

CRITICAL INCIDENT

MANAGEMENT PLAN.

Our Lady Queen of the Apostles N.S.

Our Lady Queen of the Apostles N.S. aims to protect the well being of its pupils by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. Our Lady Queen of the Apostles N.S. has taken a number of measures to create a coping, supportive and caring 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.

Our Lady Queen of the Apostles N.S. recognises a critical incident to be “an incident or sequence of events that overwhelms the normal coping mechanism 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. These 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.**

Our Lady Queen of the Apostles N.S. has developed this Critical Incident Management Policy and Plan. Our hope is that, in the event of an incident, these will help staff to react 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 pupils and staff will be limited.

We have 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:

- **Regular fire drills.**
- **Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked.**
- **Pre-opening morning time supervision in the school yard from 8:40. The principal, vice principal and class teachers supervise.**
- **Visitors may enter the school only by way of front entrance when the secretary releases the lock.**
- **Rules of the playground are discussed by and taught to the pupils. They are clearly displayed in the classrooms.**
- **Health and Safety Statement**

Psychological Safety:

The school aims to create an open and encouraging environment in the school where pupils can talk about their difficulties and seek help for same.

- **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, decision making and alcohol and drug prevention.**
- **Our Code of Discipline and Behaviour Policy includes prevention and dealing with bullying as it arises.**
- **Staff are informed of difficulties affecting individual students and are aware and vigilant to their needs.**
- **Staff have access to books and resources on difficulties affecting the primary school child.**
- **The school has developed links with outside agencies, which may be contacted in the event of an emergency and for onward referral of students.**
- **The school uses the services of NEPS, Art Therapy and Play Therapy to help those children identified as needing support.**

Critical Incident Management Team:

Our Lady Queen of the Apostles N.S. has set up a Critical Incident 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 to review and update the plan.

Roles:

<i>Leadership/Communication:</i>	Fiona Morley
<i>Coordination:</i>	Anne McVeigh
<i>Staff Liaison:</i>	Ciara Lanigan and Sheila Doherty
<i>Student Liaison:</i>	Derek Murray and Anne Cogan.
<i>Family Liaison:</i>	Rachel Kerins.
<i>Parents Representative:</i>	Anne McVeigh
<i>Community Liaison:</i>	Amanda Murray and Paula Galvin.
<i>Media Liaison:</i>	Mary Carolan
<i>Board of Management Rep:</i>	Fr. Kieran Coghlan (Chairperson)
<i>NEPS:</i>	
<i>Psychologist.</i>	Catherine Canney

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

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
- 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 events

Communication Role***Intervention***

Communication Role

Intervention

- With team, prepare a public statement if necessary
- Ensure telephone lines are free for outgoing and important incoming calls
- Liaise with relevant outside support agencies

Postvention

- Review and evaluate effectiveness of communication response

Critical Incident Co-ordinator

- Convene meeting with Leadership Team as soon as Critical Incident is confirmed.
- Critical Incident Co-ordinator to be allocated room with appropriate communication facilities.
- Convene initial meeting with the full Critical Incident Response Team and other subsequent meetings as required.
- Identify and prioritise tasks to be allocated to team members.
- Assign tasks accordingly and assess and collate all information received.
- Ensure that good records are maintained from the beginning.
- Ensure all records and information received are reviewed and recorded accurately.
- Organise the resources required for each task.
- Ensure all communication is clear and concise and that the person to whom task is allocated to is aware of their role and responsibilities.
- Full responsibility for the co-ordination and recording of all documentation received.
- Monitor the progress of assigned tasks to ensure matters are being dealt with appropriately and as expeditiously as possible.
- Regular updates provided to Critical Incident Response Team.
- Prepare report at conclusion of matter for the relevant stakeholders.

Student/Staff Liaison

Intervention

- Outline specific services available in school.
- Put in place clear referral procedures.
- Address immediate needs of staff.
- Provide information.
- Awareness of counselling needs.

Postvention

- Provide ongoing support to vulnerable students.
- Monitor class most affected.
- Refer on, as appropriate.

Community and Family Liaison Role

Intervention

- Co ordinate contact with families (following first contact by principal).
- Consult with family around involvement of school e.g. funeral service.
- Assist with all communication dealing with parents of any student affected by critical incident.

Postvention

- Provide on going support to families affected by the incident where necessary.
- Involve as appropriate family in-school liturgies/memorial services.
- Offer to link family with community support groups.

In the event of a critical incident the responsibilities of role-holders will involve the following:

Administrative Tasks:

- ⇒ Maintenance of up to date lists of contact numbers of parents or guardians, teachers and emergency support services.
- ⇒ Telephone calls need to be responded to, letters sent and materials photocopied.

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, material used etc. The school secretary will have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters, photocopying materials etc.

Letter to parents:

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/injured person(s)
- ⇒ The facts of the incident
- ⇒ What has been done
- ⇒ What is going to be done

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.

Critical Incident Room:

In the event of a critical incident staffroom/HSCL room will be the main room used to meet the staff, pupils, parents and visitors as appropriate.

ACTION PLAN

- Meeting with Critical Incident Response Team must take place as soon as incident is confirmed.
- All information received and provided must be co-ordinated through Critical Incident Co-ordinator.
- Debrief meeting must take place at conclusion of incident with all Team members.

Day 1

- Immediate contact with family/families
- Consult with the family regarding appropriate support from the school
e.g. funeral services
- Ensure that a quiet place can be made available for students/staff
- Rooms will be made available as follows: Individual Meetings, Parents Room.

Media Briefing (if appropriate)

- Designate a spokesperson (Leader)
- Prepare a brief statement (Team)
- Protect the family's privacy
- Gather accurate information
- It is important to obtain accurate information about the incident
 - What happened, where and when?
 - What are the extent of the injuries?
 - How many are involved and what are their names?
 - Is there a risk of further injury?
 - What agencies have been contacted already?

Contact appropriate agencies

- Emergency services
- Medical Services
- H.S.E. Psychology Departments'/Community Care Services
- NEPS
- BOM
- DES/Schools Inspector

Convene a meeting with Key Staff/Critical Management Team

- Organise a staff meeting, if appropriate
- Ensure any absent staff members are kept informed
- Organise timetable/routine for the day. (adhering to normal school routine is important, if this is possible)
- 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.
- Arrange supervision of students

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 schools involvement in funeral/memorial service
- Arrange a home visit by two staff representatives within 24 hours, if appropriate.
- Have regard for different religious traditions and faiths

Arrange support for individual students, groups of students and parents if necessary

- Hold support/information meeting for parent/.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 relatives etc
- Student Liaison person to liaise with above on their return to school

Plan visits to injured

- Home School Community Co-Ordinator, class teacher and Principal to visit home/hospital if appropriate.
- 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) in consultation with Board of Management.

Medium Term Actions

- Preparation of students/staff attending funeral
- Involvement of students/staff in liturgy if agreed by bereaved family
- Facilitation of students staffs responses e.g. Sympathy cards, flowers, book of condolences
- Ritual within the school
- Review 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 where necessary
- Have review of Critical Incident Management Team meeting
- Establish contact with absent staff and pupils

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 Health Board.
Constant communication with family is essential.
 1. Uncharacteristic behaviour
 2. Deterioration in academic performance
 3. Physical symptoms – e.g. weight loss/gain, lack of attention to appearance, tiredness, restlessness
 4. Inappropriate emotional reactions
 5. Increased absenteeism
 6. Communication with the family will be ongoing.

Development and communication of this policy and plan:

All staff were consulted and their views canvassed at a staff meeting facilitated by NEPS psychologist Catherine Canney. It was further developed at a subsequent staff meeting. Parent representatives were also consulted and asked for their comments. Our school's final policy and procedures in relation to responding to critical incidents has been presented to all staff and is reviewed each year. Each member of the critical incident team has a personal copy.

All new and temporary staff will be informed of the details of the plan by Fiona Morley. In the event of a critical incident arising in the absence of the team leader, Ciara Lanigan will assume this role.

Development and communication of this policy and plan:

New staff/new school pupils affected by Critical Incidents will be informed where appropriate by

- Ensuring that new staff are aware of the school policy and procedures in this area
- Ensuring 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 accident are transferring to a new school, the principal will brief the principal of the new school
- Deciding on appropriate ways to deal with anniversaries, being sensitive to special days and events
- Anniversaries may trigger emotional responses in students/staff and they may need additional support at this time
- Acknowledging the anniversary with the family

- Plan school memorial service if appropriate
- Care of deceased person's possessions. What are the parent's wishes?
- Updating and amending school records

Reviewed by Board of Management of Our Lady Queen of the Apostles
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Signed: *Kieren Coghlan*
Chairperson of Board of Management

Date: *21st February 2023*