



St. Mary's Primary School,  
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# CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY

## ST. MARY'S MISSION STATEMENT

St. Mary's Primary School is a Catholic Primary School which strives to provide a well ordered, happy and secure atmosphere where the self-esteem of each child will be enhanced and the educational, spiritual, moral and cultural needs of each child will be identified and developed with compassion, enthusiasm and due regard for the child's individuality. St. Mary's Primary School promotes excellence in teaching and learning.

St Mary's Primary School aims to protect the well-being of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. The Board of Management, through *Principal Bernie McVeigh*, has drawn up a Critical Incident Management Plan as one element of the school's policies and plans.

## REVIEW AND RESEARCH

The 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 201 6) Suicide Prevention in the Community - A Practical Guide (HSE 2011) Well-Being in Primary Schools - Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion (DES, DOH, HSE 201 5)

## DEFINE CRITICAL INCIDENT

The staff and management of St. Mary's Primary School 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

Outbreak of disease or major illness in school or community

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 effect 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

- Regular fire drills occur
- Health and Safety Statement
- Record of Pupils with medical needs
- Evacuation plan formulated
- Fire alarms, exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
- Front gate closed during school hours
- Enclosed/Secure yard risk assessed regularly
- Main school doors secure with magnetic locks during class time
- Pupils leaving early are released by a member of staff
- A number of staff members trained in First Aid

### PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

The management and staff of St. Mary's Primary 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. Stay Safe Programme is taught as part of SPHE.
- Staff have access to training for their role in SPHE
- Staff are familiar with the Child Safeguarding 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
- Information is provided on mental health in general and such specific areas as signs and symptoms of depression and anxiety
- The school has developed links with a range of external agencies – e.g. Good to Talk, Bernardo's. Mullingar School Completion Project.
- 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)
- Students who are identified as being at risk are referred to the designated staff member (e.g. support teacher, Home School Liaison 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. (A summary of this support is set out in R 23 of NEPS Guidelines on Critical Incidents)

- 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:** (Bernie McVeigh)

#### **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 bereaved family

**GARDA LIAISON** (Bernie McVeigh/ Lorraine Polgar)

#### **Role**

- Liaises with the Gardai
- Ensures that information about deaths or other developments is checked out for accuracy before being shared

**STAFF LIAISON** (Niamh McAdden/Lorraine Polgar/Andrew Whitney/Triona Ni Bhaoill)

#### **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
- Advises them of the availability of the EAS and gives them the contact number.

**PUPIL LIAISON** (Jenny Milner/Clair Keane/Laura Timoney)

Supported by Gillian Corcoran, Sean O Mairtin, Margaret O Grady

#### **Role**

- Alerts other staff to vulnerable pupils (appropriately)
- Provides materials for pupils (from their critical incident folder)
- Maintains pupil contact records (R1).
- Looks after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room where agreed

**COMMUNITY/AGENCY LIAISON** (Andrew Whitney/Triona Ni Bhaoill)

#### **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
- Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies

#### **FAMILY LIAISON** (Sean O Mairtin/Clair Keane/ Jenny Milner/Laura Timoney)

##### **Role**

- Visits the bereaved family 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)
- Involves family in school liturgies/memorial services

#### **MEDIA LIAISON** (Bernie McVeigh/Karen O Reilly/Laura Timoney)

##### **Role**

- In advance of an incident, will consider issues that may arise and how they might be responded to (e.g. pupils being interviewed, photographers on the premises, etc)
- In the event of an incident, will liaise where necessary with relevant teacher unions etc.
- Will draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews (as agreed by school management)

#### **ADMINISTRATOR** (Jane Horan)

##### **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 schools system in advance and ready for adaptation
- Prepares and sends out letters, emails and texts
- Photocopies materials needed
- Maintains records

#### **RECORD KEEPING** (Jenny Milner)

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.

Jane Horan 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 Primary 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

Room Name:	Designated Purpose:
Hall/Virtual Meeting	Main room for meeting staff
Classroom	Meetings with pupils
Hall/Virtual Meeting	Meetings with parents
Room 18	Meetings with media
Support Rooms	Individual sessions with pupils
Parents Room	Meetings with other visitors

## CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION REGARDING THIS PLAN

All staff were consulted and their views canvassed in the preparation of this policy and plan. Pupils 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 Niamh McAdden/Triona Ni Bhaoill.

The plan will be updated annually in September

This policy was ratified by Board of Management at its meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> January 2023. It was reviewed in September 2023 and ratified by the Board of Management at its meeting on 27/9/2023.

Signed



Chairperson

27/9/23





Critical Incident Management Team		
Role	Name	Phone
Team leader:	Bernie McVeigh	
Garda liaison	Bernie McVeigh/Lorraine Polgar	
Staff liaison	Niamh McAdden Lorraine Polgar Andrew Whitney Triona Ní Bhaoill	
Student liaison	Jenny Milner Clair Keane Laura Timoney	
Community liaison	Andrew Whitney Triona Ní Bhaoill	
Family liaison	Sean O Mairtin Clair Keane Jenny Milner Laura Timoney	
Media liaison	Bernie McVeigh Karen O Reilly Laura Timoney	
Administrator	Jane Horan	

### Short term actions – Day 1

Task	Name
Gather accurate information	Bernie McVeigh
Who, what, when, where?	Bernie McVeigh
Convene a CIMT meeting – specify time and place clearly	Bernie McVeigh/Lorraine Polgar/Andrew Whitney/Triona Ní Bhaoill
Contact external agencies	Andrew Whitney/Triona Ní Bhaoill
Arrange supervision for pupils	Andrew Whitney/Jenny Milner/Lorraine Polgar
Hold staff meeting	Bernie McVeigh/Lorraine Polgar/Andrew Whitney/Triona Ní Bhaoill
Agree schedule for the day	Bernie McVeigh/Lorraine Polgar/Andrew Whitney/Triona Ní Bhaoill
Inform pupils – (close friends and pupils with learning difficulties may need to be told separately)	CMIT

<b>Compile a list of vulnerable pupils</b>	Jenny Milner/Andrew Whitney/Lorraine Polgar/Triona Ni Bhaoill
<b>Prepare and agree media statement and deal with media</b>	Bernie McVeigh/Laura Timoney/Karen O Reilly
<b>Inform parents</b>	Bernie McVeigh/Andrew Whitney/Sean O Mairtin/Triona Ni bhaoill
<b>Hold end of day staff briefing</b>	Bernie McVeigh

### Medium term actions - (Day 2 and following days)

Task	Name
<b>Convene a CIMT meeting to review the events of day 1</b>	Bernie McVeigh
<b>Meet external agencies</b>	Andrew Whitney/Niamh Mc Adden
<b>Meet whole staff</b>	CMIT
<b>Arrange support for students, staff, parents</b>	Niamh McAdden, Jenny Milner, Clair Keane, Sean O Mairtin
<b>Visit the injured</b>	CMIT
<b>Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements</b>	Bernie McVeigh
<b>Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service</b>	Bernie McVeigh
<b>Make decisions about school closure</b>	BOM

## Follow-up – beyond 72 hours

Task	Name
Monitor students for signs of continuing distress	Class teachers
Liaise with agencies regarding referrals	Bernie McVeigh/Andrew Whitney
Plan for return of bereaved pupils(s)	Jenny Milner/Clair Keane/Triona NI Bhaoill
Plan for giving of 'memory box' to bereaved family	Class teacher/CMIT/Bernie McVeigh
Decide on memorials and anniversaries	BOM/Staff, family, parents and students
Review response to incident and amend plan	Staff/BOM



# EMERGENCY CONTACT LIST

AGENCY	CONTACT NUMBERS
Garda	044 9384000
Hospital	044 9340221
Fire Brigade	(044) 933 2101
Local GPs	Dr. Dalton (044) 934 1987 Dr. Brennan (044) 939 0033 Dr Ruane (044) 934 4722
HSE - CISM Response Unit	0818 327 327
Community Care Team – HSE Health Centre	044 935 3700
Child and Family Centre - Child & Family Resource Centre, Mullingar	(044) 934 4877
Child and Family Mental Health Service (CAMHS)	044 93 95608 /94219
School Inspector – Yvonne Ni Mhurchu	
NEPS Psychologist – NEPS, Friars Mill Road, Mullingar,	(01) 8650573
DES	0906 483600
INTO/ASTI/TUI	
Clergy	044 9348338
Employee Assistance Service	1800 411 057