

St Joseph's Secondary School

Newfoundwell, Drogheda, Co. Louth

Critical Incident policy



Review Dates: This policy will be reviewed annually.

Staff		Consultation 2020
Parents' Council		Consultation 2020
Student Council		Consultation 2020
Board Of Management		Ratified 2020

St. Joseph's Secondary School aims to protect the well-being of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times.

MISSION STATEMENT

Our school recognises that each pupil who enrolls in our school is unique and has different gifts as well as different needs. It is our wish that our pupils live with enhanced self-confidence, with life skills and attitudes which will enable them to lead lives that are satisfying to themselves and lives which may contribute to the betterment of society. We recognise that a pupil's development is closely linked to a good self-image and so we strive to present the school's total curriculum in such a manner as to allow all the students to realise their full potential. We see ourselves as working in partnership with parents so that we may meet the needs of all our students. We regard our school as an educational establishment with a Christian community characterised by care and justice.

The Board of Management, through Mr. Paul Savage has drawn up a Critical Incident Management Plan as one element of the school's policies and plans.

Review and Research

The Critical Incident Management Team CIMT have consulted resource documents available to schools on www.education.ie and www.nosp.ie including

These documents are available in a shared Google Folder for the CIMT

- 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)
- Well-Being in Post-Primary Schools Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention (DES, DOH, HSE 2013)
(DES, DOH, HSE 201 5)

DEFINITION

The staff and management of St. Joseph's Secondary 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*
- *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

The following plans and policies are in place to promote physical safety:

- Evacuation plan formulated
- Regular fire drills occur
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
- Pre-opening supervision in the school
- Safety Policy
- Child Safeguarding Risk Assessment And Child Safeguarding Statement
- Code of Behaviour
- Substance Abuse Policy
- Internet Acceptable use policy
- First Aid Policy
- Designated supervised recreation areas for year groups

Psychological safety

The management and staff 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
 - 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 including Tusla, the Hse, Garda Liaison Officer, outside counsellors, neighbouring schools, NEPS, EWO and local GP
 - 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
 - Students who are identified as being at risk are referred to the designated staff member (e.g. guidance counsellor or support 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.
 - Staff are informed about how to access support for themselves. (School Safety Statement)
-
- Good student teacher rapport supporting students who need to discuss concerns

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. This information is also stored in a shared Google Folder.

Team leader: *Mr. Paul Savage*

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

Lead in the absence of the team leader: Deputy Principals

Garda liaison: *Mr. Paul Savage* and Chairperson of the BOM

Role

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

Staff liaison: Ms. Jennifer Kelly

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 liaisons Ms. Evelyn Daly, Ms. Deirdre Doherty, Ms. Aisling Flood, Ms. Mary McGee, Mr. Niall Murphy, Lorcan Mc Quillan, Claire Mc Adam, John Connolly.

Role

- Co-ordinates information from tutors and year heads about students they are concerned about
- 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 (Prayer Room)

Community/agency liaison: Mr. Patrick Traynor

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

Parent liaison: Mr. Brian Lynch

Role

- Visits the bereaved family with the team leader and/or appropriate teacher
- Arranges parent meetings, if held
- May facilitate such meetings, and manage 'questions and answers'
- Manages the 'consent' issues in accordance with agreed school policy
- Prepares letters/texts/communications etc (With Deirdre O' Doherty)
- 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 Mr. Paul Savage, Ms Deirdre O' Doherty and Chairperson of the BOM

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: *Noeleen Kevitt Murphy, Jacinta Kenneally*

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
- Send communications, type communications, Google Space
- Prepares and sends out letters, emails and texts
- Photocopies materials needed
- Maintains records

Team communication: Malachy Trainor

Role

- Ensure all team members are contacted and informed of team meetings in consultation with the Principal.

Record keeping (Small set of notebooks kept in office in CIMT Folder)

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.

Noeleen Kevitt Murphy and Jacinta Kenneally will have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters, photocopying materials, etc.

Confidentiality and good name considerations

Management and staff 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.

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 Ms Andrea Conlon
The plan will be updated annually in September by Mr. Brian Lynch, School Development Officer

Critical Incident Rooms

In the event of a critical incident, the following rooms are designated for the indicated purposes
These meetings and rooms will be coordinated by Mr Niall Leonard(Caretaker) & Mr. Bernard Sharkey

Room Name:	Designated Purpose:
<i>Staff Room</i>	Main room for meeting staff
<i>Library/ GPA</i>	Meetings with students
<i>Library</i>	Meetings with parents
<i>School Office</i>	Meetings with media
<i>Guidance offices, Year head offices</i>	Individual sessions with students
<i>Parent Teacher Room</i>	Meetings with other visitors

Role	Name
Team leader:	<i>Paul Savage</i>
Garda liaison	<i>Paul Savage</i>
Staff liaison	<i>Jennifer Kelly</i>
Student liaison	<i>Evelyn Daly, Aisling Flood, Deirdre O'Doherty, Mary McGee, Niall Murphy, Lorcan Mc Quillan, Claire Mc Adam, John Connolly.</i>
Community liaison	<i>Patrick Traynor</i>
Parent liaison	<i>Brian Lynch</i>
Media liaison	<i>Paul Savage, Deirdre O' Doherty</i>
Administrator	<i>Noeleen Kevitt Murphy, Jacinta Kinneally</i>
Room Co-Ordinator	<i>Niall Leonard, Niall Murphy, Bernard Sharkey, Paul Mc Ardle,</i>
Critical Incident Pack	<i>Jacinta Kenneally</i>
Critical Incident Google Space	<i>Noeleen Kevitt Murphy</i>
Team communication	<i>Malachy Trainor</i>

Short term actions – Day 1

Task	Name
Gather accurate information	Chairperson of the BOM and Principal
Who, what, when, where?	Chairperson of the BOM and Principal
Convene a CIMT meeting – specify time and place clearly	Senior Management Team Malachy Trainor
Contact external agencies	Evelyn Daly
Arrange supervision for students	Patrick Traynor
Hold staff meeting	All staff
Agree schedule for the day	Senior Management Team and Evelyn Daly

Inform students – (close friends and students with learning difficulties may need to be told separately)	Evelyn Daly, Deirdre O’Doherty, Aisling Flood, Mary McGee, Niall Murphy, Lorcan Mc Quillan, Claire Mc Adam, John Connolly.
Compile a list of vulnerable students	Evelyn Daly, Deirdre O’ Doherty, Aisling Flood
Prepare and agree media statement and deal with media	Paul Savage and Deirdre O’ Doherty
Inform parents	Brian Lynch
Hold end of day staff briefing	Senior Management Team

Medium term actions - (Day 2 and following days)

Task	Name
Convene a CIMT meeting to review the events of day 1	Team leader/ Malachu Trainor
Meet external agencies	Senior Management and Evelyn Daly
Meet whole staff	Senior Management
Arrange support for students, staff, parents	School Care Team and Appropriate Year Head
Visit the injured	Appropriate Teacher supported by Senior Management
Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements	Aisling Flood
Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service	Aisling Flood
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	Evelyn Daly
Plan for return of bereaved student(s)	Team Leader and Aisling Flood & Evelyn Daly
Plan for giving of 'memory box' to bereaved family	Aisling Flood
Decide on memorials and anniversaries	BOM/Staff, parents and students
Review response to incident and amend plan	Staff/BOM

End

This policy was amended on 24/11/2020

Signature: Chairperson of the Board Of Management _____

Date: 24/11/2020

Signature: Principal & Secretary to the Board of Management _____

Date: 24/11/20

Appendix 1:**EMERGENCY CONTACT LIST**

AGENCY	CONTACT NUMBERS
Garda	0419838777
Hospital	0419837601
Fire Brigade	0419832222
Local GPs	Access to number in office
HSE	0419809500
Community Care Team	Access to numbers in office
Child and Family Centre	0419841309
Child and Family Mental Health Service (CAMHS)	0419893300
School Inspector	N/A
NEPS Psychologist	Siobhán Gahan - 0871722670
DES	0906483600
INTO/ASTI/TUI	ASTI 01-6040160 / 1850 – 418400
Clergy (St. Peters Parish)	0419845355
State Exams Commission	0906442700
Employee Assistance Service	1800 411 057

Appendix 2: Covid19

Responding to Critical Incidents during School Closures and Public Health Restrictions arising from COVID-19 : Information Booklet for Schools

Purpose of this booklet:

NEPS wants to acknowledge the unprecedented challenges that the school closures and public health restrictions arising from COVID-19 brings for the whole school community, and especially for school leaders. Responding to a critical incident during this time brings additional concern. To support you to support your school communities, school leaders are encouraged to pay particular attention to their own self-care in the first instance;- suggestions available on Teacher Wellbeing and Self Care during the Covid-19 school closure NEPS is available to provide telephone/online support to you and your community in the event of a critical incident. NEPS publication 'Responding to Critical Incidents - NEPS Guidelines and Resource Materials for Schools' outlines best practice in guiding school communities to respond to a critical incident in a way that promotes resilient outcomes.

As a result of COVID-19 restrictions, the actions typically taken by schools in responding to critical incidents require adaptation. The purpose of this booklet is to outline how schools might adapt their response to critical incidents (both COVID-19 and non-COVID-19 related), particularly those short-term and medium-term actions outlined in Sections 4 and 5 of 'Responding to Critical Incidents-NEPS Guidelines and Resource Materials for Schools' (pages 20-29). This booklet should be read in conjunction with these main guidelines. Various sections and resources (R) from these guidelines are referenced throughout this booklet. The COVID-19 pandemic and the Public Health measures in place at this time are challenging students, staff and families, in particular those who may be already vulnerable.

Therefore, it is even more important at this time to attend to preventative factors that may mitigate against distress and promote wellbeing. In this regard, we direct schools and parents to the NEPS advice & resources for keeping children and young people well during COVID-19 for suggestions on maintaining student, teacher and parent wellbeing. It is also recommended that schools review their Critical Incident Management Plan to ensure that they are ready to respond effectively to critical incidents occurring at this time.

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Day 1: Action Plan for Critical Incident Management Team. (See Section 4 of main guidelines *)

Short Term Actions

a) Convene

- Establish accurate facts. • Refer to the school's Critical incident Management Policy and to Responding to Critical Incidents-NEPS Guidelines and Resource Materials for Schools' document. • Convene Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) meeting virtually. • Conduct an initial assessment of the incident, decide what level of response is required (guidelines pgs. 20–21) and agree an Action Plan. • Contact appropriate agencies, e.g. Board of Management etc. (R21). • Decide who needs to be contacted directly:- staff/students/parents/others and by what means:- phone/email/text/letter/website notice. See R2/3 for sample notices. • Identify vulnerable students (see risk factors pg. 25) and consider how to connect with them:- phone call to parents and/or speaking to students directly. • Consider how to communicate with the bereaved family whilst physical distancing measures are in place:- phone calls, writing a card or letter.

b) Notify staff and parents

- Agree and test available technologies as a means of communication, • Agree a telephone tree for contacting staff and advise staff of the initial Action Plan. • Notify parents using agreed means. • Remember to respect family privacy and avoid references to the cause of death. • Bear in mind that it is not usual practice for a school to inform the school community of the death of a parent. • Manage social media as per guidelines (R22). Draft a media statement if necessary (R4). • Distribute resource page 7 of this document as appropriate, 'For parents sharing sad news with their child'.

(c)Connecting with staff

- Agree a telephone tree for contacting staff. • Make separate contact with staff who may be vulnerable. • Remind staff of the availability of the Inspire Service (ph. 1800 411057). • Agree a time for a follow-up staff meeting for updates and reflection on shared experiences. • Draw teachers attention to Teacher Wellbeing and Self Care during the Covid-19 school closure • Share with staff any resources being forwarded to parents

(D) Connecting with students

- In accordance with school policy, some staff may decide to link directly with students via telephone, video link or email. Post Primary staff should refer to DES document on 'Continuity of Guidance Counselling-Guidelines for schools providing online support for students' . • Remind students that maintaining communication is important for wellbeing, and encourage them to keep in touch with close family and friends, whilst observing HSE guidelines. Remind students and staff that others are available to provide support. • Reassure students of their resilience and ability to cope. Encourage them to think of times and ways that they have coped in the past and to identify attributes that have helped them during difficult times.

- (E) **Bereavement rituals:** Funeral restrictions and alternative goodbyes • Designated CIMT member(s) should liaise with the bereaved family regarding the funeral service and, when appropriate, a memorial service. Remind students that they are not alone in their grief and that everyone shares the loss of not being able to participate in our usual rituals and togetherness; i.e. visiting the family, attending funerals, etc. • Reassure students that the bereaved family understands the need to comply with current Public Health restrictions and that a commemorative service may take place at a later date. • Invite students to think of alternative ways to express sympathy, e.g. sending a card to family (see Winston's Wish for alternative goodbyes). Remind students to be considerate and sensitive when posting messages on any social media platforms. RIP.ie has a message condolence facility. • School leaders may consider facilitating a school platform for compiling messages of condolences/well wishes to share with family, monitored for sensitivity by school personnel. •

Encourage students to participate individually, but collectively, in any bereavement ritual being organised, e.g. a streamed funeral service, lighting a candle at a particular time during the ceremony, playing music, etc.

(F) Review

- Convene a further Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) meeting virtually to review what has been done and to identify new tasks needed.
- Update staff virtually on any new information

(G) Continue to provide support

- Continue to link in with students, especially more vulnerable students.
- Remind students that others are available to provide support, e.g. teachers, guidance counsellors, close family, friends and/or online supports.
- Advise students to use practical approaches to manage anxiety. Share DES resources and advice for young people during COVID-19:- using breathing techniques, relaxation techniques, coping statements, practising yoga, doing exercise, etc.
- Support students to create action plans and to break down problems into small, realistic and manageable steps.
- Encourage students to try to spot any unhelpful thoughts and to 'reframe' them to more helpful thoughts (e.g. - 'That car was unsafe, but not all cars are unsafe').
- Encourage them to identify positive, self-soothing strategies with prompts such as 'What will help?' or 'What can I do now?' For further resources, see www.yourmentalhealth.ie.
- Advise parents and students against making big life changes or hasty decisions at this challenging time.
- Advise parents to make a referral to their GP should their child show signs of severe emotional distress (R14).

(H) Follow Up Actions:

(See Guidelines Section 6, Pg. 30)

- Discuss and review the status of any student referrals made to outside agencies.
- Prepare for how your school might support all students and staff when schools reopen, in particular those who have been bereaved.
- Evaluate your school's response to the critical incident and amend your Critical Incident Management Policy, as appropriate.

Resources:

Below is a sample of online resources to support young people who have experienced loss and grief. These resources are intended to complement NEPS' existing publication 'Responding to Critical Incidents-NEPS Guidelines and Resource Materials for Schools'.

- a) **Coronavirus and Bereavement** The Irish Hospice Foundation have developed practical and easily accessible materials for the Irish context, and include resources and supports available from organisations such as the HSE, DES and websites such as RIP.ie. There are also topic specific resources addressing issues such as 'Planning a funeral in exceptional times', 'Grieving in exceptional times' and 'Helping children grieve during COVID-19 restrictions'

Winston's Wish is a British childhood bereavement charity with a very comprehensive website. Their COVID-19 page has useful resources, such as 'How to say goodbye when a funeral isn't possible', 'Telling a child someone has died from coronavirus' and 'Managing grief in isolation'

b) **General Bereavement Rainbows** is a free, voluntary service that supports children and young people with separation and bereavement. Support programmes for children and young people at both primary and post-primary level are available for students three months (minimum) after the experience of a loss. Further information and resources are available at their website.

Barnardos provide wide-ranging services to families, including support around bereavement. There is a downloadable e-book and links to various services available on their website. The Irish Childhood Bereavement Network is a member organisation where families, professionals and schools can obtain information, guidance and support from various professionals. In addition to

resources and supports, courses are available for professionals to develop their skillset in supporting bereavement.

c) **Suicide and Bereavement The National Office for Suicide Prevention (NOSP)** is the body responsible for co-ordination and implementation of the national strategy for suicide prevention. As well as general information and resources, the site includes details on regional contacts for **Suicide Resource Officers/Samaritans** etc., details of various training programmes, and how professionals can access 'Urgent Help' at times of crisis. Headspace is an Australian organisation for youth mental health. Their website has very practical materials for supporting those who have lost a loved one through suicide.

d) **SEN and Bereavement Mencap** have materials for explain loss and death to people with learning disabilities and includes literature for specific aspects such as 'What can I do to feel better' and 'Going to a funeral' Resources: For parents sharing sad news with their child 7 The following NEPS resources may be helpful for parents: Children's Understanding and Reaction to Death (R6) Stages of Grief (R7) How to cope when something terrible happens (R8) Reactions to a Critical Incident Ways To Help Your Child Through This Difficult Time (R12). Other Recommended Resources **Barnardos** provide a wide-ranging service to families including support around bereavement. Downloadable e-books both parents and children are available on their website as well as links to various services. A national telephone support service for parents is available in response to the challenges they are facing during the COVID-19 pandemic. Freephone 1800 910 123 (from 10am to 2pm, Monday to Friday). Barnardos also provide a children's bereavement helpline service, for members of the public seeking information and support in relation to bereavement. Telephone 01 473 2110 (from 10am to 12pm, Monday to Thursday) The Irish Childhood Bereavement Network is a member organisation where families, professionals and schools can obtain information, guidance and support from various professionals. In addition to resources and supports, courses are available for professionals to develop their skillset in supporting bereavement. **Winston's Wish** is a British childhood bereavement charity with a very comprehensive website. Their COVID-19 page has useful resources, such as 'How to say goodbye when a funeral isn't possible', 'Telling a child someone has died from coronavirus' and 'Managing grief in isolation' The Irish Hospice Foundation have developed practical and easily accessible materials for the Irish context, and include resources and supports available from organisations such as the HSE, DES and websites such as RIP.ie. There are also topic specific resources addressing issues such as 'Planning a funeral in exceptional times', 'Grieving in exceptional times' and 'Helping children grieve during COVID-19 restrictions' **Mencap** have materials for explain loss and death to people with learning disabilities and includes literature for specific aspects such as 'What can I do to feel better' and 'Going to a funeral' Supports for younger people Childline (ISPCC) is Ireland's 24-hour national listening service for young people up to the age of 18. Freephone 1800 666 666 (any time, day or night). Text 50101 (from 10am to 4pm every day). Chat online at www.childline.ie (from 10am to 4pm every day). The YourMentalHealth.ie website has information on all mental health supports and services available nationally & locally from the HSE and its funded partners. You can also call the freephone **YourMentalHealth** Information Line to find supports and services: 1800 111 888 (any time, day or night).

Resources: For parents sharing sad news with their child 7 The following NEPS resources may be helpful for parents:

Children's Understanding and Reaction to Death (R6) Stages of Grief (R7) How to cope when something terrible happens (R8) Reactions to a Critical Incident Ways To Help Your Child Through This Difficult Time (R12)

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NEPS respond to critical incidents on request from affected schools. School authorities seeking support should contact their local NEPS office during working hours, Monday – Friday.