

St Joseph's NS



**CRITICAL
INCIDENTS
POLICY
2023**

Introduction

St Joseph's is a Catholic Co-Educational vertical school situated in the town of Kilcock.

Our vision at St Joseph's is to provide an inclusive and respectful school environment for all. We aim to work co-operatively as a team to create a caring, kind and happy school. At St Joseph's we promote the wellbeing and safety of all those in our school community. We strive to encourage everyone to reach their potential and to pursue a lifelong love of learning. Integrity and trust are fundamental to our shared vision involving all the partners in the education of our pupils.

The Board of Management, through the Principal (Úna O'Kelly) has drawn up a Critical Incident Management Plan to support the school community in preparing for and responding to critical incidents.

Review and Research

The Critical Incidents Management Team (CIMT) have consulted resource documents available to schools on www.education.ie and www.neps.ie including:

- Psychological First Aid (NEPS)
- Responding to Critical Incidents Guidelines and Resources for Schools (NEPS 2016)
- 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 Primary Schools – Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion (DES, DOH, HSE 2015)

Definition of A Critical Incident

The staff and management of *St Joseph's 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 pupils 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 suspected suicide or other unexpected death.

Level 1:

- Death of pupil or staff member who was terminally ill
- Death of a parent/sibling
- A fire in school not resulting in serious injury
- Serious damage to school property

Level 2:

- Sudden death of a pupil or staff member

Level 3:

- An accident/event involving a number of pupils
- A violent death
- An incident with a high media profile or involving a number of schools

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 calm/control and to ensure that appropriate support is offered to pupils and staff. Having a good plan should also help ensure that the effects on the pupils 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

St Joseph's N.S. has put systems in place to lessen the probability of the occurrence of an incident and to help build resilience in both staff and pupils, 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

- Health and Safety Statement Safety Officer on Board of Management
- Evacuation plan formulated
- Regular fire drills occur
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
- Pre-opening supervision in the school yard from **08:40** each morning when the pedestrian gates are opened by the caretaker, Mr John Curley.
- A fob is required to access the front door of the school.
- Yard supervision/Rules/Routines are discussed at staff meetings and explained and demonstrated to pupils.

Psychological safety

The management and staff of **St Joseph's N.S.** aim to use available programmes and resources to address the personal and social development of pupils, 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) addresses 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. The Stay Safe Programme is delivered once every two years with booster lessons of the sensitive topics delivered on the 'alternate years'. RSE is taught every second year using the RSE Teacher's Manual as the main resource.
- 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 '*Child Protection Policy*' details the Designated Liaison Person (Úna O'Kelly) and the Deputy Designated Liaison person (Ciara McNickle).
- Books and resources on difficulties affecting pupils in primary school are available online or through NEPS.
- The school has developed links with a range of external agencies – NEPS, CAMHS, NCSE.
- Inputs to pupils by external providers are carefully considered in light of criteria about pupil safety, the appropriateness of the content, and the expertise of the providers. *See DES Circulars 0022/2010 (Primary)*.
- The school has a clear policy on bullying and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy and the school 'Code of Behaviour'.

- There is a care system in place in the school using the ‘Continuum of Support’ approach which is outlined in the NEPS documents published in 2007 for primary schools These documents are available on www.education.ie .
- Pupils who are identified as being at risk are referred to the designated staff member (e.g. support teacher or SENCo), 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.
- Relevant staff are informed of difficulties affecting individual pupils and are aware and vigilant to their needs.
- The school liaises with the local Post Primary School to ease the transition of pupils from primary to Post Primary and implements the Pupil Passport.
- Swimming Lessons are provided for pupils in Third class annually.
- Staff are informed about how to access wellbeing support for themselves by availing of the *Employment Assistance Service* which is provided by Spectrum Life 24/7, 365 days a year by contacting 1800 411 057.

Procedures to deal with Critical Incident (Immediate) See Appendix 1

- 1. Gather the facts**
- 2. Contact appropriate agencies**
- 3. Convene the Critical Incident Team**
- 4. Organise the supervision of pupils**
- 5. Inform staff**
- 6. Agree on Statement of Facts**
- 7. Identify high risk pupils**
- 8. Appoint CIMT member to deal with phone enquiries**
- 9. Maintain the normal school routine when at all possible**
- 10. Inform parents/guardians and pupils when necessary**
- 11. Make contact with bereaved family**
- 12. Organise support e.g. NEPS**
- 13. Respond to media**

Medium Term actions (24-72 hours) See Appendix 2

- Reconvene CIMT and review events of the last 24 hours
- Arrange support for individual pupils, groups of pupils and parents if necessary
- Plan for the reintegration of pupils and staff
- Plan visits to ‘incident’ persons (injured/bereaved)
- Liaise with family regarding funeral arrangements /memorial service. Attendance and participation at funeral/memorial service as appropriate
- School closure if deemed necessary.

Longer Term Actions See Appendix 3

- Monitor pupils for sign of continuing distress (refer to HSE/NEPS)
- 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.

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. Please note that where two names are listed (*e.g. Principal/DP*), the role belongs to the 'first person' named. The second person named only adopts the role if the actual Critical Incident 'is' the first person named.

Role of Team leaders: Principal (Úna O'Kelly) and Chairperson (David Powderly)

- 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
- Liaises with the bereaved family.

Role of Garda liaison: Principal (Úna O'Kelly) (Community Garda –Lennie Donlon)

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

Role of Staff liaison: Deputy Principal (Ciara McNickle)/Principal (Úna O'Kelly)

- 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 pupils
- 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.

Role of Pupil liaison: Assistant Principal 1 (Carmel Doherty)

- Alerts other staff to vulnerable pupils (appropriately)
- Provides materials for pupils (from their critical incident folder)
- Maintains records of contact with pupils
- Looks after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room where agreed.

Role of Community/agency liaison: Assistant Principal 1

- 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.

Role of Parent liaison: 2 nominees from BOM

- Visits the bereaved family with the team leader (if appropriate)
- 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).

Role of Media Liaison: Chairperson (David Powderly) and Principal (Úna O’Kelly)

In the event of an incident –

- will consider issues that may arise and how they might be responded to (e.g. pupils being interviewed, photographers on the premises, etc.)
- will liaise where necessary with the INTO
- will draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews (as agreed by school management).

Role of Administrator: School Secretary (Shirley Feeney)

- 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 school’s system in advance and ready for adaptation
- Prepares and sends out letters, emails and texts
- Photocopies materials needed
- Maintains records.

Record keeping

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

Confidentiality and good name considerations

Management and staff of **St Joseph’s 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 pupils 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, Ratification and Communication of the Plan

All staff were consulted and their views considered in the preparation of this policy and plan. 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 the staff representative on the Board of Management.

The plan will be updated annually.

Signed: 
David Powderly Chairperson BOM

Date: 30/11/23

Signed: 
Una O' Kelly School Principal

Date: 30/11/23

Critical Incident Management Team		
Role	Name	Phone
Team leader	Chairperson BOM (David Powderly) Principal (Úna O'Kelly)	(01) 6284333 (01) 6287628
Garda liaison	Principal (Úna O'Kelly) Community Garda (Lennie Donlon) Leixlip Garda Station (Julie)	(01) 6287628 Leonard.f.donlon@garda.ie (01) 6667800
Staff liaison	Deputy Principal (Ciara McNickle) Principal (Úna O'Kelly)	(01) 6287628
Pupil liaison	Assistant Principal 1 (Carmel Doherty)	(01) 6287628
Community liaison	Assistant Principal 1	(01) 6287628
Parent liaison	2 nominees from BOM	(01) 6287628
Media liaison	Chairperson (David Powderly) Principal (Úna O'Kelly)	(01) 6284333 (01) 6287628
Administrator	School secretary (Shirley Feeney)	(01) 6287628

APPENDIX 1: Short term actions – Day 1

Task	Name
Gather accurate information	Principal (Úna O’Kelly) Deputy Principal (Ciara McNickle)
Who, what, when, where?	
Convene a CIMT meeting – specify time and place clearly	Principal (Úna O’Kelly)
Contact external agencies	Assistant Principal 1
Arrange supervision of pupils	Assistant principal 1 (Carmel Doherty)
Hold staff meeting	Deputy Principal (Ciara McNickle) Principal (Úna O’Kelly)
Agree schedule for the day	Chairperson BOM (David Powderly) and Principal (Úna O’Kelly)
Inform pupils – (close friends and pupils with learning difficulties may need to be told separately)	Assistant Principal 1 (Carmel Doherty)
Compile a list of vulnerable pupils	Assistant Principal 1 (Carmel Doherty)
Prepare and agree media statement and deal with media	Chairperson BOM (David Powderly) Principal (Úna O’Kelly)
Inform parents	Principal (Úna O’Kelly)
Hold end of day staff briefing	Chairperson BOM (David Powderly) Principal (Úna O’Kelly)

APPENDIX 2: Medium term actions – (Day 2 and following days)

Task	Name
Convene a CIMT meeting to review the events of day 1	Chairperson BOM (David Powderly) Principal (Úna O’Kelly)
Meet external agencies	Assistant Principal 1
Meet whole staff	Principal (Úna O’Kelly) Deputy Principal (Ciara McNickle)
Arrange support for pupils, staff, parents	Principal (Úna O’Kelly) Deputy Principal (Ciara McNickle)
Visit the injured or bereaved	Principal (Úna O’Kelly) Class teacher/Parent representative (if appropriate)
Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements	Principal (Úna O’Kelly)
Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service	Board of Management Principal (Úna O’Kelly)
Make decisions about school closure	Board of Management

APPENDIX 3: Follow-up – beyond 72 hours

Task	Name
Monitor pupils for signs of continuing distress	Class teachers Support teachers
Liaise with agencies regarding referrals	Principal (Úna O’Kelly) Assistant Principal 1 (Carmel Doherty)
Plan for return of bereaved Pupil(s)	Principal (Úna O’Kelly) Class teacher
Plan for giving of ‘memory box’ to bereaved family	Assistant Principal 1
Decide on memorials and anniversaries	BOM, Staff, parents and pupils
Review response to incident and amend plan	Staff and BOM
EMERGENCY CONTACT LIST	
AGENCY	CONTACT NUMBERS
Garda District HQ	Kilcock W23 DW22 Leixlip 01 6757390 01 6667800
Hospital	Naas W91 AE76 Crumlin D12 N512 045 849500 01 4096100
Fire Brigade	Maynooth Naas 01 6291444 045 454800
Local GPs	Kilcock Primary Care Centre 01 9213500
HSE	01 9213500
Community Care Team	01 9213500
Child and Family Centre	045 920000
Child and Family Mental Health Service (CAMHS)	01 5058560
School Inspector	Stephanie Ormond
NEPS Psychologist	Naas 0761 108638
DES	0906 483600
INTO	01 8047700
Clergy	Fr George 01 6103512 087 3664626
TUSLA	Naas Head Office 045 839312 01 7718500
Employee Assistance Service	1800 411 057

