



St. Ita's N.S

Critical Incident Management Plan & Policy

Introduction:

St. Ita's N.S. aims to protect the wellbeing of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. In our Mission Statement, we hold as central, respect for the dignity and uniqueness of every child. We uphold the teaching of Christian values and educating the child for life. We commit ourselves to maximize the potential of each child by developing their self-esteem, consideration for others and a critical evaluation of life. We are committed to developing right attitudes towards justice and tolerance and we respect the diverging views of minorities within our school.

The Board of Management through the Principal and Staff has drawn up a critical incident management plan. They have established a Critical Incidents Management Team to steer the development and implementation of the plan.

The staff and management of *St. Ita's N.S.* have formulated a number of policies and procedures to be followed with a view to ensuring the physical and psychological safety of both staff and students, and the creation of a supportive and caring ethos in the school, in ordinary time as well as in the event of a critical incident

Definition of a Critical Incident at St. Ita's N.S:

The staff and management of St. Ita'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 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 school community
- Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism, etc
- The disappearance of a member of the school community
- An outbreak of a serious disease or illness which may affect the school or community

Aim:

The aim of the CIMP is to help school management and staff to react quickly and effectively in the event of a critical 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 minimised. It should enable us 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 build resilience in both staff and students, thus preparing them to cope with a range of life events. The school has created a number of policies e.g. Anti-Bullying, Health and Safety, Code of Behaviour and procedures (e.g. school rules) to be followed to ensure the physical and psychological safety of all staff and students.

Physical safety:

See Health & Safety Policy at St. Ita's N.S.

- Evacuation plan formulated
- Regular fire drills occur
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
- Front gate closed during school hours
- School doors locked during class time - access to the school during this time is through a secure electronic door.
- Rules of the playground
- Supervision of children from 9:10 – 9:20 in the school hall. All children whose classrooms are on the middle or top floors will be supervised in their classrooms at this time. This is prior to the commencement of school
- Students leaving early will be released by a member of the teaching staff to an authorised adult. The adult will use the “sign-out” book to record this departure from the premises. Children will not be released to persons’ unknown to the staff or without getting consent from the parent(s)/ guardian(s)

Psychological safety

The management and staff of *St. Ita's 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 alcohol and drug prevention. Promotion of mental health is included in 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 are familiar to all staff
- Books and resources on difficulties affecting the primary school student are available.
- 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 such as National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), Tusla, Family Resource Centre, HSE, CAHMS, Loughrea Garda station
- 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. (See Section 7 of *Responding to Critical Incidents: Guidelines for Schools*)
- The school has a clear policy on bullying and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy

- Students who are identified as being at risk are referred to the designated CIMT member, 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
- Staff are informed on a need-to-know basis to ensure appropriate care, awareness and vigilance of the needs of the child, while also respecting the individual's privacy

Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT):

A CIMT has been established in line with best practice. Currently, this team consists of: Patrick Coyle, School Principal; Joan Glynn, Deputy Principal; Lorna Fahy, Teacher; Ann Burns, School Secretary; and Msgr Cathal Geraghty, Chairperson Board of Management. The members of the team were selected in order of seniority 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.

Key Roles:

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

Team leader: Principal Patrick Coyle:

- Confirms and clarifies the event and associated facts
- Informs and activates the CIMT of the crisis and convenes a meeting
- Coordinates the tasks of the team
- Liaises with the Board of Management; DES; NEPS
- Liaises with and express sympathy with the bereaved family
- Liaises with the Gardaí
- Ensures that information about deaths is checked out before being shared
- Decides on how news will be communicated to different groups with the guidance of the B.O.M (staff, pupils, school community)

In the absence of the team leader Joan Glynn, the Deputy Principal takes on the role.

Staff liaison: Deputy Principal Joan Glynn:

- 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 including substitute and new teachers (from their critical incident folder)
- Keeps staff updated as day progresses
- Is alert to vulnerable staff members and makes contact with them individually. Advises them of availability of Employee Assistance Service and gives them the contact number

Student Liaison: Deputy Principal Joan Glynn:

- Provides materials for students (from their critical incident folder)
- Keeps records of students seen by external agency staff
- Looks after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room, where agreed

Community/Agency Liaison: Teacher Lorna Fahy:

- Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of Emergency support services and other external contacts and resources
- Liaises with N.E.P.S. and other agencies in the community for support and onward referral
- Is alert to 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: Teacher Lorna Fahy:

- Coordinates contact with family (after initial contact by principal)
- Visits the bereaved family with the team leader
- Consults with family about the school's potential involvement e.g., funeral service
- Sets up room for meetings with parents
- Assists with all communication dealing with parents of any pupils affected by the critical incident
- Gets written permission from the parent in the event of a child having to get support or counselling from N.E.P.S
- Maintains a record of parents seen
- Provides appropriate materials for parents (from their critical incident folder)

Media Liaison: Principal Patrick Coyle / Chairperson B.O.M - Msgr Cathal Geraghty:

- 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 relevant management agencies and unions.
- Will draw up press statement, give media briefings and interviews (as agreed by school management)

Administrator: Secretary Ann Burns:

- Maintenance of up-to-date telephone numbers of
 - Parents or guardians
 - Teachers
 - Emergency support 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 and emails
- 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 sent and received, meetings held, persons met, interventions used, material used etc. The School Secretary at St. Ita's N.S. will have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters, photocopying materials, etc.

Confidentiality and Good Name Considerations:

The management and staff of St. Ita's N.S 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. For instance, 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 staffroom will be the main room used to meet the staff,
- The school hall or classrooms for meetings with students,
- The school hall for parents,
- The Principal's office for press,
- The learning support room for individual sessions with students
- The Principal's office for other visitors

Consultation and Communication Regarding the Plan:

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

Parent 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.

All new and temporary staff will be informed of the details of the plan by the School Principal.

The plan will be updated annually. Review date June 2021

Critical Incident Management Team

Role	Name	Telephone number (home and mobile)
Team Leader	Mr Patrick Coyle	091 841605
Garda Liaison	Mr Patrick Coyle	
Staff Liaison	Ms Joan Glynn	
Student Liaison	Ms. Joan Glynn	
Parent Liaison	Ms. Lorna Fahy	
Community Liaison	Ms Lorna Fahy	
Media Liaison	Msgr Cathal Geraghty	
Administrator	Ann Burns	

Critical Incident Management Plan:

Short Term Actions: Day 1:

- Gather accurate information; Who, what, when, where?
- Convene a CIMT meeting – specify time and place clearly
- Contact external agencies
- Arrange supervision for students
- Hold staff meeting. Ensure all staff are present
- Agree schedule for the day
- Inform students – (close friends and students with learning difficulties may need to be told separately)
- Compile a list of vulnerable students
- Contact/visit the bereaved family
- Prepare and agree media statement and deal with media
- Inform parents
- Hold end of day staff briefing

Medium Term Actions: Day 2 & Following Days:

- Team leader convenes a CIMT meeting to review the events of day 1
- Meet external agencies
- Meet whole staff
- Arrange support for students, staff, parents
- Visit the injured
- Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements
- Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service
- The BOM makes a decision about school closure

Follow Up: Beyond 72 Hours:

- Class teachers monitor students for signs of continuing distress
- Liaise with agencies regarding referrals
- Plan for return of bereaved student(s)
- BOM/Staff, parents and students decide on memorials and anniversaries
- Staff/BOM review response to incident and amend plan

Emergency Contact List

(To be displayed in staff-room, school office and Principal's office etc)

AGENCY	CONTACT NUMBERS
GARDA	Loughrea Garda Station: (091) 841 222
HOSPITAL	UCHG: (091) 580 580
FIRE BRIGADE	Loughrea Emergency: Dial 999 or 112
LOCAL GPS	Dr. J Flaherty (091) 842 144
	Dr Moloney (091) 841 543
	Dr. O Reilly (091) 841 509
	Dr. McDonagh (091) 841 017
HSE/Community Care Team/ Family Centre	(091) 847 820
INSPECTOR	Martin Whyte: martin_whyte@education.gov.ie
NEPS PSYCHOLOGIST	Michelle Mc Mahon: (076) 110 8831
DES	(01) 873 4700
INTO	(01) 804 7700
PARISH PRIEST/CLERGY	Parochial House Loughrea (091) – 841 212 Monsignor Cathal Geraghty; Chairperson, B.O.M
Employee Assistant Services	(1800) 411 057
Loughrea Health Centre	(091) 847 820
School Nurse (Teresa Sheehan) Based at St. Brendan's Hospital	(091) 872 748

References:

- Responding to Critical Incidents – NEPS Guidelines for Schools and Resource Materials for Schools, NEPS, 2016
- When Tragedy strikes - Guidelines for Effective Critical Incident Management in Schools, INTO
- CPSMA Management Board Members' Handbook, 2016

Websites:

- DES – NEPS www.education.ie
- Health and Safety Authority www.hsa.ie/osh
- Allianz (Church and General) www.cg-online.ie
- INTO www.into.ie

This plan was reviewed: April 2020

It was discussed by the Board of Management on the 04/06/2020 and amendments / suggestions welcomed.

Ratified by the Board of Management on the 4th of June 2020

Signed: Monsignor Cathal Geraghty
Chairperson of Board of Management

Date: 04/06/2020