



St. Peter's National School

Critical Incidence Policy

Introduction

St. Peter's National School aims to protect the well-being of our pupils and staff by providing a positive, safe, supportive and nurturing environment at all times. Our mission statement outlines the value we place on empowering our children to have the intellectual and emotional tools to navigate life today and into the future. Central to our mission statement is our 'children first' ethos, which enables us to meet and cater for the individual needs of all children regardless of social background, religious denomination, gender, educational achievement and physical characteristics. Our focus on trusted relationships and lifelong connections further emphasises our values of inclusivity and equality; therefore, meeting the nine grounds as listed in the Equal Status Act of 2000 – gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and being a member of the travelling community.

The Board of Management, through the Principal and Deputy Principal, and in consultation with staff and parents, has drawn up a Critical Incident Management Policy and Plan which forms part of the overall Plean Scoile. This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis.

Review and Research

The following resource documents available to schools on www.education.ie and through NEPS have been consulted in the writing of this plan. The resources are all available in the school office also.

- Responding to Critical Incidents Guidelines and Resources for Schools (NEPS, 2016)
- Suicide Prevention in Schools: Best Practice Guidelines (IAS, National Suicide Review Group, 2002)
- Suicide Prevention in the Community – A Practical Guide (HSE, 2011)
- Well-being in Primary Schools – Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion (DES, DOH, HSE, 2015)

What is a Critical Incident?

St. Peter's National School recognises a critical incident to be 'any 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.

Once an incident occurs, the Principal and Chairperson will decide if the occurrence constitutes a 'critical incident'. The involvement of the wider community will also depend on the incident and be at the Principal's and Chairperson's discretion.

Examples of incidents might include:

- The death of a member of the school community through accident, violence, suicide, or suspected or other unexpected death
- Major accidents or serious injury involving members of the school community
- An accident/tragedy in the wider community
- Major illness or outbreak of disease

- Disappearance of a member of the school community
- Unauthorised removal of student from school or home
- Criminal incidents or intrusion into the school
- Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism, natural and technological disaster
- Civil unrest, war (foreign nationals may be traumatised by events that happened in their country of origin)
- World events that may affect the student body and/or staff, which may present a need for the provision of discussion and involvement in ceremonies

Aim

The aim of the critical incident policy is to help school management and staff to react quickly and effectively in the event of an incident, to enable staff 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 effects of the critical incident on the students and staff will be limited. Its aim is also to enable the school to effect a return to normality as soon as is possible.

Creation of a coping supportive and caring ethos in the school

We have put systems in place to help 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.

Physical safety

The following policies and strategies have been put in place in order to maintain the physical safety of all members of the school community:

- Health & Safety Statement (reviewed annually).
- Regular fire drills occur and evacuation plan formulated.
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked.
- The Fire Alarm is serviced regularly, at least once a year.
- Playground gates are locked during school hours.
- Pupils leaving early will only be released by a member of teaching staff when an authorised adult arrives to accompany the child from the premises.
- Pupils are not released into the care of persons unknown to school staff without checking with a parent/ guardian.
- Pupils are reminded of playground rules by staff at regular intervals in the context of our School Code of Behaviour.
- Pupils are adequately supervised at all times especially during physical activity and breaktimes.
- First Aid box maintained and kept in: (a) in the hallway of each classroom in the medicine cabinet and (b) in the hall of the staff room.
- Water, road, farm safety are covered in SPHE and SESE at various class levels

Psychological Safety

St. Peter's National School aims to use available programmes and resources to address the personal and social development of students, to enhance a sense of safety and security within the school and to provide opportunities for reflection and discussion. We strive to create an open and encouraging environment in the school where we encourage students to talk about their difficulties and seek help when needed.

The following strategies aim to support and ensure the psychological well-being of our pupils:

- Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is an integral part of the school curriculum and is integrated into daily school life. SPHE addresses issues such as grief and loss; communication skills; stress and anger management; conflict management; resilience; problem solving; help-seeking; bullying; decision making, and prevention of drug and alcohol misuse. Promotion of mental health is an integral part of this SPHE provision.
- Students complete 'My Thoughts About School' Checklist annually.
- Staff have access to training for their role in SPHE including the facilitation of the 'Friends for Life' programme.
- Staff are familiar with the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures – each staff member is given a copy of the school's Child Safe Guarding Statement and child protection policies at the beginning of each academic year.
- St. Peter's National School's Anti-Bullying Policy is reviewed and communicated to the whole school community every year.
- Cyber-Bullying workshops are organised bi-annually for children in 3rd-6th class and parents of all children.
- Substance / Alcohol Misuse Policy is reviewed and communicated regularly.
- Staff have access to books and resources on difficulties effecting the primary school child and funding is made available for the purchase of others when needed.
- Information is provided on mental health in general, as well as on specific areas such as signs and symptoms of depression and anxiety.
- Staff are informed in the area of suicide awareness through documentation and regular workshops in this area and in mental health.
- Staff are fully aware of Mental Health Guidelines
- Staff are informed of difficulties effecting individual students and are aware of and vigilant in identifying their needs.
- The school has developed links with outside agencies, which may be contacted in the event of an emergency and for onward referral of students. These include:
 - NEPS
 - Túsla Child and Family Agency
 - HSE
 - Garda
- 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 are analysed.
- There is a care system in place in the school using the 'Continuum of support' approach which is outlined in the NEPS documents published in 2007 for primary schools and 2010 for post primary schools in addition to up to date DES documents and circulars on the New Model of Support within schools.
- Once students are identified as being at risk, concerns are explored and the appropriate level of assistance and support is provided. The child may access additional resources. Parents are informed, and where appropriate, a referral is made to an appropriate agency.
- Staff are informed about how to access support for themselves. Individual teachers requiring additional support at a particular time may access the Employee Assistance Service. Further information can be accessed at www.carecall.ie. or telephone: 1800 411 057.
- The school's PTA frequently run NPC course for parents in various areas of children's lives.

Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)

St. Peter's N.S Critical Incidence Management Team has been established in line with best practice.

- The Principal
- The Deputy Principal
- The Assistant Principal II Post holder
- The Chairperson of the BoM
- The Secretary

The members of the team each have specific roles assigned and 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.

Critical Incident Management Team		
Role	Name	Phone
Team leader	Principal	(01) 8026741
Garda liaison	Principal and Chairperson	(01) 8026741
Staff liaison	Principal and Deputy Principal	(01) 8026741
Student liaison	Principal, DP, APII, Chairperson, Secretary	(01) 8026741
Community liaison	Principal, DP, APII, Secretary	(01) 8026741
Parent liaison	Principal, DP, APII, Chairperson, Secretary	(01) 8026741
Media liaison	Principal, APII, Chairperson	(01) 8026741
Administrator	Secretary	(01) 8026741

CIMT Roles and Responsibilities

Any roles and responsibilities relating to a critical incident involving 'serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism, natural and technological disaster' are documented in blue. All other roles and responsibilities relate to the harm/death of an individual/group member of the school community.

	School Principal	Deputy principal	APII	Chairperson	School Secretary
Team Leader <i>(In the event where both the Principal and the Deputy Principal are away at the time of a critical incident, the rest of the Critical Incident Team have the authority to proceed)</i>	Alerts the team to the crisis and convenes a team meeting	Co-ordinates the tasks of the team in consultation with the Principal		Liases with the BoM, DES and NEPS	Assist with ESINET application for Emergency works scheme grant aid
	Liases with the BoM, DES and NEPS			Liases with the bereaved family	
	Liases with the bereaved family			Assists with Emergency works application	
	Organises the application for Emergency works funding.				
Garda Liaison	Liases with the Gardai			Liases with the Gardai	Keep records of reports made to Gardai of incident.
	Ensures that information about deaths or other developments are checked out for accuracy before being shared			Ensures that information about deaths or other developments are checked out for accuracy before being shared	

	School Principal	Deputy principal	APII	Chairperson	School Secretary
Staff Liaison	Leads briefing meetings for the staff on the facts as known, gives staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions. Outlines the routine for the day.	Leads briefing meetings for the staff on the facts as known, gives staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions. Outlines the routine for the day.	Creates a list of the absolute necessities for teaching and learning to continue and liaises with staff to create this.	Is visible and available to staff in their pastoral role.	Organises the ordering of resources/materials needed in the short term to meet the current needs.
		Advises staff on the procedures for the identification of vulnerable pupils			
		Keeps staff updated as the day progresses			
	Is alert to vulnerable staff member and make contact with them individually	Is alert to vulnerable staff member and make contact with them individually			
	Informs staff of alternative arrangements for teaching and learning – online or alternative space	Advises staff of the availability of the Employee Assistance Service (EAS) and of its number – Freephone Helpline 1800411057			
Student Liaison	Visit classrooms and individual pupils where needed and liaises with Chairperson to arrange appropriate times for their visit	Alerts staff to vulnerable pupils	Provides Materials for students	Arrange with Principal an appropriate time to visit classrooms or individual pupils if applicable	Maintains students contact records
	Ensures DP is aware of vulnerable pupils associated with the critical incident	Ensures individual needs are considered in relation to the temporary accommodation and resources organised.	Looks after setting up and supervision of 'quiet room' where agreed		
Community Agency Liaison	Liaises with agencies within the community for the support and onward referral	Is alert to the need to check credentials of individuals offering support	Arrange parent meetings, if held	Reach out to local politicians for support in arranging temporary accommodation.	Maintains up to date lists of BoM, PTA, staff on leave, emergency support services and other external contacts and resources
	Co-ordinates the involvement of outside agencies				
	Updates team member of involvement of external agencies				Reminds agency staff to wear name badges

	School Principal	Deputy principal	APII	Chairperson	School Secretary
Parent Liaison	Informs parents using template letter	Meets with individual parents	Meets with individual parents	Visits the bereaved family with the team leader	Ensures that sample letters are typed up on the schools system and ready for adaptation
	Meet with individual parents	Sets up room for meeting with parents	Sets up room for meeting with parents	May facilitate parent meetings, if held, and manage questions and answers	
	Provides appropriate materials for parents and distribute to DP and APII	Maintains a record of parents seen	Maintains a record of parents seen	Meets with individual parents	
		Provides appropriate materials for parents from Principal	Provides appropriate materials for parents from Principal	Provides appropriate materials for parents from Principal	
Media Liaison <i>(in case of an incident, it is school policy that no photographers be allowed on the premises and that pupils would not be interviewed. In a letter to parents following the incident, pupil/parents giving interviews is heavily discouraged)</i>	Will draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews		Will liaise where necessary with the INTO	Will draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews	
Administrator					Maintenance of up to date telephone numbers of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents and guardians • Teachers • Emergency services
					Takes telephone calls and notes those who need to be responded to.
					Ensures that templates are on the school's system in advance and ready for adaptation
					Prepares and sends out letters, emails and texts
					Photocopies materials needed
					Maintains records

The members of the CIMT will meet annually to review and update the policy and plan. Each member has a dedicated critical incident 'Ready-to-go' 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.

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 (templates will be available in each of the CIMT folders).

The school secretary will have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters, photocopying materials, etc. At the end of the critical incident, the school secretary will scan and upload all the documentation to the Critical Incident folder on the shared admin drive on Google Drive.

Letter to Parents

The Principal will prepare a brief, written statement to include:

- The sympathy of the school community for the affected/bereaved family
- Or
- Details of the
 - 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

St. Peter's National 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. Members of the school staff will bear this in mind and will seek to ensure that pupils do also, e.g. the term 'suicide' will not be used unless there is solid 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 Incidence Rooms	
In the event of a critical incidence, the following rooms are designated for the indicated purposes:	
Room name:	Designated purpose:
Staff room	Main room for meeting Staff
Resource room	Meeting with Students
Resource room	Meeting with Parents
Resource room	Meeting with Media
Resource room or Principal's office	Individual sessions with students, staff or parents
Principal's office	Meetings with other visitors
Oak Centre	If large gathers of parents/students/wider school community is needed

Development and communication of this policy and plan

All staff members were consulted and asked for their comments in the preparation of this policy and plan. Our school's final policy and procedures in relation to responding to critical incidents has been presented to all staff. Parents/guardians were all presented with the proposed plan and asked for their feedback before final approval by the Board of Management. Each member of the critical incident team has a personal copy of the plan and necessary templates and documents in their 'ready-to-go' pack. All new and temporary staff will be informed of the details of the Critical Incidence plan by the Deputy Principal and will feature as part of the welcome Pack for new staff. St. Peter's National School's Critical Incident Policy will be ratified by BoM and reviewed regularly and up-dated as required.

Action Plan

Day 1

Task	Name
Gather accurate information <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who? • What? • When? • Where? 	Principal
Immediate contact with families involved in incident <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consult with the family regarding appropriate support from the school, e.g. funeral service. • Arrange a home visit by two staff representatives within 24 hours, if appropriate. (Principal + Class Teacher + or Home School Community Liaison) • Have regard for different religious traditions and faiths. 	Principal and Chairperson
Convene a CIMT Meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where? • When? 	Principal
Organise a staff meeting, if appropriate. During holiday time the Principal will inform the Critical Incident Team. Staff will be requested to confirm the receipt of any text messages. If message is delivered from Principal, respond to Principal, if received from Aladdin respond to School Secretary, if received from Deputy Principal respond to Deputy Principal. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 and give to the student Liaison person (APII) • Arrange supervision of pupils • Liaise with the family regarding funeral arrangements/memorial service. 	All Staff Organised by Chairperson and Principal
Contact appropriate external agencies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency services • Medical services • HSE Psychology Departments/Community care services • NEPS • B.O.M. • DES/Schools inspector • Insurance Company 	Principal
Arrange supervision of pupils	Deputy principal
Inform parents	Principal
Contact with families of the other children affected, options: a) in school support b) withdrawal by family.	Principal and Chairperson
Inform students <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • close friends and students with learning difficulties may need to be told separately 	Principal/DP/APII
Compile a list of vulnerable students	APII
Ensure a quiet place can be made for pupils/staff/Parents/Families <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rooms will be made available as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Prayer/Reflection Room: Quiet Room o Individual Meetings: Principal's Office/Resource room o In the case of a major incident the Oak Centre or Resource room will be used 	DP and APII
Prepare and agree media statement and deal with media	Principal and Chairperson
Hold end of day staff briefing	All Staff and Chairperson

Day 2 and following days

Task	Name
Convene a CIMT meeting to review the events of day 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the events of first 24 hours. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Decide arrangements for support meetings for parents/pupils/staff. 2. Decide on mechanism for feedback from teachers on vulnerable students. 3. Establish contact with absent staff and pupils. 	Principal
Meet external agencies	CIMT Staff
Meet Whole staff	CIMT
Arrange support for students, staff, parents <u>Pupils and parents</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrange support for individual pupils, groups of pupils, and parents, if necessary. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Hold support/information meeting for parents/pupils, if necessary, in order to clarify what has happened. 2. Teacher for each class group to talk separately (depending on age) bearing in mind that there are certain things they don't need to know. 3. The C.I.M.Team will be sensitive to Staff Needs 4. Arrange, in consultation, with outside agencies, individual or group debriefings or support meetings: (with parental permission). <u>Staff</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure staff have the supports they need • Identify vulnerable members of staff and identify additional supports that they may need 	Principal Deputy Principal APII
Visit the injured	Principal Chairperson
Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements	Principal
Make decisions about school closure	BoM

Follow-up - beyond 72 hours

Task	Name
Monitor students for signs of continuing distress <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If, over a prolonged period of time, a student continues to display the following, he/she may need assistance from the HSE. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Uncharacteristic behaviour 2. Deterioration in academic performance 3. Physical symptoms - e.g. weight loss/gain, lack of attention to appearance, tiredness, restlessness 4. Inappropriate emotional reactions 5. Increased absenteeism 	Class Teachers
Liaise with agencies regarding referrals	Class Teachers Liaise with Principal who makes contact

<p>Plan for return of bereaved student(s)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Plan for the re-integration of pupils/staff e.g., absentees, injured, siblings, close relative etc.) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Student Liaison person may liaise with above on their return to school. 2. Plan Visits to injured. 3. Chairperson + Principal + Class Teacher to visit home/hospital 4. Attendance and participation at funeral/memorial service (to be decided). 5. Decide this in accordance with Parents' wishes and school management decisions and in consultation with close school friends. School closure. 6. Request a decision on this from school management. 	Principal
Consult with NEPS Psychologist	Principal
Plan for giving of 'memory box' to bereaved family (if deemed appropriate)	Class teachers
Decide on memorials and anniversaries (if deemed appropriate)	BoM/Staff, parents and students
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Inform new staff/new school pupils affected by Critical Incidents where appropriate. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure that new staff is aware of the school policy and procedures in this area. 2. Ensure they are aware of which pupils were affected by any recent incident and in what way. 3. When individual pupils or a class of pupils affected by an incident are transferring to a new school, it would be useful to brief the Principal of the new school. 	DP
<p>Review response to incident and amend plan, if necessary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Evaluate response to incident and amend Critical Incident Management Plan appropriately <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What went well? 2. Where were the gaps? 3. What was most/least helpful? 4. Have all necessary onward referrals to support services been made? 5. Is there any unfinished business? ● Formalise the Critical Incident Plan for the future. 	Staff, BoM, CIMT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Decide on appropriate ways to deal with anniversaries. (Be sensitive to special days and events) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Anniversaries may trigger emotional responses in pupils/staff and they may need additional support at this time. 2. Acknowledge the anniversary with the family. 3. Be sensitive to significant days like Birthdays, Christmas, Mother's Day, and Father's Day. 	Principal, Staff and BoM
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Plan a school memorial service e.g. plant tree (closure) 	Principal, Staff and BoM
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Care of deceased persons possessions. What are the parents' wishes? 	Principal/Chairperson
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Update and amend school records. 	Principal and Staff

Emergency Contact List


Agency	Numbers
Garda – Dunboyne Station	01-8252211
Hospital: Connolly Blanchardstown	01-6465000
Fire Brigade	999
Local GPs	Dunboyne surgery: 01-8255069 Family Practitioners: 01-8252105
HSE Social Work Department	046-9097800
Community Care Team	01-8251622
Tusla	01-7718500
CAMHS	046-9079350
School inspector	087-7471384
NEPS Psychologist	01-8650635
DES	01-8896400
INTO	01-8047700
Chairperson	086-3826646
Employee Assistance Service	1800411057

Ratification and Communication

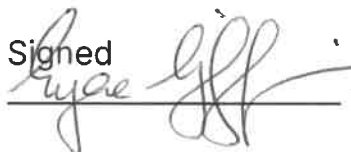
This policy has been reviewed in February 2022 and will apply from the 2nd of March, 2022. The Principal welcomes ideas to change/improve this policy at any time. This policy will be formally reviewed annually.

The Board of Management have officially ratified this policy

Signed

 Principal 9th March 2022 (Date Ratified)

Signed

 Chairperson of BoM 9 March 2022 (Date Ratified)