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## Critical Incident Policy St. Fergal's National School

### Introduction

St. Fergal's NS aims to provide a caring, learning environment which nurtures the full educational potential of each child and promotes the well-being of all members of our school community. We have taken a number of measures to create a supportive and caring environment in our school and we have formulated a number of policies and procedures to be followed with a view to ensuring the safety of staff and pupils. Our Critical Incident policy follows the guidelines for schools available in the following publications:

Responding to Critical Incidents	- Guidelines for Schools DES 2008 - Resource Materials for Schools DES 2008
When Tragedy Strikes	- INTO 2000

This policy has been formulated in consultation with staff, pupils, parents and the Board of Management. Copies of the policy will be disseminated to staff, the Board of Management and the Parents' Association. A copy of the policy will be made available in the school office.

### Definition

The term, Critical Incident, denotes any incident or sequence of events that overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of the school and disrupts the running of the school. Critical incidents may involve one or more pupils, staff, the school or the local community and include:

- Death of a member of the school community through sudden death, accident, terminal illness or suicide
- A physical attack on staff member(s) or pupil(s)
- An intrusion into the school
- Serious damage to the school through fire, vandalism or flooding
- The disappearance of a member of the school community
- An accident involving members of the school community
- A tragedy in the wider community

### Aim

The key to managing a critical incident is planning, and St Fergal's NS has formulated this Critical Incident Management Policy and accompanying Plan. The aim is that in the event of an incident, these will help staff to act quickly and effectively and to maintain a sense of control.

## Key Roles and Tasks in the Critical Incident Management Process

### Critical Incident Management Team

- Principal and Deputy Principal
- Staff Health and Safety Representative
- Secretary
- Caretaker
- Chairperson of Board of Management
- Chairperson of Parents' Association

The duties and responsibilities of the members of the Critical Incident Management Team are as follows:

The **Chairperson of Board of Management** will be kept informed of all developments

The **Principal and Deputy Principal** will normally be responsible for:

- Care and communication with staff
- Organising the supervision of pupils
- Liaising with ancillary staff
- Liaising with the Parents' Association
- Liaising with external support agencies, the emergency services, the Board of Management and the Department of Education and Science
- Drawing up a letter informing all parents of the critical incident and the school's response
- Reporting incidents to the Health and Safety Authority
- Communicating with the media

**Health and Safety Representative** will normally be responsible for:

- Assessing the Health and Safety issue
- Liaising with other members of Critical Incident Management Team
- Assisting with reports of dangerous occurrences or accident for the Health and Safety Authority

The **School Secretary** will normally be responsible for:

- Ensuring that the Office is manned at all times
- Liaising with other members of Critical Incident Management Team

The **Caretaker** will normally be responsible for:

- Controlling access to the school premises
- Maintaining security procedures
- Maintaining services such as heating, light, water and communication lines
- Liaising with other members of Critical Incident Management Team

The **Teaching Staff** will normally be responsible for:

- Supervising their own and colleagues' classes
- Assisting in identifying and supporting pupils at risk or in distress
- Assisting in information gathering
- Maintaining normal procedures

The **Ancillary Staff** will normally be responsible for:

- Maintaining normal procedures
- Assisting in identifying and supporting students at risk or in distress

**The Chairperson of the Parents' Association will contribute by** representing parents' concerns and wishes with regard to the school's response to the critical incident

### **Critical Incident Room**

In the event of a critical incident, the Hall will be the main room used to meet the staff, pupils, parents and visitors involved

### **Contact Numbers and Emergency Information**

- The Secretary has responsibility for maintaining an up to date list of contact numbers for pupils and their parents / guardians. There will be two lists kept on file:
- A) Emergency contact list with all contact details for each child.
- B) Text-a-parent list with mobile numbers nominated by each parent.
- It will be the responsibility of each parent to ensure that this number is current.
- The Health and Safety Representative has responsibility for ensuring that a list of contact numbers for the emergency support services is displayed in the Staff Room, the Secretary's Office and the Principal's Office

### **Evacuation Procedures**

- The evacuation procedures are displayed near the door of every classroom
- The emergency evacuation procedure will be practised once per term.

### **Training and Staff Development**

The school will provide opportunities for staff and members of the Board of Management to attend information /training meetings on issues such as suicide, grieving and first aid. The school will use the resources of NEPS as an advisor in planning for, and as a support facility after any incident.

### **Visitors**

Visitors, including parents must report to the Office, identify themselves and state their business in the school. Visitors will not be allowed beyond the Secretary's Office except at the invitation of a member of staff.

### **The Media**

Members of the media must report to the Secretary's Office, identify themselves and state their business in the school. Members of the media will not be allowed beyond the Secretary's Office except at the invitation of the Principal or Deputy Principal. Media will be addressed as follows:

- The Principal and Deputy Principal will prepare a brief, written statement to include:
- The sympathy of the school community for the affected /bereaved family
- Positive information or comments about the deceased / injured person
- The facts about the incident (following consultation with the affected/ bereaved families)
- What has been done
- What is going to be done

### **Procedures to be followed in the event of a Critical Incident**

#### **Short Term Actions (1st Day)**

- Ensure the safety of students, staff and visitors
- Convene a meeting of the Critical Incident Management Team and delegate responsibilities
- Gather accurate information (use Incident Report form)
- Identify high risk pupils

- Contact appropriate agencies and organise support
- Contact BOM, DES, NEPS and Parents' Association
- Appoint people to assist Secretary and Caretaker in handling phone enquiries and manning the Secretary's Office and the gates
- Arrange the supervision of pupils
- Organise a time-table for the day
- Inform pupils and parents
- Make contact with the affected / bereaved family
- Respond to the media (Principal / Deputy Principal)
- Arrange visit to the affected / bereaved family
- Report to the Health and Safety Authority, if necessary

As far as possible, maintain normal school routine

### **Medium Term Actions (24 – 72 Hours)**

- Convene a meeting of Critical Management Team to review events of the first 24 hours and to delegate responsibilities
- Arrange support for pupils, staff and parents
- Update staff and students
- Update DES, BOM, Parents' Association and the relevant external agencies
- Update the media
- Plan visits to the injured
- Plan the restoration of normal school routine
- Consider the legal and financial consequences

### **Long Term Actions**

- Monitor pupils and staff for signs of continuing distress
- Plan the long-term counselling needs of individuals
- Plan for anniversaries and memorials
- Evaluate the school's response to the critical incident and amend the Critical Incident Policy appropriately
- Evaluate the long-term effect on the educational progress of pupils
- Ensure that new staff are aware of the Critical Incident Policy and are informed of which pupils / staff were affected in any recent incident
- Ensure that a report is sent to the new school when a pupil is transferring
- Evaluate the legal and financial consequences
- Report to the BOM, the Parents' Association and the DES

### **Monitoring, Review and Evaluation**

The Critical Incident Policy Committee will review the policy every 3 years or before the formation of a new Board of Management. Ongoing review and evaluation will take cognisance of changing information, legislation and feedback from parents/ guardians, teachers and pupils. The policy will be revised as necessary in the light of such review and evaluation and within the framework of school planning.

### **Critical Incident Management Team**

- Principal
- Deputy Principal
- Assistant Principals
- Secretary
- Health and Safety Representative

## Key Roles Assigned

Task	Name
Overall Management of Response	Principal
Communication	Principal / Deputy Principal
Administrative Tasks	Secretary
Supervision	All teachers and SNA's
Media Liaison	Principal / Deputy Principal
Parent Liaison	BOM Parents Representative
Community Liaison	BOM Teacher Representative
Pupil Liaison	All Teachers
Staff Liaison	Principal / Deputy Principal

**Emergency Contact List** is contained in Safety Statement and displayed at Secretary's Office and in Principal's Office

## Preventative Measures

### Curriculum

- Anti-bullying policy
- Behaviour policy
- Circle Time
- Walk Tall
- Stay Safe
- SPHE Policy
- Staff alerted to Students with difficulties (bereaved students, self-harming, eating difficulties)

### Support

- NEPS
- School Chaplain – Fr. Jimmy
- Headlamps Project Worker
- HSE Social workers (if appropriate)
- DES Employee Assistance Service

### Physical Environment

- Emergency Evacuation Drills
- Health and Safety Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Playground Supervision

## Short Term Actions and Roles Assigned - 1st Day

Task	Name (Key personnel and support)
Gather accurate information	Relevant Staff and witnesses
Contact appropriate agencies	Principal / Deputy Principal
Convene a meeting with key staff	Principal / Deputy Principal
Arrange supervision of students	Principal / Deputy Principal

Hold staff meeting	All staff
Organise time-table for day	Principal / Deputy Principal
Inform parents	Principal / Deputy Principal
Inform pupils	Principal / Deputy Principal
Make contact with bereaved family	Principal / Deputy Principal
Deal with media	Principal / Deputy Principal

#### **Actions and Roles Assigned - 24- 72 Hours**

<b>Task</b>	<b>Name (Key personnel and support)</b>
Review events of the first 24 hours	Staff
Arrange support	Principal / Deputy Principal
Plan visits to injured	Principal / Deputy Principal
Liaise with family re funeral	Principal / Deputy Principal
Arrangements for funeral	Principal / Deputy Principal
Attendance at funeral service	Principal / Deputy Principal
School Closure	BOM

#### **Actions and Roles Assigned - Beyond 72 Hours**

<b>Task</b>	<b>Name (Key personnel and support)</b>
Monitor pupils for signs of continuing distress	Class Teachers/ SNA's/ SEN Teachers/Headlamps Project Worker
Evaluate response to incident and amend CI plan appropriately	Staff /BOM
Formalise plan for future	Staff /BOM
Inform new staff/ pupils	Principal / Deputy Principal
Decide on appropriate ways to deal with anniversaries	BOM / Parents

Yet to be ratified

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

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



## Useful Contact Numbers

Barnardos	450 355
Samaritans	1850 60 90 90
Childline	1800 666 666
Parentline	1890 927 277
Aware	6766166/ 1890 303 302
National Suicide Bereavement Support	024 955 61
Rainbows	473 4175
National Emergency Helpline	1850 515 515
Bereavement Counselling Service	839 1766
Bereavement Counselling	676 7727
Employee Assistance Service(DES)	1800 411 057
NEPS	8892700



## Incident Report Form

Name:	
Class:	
Date and Time of Incident:	
Details of Incident:	
Details of Medical Assistance	
Incident Reported to:	
Incident Reported at - (Date & Time)	
Signed	

## Sample Letter to Parents

Dear Parent(s) / Guardian(s),

The school has experienced (the sudden death / accidental injury) of one of our students. We are deeply saddened by the deaths / events.

(Brief details of the incident and in the event of a death, some positive remembrances of the person who has died)

We have support structures in place to help your child to cope with this tragedy. (Elaborate)

It is possible that your child may have some feelings that he/she may wish to discuss with you. You can help your child by taking time to listen and encouraging them to express their feelings. It is important to give truthful information that is appropriate to their age.

If you would like advice, you may contact the following people at the school (Details).

## Sample Letter Requesting Consent for Involvement of Outside Professionals

Dear Parents,

Following the recent (tragedy, death), we have arranged professional support for pupils in our school who need particular help. \_\_\_\_\_ is available to help us with this work. The support will usually consist of talking to children, either in small groups or on a one-to-one basis and offering reassurance and advice as appropriate.

Your child has been identified as one of the pupils who would benefit from meeting with \_\_\_\_\_. If you would like your child to receive this support, please sign the attached permission slip and return to the school by \_\_\_\_\_.

If you would like further information on the above or to talk to the psychologist please indicate this on the slip or telephone the school.

Principal

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I consent to having my son/ daughter met by \_\_\_\_\_

I understand that my son/daughter may meet \_\_\_\_\_ in an individual or group session depending on the arrangements which are thought to be most suitable.

Name of Pupil: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

I would like my son/daughter \_\_\_\_\_ to avail of the support being offered by \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_