



# ST JOSEPH'S NATIONAL SCHOOL

Mulhussey, Kilcock, Co. Meath, W23 T8YC

maolhosae@gmail.com www.mulhusseyns.ie

Tel: 01 6285513 Acting Principal: Karen Murray Roll No. 18887A



## 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.



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## 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

The disappearance of the member of the school community

Unauthorised removal of a student from school

## Creation of a Coping, Supportive and Caring Ethos in the school

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



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- Formulated Regular Fire Drill
- Fire Maintenance Contract signed with Apex Fire
- Fire Exits checked regularly and Fire Extinguishers serviced by "Fire Direct".
- First Aid Box maintained and kept in the staffroom and at the end of the corridor.
- School gate closed during ordinary school time. Two copies of the master key are stored in the Principal's office.
- Yard Rules/Routines discussed at staff meetings and explained and demonstrated to pupils at school assembly times.
- Pupils leaving early will only be released when an authorised adult arrives to accompany the child from the premises. The departure is recorded in the 'Sign Out' book.
- Other related policies include; Anti-Bullying Policy, Child Protection Policy

### **(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. 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.
- 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



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- Bicycle Safety Course is provided to pupils in middle and senior classes.
- Meath Fire Brigade – Fire safety Officer with middle class annually.
- Garda Liaison Ashbourne 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.
- Staff have completed 'Introduction to Children First' Programme and renew it every three years as per guidelines.

### Critical Incident Management Team

St. Joseph's N.S. has set up a Critical Incident Management Team in line with best practice and will maintain this team in the future. The members of this team will meet once per year to review and update this plan. Each member of the team has the Ready-To-Go pack with relevant materials to be used in the event of an incident.

### Roles

Key roles have been identified and assigned as follows;

- Team Leader: Meabh Madden, Principal / Karen Murray, Acting Principal
- Staff Liaison: Maeve Beirne, Deputy Principal
- Student Liaison: Maeve Beirne, Deputy Principal
- Parent Liaison: Maeve Beirne, Deputy Principal
- Pastoral Care: Fr. Declan Kelly, Patron Nominee
- Community Liaison: John Keane, Chairperson
- Media Liaison: John Keane, Chairperson
- Garda Liaison: Meabh Madden, Principal / Karen Murray Acting Principal
- Administration Tasks: Ann Kelly, School Secretary

In the absence of the Principal, these responsibilities fall to the Deputy Principal and the responsibilities of the Deputy Principal to the next member of the leadership team (AP2).



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In the event of a critical incident the responsibilities of each role-holder will be as follows;

### **Team Leader:**

- Alerts the team member to the crisis and convenes a meeting
- Co-ordinates the tasks of the team
- Liaises with the Board of Management and DES; INTO/NEPS and other relevant agencies
- Liaises with the bereaved family

### **Staff Liaison:**

- Leads meetings to brief staff on the facts as known, gives staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and outlines the routine for the day
- Advises staff on the identification of vulnerable students
- Is alert to vulnerable staff members and makes contact with them individually
- Provides materials to staff from the Ready-to-Go Pack

### **Student Liaison:**

- Liaises with other team members to keep them up-dated with information and progress.
- Alerts staff to vulnerable students.
- Looks after setting up and supervision of 'quiet room' where agreed
- Provides age-appropriate materials for students from the Ready-to-Go pack
- 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.

### **Parent Liaison:**

- Meets with individual parents and maintains a record of parents seen
- Sets up room for meeting with parents
- Provides materials for parents from the Ready-to-Go Pack



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### **Pastoral Care and Community Liaison:**

- Liaises with agencies in the community for support and onward referral
- Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies
- Co-ordinates the involvement of these agencies
- 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
- Visits the bereaved family with the team leader

### **Media Liaison:**

- In preparing for the role, he/she will consider issues that may arise during an incident 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 Communications Section in the DES/INTO
- Information to be communicated to the media should be checked for accuracy to avoid unwarranted distress.

### **Garda Liaison:**

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

### **Administrative Tasks**

- Maintenance of up-to-date lists of contact numbers of parents/guardians/teachers/emergency support services



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-Telephone calls needing to be responded to, letters sent and materials photocopied

### Record Keeping

In the event of an incident each member of the team will keep detailed records of phone calls made and received, letters sent and received, meetings held, persons met, interventions used, materials used etc. The school secretary, Ann Kelly, will have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters, photocopying materials etc.

### Letter to Parents

St. Joseph's N.S. will prepare a brief, written statement approved by the Chairperson to include:

- The sympathy of the school community for the affected/bereaved family
- Positive information or comments about the deceased/injured person(s)
- The facts of the incident
- What has been done
- What is going to be done

### Confidentiality and Privacy

The school has a responsibility to protect the privacy and good name of the people involved in any incident and will be sensitive to the consequences of any public statements. The members of the school staff will bear this in mind and will see to ensure pupils do so also. (For instance, the term 'suicide' will not be used without the consent of the family involved or until it has been established categorically that the person's death was as a result of suicide. The phrases 'tragic death' or 'sudden death' may be used instead.)



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## Procedures to deal with Critical Incident (Immediate)

- Gather the facts
- 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.
- 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



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### **Pastoral Care of the Bereaved**

The Patron Nominee, Fr. Declan, 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 Chairperson of the Board of Management and Fr. Declan 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**

The Chairperson of the Parents Association Committee is informed upon review of this policy that the Parents' Association supports the school in dealing with a critical incident following the lead of the CIMT at all times. The Parents Association Committee is not a media liaison.

### **Emergency Contact List**

An Emergency Contact List should be displayed in the staff room and school office.



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## **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 CIMT. All new/temporary staff will be informed of the details of the plan by the Principal and the plan will be updated in 2026.

## **Roles and Responsibility**

In school management



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## Implementation Date

December 2022

## Ratification & Communication

The BOM reviewed this policy in December 2022, in December 2023 and March 2025. Make provision for the circulation of the ratified policy on the school website.

## Review Date

March 2026

Ratified by the Board of Management

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Chairperson, Board of Management

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Principal

Date \_\_\_\_\_



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