

Critical Incident Policy for St. Anthony's School

Introduction:

In St. Anthony's School we aim to protect the well being of our pupils and staff by providing a safe, secure and well ordered environment as outlined in our school mission statement.

The BoM through the Principal, the Staff and the Parents Association has drawn up a critical incident management plan. They have established a Critical Incidents Management Team to steer the development and implementation of the plan.

What is a Critical Incident?

'A critical incident is any incident or sequence of events which overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school and disrupts the running of the school'.

Examples:

- Death, major illness/outbreak of disease (Foot & Mouth/Swine Flu)
- Criminal incidents (e.g. Dunblane shooting, Shooting at first communion in Ballymun.)
- Major accidents, serious injury (e.g. bus crash)
- Suicide
- Civil unrest, war (foreign nationals may be traumatised by events that happened in their country of origin)
- Fire, natural and technological disaster (e.g. school ceiling collapsing in Cork)
- Disappearance of student from home or school (e.g. Midleton incident in Cork)
- Unauthorised removal of student from school or home.
- World events that may affect the student body and/or staff. May be a need for provision of discussion and involvement in ceremonies e.g. 9/11, tsunami

Response Levels:

Level 1: death of a student or staff member who was terminally ill; death of a parent or sibling; fire in school not resulting in serious injury; serious damage to school property

Level 2: sudden death of a student or staff member

Level 3: incident; accident/event involving a number of students; a violent death; an incident with a high media profile or involving a number of schools

Action Taken:

For **level 1** it may be sufficient to talk to psychologist to get advice/support.

For **level 2 and 3** make contact with NEPS who will visit school as soon as possible to offer support and advice.

For **all levels** follow Critical Incident Policy & Plan

Aim of Plan:

Recognising that the key to managing critical incidents is planning we have developed this Critical Incident Management Policy and Plan. It is hoped that in the event of an incident it will help staff react quickly and effectively while enabling them to maintain a sense of control. The plan should also help us return to normality as soon as possible and ensure that the effects on staff and students will be limited.

Critical Incidents Management Team:

We have set up a CI Management Team in line with best practice and will maintain this team in the future. The members are voluntary and retain their roles for at least one year. They will meet at least once a year to review and update the plan. Each member of the team has a pack with relevant materials to be used in the event of an incident.

Key roles have been identified and all members of the CIMT are aware of the responsibilities attached to each role.

Leadership Role: (Principal)

Student/Staff Liaison Role: (Deputy Principal)

Communication/Agency Liaison Role:

Chaplaincy Role:

Family Liaison Role:

Administration Role: (Secretary)

BOM link

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.

It has been agreed that as we are a small school the roles already link in with existing duties carried out by the Principal and Deputy Principal in the main instance. If there is a critical incident the Principal/Deputy Principal will convene the CIMT and assign roles as appropriate at the time. If any of the CIMT team are absent then other senior staff members will be called on to take on a role. All team members have the CIMT Pack and understand the roles they may be called to act upon.

Roles and Responsibilities

1. Leadership Role: (The Deputy Principal will assume this role in the absence of the Principal)

Intervention

- Confirm the event
- Alerts and Activates the Critical Incident Management team
- Liaise with the Gardaí/Emergency services
- Liaise with the bereaved family etc
- Lead initial briefing meetings for staff on the facts as known, give staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions, outlines the routine for the day
- Express sympathy to family
- Clarify facts surrounding event
- Make contact with other relevant agencies/BOM/DES
- 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 memorial events
- Review Plan

2. Staff/Student Liaison Role:

Intervention

- Assists Team Leader with initial staff briefing.
- Then links in with staff throughout incident development, giving updates, giving staff opportunities to express feelings, outlines routines to be followed.
- Provides materials for the staff from the CIMT pack.
- Advise the staff on the procedures for identification of vulnerable pupils
- Alert staff to vulnerable pupils
- Outline specific services available in the school for both staff and students
- Put in place clear referral procedures
- Address immediate needs of staff
- Provide up to date information as necessary

Postvention

- Provide ongoing support to vulnerable students and staff
- Monitor class most affected
- Refer as appropriate
- Review and evaluate Plan

3. Communication/Agency Liaison Role

- With Team Leader, prepares a public statement
- Organise a designated room to address media and/or agencies needs promptly
- Ensure telephone lines are free for outgoing and important incoming calls
- Designate mobile numbers for contact with key personnel e.g. members of PA, emergency support services.
- Maintain up to date lists on contacts with relevant outside support agencies
- Liaise with agencies in the community for support and onward referral
- Check credentials of individuals offering support and remind agency staff to wear ID
- Co-ordinate involvement of agencies in the school

Postvention

- Review and evaluate effectiveness of communication response

4. Chaplaincy Role: The Principal or Deputy Principal will contact the school chaplain and he will liaise with local clergy and be available to do following:**Intervention**

- Visit home(s), if appropriate
- Assist with prayer services
- Make contact with other local clergy
- Be available as personal and spiritual support to staff

Postvention

- Provide follow-up support to families in conjunction with School Liaison
- Work in partnership with Critical Incident team
- Review and Evaluate Plan

5. Family/Parent Liaison Role:**Intervention**

- Co-ordinate contact with family (following first contact by Principal)
- Consult with family around involvement of school in e.g. funeral service
- Assist with all communication dealing with parents of any student affected by critical incident
- Provides information for parents from CIMT pack
- Facilitates a Q&A meeting if appropriate
 - Visit the bereaved family with the team leader
 - Set up room for meetings with parents
 - Maintain records of parents visiting school
- Manage "consent" issues in accordance with policy

Postvention

- Provide ongoing support to families affected by the incident
- Involve as appropriate the family in school liturgies/memorial services
- Offer to link family with community support groups
- Review and evaluate plan

6. Administrative Tasks:

- Maintenance of up to date lists of contact numbers for
 - Parents or Guardians
 - Teachers and staff
 - Emergency support services
 - Other personnel
 - telephone calls need to be logged/responded to
- Letters copied and distributed: have sample letters on file ready to go
- Materials photocopied as required
- Maintain records

CONFIDENTIALITY & GOOD NAME CONSIDERATIONS:

The management & staff of St. Anthony's Special School have a responsibility to protect the privacy and good names of the people involved in any incident and will be sensitive to the consequences of any public statements. Members of school staff shall bear this in mind and will seek to ensure that students do so also. For instance the term "suicide" will not be used unless there is solid information that death was due to suicide and that the family consents to the use of the term. 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 will be used:

- The staff room will be main room to meet staff and for staff to gather
- The GP hall will be used for meetings with media or large groups of parents or the student body
- The parents room OR library will be used to meet individual parents
- The library will be used for other visitors e.g. agency staff etc

Action plan

SHORT-TERM ACTIONS (Day 1)

- Immediate contact with family/families by Leader.
- Convene a meeting with Key Staff/Critical Management Team
- Organize a staff meeting, if appropriate
- Ensure any absent staff members are kept informed
- Organise timetable/routine for the day. (Adhering to the normal school routine is important, if this is possible)
- Inform students
- Ensure that a quiet place can be made for students/staff
- Consult with the family regarding appropriate support from the school, e.g. funeral service.
- It is important to obtain accurate information about the incident
 1. What happened, where and when?
 2. What is the extent of the injuries?
 3. How many are involved and what are their names?
 4. Is there a risk of further injury?
 5. What agencies have been contacted already?
- Contact appropriate agencies
 1. Emergency services
 2. Medical services
 3. H.S.E. Psychology Departments/Community Care Services
 4. NEPS
 5. BOM
 6. DES/School Inspector

- Class teachers to take note of any absentees who might need to be contacted, list of friends etc, or any other relevant information. This is to be given 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 school's involvement in funeral/memorial service
- Arrange a home visit by two staff representatives within 24 hours, if appropriate. (Student Liaison person + Class teacher)
- Have regard for different religious traditions and faiths
- Hold end of day staff briefing (with NEPS if appropriate)

Media Briefing (if appropriate)

- Designate a spokesperson (Leader)
- Gather accurate information
- Prepare a brief statement (Team)
- Protect the family's privacy

MEDIUM-TERM ACTIONS (DAYS 2 – 3)

- Reconvene Key staff/CIMT meeting to review Day 1 and plan for Day 2.
- Meet external agencies
- Meet whole staff and update
- Establish contact with absent staff and pupils
- Arrange support for individual students, groups of students, and parents, if necessary
- Decide arrangements for support meetings for parents/students/staff
- Decide on mechanism for feedback from teachers on vulnerable students
- Hold support/information meeting for parents/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 relative etc)
- Student Liaison person to liaise with above on their return to school.
- Ritual within the school
- Family Liaison person + Class Teacher + Principal to visit home/hospital. Plan visits to injured
 - Attendance and participation at funeral/memorial service (To be decided)
 - Decide this in accordance with parent's wishes, school management decisions and in consultation with close school friends
 - 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, etc.
- School closure (if appropriate)
- Request a decision on this from school Board of Management

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 the Health Board. Constant communication with family is essential.

- Uncharacteristic behaviour
- Deterioration in academic performance
- Physical symptoms — e.g. weight loss/gain, lack of attention to appearance, tiredness, restlessness
- Inappropriate emotional reactions
- Increased absenteeism

Evaluate response to incident and amend Critical Incident Management Plan appropriately

- What went well?
- Where were the gaps?
- What was most/least helpful?
- Have all necessary onward referrals to support services been made?
- Is there any unfinished business?

Formalise the Critical Incident Plan for the future

- Consult with NEPS Psychologist
- Inform new staff/new school pupils affected by Critical Incidents where appropriate
- Ensure that new staffs are aware of the school policy and procedures in this area

- Ensure 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 incident are transferring to a new school, the Principal should brief the Principal of the new school

Decide on appropriate ways to deal with anniversaries (Be sensitive to special days and events)

- Anniversaries may trigger emotional responses in students/staff and they may need additional support at this time
- Acknowledge the anniversary with the family
- Need to be sensitive to significant days like Birthdays, Christmas, Mother's Day, and Father's Day
 - Plan a school memorial service
 - Care of deceased person's possessions. What are the parent's wishes?
 - Update and amend school records

Drawn up by the Board of Management of St. Anthony's School in November 2009.
Approved and ratified by the Board on 7/12/2009.

Review Date: This policy was reviewed by staff and Board of Management during October/November 2014. It was reviewed by NEPS Adrian Gavin and teachers at a meeting in January 2015.

It was brought to a meeting of the Board of Management and approved/ratified on 9th February 2015.

Signed: Johnny Mee
Chairperson, Board of Management

Date: 9/2/2015