



# Critical Incident Policy

## St. Mary's N.S.

*Updated January 2024*

### **1. Introduction**

St. Mary's National School aims to protect the well-being of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times in which all children will be enabled to reach their full potential. Our school community, which includes the teaching staff, ancillary staff and the Board of Management, work in partnership to meet the needs of our pupils. We recognise the uniqueness of each child and we aim to nurture and promote the value and dignity of each person in the school and in so doing, develop a respect for diversity and difference. The Board of Management, through our principal, Amy Moran, has drawn up a Critical Incident Management Plan as one element of the school's policies and plans.

### **2. Review and Research**

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

- Responding to Critical Incidents Guidelines and Resources for Schools (NEPS 2016)
- Suicide Prevention in the Community - A Practical Guide (HSE 2015)
- Well-Being in Primary Schools - Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion (DES, DOH, HSE 2015)

### **3. What is a Critical Incident?**

The staff and Board of 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
- The spread of a dangerous infectious disease or virus
- Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism, etc
- The disappearance of a member of the school community

#### **4. Aim**

The aim of the Critical Incident Management Plan (CIMP) is to help the Board of 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 to ensure that the effects on the students and staff will be limited. It should enable us to effect a return to normality as soon as possible.

#### **5. 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.

##### **(i) *Physical safety***

- Evacuation plan formulated
- First Aid training for staff
- Updated Health and Safety Policy
- Site risk assessments carried out
- Regular fire drills occur
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked and serviced
- External school doors locked during class time
- Code of Behaviour Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Supervision of Pupils Policy
- Proper hand washing and hygiene techniques taught
- Appropriate yard supervision

##### **(ii) *Psychological safety***

The Board of Management and staff of St. Mary's NS 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 primary school student are available
- 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 0022/2010 (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 on 2007 for primary schools and 2010 for post primary schools. These documents are available on [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie)
- 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.

*The first-named person has the responsibility as defined.*

*The second-named person assists and only assumes responsibility on the absence of the first-named.*

<b>Critical Incident Management Team</b>		
<b>Role</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Phone</b>
<b>Team leader:</b>	Amy Moran/Marita Keenan	AM - 086 0860661 MK - 087 4196372
<b>Garda liaison</b>	Amy Moran/Marita Keenan	AM - 086 0860661 MK - 087 4196372
<b>Staff liaison</b>	Andrew Furlong (AP1)	087 1313921
<b>Student liaison</b>	All class teachers	
<b>Community liaison</b>	Amy Moran/Marita Keenan	AM - 086 0860661 MK - 087 4196372
<b>Parent liaison</b>	Aisling Dillon	087 9967949
<b>Media liaison</b>	John Hennessy	087 2221924
<b>Administrator</b>	Josephine O'Farrell	087 3212877

**Team leader:** Amy Moran (Principal) /Marita Keenan (Deputy Principal)

#### **Role**

- Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting
- Coordinates the tasks of the team
- Liaises with the Board of Management; DES; NEPS; SEC
- Liaises with the family affected by the incident

**Garda liaison:** Amy Moran (Principal) /Marita Keenan (Deputy Principal)

#### **Role**

- Liaises with the Gardaí
- Ensures that all information surrounding the incident is checked for accuracy before being circulated

**Staff liaison:** Andrew Furlong (Assistant Principal I)

#### **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
- Advises staff on the procedures for identification of vulnerable students
- Provides materials for staff (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.

**Student liaison** - All Class Teachers

**Role**

- Alerts other staff to vulnerable students (appropriately)
- Provides materials for students (from their critical incident folder)
- Maintains student contact records
- Looks after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room where agreed

**Community/agency liaison:** Amy Moran (Principal) /Marita Keenan (Deputy Principal)

**Role**

- Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of
  - Key parents, such as members of the Parents Association
  - 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
- Checks Garda vetting, where appropriate
- Coordinates the involvement of these agencies
- Reminds agency staff to wear name badges
- Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies

**Parent liaison:** Aisling Dillon (Patron Nominee of the Board of Management)

**Role**

- Visits the family affected by the incident 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:** John Hennessy (Chairperson of the Board of Management)

**Role**

- In advance of an incident, will consider issues that may arise and how they might be responded to (e.g. students/staff being interviewed, photographers on the premises etc.) Any such issues will be considered and appropriate actions discussed at a CIMT meeting.
- 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 CIMT)

**Administrator:** Josephine O'Farrell (School Secretary)

**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

- Ensures that templates are on the school's system in advance and ready for adaptation
- Prepares and sends out letters, emails and texts
- Photocopies materials needed
- Maintains records

**Record keeping:** All CIMT members

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. All records will be collated and stored centrally by the team leader at a later date.

## 6. Confidentiality and good name considerations

The Board of Management and staff of St. Mary'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. 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.

## 7. Critical Incident Rooms

Critical Incident Rooms	
In the event of a critical incident, the following rooms are designated for the indicated purposes.	
Room Name:	Designated Purpose:
<i>Mount Eden library/hall</i>	Main room for meeting staff
<i>Classrooms / Meeting room</i>	Meetings with students
<i>Principal's office / Meeting room</i>	Meetings with parents
<i>Principal's office / Meeting room</i>	Meetings with media
<i>Meeting room/SET room / Principal's office</i>	Individual sessions with students
<i>Principal's office / Meeting room</i>	Meetings with other visitors

## 8. Consultation and communication regarding the plan

All staff were consulted and their views canvassed in the preparation of this policy and plan. 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 Andrew Furlong (Assistant Principal I).

The plan will be reviewed and updated annually, where appropriate.

## 9. CIMP Action Plan

### Short term actions – Day 1

<b>Task</b>	<b>Name</b>
<b>Gather accurate information</b>	Team leader and CIMP
<b>Who, what, when, where?</b>	Team leader and CIMP
<b>Convene a CIMP meeting – specify time and place clearly</b>	Team leader with all CIMP members
<b>Contact external agencies</b>	Community liaison
<b>Arrange supervision for students</b>	Staff liaison/Team leader
<b>Hold staff meeting</b>	Team leader with all staff
<b>Agree schedule for the day</b>	Team leader
<b>Inform students – (close friends and students with learning difficulties may need to be told separately)</b>	All staff members
<b>Compile a list of vulnerable students</b>	Staff liaison with class teachers
<b>Prepare and agree media statement and deal with media</b>	Media liaison
<b>Inform parents</b>	Team leader/Parent liaison
<b>Hold end of day staff briefing</b>	Team leader

## 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	Community liaison
Meet whole staff	Team leader
Arrange support for students, staff, parents	Staff liaison
Visit the injured/ visit individual affected by the critical incident	Team leader and parent liaison
Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements/ meet with family affected by the critical incident	Team leader and parent liaison
Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service	Team leader
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	Community liaison
Plan for return of bereaved student(s), if appropriate	Team leader and staff liaison
Plan for giving of ‘memory box’ to bereaved family, where appropriate	Parent liaison
Decide on memorials and anniversaries, where appropriate	BOM/Staff, parent and students
Review response to incident and amend plan	Staff liaison, staff and BOM

## EMERGENCY CONTACT LIST

<b>AGENCY</b>	<b>CONTACT NUMBERS</b>
Donnybrook Garda Station	(01) 666 9200
Local Hospitals	Temple St. Hospital – (01) 878 4200 Crumlin Children’s Hospital – (01) 409 6100 St. Vincent’s Hospital - (01) 221 4358
Donnybrook Fire Brigade	(01) 222 4000
GP: Morehampton Clinic (Bloomfield Avenue)	(01) 269 3921
GP: 115 Medical (Morehampton/Mt. Eden Road)	(01) 269 3347
GP: D4 Medical (95a Morehampton Road)	(01) 667 4984
HSE	(01) 635 2000
Baggot Street Sandymount Primary (Community) Care Team	(01) 669 9300
Daughters of Charity Child and Family Centre Service	(01) 842 5152
Child and Family Mental Health Service (CAMHS)	(01) 867 6315
School Inspector Edel Corcoran	087 2838731
NEPS Psychologist	(01) 889 2700
Department of Education and Skills	01 889 6400
INTO	(01) 804 7700
Clergy ( <i>Msgr. Ciarán O’Carroll</i> )	086 8142364
Employee Assistance Service (for school staff)	1800 411 057
Teaching Council	(01) 651 7900