

# **CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY**

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St John the Evangelist NS aims to protect the well-being of its staff and students by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times.

We have taken a number of measures to create a coping, supportive and care ethos in the school. The school has also formulated a number of policies and procedures to be followed with a view to ensuring the physical and psychological safety of staff and students, both in ordinary time and in the event of a critical incident.

### **WHAT IS A CRITICAL INCIDENT?**

St John the Evangelist NS recognises a critical incident to be “an incident or sequence of events that overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of the school and disrupts the running of the school.” Critical incidents may involve one or more pupils, staff, the school, or our local community. Each individual incident will be dealt with on an individual basis and the measures deemed necessary will be taken.

### **Types of incidents might include:**

- The death of a member of the school community through sudden death, accident, terminal illness or suicide.
- An intrusion into the school.
- An accident/tragedy in the wider school community.
- Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism, etc..
- The disappearance of a member of the school community.
- An accident involving members of the school community.
- Threatening and abusive behaviour or putting in fear directed towards a member of staff

### **AIMS**

Recognising that the key of managing critical incidents is planning, St John the Evangelist NS has developed this Critical Incident Management Policy and accompanying Plan. Our hope is that in the event of an incident, these will help staff to act quickly and effectively and to maintain a sense of control. They should also help us to achieve a return to normality as soon as possible and ensure that the effects on the students and staff will be limited.

## **1. CREATION OF A COPING, SUPPORTIVE AND CARING ETHOS IN THE SCHOOL**

We've put systems in place to lessen the probability of the occurrence of an incident. These include measures to address both the physical and psychological safety of both staff and students.

### **Physical Safety**

The following are some specific examples of what the school is doing at this point:

- Evacuation plan formalised
- Restricted access
- Keypad codes for staff
- Regular fire drills
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
- Yard gates closed during school hours
- School doors locked during class time
- Rules of the playground regularly revised
- Anti Bullying Policy
- Code of Behaviour
- Health & Safety Statement

### **Psychological Safety**

St John the Evangelist NS aims to create an open and encouraging environment in the school where students can talk about their difficulties and seek help for same.

Some examples of this are as follows:

- SPHE programmes are included in the curriculum to address issues such as grief and loss, communication skills, stress and anger management, conflict management, problem solving, help seeking, decision making and alcohol and drug prevention.
- Supporting Learning for All Children Policy
- Our Code of Behaviour and Antib-Bullying policies
- Where appropriate, staff members are informed of difficulties affecting individual students and are aware and vigilant to their needs.
- Service of Play therapist available
- The school has developed links with outside agencies which may be contacted in the event of an emergency and for onward referral of students.

## 2. CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM (CIMT)

A critical incident team is a group of staff members who know the community, the students and others well enough to make the necessary decisions for when an incident occurs.

St John the Evangelist NS has set up a CI Management Team in line with best practice and will maintain this team in future. 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 once a year and review and update the plan. Each member of the team has a Critical Incident pack with relevant materials to be used in the event of an incident.

### Communication Strategy

The Team Leader will contact CIMT & calls will be made as per Contact Sheet. The Team Leader will decide on specific information for communication, to ensure uniformity of delivery. The second tier of contacts will be informed depending on circumstances.

### Key roles have been identified and assigned as follows:

- |                           |                   |
|---------------------------|-------------------|
| ● Team Leader .....       | James Carroll     |
| ● Staff Liaison .....     | Siobhán Mc Donagh |
| ● Student Liaison .....   | Fiona Carroll     |
| ● Parent Liaison .....    | Siobhán Gildea    |
| ● Community Liaison ..... | TBC               |
| ● Media Liaison .....     | James Carroll     |

### Roles

In the event of a critical incident the responsibilities of each role holder will be as follows:

#### Team Leader

- Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting.
- Communicates with rest of CIMT
- Coordinates the tasks of the team.
- Liaises with the Board of Management and Department of Education and Science.
- Liaises with the bereaved family if appropriate

#### Staff Liaison

- Leads meetings to brief staff on the facts as known, gives staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and outlines the routine for the day.
- Advises staff on the identification of vulnerable students.
- Is alert to vulnerable staff members and makes contact with them individually.
- Provides materials to staff from the Critical Incident Pack.

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## **Student Liaison**

- Liaises with other team members to keep them up-to-date with information and progress.
- Alerts staff to vulnerable students.
- Provides appropriate materials for students from the Critical Incident Pack.

## **Parent Liaison**

- Facilitates question and answer meetings.
- Meets with individual parents of those affected.
- Provides materials for parents from the Critical Incident Pack.
- Visits the bereaved family with the team leader or team member or staff member

## **Community Liaison**

- Liaises with agencies in the community for support and onward referral.
- Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies.
- Coordinates the involvement of these agencies.

## **Media Liaison**

- In preparing for the role, s/he will consider issues that may arise during an incident 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 Communications Section in the DES.

## **Administrative Tasks**

- Maintenance of up to date lists with contact numbers of
  - Board of Management
  - Parent or guardians
  - Teachers
  - Emergency support services
- Telephone calls need to be responded to, letters sent and materials photocopied

## **3. RECORD KEEPING**

In the event of an incident each member of the team will keep detailed records of phone calls made and received, letters sent and received, meetings held, persons met, interventions used, materials used etc. The school secretary will have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters, photocopying materials etc.

## **4. LETTERS TO PARENTS**

The Team Leader in association with the CIMT will prepare a brief, written statement to include:

- The sympathy of the school community for the affected/bereaved family.
- Positive information or comments about the deceased person/injured person(s)
- The facts of the incident
- What has been done
- What is going to be done

## **5. CONFIDENTIALITY AND GOOD NAME CONSIDERATIONS**

The school has 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 the school staff will bear this in mind, and will see to ensure that pupils do so also.

[For instance, the term 'suicide' will not be used without the consent of the family involved or until it has been established categorically that the person's death was a result of suicide. The phrases 'tragic death' or 'sudden death' may be used instead.]

## **6. CRITICAL INCIDENT ROOM**

In the event of a critical incident a room will be assigned to meet the staff, students, parents and visitors involved.

## **7. DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNICATION OF THIS POLICY AND PLAN**

Staff were consulted and their views sought in the preparation of the policy. Each member of the critical incident team has a personal copy.

# Preventative Approaches

## **Curriculum**

- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- SPHE Policy
- Supporting Learning for All Children Policy
- Staff Alert To Students With Difficulties where appropriate

## **Support**

- NEPS
- Parish Priest/Clergy/Pastoral Workers
- Child And Family Services etc, Túsła

## **Physical Environment**

- Fire Drill – Evacuation of Pupils
- Maintain Fire Extinguishers
- Health And Safety Statement
- Playground Supervision

## **Implementation Date:**

This policy is effective from 2011

## **Review/Ratification:**

This policy was last reviewed in: October 2022

It will be reviewed every three years.