Critical Incident Policy

St. Michael’s N.S.

Castletown Geoghegan

**Critical Incident Policy**

**Introduction:**

In St. Michael’s N.S., Castletown Geoghegan we aim to protect the well-being of our pupils and staff by providing a safe, tolerant and well catered for environment as outlined in our school philosophy statement.

The Board of Management through the Principal, Staff and the Parents Association 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.

**What is 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 (Foot and Mouth).
* Criminal incidents (e.g. Dunblane shooting, Shooting at First Communion in Ballymun).
* Major accidents, serious injury (e.g. Navan Bus Crash).
* Suicide.
* Outbreak of H1N1 Pandemic, Covid-19 Pandemic, in the school (pupils/staff).
* Civil unrest, war (foreign nationals may be traumatised by events that happened in their country of origin).
* Disappearance of student from home or school (e.g. Midleton incident in Cork).
* Unauthorised removal of a student from school or home.
* World events that may affect the study body and/or staff. May be a need for provision of discussion and involvement in ceremonies e.g. 9/11, Tsunami.

**Critical Incidents Management Team**

**Leadership Role:** Ms. Margaret Gorman (Principal)

**Communication Role:** Mrs. Barbara Reynolds (Deputy Principal)

**Student Liaison/Counselling Role:** Mrs. Gorman/Mrs. Barbara Reynolds

**Chaplaincy Role**: Fr. Barry Condron

**Family Liaison Role**: Fr. Barry Condron

**Parent Association Rep:** Mrs. Marie Birch/Mrs. Margaret Rami

**B.o.M Representative:** Mr. Alan Mangan & Mrs. Sheila Corcoran

The first named person has the responsibility as defined.

The second named person assists and only assumes responsibility in the absence of the first named.

**Roles and Responsibilities**

**Leadership Role:**

**Intervention**

* Confirm the event
* Activate the Critical Incident response team
* Liaise with the Gardaí/emergency services
* Lead briefing meetings for staff on the facts as known, give staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions, outlines and routine for the day
* Express sympathy to family
* Clarify facts surrounding event
* Make contact with other relevant agencies
* Decide how news will be communicated to different groups (staff, pupils, outside school)

**Postvention**

* Ensure provision of ongoing support to staff and students
* Facilitate any appropriate memorial events
* Review plan

**Communication Role:**

**Intervention**

* With team, prepare a public statement
* Organise a designated room to address media promptly
* Ensure telephone lines are free for outgoing and important incoming calls
* Designate mobile numbers for contact
* Liaise with relevant outside support agencies

**Postvention**

* Review and evaluate effectiveness of communication response

**Student Liaison/Counselling Role:**

**Intervention**

* 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 materials for staff
* Provide information
* Provide counselling

**Postvention**

* Provide ongoing support to vulnerable students
* Monitor class most affected
* Refer as appropriate
* Review and evaluate Plan

**Chaplaincy Role:**

**Intervention**

* Visit home(s), if appropriate
* Assist with prayer services
* Make contact with other local clergy
* Be available as personal and spiritual support to staff

**Postvention**

* Provide follow-up support to families
* Work in partnership with Critical Incident team
* Review and Evaluation Plan

**Family Liaison Role:**

**Intervention**

* Co-ordinate contact with families (following first contact with Principal)
* Consult with family around involvement of school in e.g. funeral service
* Assist with all communication dealing with parents of any student affected by critical incident

**Postvention**

* Provide ongoing support to families affected by the incident
* Involve as appropriate the family in school liturgies/memorial services
* Offer to link family with community support groups
* Review and evaluate plan

**Board of Management**

Principal to inform Board of Management of Plan drawn up by Critical Incidents Management Team in the event of incident. If applicable, emergency Board of Management meeting to be held at short notice.

**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 for students/staff
* Convene a meeting with Key Staff/Critical Management Team
* Organise 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)
* Class teachers to take note of any absentees who might need to be contacted, list of friends etc, or any other relevant information. This is to be given to the Student 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 and Class teacher)
* Have regard for different religious traditions and faiths.

**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. HSE Psychology Departments/Community Care Services
4. NEPS

**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/staff 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 relatives etc)
* Student liaison person to liaise with above on their return to school
* Plan visits to injured
* Family Liaison person and class teacher and 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 HSE. 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 members 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, 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

This plan was drawn up by the Staff, Parents Association and Board of Management of St. Michael’s N.S., Castletown Geoghegan with the help of our NEPS psychologist and may need to be reviewed to comply with any changes to legislation or new legislation. This policy will be reviewed annually.

Ratified by the Board of Management

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

 Chairperson, Board of Management Date

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 Principal Date

***Staff Next of Kin:***

Margaret Gorman Joe Gorman (Husband) 0877625202

 Bridget McDonnell (Sister) 0851027563

Edel Dalton Paul Dalton (Husband) 0879825591

 Marie Oxley (Mother) 0872238187

Jenny Malone Christopher Mullally (Husband) 0872370663

Pat Malone (Father) 0498541749

Aisling Morgan Finnian Pettit (Husband) 0877605368

 Maura Morgan (Mother) 0868157269

Barbara Reynolds Oliver Reynolds (Husband) 0872520475

 Jean Smyth (Sister) 0877401913

Catherine Clarke Fintan Clarke (Husband) 0878047100

 Jim Fagan (Brother) 0876479991

Mary Rabbitt Pat Rabbitt (husband) 0862254494

 Sandra Rabbitt (Daughter) 0879842902