



SAINT FINIAN'S NATIONAL
SCHOOL

Critical Incident Policy 2023/2024

St. Finian's N.S.

Critical Incident Policy

St. Finian's NS aims to protect the well being of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times, in keeping with our Mission Statement, part of which is: *"aspiring to promote self esteem, through open and respectful relationships, in a safe, caring environment."*

The Critical Incident Team, through the principal Ms. O'Connell, has drawn up a critical incident management plan. St Finian's NS has taken a number of measures to create a coping, supportive and caring ethos in the school.

The school has also formulated a number of policies and procedures to be followed with a view to ensuring the physical and psychological safety of staff and students, both in ordinary time and in the event of a critical incident.

What is a 'critical incident'?

The staff and management of St. Finian's NS 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 community
- Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism, etc.

Aim of Critical Incident Management Plan

Recognising that the key of managing critical incidents is planning, St. Finian's NS has developed this Critical Incident Management Policy and accompanying Plan. Our aim is that, in the event of an incident, these will help staff to react quickly and effectively and to maintain a sense of control. They should also help us to achieve a return to normality as soon as possible and to ensure that the effects on the students and staff will be limited.

Creation of a coping, supportive and caring atmosphere in the school

We have put systems in place to lessen the probability of the occurrence of an incident. These include measures to address both the physical and psychological safety of the school community:

Physical safety: We have formulated plans in accordance with our Health and Safety Policy including:

- an evacuation plan
- regular fire drills
- fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
- there is pre-opening morning time supervision from 8.50 am
- if a parent wants to take a child home early they must fill in the school Book, signing out child and child must be collected by parent/guardian
- playground rules: wrestling, fighting, rough play etc. are forbidden in the interests of safety. No child is allowed to leave the yard at lunchtime.

Psychological safety:

St. Finian's NS aims to create an open and encouraging environment in the school where students can talk about their difficulties and seek help for the same. We will refer to all available programmes and resources to address the personal and social development of our pupils, including:

- SPHE programmes included in the curriculum to address issues such as grief and loss, communication skills, stress and anger management, conflict management, problem solving, help-seeking, decision making and alcohol and drug prevention
- Our Weaving Wellbeing Programme is in place
- Our Code of Discipline Policy, Restorative Practice and Friendship and Inclusion Policy are in place
- Staff are informed of difficulties affecting individual students and are aware and vigilant to their needs
- Staff have access to books and resources on difficulties affecting the primary school child
- The school has developed links with outside agencies, which may be contacted in the event of an emergency and for onward referral of pupils ie NEPS, Better Finglas, Wellmount Clinic
- 2022 NEPS Psychological First Aid training for all staff
- 2020 NEPS Wellbeing Training for all staff
- 2022 BrianCalm training for all staff

Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)

Saint Finian's N.S. has set up a CI Management Team in line with best practice² and will maintain this team in the future. 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 once a year to review and update the plan. Each member of the team has a Ready-to-Go Pack with relevant materials to be used in the event of an incident

Key roles have been identified and assigned as follows:

Critical Incident Management Team

Role	Name
Team Leader	Maria O’Connell
Garda Liaison	Maria O’Connell
Staff Liaison	Maria O’Connell
Student Liaison	Terry Martin Sorcha Jennings Lisa Connolly
Parent Liaison	Grace Jordan/Maureen Fitzpatrick
Community Liaison	Grace Jordan/Julie Cogan
Media Liaison	Maria O’Connell
Administrator	Maria O’Connell
Chaplaincy Role	Fr. Seamus Ahearne
NEPS	Rhona Larney (Psychologist)

²A critical incident team “is a group of individuals from the staff of the school who know the community, the students and each other well enough to make the necessary decisions called for when an incident occurs” (Mary Schoenfeldt).

In the event of a critical incident the responsibilities of each role-holder will be as follows.

Team Leader

- Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting.
- Coordinates the tasks of the team
- Liaises with the Board of Management and Dept. of Ed. & Science
- Liaises with the bereaved family
- Facilitates ‘ question & answer’ meeting

Staff Liaison

- Leads meetings to brief staff on the facts as known, gives staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and outlines the routine for the day.
- Advises staff on the identification of vulnerable students
- 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.
- Keeps staff updated as the day progresses.

Student Liaison

- Liaises with other team members to keep them updated with information and progress.
- Alerts staff to vulnerable students
- Provides materials for students from the Ready to Go Pack.

Community Agency Liaison

- Liaises with agencies in the community for support and onward referral
- Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies
- Coordinates the involvement of these agencies.
- Reminds agency staff to wear name badges
- Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of
 - Key parents , such as members of the Parents Association
 - Emergency support services and other external contacts and resources
- Is alert to the need to check credentials of individuals offering support.

Parent Liaison

- Meets with individual parents.
- Consult with family around involvement of school e.g. funeral service
- Visits the bereaved family with the team leader

Media Liaison

- In preparing for the role Maria O'Connell will consider issues that may arise during the incident and how they might be responded to (eg students being interviewed, photographers on the premises etc).
- In the event of an incident, will liaise where necessary with the Communications Section in the Department of Education & Science

Administrative Duties-Community Liaison (secretary)

- Maintenance of up to date telephone numbers of parents/guardians/teachers
- Takes telephone calls and notes those that need to be responded to
- Ensures that the templates are on the school system in advance and ready for adaptation
- Prepares and sends out letters, emails and faxes
- Photocopies materials needed
- Maintains records

Record Keeping

In the event of an incident each member of the team will keep detailed records of phone calls made and received, letters sent and received, meetings held, persons met, interventions used, materials used etc. The school secretary will have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters, photocopying materials, etc

Letter to Parents

The Care Team will prepare a brief, written statement to include:

- The sympathy of the school community for the affected /bereaved family
- Positive information or comments about the deceased/injured person(s)
- The facts of the incident
- What has been done
- What is going to be done

Confidentiality and good name considerations

The school has a responsibility to protect the privacy and good name of the people involved in any incident and to 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 pupils do so also.

The term suicide will not be used without the consent of the family involved or until it has been established categorically that the person's death was a result of suicide. The phrases 'tragic death' or 'sudden death' may be used instead.

Critical Incident Rooms

In the event of a critical Incident:

The **Staff Room** will be used to meet staff

The **Classrooms** will be used for students

The **H.S.C.L Room 13** for parents

Tír Na nÓg for individual sessions with students

Library Room 11/Office for other visitors

Development and Communication of this policy and plan

All staff were consulted and their views canvassed in the preparation of the draft plan. Parent Association were also consulted and asked for their comments. Our school's final policy and procedures in relation to responding to critical incidents has been presented to all staff.

Each member of the staff has a personal copy of this Critical Incident Policy.

All new and temporary staff will be informed of the details of the plan by Terry Martin.

Key Roles Assigned

Role	Name
Team Leader	Maria O’Connell
Garda Liason	Maria O’Connell
Staff Liaison	Maria O’Connell
Student Liaison	Terry Martin/Lisa/Sorcha
Parent Liaison	Grace Jordan/Maureen Fitzpatrick
Community Liaison	Maureen Fitzpatrick /Julie Cogan
Media Liaison	Maria O’Connell

Emergency Contact list

Agency	Contact Numbers
Garda -Finglas Blanchardstown	6667500 6667000
Hospitals -Mater Connolly B.town Temple St.	8572764 6465826 8784224/8784200
Fire Brigade	8343656
Local G.P. Dr. Kevin Strong	8345400
H.S.E. Child & Family Centre ,C.knock	8112540 (phone) 8217047 (fax)
Inspector John Fitzgerald	
NEPS Psychologist Michelle Waldron	0761108673
DES -Communications	
INTO	8047700
Parish Priest: Fr. Seamus Ahearne	0876782746 8343722
Employee Assistance Service (EAS)	1800411057
Finglas Addiction Support	8110595
H.S.E. Wellmount	8567726
Dept. Ed. Science-General	8892428
Samaritans	1850609090
Bereavement Counselling Service	8391766
National Suicide Bereavement Support	02495561- check this
Rainbows	4734175
DES: Media Queries/Press office	8892322

Short Term Actions – Day 1

<u>Task</u>	<u>Name</u>
Gather accurate information	Relevant staff & witnesses (accidents)
Convene a CIMT meeting – specify a time and place clearly	Maria O’Connell
Contact external agencies	Community Liaison/Julie
Arrange supervision for students	Terry Martin
Hold staff meeting	All staff
Agree schedule for the day	Maureen Fitzpatrick
Inform student – (close friends and students with learning difficulties may need to be told separately)	Terry Martin / Sorcha Jennings/Lisa Connolly
Compile a list of vulnerable students	Terry Martin
Contact/visit the bereaved family	Principal & relevant staff
Prepare and agree media statement and deal with media	Maria O’Connell
Inform parents	Maureen Fitzpatrick / Grace Jordan
Hold end of day staff briefing	Maria/Terry
Media Liaison	Principal

Medium term actions (Day 2 and following days)

Convene a CIMT meeting to review the events of day 1	Team Leader Maria O'Connell
Meet external agencies	Maria O'Connell
Meet whole staff	Maria O'Connell
Arrange support for students, staff, parents	Terry Martin/Maureen Fitzpatrick/Lisa/Sorcha/Grace
Visit the injured	Any team member
Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements	Grace Jordan/Maureen Fitzpatrick
Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service	Staff
Make decisions about school closure	BOM

Follow up - beyond 72 hours

Monitor student for signs of continuing distress	Class teachers
Liaise with agencies regarding referrals	Maria O'Connell
Plan for return of bereaved students	Class teacher
Review response to incident and amend plan	Staff/BOM

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 staffs 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

I consent to having our daughter/son met by.....

I understand that my daughter/son may meet x... in an individual or group session depending on the arrangements which are thought to be most appropriate.

Name of Student: _____

Class: _____

Date of Birth: _____

I would like my daughter/son..... To avail of the support being offered by x.....

Signed: _____

Review Date September 2023