

CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT

Saint Joseph's N S, Cong.

Note: Public Document

Cong N.S. aims to protect the well-being of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. *This is enshrined in our school's mission statement.* The Board of Management, through Ms Orla Waters, has drawn up a Critical Incident Management Plan as one element of the school's policies and plans. Any critical incident will be managed through the chairperson of the Board Of Management, Mr Jim McGovern.

Review and Research

The CIMT have consulted resource documents available to schools on www.education.ie and www.nosp.ie including the following;

- Responding to Critical Incidents Guidelines and Resources for Schools (NEPS 201 6)
- Suicide Prevention in Schools: Best Practice Guidelines (IAS, National Suicide Review Group (2002)
- Suicide Prevention in the Community - A Practical Guide (HSE 2011)
- Well-Being in Post-Primary Schools Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention (DES, DOH, HSE 2013)

What is a critical incident*

The staff and management of *Cong N. 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*

- *Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism, etc*
- *The disappearance of a member of the school community*
- *Serious illness of a member/members 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

- Evacuation plan formulated, outdoor assembly points marked.
- Regular fire drills occur, use of low volume alerts in an effort not to upset SEN children.
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
- Front gate closed once buses have departed each morning
- School doors in view of nearby teacher.
- Rules of the playground — each class grouping have their own specific area.
- Each class are alerted to stranger danger.
- Each child is made aware of the importance of staying inside school boundaries.
- Each class is involved in drawing up a set of classroom rules.

Psychological safety

The management and staff of *Cong N.S.* 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
- The school has developed Links with a range of external agencies — NEPS, Fr Declan, IPPN, Oide, NCSE.
- 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.
- 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.
- Students who are identified as being at risk are referred to the Designated Liaison Person - DLP (Mike Kenny), 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.
- Staff are informed about how to access support for themselves.
- Each class practices mindfulness.
- Each classroom has it's own sacred space.
- A sensory garden facility.

- Poly tunnel facility.
- Active use of and participation in the Wellbeing programme connected with the Amber Flag initiative.

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: *Mr. Kenny as principal (acting) / Ciara as DP (acting)*

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

In the absence of team leader Mrs Waldron will assume the responsibility.

Garda liaison *Vincent O'Reilly*

Role

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

Staff liaison *Ms. Ciara King*

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 *Mrs Martina Flannery / Mr. Luke Kavanagh*

Role

- Alerts other staff to vulnerable students (appropriately)

- Provides materials for students (from their critical incident folder)
- Maintains student contact records (R1).
- Looks after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room where agreed

Community/agency liaison *Ms. Fiona Wall*

Role

- Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of
 - Parents
 - 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
- Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies

Parent liaison *Ms Grace Hickey*

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)

Media liaison *Ms Aine Hughes*

Role

- In advance of an incident, will consider issues that may arise 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 SEC; relevant teacher unions etc.
- Will draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews (as agreed by school management)

Administrator *Mr. Kenny*

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 Cong NS

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. *Ms Ciara King* 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 *Cong N.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.

Critical Incident Rooms	
In the event of a critical incident, the following rooms are designated for the indicated purposes	
Room Name:	Designated Purpose:
<i>SET room</i>	Main room for meeting staff
<i>SET room</i>	Meetings with students
<i>SET room</i>	Meetings with parents
<i>SET room</i>	Meetings with media
<i>SET room</i>	Individual sessions with students
<i>SET room</i>	Meetings with other visitors

Consultation and communication regarding the plan

All staff were consulted and their views canvassed in the preparation of this policy and plan. Students 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 Principal.

Critical Incident Management Team		
Role	Name	Phone
Team leader:	<i>Mr Michael Kenny</i>	
Garda liaison	<i>Vincent O'Reilly</i>	
Staff liaison	<i>Ms Ciara King</i>	
Student liaison	<i>Martina Flannery/Luke Kavanagh</i>	
Community liaison	<i>Fiona Wall</i>	
Parent liaison	<i>Ms Grace Hickey</i>	
Media liaison	<i>Ms Aine Hughes</i>	
Administrator	<i>Ms Michael Kenny</i>	

Short term actions - Day 1

Task	Name
Gather accurate information	Mike
Who, what, when, where?	SET room used as base.
Convene a CIMT meeting — specify time and place clearly	Mike
Contact external agencies	Fiona Wall
Arrange supervision for students	Áine to co-ordinate with the support of all SNA's
Hold staff meeting	All staff
Agree schedule for the day	All staff
Inform students — (close friends and students with learning difficulties may need to be told separately)	CMIT under the direction of Ciara
Compile a list of vulnerable students	Martina / Luke
Prepare and agree media statement and deal with media	Aine / Mike
Inform parents	Grace Hickey
Hold end of day staff briefing	Vincent / Ciara

This plan was notified to the Board of Management of Cong N.S. at its meeting on 10/11/2024.

The plan will be updated annually in January.

Parents will be informed of the plan and may view on request.

Signed:

(Chairperson)

Date: _____

Signed:

(Principal)

Date: _____

Medium term actions - (Day 2 and following days)

Task	Name
Convene a CIMT meeting to review the events of day 1	Team leader Mike
Meet external agencies	Fiona Wall
Meet whole staff	Principal and team leader plan - Mike
Arrange support for students, staff, parents	Team leader in collaboration with CIMT
Visit the injured	Organised by Miss Wall
Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements	Miss Wall and Miss Hickey
Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service	All members of CIMT
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	Fiona Wall
Plan for return of bereaved student(s)	Mike/class teacher.
Plan for giving of 'memory box' to bereaved family	Class teacher/Grace/Ciara
Decide on memorials and anniversaries	BOM/Staff, parents and students
Review response to incident and amend plan	Staff/BOM

EMERGENCY CONTACT LIST¹

AGENCY	CONTACT NUMBERS
Garda	Claremorris Garda Station; 094 9372080
Hospital	Mayo University Hospital; 094 9021733 Galway university Hospital; 091 524222
Fire Brigade	Mayo County Fire and Rescue Services;
Local GPs	Lynn Medical Centre; 094 9546006
HSE	HSE Mayo; 094 90 21733 HSE Galway; 091 523 122
Community Care Team	Mayo Children's Care; 094 - 9022333 Galway CDNT - Spiddal; 091 - 896040
Child and Family Centre	Mayo Child and Family Centre; 094 9025900
Ballinrobe TACÚ	094 9542908
Child and Family Mental Health Service (CAMHS)	CAMHS Mayo 094 9042656 CAMHS Galway 091 548900
School Inspector	Mr Michael Baker
NEPS Psychologist	Ms Caitriona Martyn; 087 609 3988 NEPS National Service; 01 8892700
DES	Dept Of Education Athlone 090 648 3600
INTO/ASTI/TUI	INTO Head Office; 01 804 7700
Clergy	Fr Declan Carroll, Cong Presbytery; 094 9546030 / Very Reverend Diane Matchett; 094 9546909
Employee Assistance Service Spectrum	1800 411 057

¹ Cong NS Eircode is on display in the staffroom on the noticeboard