

Critical Incident Policy St Clare's P.S.

Introduction: St. Clare's Primary School aims to provide a secure and caring learning environment for all its students. The Board of Management, through the Principal and I.S.M.T. has drawn up a critical incident management plan as part of the school's policies and plans. Updated November 2020.

The aim is to establish a Critical Incident Management Policy (CIMP)

Review and Research

The I.S.M.T. referred to the resource documents below in devising the policy. *Responding to Critical Incidents; Guidelines for Schools (NEPS 2007) and updated the policy in line with new concerns and issues arising.*

Definition of a 'critical incident'

The staff and management St. Clare's P.S. 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*
- *Disruption to the normal running of any classroom due to unacceptably violent or aggressive behaviour of a pupil, parent or guardian, or a member of the wider community which causes a health and safety risk to the teacher or pupils in that classroom.*
- *A Child Safeguarding/protection Concern in the school community/a potentially impactful cyberbullying or online security or safety concern.*

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 to enable the school to affect 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 –

- Refer to the Health & Safety policy / Annual Risk Assessment
 - Evacuation plan / Fire Drill carried out twice annually.
 - Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
 - Morning supervision from 9:05 in the school yard by an I.S.M.T. member.
 - Rules of the playground are reviewed regularly at staff meetings and yard records of incidents retained.
- Tours and outings –teachers will carry a school mobile phone on tours and outings.
- Text a parent is also in operation to notify all parents if the need arises.

Psychological safety: The management and staff of St. Clare's P.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 (S.P.H.E.) is integrated into the daily fabric of the school.
- School Curriculum dealing with loss (as required); communication skills; stress and anger management; resilience; conflict management; problem solving; help-seeking; bullying; decision making and prevention of alcohol and drug misuse.
- Staff have access to training for their role in SPHE as needed e.g. Walk Tall, Anti-bullying, RSE and child protection, Zippy's friends, Apples friends, Healthy Schools Initiative (HSE) etc.
- Staff are familiar with the Child Protection Guidelines and safeguarding statement and Procedures and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures of abuse.
- The school has developed links with a range of external agencies – H.S.E., N.E.P.S., local Priest/parish, local Gardaí, social services and Vincent De Paul.

- 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, reporting all incidents to the B.O.M. and addressing cyberbullying.

Roles: The key roles which need to be covered are as follows:

- Team Leader
- Garda liaison
- Staff liaison.
- Student liaison
- Parent liaison
- Community liaison
- Media liaison
- Administrator

Outlined below are some points on the key responsibilities of each role.

Team leader (Mr Conlon/Margaret Treanor/Fr. John)

- Alerts the staff members to the crisis and convenes a meeting
- Coordinates the tasks of the team
- Liaises with the Board of Management; D.E.S.; N.E.P.S;
- Liaises with the effected/bereaved/family

Mr Dolan/Mrs Fox will take the lead in the absence of Mr Conlon.

Garda liaison (Mr. Conlon or School Chairperson Margaret Treanor)

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

Staff liaison (Mr Dolan/Mrs Fox)

- 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 contacts them individually
- Advises them of the availability of the support and provides advice on getting relevant support (NEPS)

Media liaison (Michael Dolan/Maeve Conlon)

- 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
- Will draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews (as agreed by school management)

Student liaison Mrs Fidelma Fox/Mrs Maeve Conlon)

- Will co-ordinate information from all staff about students they are concerned about
- Alerts other staff to vulnerable students (appropriately)
- Provides materials for students (from their critical incident folder)
- Looks after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room where agreed

Community/agency liaison (Mrs Fox/Deirdre Mc Dermott)

- Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of
 - Key parents, such as members of the Parents Association, B.O.M. Members, Emergency support services and other external contacts and resources

Mr Dolan/Mrs Mc Dermott

- 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 and reminds agency staff to wear name badges
- Updates staff members on the involvement of external agencies

Parent liaison (Mrs Fox/Mrs Conlon)

- Visits the bereaved family with the team leader
- Arranges parent meetings where necessary in crisis situation
- 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 and maintains a record of parents seen and meets with individual parents
- Provides appropriate materials for parents (from their critical incident folder)

Administrator / School Secretary (Frank Considine)

- Maintenance of up to date telephone numbers of, Parents or guardians, Teachers and all 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 faxes
- Photocopies materials needed and 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 sent and received, meetings held, persons met, interventions used, material used etc.

Confidentiality and good name considerations: The management and staff of St. Clare's Primary School have 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 seek to ensure that students do so also.

Critical incident room: In the event of a critical incident, *The Principal's office* will be the main room used to meet the staff, parents and any other visitors.

School GP room for meetings with students, *Staff Room* or *L.S.R.T. rooms* for media or visitors.

Consultation and communication regarding the plan

All staff were consulted in November 2020 and new personal and responsibilities, views and amendments are reflected in this update of this policy. The Parent Association committee were also consulted and asked for their feedback. The school's policy and plan in relation to responding to critical incidents will be presented to all staff for updated annually in September or on request at any time.

Ratified by the B.O.M. on 9 December 2020.

Signed; Margaret Treanor .Date : 9/12/20 .

Margaret Treanor (Chairperson)