

St. Joseph's National School



Critical Incident Management Plan

Introduction

St. Joseph's National School aims at promoting the full harmonious development of all aspects of the person of the pupil — intellectual, physical, cultural, moral and spiritual, including a living relationship with God and other people. The school models and promotes a philosophy of life inspired by belief in God and in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

In its provision of religious education for the pupils in accordance with the doctrines, practices and traditions of the Catholic Church, St. Joseph's National School fosters a positive and supportive atmosphere for the entire school community.

A required element of the curriculum, Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) promotes mental health, addressing issues such as grief and loss, stress and anger management, bullying, and prevention of alcohol and drug abuse.

To foster the well being of its students and staff by providing a safe and supportive environment at all times, the Board of Management has drawn up a Critical Incident Management Plan (CIMP) and has established a Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT).

The CIMP aims to help the Board of Management and staff respond effectively in the event of a critical incident, maintaining a sense of calm and ensuring appropriate support for students, parents and staff.

Definition of a Critical Incident

As suggested by the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), a critical incident is any incident or sequence of events which overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of a school. Such an incident may involve one or more students or staff members, or members of our local community, e.g., the death of a member of the school community through accident, violence, suicide or other unexpected death.

Level 1:

Death of student or staff member who was terminally ill

Death of parent or sibling

Fire in school not resulting in serious injury

Serious damage to school property

Level 2:

The sudden death of a student or staff member

Level 3:

An accident or event involving a number of students

A violent death

An incident with a high media profile or involving a number of schools

Supportive Environment

St. Joseph's National School has 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 pupils.

(a) Physical Safety

- Health & Safety Statement Safety Officer Board of Management
- Formulated Regular Fire Drill
- Fire Maintenance Contract signed with Apex Fire
- Fire Exits checked regularly and Fire Extinguishers serviced by “Fire Direct”.
- School gate closed during ordinary school time. Each teacher provided with master key.
- Yard Rules/Routines discussed at staff meetings and explained and demonstrated to pupils at school assembly times.

(b) Psychological Safety

St. Joseph’s National School aims to create an open and encouraging environment in the school where pupils can talk about their difficulties and seek help for same.

- Social, Personal and Health Education programmes are included in the curriculum to address issues such as grief and loss, communication skills, conflict, problem solving, decision making and alcohol and drug prevention. {“Walk Tall” / “Stay safe” / “Circle Time” / RSE Booklet for 5th / 6th Class / RSE Themes for each class / Road Safety / Be Safe / Fire Safety / Water Safety}
- Fun Friends, a social skills training programme to build resilience in 4-7 year old children is taught to second class for a 10 week block in the first term. Friends for Life, a social skills programme to develop life skills to effectively cope with difficult and or anxiety provoking situations is taught to fifth class for a 10 week block in the first term. The learning support teacher teaches S.P.H.E to 3rd and 4th classes ensuring each teacher only has two classes to teach.
- The school Code of Behaviour and Anti-Bullying Policy” list approaches to deal with bullying.
- The School “Child Protection Policy” details the Designated Liaison Person and the Deputy Designated Liaison Person.
- The school avails of one Education Psychological Reports per annum (N.E.P.s.)
- The school liaises with Post Primary Schools to ease the transition of pupils from Primary to Post Primary and implements the Student Passport
- Bicycle Safety Course is provided to pupils in middle and senior classes.

- Meath Fire Brigade – Fire safety Officer with middle class annually.
- Garda Liaison Kilcock Garda Station visit and talk to senior classes annually.
- Swimming lessons are provided for all pupils annually
- Staff are informed of difficulties affecting individual pupils and are aware and vigilant to their needs.

Procedures to deal with Critical Incident (Immediate)

- Gather the facts
- Contact appropriate agencies
- Convene the Critical Incident Team
- Organise the supervision of pupils
- Inform staff
- Agree on Statement of facts
- Identify high risk students
- Appoint someone to deal with phone enquiries
- Maintain the normal school routine when at all possible Inform parents / guardians
- Make contact with the bereaved family
- Organise support Respond to media

Medium Term Actions (24 – 72 hours)

- Reconvene C.I.M. Team & review events of the first 24 hours
- Arrange support for individual students, groups of students and parents if necessary
- Plan for the reintegration of students and staff
- Plan visits to “incident” persons (injured /bereaved)
- Liaise with family regarding funeral arrangements / memorial service
Attendance and participation at funeral / memorial service
- School closure if necessary and appropriate.

Longer Term Actions

- Monitor students for sign of continuing distress (refer to H.S.E. / N.E.P.S.)
- Staff Meeting
- Evaluate response to incident and amend the Critical Incident Management Plan appropriately
- Inform new staff / new school pupils affected by critical Incidents where appropriate
- Decide on appropriate ways to deal with anniversaries

Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)

In addition, a CIMT has been established, its members retaining their roles for at least two school years. Each member of the CIMT has a copy of the CIMP and materials particular to their role, to be used in the event of an incident.

In the event of an incident each member of the CIMT will keep records of phone calls made and received, letters sent and received, meetings held, persons met, interventions made, material used, etc.

Team Members

Leader: Principal

Staff Representative: Deputy Principal

Board of Management Representative: Chairperson of Board of Management.

Parents' Association: Chairperson of Parents Association.

Roles

Principal: Leader

Deputy Principal: Liaison Person

Chairperson of Board of Management: Pastoral Care

Chairperson of Parents' Association: Community Liaison

CIMT Leader

As leader of the CIMT, the Principal will alert the CIMT to any critical incident and convene a meeting. She will coordinate tasks and liaise with the Board of Management, the DES, and the NEPS and the Gardaí.

It is her responsibility to inform staff of the facts as known and to update the staff as necessary, being alert to vulnerable staff members, making contact with them individually and advising them of the availability of the Employee Assistance Service (EAS), providing the contact number, and determining the routine for the day.

The Principal will also manage any 'consent' issues in accordance with agreed school policy, noting that signed parental consent is an essential pre-requisite for any individual interview between a student and a NEPS psychologist.

A brief and accurate press statement, approved by the Chairman of the Board of Management, can be forwarded to the media by email or telephone, or communicated in person by the Principal.

The management of information is especially important. Information to be communicated to the media should be checked for accuracy to avoid unwarranted distress.

As it is important that the family be given time to inform their own relatives of new information, untimely information should not be given out by the school.

In the absence of the Principal, these responsibilities fall to the Deputy Principal.

Care & Support of Pupils

The Principal will alert other staff to vulnerable students, keep a record of students seen by external agency staff and liaise with agencies in the community for support and onward referral, and in coordinating the involvement of external agencies will be alert to the need to check credentials of individuals offering support. The Principal will also be responsible for updating other members of the CIMT in relation to the involvement of external agencies.

Pastoral Care of the Bereaved

The Chairperson of the Board of Management, will visit the bereaved family and those in need of pastoral care as a result of a critical incident. Inspired by belief in God and in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, every effort will be made to bring comfort and consolation to those in distress, recommending them to the prayers of the local community.

In addition to being responsible for the preparation of a Requiem Mass or other liturgy, he will endeavour to provide appropriate pastoral care to the children and staff of the school, all of whom will be encouraged to pray for the deceased, the bereaved and those in distress.

Subsequent to a Critical Incident, bereaved parents/guardians will be invited to visit the school after the Month's Mind, and personal belongings will be returned.

In addition, the Principal will mark the Month's Mind and First Anniversary in the school's calendar and with the Chairman of the Board of Management will discuss what to do with respect to events in which the deceased student would have participated.

General Pastoral Care

In the long term, individuals with ongoing difficulties will be monitored, and the CIMT will evaluate the school's response to the Critical Incident, amending the CIMP as appropriate.

Parents' Association

In times of tragedy, young people need support from the adults who know them best and the Board of Management recognize that their teachers have invaluable experience, competence and skills and, in partnership with parents, can provide this support.

At the same time, the Board of Management recognize the important role parents play in a critical incident. Therefore, in advance of an incident, the Chairperson of the Parents' Association, will consider issues that may arise and, in consultation with the Board of Management, determine the most appropriate response (e.g. students/staff being interviewed, photographers on the premises, etc.).

The Principal will ensure that parents are aware that the provision of pictures is the sole decision of the bereaved/affected family, and will advise parents/guardians that those not used to dealing with the media may say something that could cause unintentional hurt.

Together with the Principal and the Chairperson of the Board of Management, The Chairperson of the Parents' Association will consider a parent information meeting to allow parents obtain information about how they can help their children, inviting various suitable agencies to be involved so that parents are informed about available services, how they work, and how to access support for their children.

Emergency Contact List

An Emergency Contact List should be displayed in the staff room, the school office and at each exit.

Consent of Parents/Guardians

A general letter will be sent to all parents stating that, in the event of a critical incident, support may be available from NEPS, and that the school may decide that individual or group support would be helpful to certain students, and that if parents do not wish to avail of this, they must notify the school in writing. In addition, the school will undertake to telephone the parent/guardian to seek verbal consent in all cases where a child is to have an individual meeting with a psychologist. If there is difficulty in contacting a parent/guardian, the school, in consultation with the psychologist, may take the decision to proceed while continuing to make every effort to contact the parent/guardian.

Use of Rooms

In the event of a critical incident, rooms will be allocated to meet staff, parents, individual pupils and other visitors.

Garda Interviews of Children

It is the responsibility of parents to decide whether their children may be interviewed by Gardaí. Garda interviews of students should not take place on the school premises.

Prevention of Suicide

Concerns about suicidal behaviour should never be dismissed on the grounds that a pupil or staff member is merely seeking attention and will not make a suicide attempt.

Preparation of CIMP

In the preparation of this CIMP, staff and parent representatives were consulted. Since its approval by the Board of Management, the CIMP has been presented to the staff and a copy distributed to each member of the CIMP. All new/temporary staff will be informed of the details of the plan by the Principal and the plan will be updated in 2019.

Roles and Responsibility

In school management

Implementation Date

May 2017

Ratification & Communication

State when the BOM officially ratified the policy. Make provision for the circulation of the ratified policy on school website.

Review Date

June 2019

Ratified by the Board of Management

Signed _____ Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed _____ Principal

Date _____