



HOLY TRINITY
NATIONAL SCHOOL

CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY AND PLAN

NOV. 2016

Rationale

Holy Trinity N.S. aims to protect the wellbeing of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times, as reflected in our Mission Statement. The Board of Management, through James Tobin, Principal, has drawn up a critical incident management plan as one element of the school's policies and plans. Our aim is to establish a Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) to steer the development and implementation of the Critical Incident Management Plan.

Formulation of Policy

This policy document is an updating of an existing policy, (2009).

Recent documents relating to guidelines and resource materials for pupil well-being and for responding to critical incidents have been consulted in the formulation of this policy. These include:

- Responding to Critical Incidents: NEPS Guidelines and Resource Materials for Schools www.education.ie and www.nosp.ie
- Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion (DES, DOH, HSE 2015)

Definition of Critical Incident

For the purpose of this policy, the staff and management of Holy Trinity N.S. adopts the NEPS definition of a critical incident in a school context-

A critical incident is any incident or sequence of events which overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of the school.

Critical incidents may involve one or more students 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.
- A major accident/tragedy in the wider community
- An intrusion into the school
- An accident involving members of the school community
- Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism, etc.

Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)

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. Having a good plan should also help ensure that the impact on students 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

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. (See school Health & Safety Policy and school Supervision Policy).

- Evacuation plan has been formulated
- Fire drills are carried out
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
- School doors locked during class time
- Playgrounds are supervised during break and lunch time.

Psychological safety

The management and staff of Holy Trinity 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. These include:

- Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is integrated into the work of the school. 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 are addressed in the SPHE curriculum. 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 Procedures and the name of the Designated Liaison Person (Principal)
- Information is provided to staff on mental health in general
- The school has developed links with a range of external agencies – HSE, NEPS.
- 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 as per DES Circular 0022/2010 (Primary)

- The school has a clear anti-bullying policy and deals with incidents of bullying in accordance with this policy
- Pupil needs, where identified, are documented in our Continuum of Support documentation
- Staff are informed about how to access support for themselves.

School 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. The members of the CIMT for '16/'17 are:

Role	Staff/BOM member	Duties
TEAM LEADER	James Tobin	<i>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; SEC; ETB Liaises with the bereaved family</i>
GARDA LIAISON	James Tobin	<i>Liaises with the Gardaí Ensures that information about deaths or other developments is checked out for accuracy before being shared.</i>
STAFF LIAISON	Caroline Walsh	<i>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 makes contact with them individually Advises them of the availability of the EAS and gives them the contact number</i>
STUDENT LIAISON	Lisa Margey	<i>Alerts other staff to vulnerable students (appropriately) Maintains student contact records (R1) Liaises with agencies in the community for support and onward referral</i>

PARENT / GUARDIAN LIAISON	James Tobin	<p><i>Visits the bereaved family with the team leader</i></p> <p><i>Arranges meetings, if held</i></p> <p><i>May facilitate such meetings, and manage 'questions and answers' sessions</i></p> <p><i>Manages the 'consent' issues in accordance with agreed school policy</i></p> <p><i>Ensures that sample letters are prepared and available on the school's IT system ready for adaptation</i></p> <p><i>Sets up room for meetings with parents</i></p> <p><i>Maintains a record of parents seen</i></p> <p><i>Meets with individual parents</i></p> <p><i>Provides appropriate materials for parents (from their critical incident folder).</i></p>
COMMUNITY LIAISON	Sarah Lynn	<p><i>Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Key parents, such as members of the Parents Council</i> • <i>Emergency support services and other external contacts and resources</i> <p><i>Liaises with agencies in the community for support and onward referral</i></p> <p><i>Is alert to the need to check credentials of individuals offering support</i></p> <p><i>Coordinates the involvement of these agencies</i></p> <p><i>Reminds agency staff to wear name badges</i></p> <p><i>Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies.</i></p>
MEDIA LIAISON	Brianog Brady Dawson	<p><i>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.)</i></p> <p><i>In the event of an incident, will liaise where necessary with the SEC, relevant teacher unions etc.</i></p> <p><i>Will draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews (as agreed by school management).</i></p>
ADMINISTRATOR	Julie/Elaine School Secretaries	<p><i>Maintenance of up to date telephone numbers of</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Parents/guardians</i> • <i>Teachers</i> • <i>Emergency services</i> <p><i>Takes telephone calls and notes those that need a response</i></p> <p><i>Prepares and sends out letters, emails and texts</i></p> <p><i>Ensures that templates are available on the schools IT system and ready for adaptation</i></p> <p><i>Photocopies materials as needed</i></p> <p><i>Maintains records.</i></p>

Record keeping

In the event of an incident each member of the team will keep records of phone calls made and received, letters emails and texts sent and received, meetings held, persons met, interventions used, material used etc. The school secretary (Julie/Elaine) 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 Holy Trinity 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 confirmed 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, rooms which will accommodate groups are as follows:

Staffroom	<i>Main room to meet the staff.</i>
Hall-main	<i>For meeting with pupils.</i>
Hall-lower end	<i>For parents.</i>
Library	<i>For media.</i>
DP office	<i>For individual sessions with pupils.</i>
SEN room 3	<i>For other visitors.</i>

Consultation and communication regarding the plan

All staff were consulted and their views canvassed in the preparation of this policy and plan. The Parents' Association were also consulted and invited to comment. 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 Deputy Principal.

This plan has been ratified by the Board of Management on _____

The plan will be updated annually in Sept. of each academic year.