skills, self esteem, coping skills as part of the SPHE curriculum.

### ***Defining a Critical Incident:***

In general, it is any incident or sequence of events which has the potential to overwhelm the normal coping mechanisms of the school, and disrupts the running of class/classes within the school.

The following constitute examples of critical incidents:

- Death of a pupil/member of staff
- Intruder on the premises
- Death of parent/sibling
- Serious/dangerous incident witnessed by children
- Major illness/outbreak of disease
- Criminal incidents

- Major accidents, serious injury
- Fire, natural and technological disaster
- Disappearance of pupil from home or school
- Unauthorised removal of pupil from school or home

***Critical Incident Management Team:***

Role	Name
Team Leader	Duncan Mc Carthy
Garda Liaison	Alan Healy and Seán Murphy
Staff Liaison	Bríd Bolster and Emma Fleming
Student Liaison	Caitríona O’Sullivan, Sarah McCarthy and Jean O’Sullivan
Community Liaison	Sarah McCarthy and Méabh Mulcahy
Parent Liaison	Louise Barry, Julie Foley and Jean O’Sullivan
Media Liaison	Duncan Mc Carthy and Alan Healy
Administrator	Colette Brennan, Duncan Mc Carthy and Bríd Bolster

“Principal will play a key role, being responsible for many of the tasks.” *Responding to Critical Incidents, NEPS, p.6*

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 three school years. The members of the team will meet every September 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 his/her role, to be used in the event of an incident.

**Team leader Role**

- Alert the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting
- Coordinate the tasks of the team
- Liaise with the Board of Management; DES; NEPS; SEC
- Liaise with the bereaved family
- Liaise with the Gardaí
- Ensure that information about deaths or other developments is checked out for accuracy before being shared

*(In the absence of the Team Leader, Deputy Principal will assume Leader’s role.)*

### **Staff Liaison Role**

- Lead briefing meetings for staff on the facts as known, give staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions, outline the routine for the day
- Provide materials for staff (from their critical incident folder)
- Keep staff updated as the day progresses
- Be alert to vulnerable staff members and make contact with them individually
- Inform staff of the Employee Assistance Programme- Call 1800 411 057. It is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. The current EAS provider is Spectrum.Life.

### **Student Liaison Role**

- Maintain student contact records (In file).
- Look after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room where agreed

### **Community Liaison Role**

- Maintain 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
- Update team members on the involvement of external agencies

### **Parent Liaison Role** *Louise Barry and relevant Class Teacher & SET, previous Class Teacher*

- 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 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 SEC; relevant teacher unions etc.
- Will draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews (as agreed by school management)

### **Administrator Role**

- Maintenance of up to date telephone numbers of
  - Parents or guardians
  - Teachers
  - Emergency services
- Take telephone calls and notes those that need to be responded to
- Ensure that templates are on the schools system in advance and ready for adaptation
- Prepare and send out letters, emails and texts

- Photocopy materials needed
- Maintain 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.

The secretary 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 Peter's 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.

### ***Development and communication of the plan:***

- All the teaching staff was consulted in the drafting of the plan.
- The Board of Management was consulted.
- The plan is readily accessible to all members of staff.
- The plan is instantly accessible to personnel who will play a key role in implementing the plan.
- Each member of the Critical Incident Management Team has a copy of the plan.
- Bríd Bolster and Emma Fleming (Staff Liaison) will communicate this plan to new and temporary staff.

### ***Administrative Tasks:***

#### ***Contact numbers***

- Updated folders (digital and hardcopy) of contact numbers are maintained. Numbers are available for:
- Pupils' parents/guardians – Secretary's Office
- Staff – in Principal's and Secretary's Office
- Emergency support services – in Principal's and Secretary's Office

#### ***Information for school trips***

- The class teacher will compile a list of all pupils/staff involved and the teacher in charge.
- In advance of a trip, all children have to have a Medical Form filled out by their parent/guardian. This will ensure that the school has updated medical information for pupils.

### ***Record keeping***

- Where appropriate, records will be kept by principal using a Critical Incident Form.
- Records will be kept for five years in the secretaries' office.
- The teaching staff will have access to these records where appropriate.

### ***Critical Incident room***

- The First Aid space will be used, when appropriate, should a critical incident arise.
- The Principal's Office will be used where deemed more suitable.

### ***Administration in the Course of an Incident***

- A log of events and telephone calls will be kept in the Secretary's Office in a Critical Incidents Folder.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

This plan was formulated in consultation with the Principal, members of the Critical Incident Management Team and the Board of Management. The Critical Incident Management Team is responsible for its implementation and review. The plan was ratified on 19/11/2024.