

Critical Incident

Policy & Procedures

Updated by Board of Management October 2021

Divine Word NS

Marley Grange.

Roll Number:19574H

Introduction:

The Divine Word NS aims to protect the wellbeing of its students by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times.

The Divine Word 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 Divine Word NS recognises a critical incident to be “an incident or sequence of events that overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school and disrupts the running of the school”.¹

Critical incidents may involve one or more pupils, staff, the school, or our local community.

Types of incidents might include:

- ***The death of a member of the school community through sudden death, accident, terminal illness, or suicide.***
- ***An intrusion into the school during school hours.***
- ***An accident/tragedy in the wider school community in relation to class and peers of affected persons.***
- ***Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism.***
- ***The disappearance of a member of the school community.***
- ***An accident involving members of the school community.***

Aim

Recognising that the key of managing critical incidents is planning, The Divine Word NS has developed this Critical Incident Management Policy and accompanying Plan. Our hope 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 ensure that the effects on the students and staff will be limited.

Creation of a coping supportive and caring ethos 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 both staff and students.

Physical safety:

- ***Evacuation plan formulated c/f Health and Safety Policy***
- ***Regular fire drills occur c/f Health and Safety Policy***
- ***Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked c/f Health and Safety Policy***

¹ Source: Responding to Critical Incidents in Schools – National Educational Psychological Services NEPS.

- ***Supervision during breaktimes (ordinary and wet)***

- **School and playground rules c/f Behaviour Policy + Anti Bullying Policy**

Psychological safety

The Divine Word NS aims to create an open and encouraging environment in the school where students can talk about their difficulties and seek help for same.

- ***SPHE programmes are 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 Behaviour Policy/Anti Bullying Policy includes an approach to bullying.***
- ***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 students.***

Critical Incident Management Team

The Divine Word NS has set up a CI Management Team in line with best practice² and will maintain this team for the school year. The members of the team were selected on a voluntary basis and will retain their roles for this school year. The members of the team will meet once a year to review and update the plan

Key roles have been identified and assigned as follows:

- Team Leader Principal
- Staff Liaison Principal
- Student Liaison Deputy Principal
- Parent Liaison Teacher Nominee Board of Management
- Community Liaison Deputy Principal
- Media Liaison Chairperson Board of Management
- Administrative Tasks School Secretary

² A 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).

What follow are a few points on the key responsibilities of each of the various roles and, in the boxes, a note on what you might be looking for in the role holder. However, each school will have to adapt these details to their own circumstances and needs.

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 Department of Education.
- Liaises with the bereaved family.

A person who carries authority and can make decisions during a crisis (e.g., school closure, attendance at memorial services, etc)

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.

A staff member known, trusted, and liked by the staff.

Student Liaison

- Liaises with other team members to keep them up-dated with information and progress.
- Alerts staff to vulnerable students.

A trusted and familiar figure to the students.
A bigger school may need a number of such people.

Community 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.
- Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of
 - Key parents, such as members of the parent's council
 - Emergency support services and other external contacts and resources.

Someone with good contacts with agencies and relevant individuals in the community

Someone known to parents. This person should be comfortable speaking before a large group and have skills to manage emotional reactions of individual or groups of parents.

Parent Liaison

- Facilitates 'questions and answers' meetings.
- Meets with individual parents.
- Provides information for parents.
- Visits the bereaved family with the team leader.

Media Liaison

- In preparing for the role, s/he will consider issues that may arise during an incident and how they

Someone with good interpersonal skills who would be comfortable talking to the media by phone or in person.
A person who is able to set limits without being offensive.

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 the Communications Section in the DES.

Administrative Tasks School Secretary

- Maintenance of up-to-date lists of contact numbers of
 - q Parents or guardians
 - q Teachers
 - q Emergency support services
- Telephone calls need to be responded to, letters sent, and materials photocopied.

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, material 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 Divine Word NS 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 persons(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 will be sensitive to the consequences of any public statements. The members of the school staff will bear this in mind and will see to ensure that pupils do so also. [For instance, the term 'suicide' should never be used. The phrase 'sudden death' will be used instead.]

Critical Incident Room

In the event of a critical incident, Principal's office will be the main room used to meet the staff, students, parents, and visitors involved.

Development and communication of this policy and plan

All staff were consulted, and their views canvassed in the preparation of the draft plan. Parent representatives 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 critical incident team has a personal copy.

All new and temporary staff will be informed of the details of the plan by the principal

CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT PLAN

Key Roles Assigned October 2021

TASK	NAME
OVERALL MANAGEMENT OF	Clare-Marie Murphy
COMMUNICATION	Daire Keogh & Clare-Marie Murphy
ADMINISTRATIVE TASKS	Barbara/Jennifer
SUPERVISION	Marie Mahony
MEDIA LIASION	Daire Keogh
PARENT LIASION	Donal Mangan
COMMUNITY LIASION	Marie Mahony
STUDENT LIASION	Marie Mahony
STAFF LIASION	Clare-Marie Murphy

Emergency Contact List

(To be displayed in staffroom, Principal's office etc.)

OUTSIDE AGENCY	CONTACT NUMBERS
GARDA	Dundrum Garda Station 01-6665600 Rathfarnham Garda 01-6666500 Station 01- 6667300
HOSPITAL	999 or 4142000 (Tallaght)
FIRE BRIGADE	999
HEALTH BOARD/FAMILY CENTRE	Rathfarnham Health Centre 6100024 Ballinteer 2951111
INSPECTORATE	Mr. Peadar Ó Muirí
NEPS PSYCHOLOGIST	Ms Roz McMahon 0871993652 01 8892700
DES COMMUNICATIONS	DES 8896400
INTO	C.E.C. Rep

PREVENTATIVE APPROACHES

- **CURRICULUM**
 - **ANTI BULLYING POLICY**
 - **BEHAVIOUR POLICY**
 - **CIRCLE TIME IN S.P.H.E.**
 - **WALK TALL/STAY SAFE PROGRAMME**
 - **SPHE POLICY**
 - **STAFF ALERT TO STUDENTS WITH DIFFICULTIES**

- **SUPPORT**
 - **NEPS**
 - **Fr. Jim**
 - **CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES etc**
 - **RAINBOWS as required/necessary**

- **PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT**
 - **FIRE DRILL – EVACUATION OF PUPILS**
 - **FIRE EXTINGUISHERS REGULARLY CHECKED AND MAINTAINED**
 - **STAFF ABLE TO USE FIRE EXTINGUISHERS**
 - **HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY**
 - **PLAYGROUND SUPERVISION C/F CODE OF DISCIPLINE**
 - **SOME STAFF HAVE HAD FIRST AID TRAINING**
 - **DEFIBULATOR ON SITE – TRAINED STAFF**
 - **MANUAL HANDLING COURSE COMPLETED BY SNA'S**

SHORT TERM ACTIONS AND ROLES ASSIGNED

1ST DAY

TASK	NAME (KEY & SUPPORT)
GATHER ACCURATE INFORMATION	Relevant Staff and Witnesses (accidents) Team
CONTACT APPROPRIATE AGENCIES	Principal /Chairperson BOM
CONVENE A MEETING WITH KEY STAFF	Principal
ARRANGE SUPERVISION OF STUDENTS	Deputy Principal
HOLD STAFF MEETING	ALL STAFF
ORGANISE TIMETABLE FOR THE DAY	Principal
INFORM PARENTS	Teacher Nominee BOM
INFORM STUDENTS	Principal Psychologists Class Teachers
MAKE CONTACT WITH THE BEREAVED FAMILY	Principal Priest if appropriate
DEALING WITH MEDIA	Chairperson BOM

MEDIUM TERM ACTIONS AND ROLES ASSIGNED

24 -72 HOURS

TASK	NAME - GROUP
REVIEW THE EVENTS OF THE FIRST 24 HOURS	STAFF
ARRANGE SUPPORT FOR INDIVIDUAL/GROUPS OF STUDENTS, PARENTS ETC.	Principal/Deputy/Chairperson/NEPS
PLAN THE REINTEGRATION OF STUDENTS AND STAFF	Whole Staff
PLAN VISITS TO INJURED	Principal, Team, Class Teachers
LIAISE WITH FAMILY RE FUNERAL ARRANGEMENTS/MEMORIAL SERVICE	Principal Priest
ATTENDANCE/PARTICIPATION AT FUNERAL SERVICE ETC	STAFF
SCHOOL CLOSURE	BOM

LONGER TERM ACTIONS AND ROLES ASSIGNED

BEYOND 72 HOURS

TASK	NAME/GROUP
MONITOR STUDENTS FOR SIGNS OF CONTINUING STRESS	CLASS TEACHERS SNA, RESOURCE, TEAMS
EVALUATE RESPONSE TO INCIDENT AND AMEND CI PLAN APPROPRIATELY	TEAM STAFF/BOM
FORMALISE PLAN FOR FUTURE	TEAM, STAFF/BOM
INFORM NEW STAFF/PUPILS	Principal/Deputy
DECIDE ON APPROPRIATE WAYS TO DEAL WITH ANNIVERSARIES	STAFF, BOM AND PARENTS

USEFUL CONTACT NUMBERS & Links

BARNARDOS	450355
THE SAMARITANS	1850 609090
CHILDLINE	1800 666666
PARENTLINE	1890 927277
AWARE	6766166 1890 303302
NATIONAL SUICIDE BEAREAVEMENT SUPPORT	024 95561
RAINBOWS	4734175
THE BEREAVEMENT COUNSELLING SERVICE	8391766
BEREAVEMENT COUNSELLING	6767727
Responding to Critical Incidents NEPS Guidelines https://assets.gov.ie/40700/21b5193521d147c890b4309fe4bfce9d.pdf	

SAMPLE LETTER TO PARENTS

Dear Parents,

The school has experienced (the sudden death, accidental injury) of one of our students. We are deeply saddened by the deaths/events.

(Brief details of the incident, and in the event of a death, perhaps some positive remembrances of the person lost)

We have support structures in place to help your child cope with this tragedy. (Elaborate) If you need support contact school for details.

It is possible that your child may have some feelings that he/she may like to discuss with you. You can help your child by taking time to listen and encouraging them to express their feelings. It is important to give truthful information that is appropriate to their age.

If you would like advice, you may contact the following people at the school. (Details).

Principal

SAMPLE LETTER REQUESTING CONSENT FOR INVOLVEMENT OF OUTSIDE PROFESSIONALS

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Following the recent (tragedy, death of x) we have arranged professional support for students in school who need particular help. (x...) is available to help us with this work. The support will usually consist of talking to children, either in small groups or on a one-to-one basis and offering reassurance and advice as appropriate.

Your son/daughter has been identified as one of the students who would benefit from meeting with the x.... If you would like your child to receive this support, please sign the attached permission slip and return to the school by

If you would like further information on the above or to talk to the psychologist, please indicate this on the slip or telephone the school.

Principal

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

We understand that our 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: _____

We would like our daughter/sonto avail of the support being offered by x.....

Signed: _____

