

Critical Incident Policy

St. Benins N.S

Roll No. 18636V

SCOIL NAÍSIÚNTA



Critical Incident Policy for St. Benin's NS

Introduction:

In St. Benin's NS Primary School we aim to protect the well being of our pupils and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times.

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

We have formulated a number of 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.

The context and development of the policy and plan.

In drawing up the policy and plan we have consulted the following resource documents provided to schools:

- Responding to a critical incident: Pack For Schools (NEPS 2016).
- Template for the development of a critical incident policy (NEPS 2016).
- We have put systems in place to help build resilience in both staff and pupils.

Definition of a Critical Incident?

'A critical incident is any incident or sequence of events which overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school and disrupts the running of the school'.

Examples:

- Death, major illness/outbreak of disease
- Criminal incidents
- Major accidents, serious injury
- Suicide
- Civil unrest, war (foreign nationals may be traumatised by events that happened in their country of origin)
- Fire, natural and technological disaster
- Disappearance of student from home or school
- Unauthorised removal of student from school or home.
- World events that may affect the student body and/or staff e.g a need for provision of discussion and involvement in ceremonies e.g. 9/11, tsunami
- 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.

AIM

The aim of the policy is to help the 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 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 pupils. These include measures to address both the physical and psychological safety of the school community.

Physical safety:

1. Regular fire drills- evacuation plan is followed.
2. Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked.
3. Children are encouraged to be gentle at all times.
4. Supervision in school during all breaks.
5. Regular First Aid Training.

Psychological safety:

The management and staff of St. Benin's Primary School 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) 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 disclosures.
- Information is provided on mental health in general and such specific areas such as signs and symptoms of depression and anxiety - promotion of positive healthy attitudes.
- The school has a clear policy on bullying and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy.

- The school community works very closely with the psychologist from NEPS that is assigned to our school.
- The school makes links with a range of external agencies - HSE, Túsla, Garda, Jigsaw, Social Services, Neighbouring Schools, Parish.

Critical Incidents Management Team:

Outlined below are some of the key responsibilities of each role

Team leader - Caoimhe Mellett, Principal

- Confirms the event.
- 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; SEN.
- Liaises with the bereaved family.

Annmarie Duggan is the Deputy Team Leader.

Gárda liaison - Caoimhe Mellett, Principal

- Liaises with the Gardaí.
- Ensures that information about deaths is checked out before being shared.

Staff liaison - Caoimhe Mellett, Principal

- 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 resources).
- Keeps staff updated as day progresses.
- Is alert to vulnerable staff members and makes contact with them individually.

Student liaison - All Students

- Advise the staff on the procedures for identification of vulnerable pupils.
- Alert staff to vulnerable pupils.
- Outline specific services available in the school.
- Put in place clear referral procedures.
- Address immediate needs of staff.
- Provide information.
- Provide counselling.

Chaplaincy Role - Fr. Frank Conlisk

- Visit home(s), if appropriate
- Assist with prayer services
- Make contact with other local clergy
- Be available for personal and spiritual support to staff
- Provide follow-up support to families in conjunction with Home School Community Liaison
- Work in partnership with Critical Incident team
- Review and Evaluate Plan

Parent liaison - Caoimhe Mellett, Principal & Chairperson

- Visits the bereaved family with the team leader
- 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 resources)

Community/Agency Liaison - Caoimhe Mellett, Principal & NEPS School Psychologist

- Maintains an up to date list of contact names and numbers for local community organizations.
- Ensures that accurate information is provided to local community groups who are linked in with the school.
- Liaises with organisations in the community for support.
- Provides information on an on-going basis where appropriate.
- Liaises with agencies in the community for support and onward referral.
- Is alert to need to check credentials of individuals offering support.
- Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies.

Ms. Joanne Frehill
Educational
Psychologist
(Galway)

Communications Officer- Caoimhe Mellett, Principal and Chairperson

- 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 relevant bodies.
- Will draw up press statement, give media briefings and interviews (as agreed by school management)
- Will coordinate the monitoring of communications relating to the incident.

Administrator - Noreen Moran, Secretary

- 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 schools system in advance and ready for adaptation
- Prepares and sends out letters, emails and faxes
- Photocopies materials needed
- Maintains records

Attendance Tracking - All Staff

- In the immediate aftermath of the critical incident special care will be paid to attendance of students.
- All absences will be carefully monitored.

Action plan

SHORT-TERM ACTIONS (Day 1)

- Immediate contact with family/families
- Consult with the family regarding appropriate support from the school, e.g. funeral service
- Ensure that a quiet place can be made available for students/staff

Media Briefing (if appropriate)

- Designate a spokesperson (Leader)
- Gather accurate information
- Prepare a brief statement (Team)
- Protect the family's privacy
- It is important to obtain accurate information about the incident

1. What happened, where and when?

2. What is the extent of the injuries?

3. How many are involved and what are their names?

4. Is there a risk of further injury?

5. What agencies have been contacted already?

- Contact appropriate agencies

1. Emergency services

2. Medical services

3. H.S.E. Psychology Departments/Community Care Services

4. NEPS

5. BOM

6. DES/School Inspector

- Convene a meeting with Key Staff
- Organize a staff meeting, if appropriate
- Ensure any absent staff members are kept informed
- Organise timetable/routine for the day. (Adhering to the normal school routine is important, if this is possible)
- Liaison person
- Arrange supervision of students
- Liaise with the family regarding funeral arrangements/memorial service
- The Chaplain/Principal will liaise with the family, to extend sympathy and clarify the family's wishes regarding the school's involvement in funeral/memorial service
- Arrange a home visit by two staff representatives within 24 hours, if appropriate.
- (Student Liaison person + Class teacher)
- Have regard for different religious traditions and faiths

MEDIUM-TERM ACTIONS (24-72 HOURS)

- Preparation of students/staff attending funeral
- Involvement of students/staff in liturgy if agreed by bereaved family
- Facilitation of students/staffs responses, e.g. Sympathy cards, flowers, Book of Condolences, etc.
- Ritual within the school
- Review the events of the first 24 hours
- Reconvene Key Staff/Critical Incident Management Team
- Decide arrangements for support meetings for parents/students/staff
- Decide on mechanism for feedback from teachers on vulnerable students
- Have review of Critical Incident Management Team meeting
- Establish contact with absent staff and pupils
- Arrange support for individual students, groups of students, and parents, if necessary
- Hold support/information meeting for parents/students, if necessary, in order to clarify what has happened
- Give any teacher who feels uncomfortable with involvement in support meetings the choice of opting out
- Arrange, in consultation, with outside agencies, individual or group debriefings or support meetings with parental permission
- Plan for the re-integration of students and staff e.g. absentees, injured, siblings, close relative etc)
- Student Liaison person to liaise with above on their return to school.
- Plan visits to injured
- Family Liaison person + Class Teacher + Principal to visit home/hospital
- Attendance and participation at funeral/memorial service (To be decided)
- Decide this in accordance with parent's wishes, school management decisions and in consultation with close school friends
- School closure (if appropriate)
- Request a decision on this from school management

LONGER TERM ACTIONS

Monitor students for signs of continuing distress

If over a prolonged period of time, a student continues to display the following, he/she may need assistance from the Health Board. Constant communication with family is essential.

- Uncharacteristic behaviour
- Deterioration in academic performance
- Physical symptoms – e.g. weight loss/gain, lack of attention to appearance,
- tiredness, restlessness
- Inappropriate emotional reactions
- Increased absenteeism

Evaluate response to incident and amend Critical Incident Management Plan appropriately

- What went well?
- Where were the gaps?
- What was most/least helpful?
- Have all necessary onward referrals to support services been made?
- Is there any unfinished business?
- Formalise the Critical Incident Plan for the future
- Consult with NEPS Psychologist
- Inform new staff/new school pupils affected by Critical Incidents where appropriate
- Ensure that new staff are aware of the school policy and procedures in this area
- Ensure they are aware of which pupils were affected in any recent incident and in what way
- When individual pupils or a class of pupils affected by an incident are transferring to a new school, the Principal should brief the Principal of the new school
- Decide on appropriate ways to deal with anniversaries (Be sensitive to special days and events)
- Anniversaries may trigger emotional responses in students/staff and they may need additional support at this time
- Acknowledge the anniversary with the family
- Need to be sensitive to significant days like Birthdays, Christmas, Mother's Day, and Father's Day
- Plan a school memorial service
- Care of deceased person's possessions. What are the parent's wishes?

- Update and amend school 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 Secretary 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. Benin's National 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.

The plan will be updated annually (*October of each year*).

Signed:

_____ **Date:** _____

Chairperson (BOM)

_____ **Date:** _____

Principal
