



Critical Incident Policy

Ratified by BOM: 11/05/2021

Signed:

Margaret Lennon

(Chairperson, Board of Management)

1. Introduction

This policy provides the necessary framework to guide and support the response given to any potential critical incident which may impact on the school community. The Board of Management (BOM), in partnership with the Principal and the teaching staff have drawn up this critical incident policy. This policy was reviewed in accordance with the guidelines set out in *Responding to Critical Incidents, NEPS Guidelines and Resource Materials for Schools (2017)*.

2. Definition of the Term “Critical Incident”

The staff and management of St Brigid’s National 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 pupils or staff members, or members of our local community.

Examples of a critical incident include:

- Death, major illness/outbreak of disease (e.g. Foot & Mouth).
- Criminal incidents (e.g. Dunblane shooting, Shooting at first communion in Ballymun.).
- Major accidents, serious injury (e.g. ‘Navan bus crash’).
- Suicide.
- Civil unrest, war (foreign nationals may be traumatised by events that happened in their country of origin).
- Fire, natural and technological disaster (e.g. school ceiling collapsing in Cork).
- Disappearance of pupils from home or school (e.g. Midleton incident in Cork).
- Unauthorised removal of pupils from school or home.
- World events that may affect the pupils and/or staff (e.g. 9/11, tsunami).
- A global pandemic (e.g. COVID-19).
- Incident outside the school eg. car crash at the gates at arrival/dismissal times

3. Aims

The aims of the Critical Incident Policy are:

1. To prepare for a critical incident.
2. To support staff with reacting quickly, effectively and proportionately in the event of a critical incident.
3. To create effective care systems.
4. To restore the school to normality as soon as possible after a critical incident has occurred.
5. To safeguard the health and wellbeing of our pupils and staff.
6. To limit the effects of the critical incident on the pupils and staff

4. Relationship to the Ethos

The Catholic ethos of St. Brigid's is enshrined in our school motto: *Le Chéile Faoí Bhrat Bhríde*. Our ethos prioritises the creation of a school climate of love, trust, respect and tolerance which recognises the need for the cooperation and involvement of the whole school community. This policy provides guidance on how, we as a school community, will cooperate in the event of a critical incident occurring.

As a Catholic school, we have the responsibility to ensure that:

- Our duty of care to our pupils and staff is fulfilled to the best of our ability and in line with statutory responsibilities.
- Our practices reflect our belief in our Catholic community and are inspired by the Gospel values of care, respect, dignity, compassion, love and forgiveness.
- A safe and stable environment is provided for pupils and staff.
- The physical, emotional and spiritual wellbeing of our pupils and staff is safeguarded.

5. Supporting Measures in Place

(i) Physical Safety

1. See Health & Safety Policy (health and safety risk assessment carried out annually, health and safety audit carried out every three years)
2. Code of Behaviour
3. Child Protection Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment
4. COVID-19 Response Plan
5. X6 staff members trained in Paediatric First Aid/ x1 staff member trained in standard First Aid
6. Regular fire drills
7. School doors closed during teaching time (with the exception being the electric doors)
8. Sign In/Out book for occasional visitors, parents and contractors.
9. Fire extinguishers, exit doors, smoke alarms regularly checked
10. Evacuation plan formulated and displayed
11. "Text-a-Parent" service (Aladdin Connect) to communicate urgent messages to parents
12. Access note in the case of custody issues (staff briefed in relation to same)
13. Children are always supervised
14. Permission slips sought when travelling offsite with pupils further than our local area
15. Basic maintenance of the building and grounds in as far as is practicable subject to DES grants
16. QR code for contact tracing during Covid times
17. Protocol for off-site excursions: teachers are required to bring their first aid pack, class contact list and a working mobile phone for all off site excursion

(ii) Psychological Safety

The management and staff aim to use all available curriculum programmes and resources to address the personal and social development of our pupils, to enhance a sense of safety and security in the school and wider community.

Examples include:

- S.P.H.E. to include Circle Time, Walk Tall, Stay Safe, Relationship and Sexuality Education
- Child Protection and Procedures training for staff
- N.E.P.S., CAMHS, Bernardos, Gardaí, Rainbows, Councillors
- S.E.T. Team
- S.N.A Team
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Code of Behaviour Policy
- Development of St. Brigid's as a Values School
- Moments of prayer

6. Critical Incident Management Team(CIMT)

In the event of a critical incident occurring, a Critical Incident Management Team(CIMT) has been established. Each member of the team, along with their key role has been identified below. In the interest of fairness, the roles have been proportionately distributed. Each member of the CIMT will keep detailed records of phone calls made and received, meetings held, persons met, interventions made, materials used etc. CIMT members will carry out their duties in a confidential manner.

Critical Incident Management Team Members	
<u>Role</u>	<u>Name</u>
<u>Team Leader</u>	Darina Burke Principal
<u>Garda Liaison</u>	Darina Burke Principal Catherine Lafferty Deputy Principal
<u>Staff Liaison</u>	Darina Burke Principal Catherine Lafferty Deputy Principal

<u>Parent/Guardian Liaison</u>	Darina Burke Principal Catherine Lafferty Deputy Principal
<u>Pupil Liaison</u>	Darina Burke Principal Helena Coggins MMT Member Class Teachers SNA where applicable
<u>Community Liaison</u>	Darina Burke Principal Margaret Lennon Chairperson
<u>Media Liaison</u>	Darina Burke Principal Margaret Lennon Chairperson
<u>Administrator</u>	Sheila Mulhair Secretary

7. Roles and Responsibilities of the Critical Incident Management Team

Roles and Responsibilities	
<u>Role</u>	<u>Responsibilities</u>
<p><u>Team Leader</u> <i>Darina Burke</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Confirm the event. ● Staff will be notified via the <i>St. Brigid's Announcement Whatsapp Group</i>. An announcement may also be made using the school intercom system. CODE 999 is the critical incident codeword. ● Activate the Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT). ● Coordinate tasks of the CIMT. ● Lead briefing meetings for staff on the facts as known, give staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions, outline the routine for the day. ● Express sympathy to the family. ● Clarify facts surrounding the event. ● Make contact with other relevant agencies. ● Decide how news will be communicated to different groups (staff, pupils, outside school).
<p><u>Garda Liaison</u> <i>Darina Burke</i> <i>Catherine Lafferty</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Work in partnership with the gardaí to support them with any questions that they might have in relation to the critical incident. ● Ensure that information about deaths or other developments is checked out for accuracy before being shared. ● Communicate immediately with the Gardaí in the event of a critical incident occurring in the school.
<p><u>Staff Liaison</u> <i>Darina Burke</i> <i>Catherine Lafferty</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Lead meetings to brief staff on the facts as known, gives staff members an opportunity to express their feelings, ask questions and outlines the routine for the day.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Advise staff on the identification of vulnerable pupils. ● Is alert to vulnerable staff members and makes contact with them individually. ● Keep staff updated.
<p><u>Parent/Guardian Liaison</u> <i>Darina Burke</i> <i>Catherine Lafferty</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Coordinate contact with families. ● Answer questions from concerned parents. ● Provide a direct phone line for queries, if it is deemed necessary for the specific incident. A phone and credit will be purchased at the time should the need arise. ● Consult with family around involvement of school in e.g. funeral service. ● Assist with all communication dealing with parents of any student affected by a critical incident. ● Meet with parents/guardians, when necessary.
<p><u>Pupil Liaison</u> <i>Helena Coggins</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Compile a list of vulnerable pupils ● Alert staff to vulnerable pupils. ● Advise the staff on the procedures for identification of vulnerable pupils. ● Outline specific services available for the pupils (Rainbows etc). ● Put in place clear referral procedures. ● Address immediate needs of staff. ● Provide supportive information for reintegrating the pupil/pupils back into the classroom.
<p><u>Community Liaison</u> <i>Darina Burke</i> <i>Margaret Lennon</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Liaise with agencies in the community for support and onward referral. ● Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies. ● Co-ordinates the involvement of these agencies. ● Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of key parents, such as members of the Parents Association.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency support services and other external contacts and resources.
<p>Media Liaison <i>Darina Burke</i> <i>Margaret Lennon</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With the Chairperson, prepare a public statement. • Organise a designated room to address media promptly. • Designate mobile numbers for contact. • Liaise with relevant outside support agencies.
<p>Administrator <i>Sheila Mulhair</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintenance of up to date lists of contact numbers of parents/guardians, teachers, emergency support services (parents/guardians update their contact details/ emergency contact details via Aladdin Connect. Reminders are issued at the start of each school year). • Telephone calls needing to be responded to. • Letters sent and materials photocopied. • Continuation of regular school business.

8. Action Plan

(i) Short Term Actions Day 1	
Task	CIMT Member
Convene	
Gather accurate information and check sources	Team Leader– Principal/Deputy Principal
Convene a C.I.M.T. meeting – (in person/virtually)	Team Leader-Principal
Conduct an initial assessment, decide what level of response is required, agree an action plan	CIMT
Contact external agencies- (e.g. N.E.P.S, TUSLA)	Team Leader-Principal
Decide who needs to be contacted directly and by what means (phone, email, text, website notice, Twitter notice)	Team Leader-Principal

Identify vulnerable pupils and consider how to connect with them	Team Leader-Principal Pupil Liaison-Helena Class Teacher SNA
Consider how to communicate with the bereaved family (face to face, phonecall)	Parent/Guardian Liaison-Principal
Notify Staff and Parents	
Staff meeting to give the staff the relevant information and to share the action plan (face to face/tested online platform)	Team Leader-Principal Staff Liaison-Deputy Principal
Notify parents (using agreed means)	Parent/Guardian Liaison-Principal
Draft a media statement (if necessary)	Media Liaison-Principal/Chairperson
Share resources with parents to support with the sharing of sad news with their children	Parent/Guardian Liaison-Principal Pupil Liaison-Helena
Connecting With Staff	
Connect with staff via agreed platform	Team Leader-Principal Staff Liaison-Deputy Principal
Make separate contact with staff who may be vulnerable or who may have a closer connection with the critical incident in question	Team Leader-Principal Staff Liaison-Deputy Principal
Remind staff of the availability of the <i>Inspire</i> service	Staff Liaison-Deputy Principal
Follow up staff meeting (in-person/virtually)	Team Leader-Principal Staff Liaison-Deputy Principal
Draw teacher's attention to resources related to wellbeing	Staff Liaison-Deputy Principal
Share with staff, any resources that are being shared with parents	Staff Liaison-Deputy Principal

(ii)Medium Term Actions Day 2 and Following Days	
Task	CIMT Member
Convene a CIMT meeting to review the events of the day and to look ahead to the following few days ahead (in person/virtually)	Team Leader-Principal
Meet external agencies (in person/virtually)	Team Leader-Principal (e.g. N.E.P.S.)
Meet whole staff (in person/virtually)	Staff Liaison-Principal/Deputy Principal All staff
Arrange support for pupils, staff, parents (facilitate an online platform for compiling condolences, encourage students to participate in a bereavement ritual)	Team Leader-Principal Staff Liaison-Deputy Principal Pupil Liaison-Helena

Visit the injured (communication may need to occur in a form that is not face to face)	Relevant School Personnel
Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements	Community Liaison-Principal/Chairperson
Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service (share the details of a funeral service that is being streamed, if applicable)	CIMT
Make decisions about school closure	Board of Management

(ii) Follow –up Beyond 72 hours	
Task	CIMT Member
Keep staff updated (in person, via email, online platform)	Staff Liaison-Principal/Deputy Principal
Keep parents updated	Parent Liaison-Team Leader
Monitor pupils for signs of continuing distress	Class Teacher (SNA if applicable)
Liaise with agencies regarding referrals	Class Teacher/Team Leader/Pupil Liaison
Plan for return of bereaved pupils(s)	Pupil Liaison/Team Leader/Class Teacher/SNA Contact with Parent/Guardian
Plan for giving of “memory box” to bereaved family	In Case of Pupil Death- All Staff and Local Community
Decide on memorials and anniversaries	BOM/ Staff, Parents and Pupils
Review response to incident and amend plan	Staff/BOM

9. Critical Incident Room

In the event of a critical incident, the computer room/ hall will be the main room used to meet the staff, pupils, parents and visitors involved. Classes will be addressed in individual classrooms or in the hall, as appropriate. In the event that the school is not accessible a room will be made available in the church to serve as a Critical Incident Room.

10. Data Protection

In line with the Data Protection Act 2018, all staff members 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.

11. Supporting School Policies

- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Code of Behaviour
- Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment
- Data Protection Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- COVID-19 Response Plan
- Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) Policy
- SPHE Curriculum Plan

12. Ratification and Review

This policy was reviewed by the Middle Management Team (MMT) in May 2021 and was ratified by the Board of Management in May 2021.

The BOM will monitor its implementation and will review it again, on or before , or as the need arises.

Appendix 1

Glossary of Technical Terms

BOM	Board of Management
CAMHS	Child and Adult Mental Health Services
CCTV	Closed Circuit Television
CIMT	Critical Incident Management Team
COVID	Coronavirus Disease
DES	Department of Education and Skills
MMT	Middle Management Team
NEPS	National Educational Psychological Services
SET	Special Education Teacher
SNA	Special Needs Assistant
SPHE	Social, Personal and Health Education

