



*St. Mary's Secondary School,  
Holy Faith, Glasnevin, Dublin 11.  
60770P*



**Critical Incident Management Policy 2020**

# CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT POLICY



*The key to managing a critical incident is planning. Schools are strongly advised to develop a policy in relation to critical incident response. NEPS also encourages schools to develop a Critical Incident Management Plan, outlining who will do what in the event of a tragedy.*

*The templates outlined below are designed as an aid to schools in drawing up a policy and plan. Each school will need to look at its own particular context and circumstances and draw up its own unique policy and plan. Additional guidance is contained in Responding to Critical Incidents Guidelines and Resource Materials for Schools (2016) R19-21 P.79-90.*

St. Mary's Secondary School aims to protect the well-being of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. St. Mary's follows the Holy Faith philosophy of creating an inclusive school community whose central purpose is the religious, moral, intellectual, human, social and physical-recreational education of the student. The education programme of the school is directed to the growth of the whole person. It aims to form integrated and self-reliant Christian people who are eager to build a better world. The Board of Management, through the principal *Paul Clarke*, has drawn up a Critical Incident Management Plan as one element of the school's policies and plan

## **Review and Research**

The CIMT have consulted resource documents available to schools on [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie) and [www.nosp.i](http://www.nosp.i) including:

- Responding to Critical Incidents Guidelines and Resources for Schools (NEPS 2016)
- Suicide Prevention in Schools: Best Practice Guidelines (IAS, National Suicide Review Group (2002)
- Suicide Prevention in the Community - A Practical Guide (HSE 2011)
- Well-Being in Post-Primary Schools Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention (DES, DOH, HSE 2013)
- Well-Being in Primary Schools - Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion (DES, DOH, HSE 2015)

## **Define what you mean by the term 'critical incident'**

The staff and management of St. Mary's recognise a critical incident to be "an incident or sequence of events that overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school". Critical incidents may involve one or more students or staff members, or members of our local community. Types of incidents might include:

- *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*
- *An accident/tragedy in the wider community*
- *Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism, etc*
- *The disappearance of a member of the school community*

## **Aim**

The aim of the CIMP is to help school management and staff to react quickly and effectively in the event of an incident, to enable us to maintain a sense of control and to ensure that appropriate support is offered to students and staff. Having a good plan should also help ensure that the effects on the students and staff will be limited. It should enable us to affect a return to normality as soon as possible.

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

We have put systems in place to help to build resilience in both staff and students, thus preparing them to cope with a range of life events. These include measures to address both the physical and psychological safety of the school community.

### **Physical safety**

- Evacuation plan formulated
- Regular fire drills occur
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
- Pre-opening and closing supervision in the school yard
- Front gate locked during school hours
- Health and safety policy
- Science Labs within the school building are locked when not in use
- School yard supervision at break and lunch

### **Psychological safety**

The management and staff of St. Mary's Secondary School aim to use available programmes and resources to address the personal and social development of students, to enhance a sense of safety and security in the school and to provide opportunities for reflection and discussion.

- Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is integrated into the work of the school. It is addressed in the curriculum by addressing issues such as grief and loss; communication skills; stress and anger management; resilience; conflict management; problem solving; help-seeking; bullying; decision making and prevention of alcohol and drug misuse. Promotion of mental health is an integral part of this provision.
- Staff have access to training for their role in SPHE
- Staff are familiar with the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures
- Books and resources on difficulties affecting the post primary school student are available
- Information is provided on mental health in general and such specific areas as signs and symptoms of depression and anxiety
- Staff are informed in the area of suicide awareness and some are trained in interventions for suicidal students
- The school has developed links with a range of external agencies

- Inputs to students by external providers are carefully considered in the light of criteria about student safety, the appropriateness of the content, and the expertise of the providers. See DES Circular 0023/2010 (Post-Primary)
- The school has a clear policy on bullying and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy
- There is a care system in place in the school using the "Continuum of Support" approach which is outlined in the NEPS documents published in 2010 for post primary schools. See also Student Support Teams in Post Primary Schools (2014). These documents are available on [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie)
- Students who are identified as being at risk are referred to the designated staff member (e.g., guidance counsellor or support teacher), concerns are explored and the appropriate level of assistance and support is provided. Parents are informed, and where appropriate, a referral is made to an appropriate agency (See Guidance Plan)
- Staff are informed about how to access support for themselves.

### **Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)**

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 at least one school year. The members of the team will meet annually 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 their role, to be used in the event of an incident.

**Team leader:** (Paul Clarke, Principal)

#### **Role**

- Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting in person or remotely
- Coordinates the tasks of the team
- Liaises with the Board of Management; DES; NEPS; SEC
- Liaises with the bereaved family

*(Note – Mary O'Donnell and Frances Devaney will take the lead in the absence of the team leader).*

**Garda liaison** (Paul Clarke, Principal)

#### **Role**

- Liaises with the Gardaí
- Ensures that information about deaths or other developments is checked out for accuracy before being shared, be careful of language which is measured and controlled

**Staff liaison** (Senior Management, Year Heads & Guidance Counsellors)

#### **Role**

- Leads briefing meetings for staff on the facts as known, gives staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions, outlines the routine for the day. Clear message on what is said to students. Ask staff to inform us if they are not comfortable to speak with students.
- Advises staff on the procedures for identification of vulnerable students
- Provides materials for staff prepared in advance (from their critical incident folder)
- Keeps staff updated as the day progresses
- Is alert to vulnerable staff members and makes contact with them individually
- Advises them of the availability of the EAS and gives them the contact number
- Identify a quiet space for staff (board room)

### **Student liaison** (Senior/Middle Management & Guidance Counsellors)

#### **Role**

- Co-ordinate information from tutors and year heads about students they are concerned about
- Alerts other staff to vulnerable students (appropriately)
- Provides materials for students (from their critical incident folder)
- Maintains student contact records (R1).
- Looks after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room (prayer room) where agreed.
- Ciaran Coll in his role is freed up to assist the team.

### **Community/agency liaison** (Guidance Counsellors & Senior Management)

#### **Role**

- Maintains 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
- Liaises with agencies in the community for support and onward referral
- Is alert to the need to check credentials of individuals offering support
- Coordinates the involvement of these agencies
- Reminds agency staff to wear name badges/ sign in at reception
- Parents/guardians linked in with senior management
- Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies

### **Parent liaison** (Senior & Middle Management)

#### **Role**

- Identify a clear and concise direct message factual and supportive with no opinion or speculation to send to parents
- Visits the bereaved family with the team leader
- Arranges parent meetings or managing parental contact
- 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
- Provides appropriate materials for parents (from their critical incident folder)

### **Media liaison** (Paul Clarke, Board of Management & Le Cheile Trust)

#### **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)
- Location will be outside the school building outside the school gates in front of the school.

## **Administrator** (Michelle Whelan & Liz McCabe)

### **Role**

- Maintenance of up-to-date telephone numbers of
  - Parents or guardians
  - Teachers
  - Emergency services
- Takes telephone calls and notes those that need to be responded to - clear and concise message, no speculation or rumours
- Ensures that templates are on the school's system in advance and ready for adaptation
- Prepares (senior management) and sends out letters, emails and texts (administrative staff)
- Photocopies materials needed
- Maintains records

### **Record keeping** (Each member records what they are doing)

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.

Liz McCabe and Michelle Whelan 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. Mary's Secondary School 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. Members of school staff will bear this in mind, and seek to ensure that students do so also, e.g., 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 phrases '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.

### **Critical Incident Rooms**

In the event of a critical incident, the following rooms are designated for the indicated purposes

<b>Room Name:</b>	<b>Designated Purpose:</b>
Gym/ Choir Hall/ Main Staff Room	Main room for meeting staff
Base Classes/ Gym/ Prayer Room (small group)	Meetings with students
Senior Management Offices/Guidance Offices	Meetings with parents
Outside at the front of the school	Meetings with media
Guidance offices	Individual sessions with students
Senior Management Offices	Meetings with other visitors

**Consultation and communication regarding the plan**

All staff were consulted and their views canvassed in the preparation of this policy and plan. Students and parent/guardian representatives were also consulted and asked for their comments.

Our school's final policy and plan in relation to responding to critical incidents has been presented to all staff. Each member of the critical incident team has a personal copy of the plan.

All new and temporary staff will be informed of the details of the plan by the deputy principals.

The plan will be updated annually in November.

Critical Incident Management Team		
Role	Name	Phone
Team leader:	<i>Paul Clarke</i>	
Garda liaison	<i>Paul Clarke</i>	
Staff liaison	Mary O'Donnell/ Frances Devaney	
Student liaison	Senior Management Team, Guidance Counsellors & Ciaran Coll	
Community liaison	Guidance Counsellors	
Parent liaison	Senior Management Teams/ Year Heads	
Media liaison	Paul Clarke / Board of Management	
Administrator	Michelle Whelan/ Sorcha McManus	

## Short term actions – Day 1

Task	Name
Gather accurate information	
Who, what, when, where?	
Convene a CIMT meeting – specify time and place clearly	
Contact external agencies	
Arrange supervision for students	
Hold staff meeting	All staff
Agree schedule for the day	
Inform students – (close friends and students with learning difficulties may need to be told separately)	
Compile a list of vulnerable students	
Prepare and agree media statement and deal with media	
Inform parents	



Hold end of day staff briefing	
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**Medium term actions - (Day 2 and following days)**

Task	Name
Convene a CIMT meeting to review the events of day 1	Team leader
Meet external agencies	
Meet whole staff	
Arrange support for students, staff, parents	
Visit the injured	
Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements	
Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service	
Make decisions about school closure	BOM

## Follow-up – beyond 72 hours

Task	Name
Monitor students for signs of continuing distress	Class teachers
Liaise with agencies regarding referrals	
Plan for return of bereaved student(s)	
Plan for giving of 'memory box' to bereaved family	
Decide on memorials and anniversaries	BOM/Staff, parents and students
Review response to incident and amend plan	Staff/BOM

# EMERGENCY CONTACT LIST

AGENCY	CONTACT NUMBERS
<b>Garda</b> Gardaí Santry (John Durr) Gardaí (Ballymun) Dave/Elaine  Gardaí (Finglas)	01-6664020/ 0834260234 0878979354/ 01-6664400  01-6667500
<b>Hospital</b> Temple Street Mater Hospital Beaumont Hospital	01-8784200 01-8032000 01-9093000
<b>Fire Brigade</b>	112
<b>Local GPs</b> Cremore Clinic Dr Nuala O'Farrell	01-8344611
<b>HSE</b> HSE/Community Care Team/ Child and Family Centre/CAMHS	<a href="tel:0416850300">041 6850300</a>
<b>NEPS Psychologist</b> Jacqueline Horan	0879444183/0761108683
<b>DES</b>	01-8896400
<b>INTO/ASTI/TUI</b>	ASTI:,6040160/1850-418400 TUI: 4922588
<b>Clergy</b>	0872412459/01-5582697

Fr. Richard Sheehy, Our Lady of Dolours, Glasnevin, D11. Fr. Frank Reburn, Our Lady of Victories, Ballymun Rd, Glasnevin, D9.	01-8379445 01- 8420346
<b>State Exams Commission</b>	0906442700
<b>Employee Assistance Service</b>	1800 411 057
<b>Audrey Doyle, Chairperson of the Board of Management</b>	adoyle@stmaryshfg.ie