



## Critical Incident Policy

### *What is a Critical Incident?*

"A critical incident is any incident or sequence of events which overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school and disrupts the running of the school"

### Examples:

- Death, major illness/outbreak of disease
- Criminal incidents
- Major accidents, serious injury
- Suicide
- Civil unrest, war (refugees may be traumatised by events that happened elsewhere)
- Fire, natural and technological disaster. See also Fire Policy
- Disappearance of student from home or school
- Unauthorized removal of student from school or home.
- Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism etc.

Role	Name
<b>Team Leader:</b>	Lorna Gerrard
<b>Garda Liaison</b>	Lorna Gerrard
<b>Staff Liaison</b>	Debbie Connor Sean Flanagan
<b>Pupil Liaison</b>	Debbie Connor
<b>Community Liaison</b>	Lorna Gerrard
<b>Parent Liaison</b>	Lorna Gerrard
<b>Media Liaison</b>	Lorna Gerrard Fr. Richard Matthews Chair of BOM
<b>Administrator</b>	Sharon Carolan





## *Roles and Responsibilities*

### **Leadership Role:**

#### Intervention

- Confirm the event (Lorna and/or Debbie)
- Activate the C.I. management team (Lorna and/or Debbie)
- Express sympathy to family (Lorna and/or Debbie and /or Fr Matthews)
- Clarify facts surrounding event (Lorna and/or Debbie)
- Make contact with other relevant agencies (Debbie and/or Lorna)
- Decide how news will be communicated to different groups (staff, pupils, outside school) (Lorna and/or Debbie)

#### After the Event/Postvention

- Ensure provision of ongoing support to staff and pupils (Lorna and/or Debbie)
- Facilitate any appropriate memorial events (Lorna and Fr Matthews)
- Review plan (staff and BOM)

### **Communication Role:**

#### Intervention

- With team prepare a public statement (Lorna)
- Organise designated room to address media promptly (Sharon)
- Address media (Lorna)
- Ensure telephone line free for outgoing and important incoming calls (Sharon)
- Liaison with relevant outside support agencies (Lorna and Debbie/Sean)

#### After the Event/Postvention

- Review and evaluate effectiveness of communication response (All)

### **Student Liaison/Counseling Role:**

#### Intervention (Debbie/Sean and/or Lorna)

- Outline specific services available in school
- Put in place clear referral procedures
- Address immediate needs of staff & pupils
- Information
- Counseling for staff & pupils

#### After the Event/Postvention (Debbie/Sean and/or Lorna)

- Ongoing support to vulnerable students
- Monitor class most affected
- Refer on, as appropriate
- Review and evaluate plan

### **Chaplaincy Role:**

#### Intervention (Lorna & Fr Matthews)

- Visit home, if appropriate
- Assist with prayer services
- Make contact with local clergy
- Be available as personal and spiritual support to staff



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## After the Event/Postvention

- Provide follow-up support to family (Lorna/Debbie/Fr. Matthews)
- Work in partnership with religious education team
- Review and evaluate plan

## Family Liaison Role:

### Intervention (DP and or Lorna)

- Coordinate contact with families (following first contact by principal)
- Consult with family around involvement of school e.g. funeral service
- Assist with all communication dealing with parents of any student affected by critical incident

### After the Event/Postvention

- Provide ongoing support to bereaved family
- Involve as appropriate family in school liturgies/memorial services.
- Offer to link family with community support groups
- Review and evaluate plan.

## Action Plan

### Summary Checklist for Principal

1. Gather the facts – Who? What? When? and Where?
2. Contact appropriate agencies
3. Convene the Critical Incident Management Team
4. Organize for the supervision of students
5. Inform staff
6. Agree on a statement of the facts & consult with BOM as to statement
7. Identify high risk students
8. Appoint someone to deal with phone enquiries
9. Organize timetable for the day

## MAINTAIN THE NORMAL SCHOOL ROUTINE WHEN AT ALL POSSIBLE

10. Inform parents/guardians
11. Inform students
12. Make contact with the bereaved family
13. Organize support
14. Respond to the media.

## SHORT-TERM ACTIONS (Day 1)

- Contact the emergency services if appropriate
- Immediate contact with family/families (see attached family contact list). Sharon able to contact families by text using a mobile phone
- Consult with the family regarding appropriate support from the school, e.g. funeral service
- Ensure that a quiet place can be made for students/staff
- Rooms will be made available as follows:
  - Prayer room: Day chapel in Church if school unavailable
  - Individual Meetings: Office or Parochial House if school unavailable





# St Patrick's National School

*Coinnigh an solas ar lasadh*

Slane, Co. Meath

(041) 982 4229  
office@slanens.ie  
www.slanens.ie  
Roll No: 18040L  
Acting Principal:  
Lorna Gerrard

Parents: Hall or old school at Church if school unavailable

## Media Briefing

- Designate a spokesperson. Principal
- Prepare a brief statement. Staff
- Protect the family's privacy
- Gather accurate information
- It is important to obtain accurate information about the incident.
  1. What happened, where and when?
  2. What is the extent of the injuries?
  3. How many are involved and what are their names (only release names after parents notified & agreement)
  4. Is there a risk of further injury?
  5. What agencies have been contacted already?
- Contact appropriate agencies
  1. Emergency services/Gardai/Priest
  2. Medical services
  3. Health Services Executive Psychology Departments/Community Care Services
  4. National Educational Psychology Services
  5. Board of Management
  6. Department of Education and Skills/Schools Inspector
  7. Health and Safety Authority/Health & Safety Officer/Emergency Parents Team
- Convene a meeting with Key Staff/Critical Incident Management Team (8.30 a.m.)
  1. Organize a staff meeting, if appropriate. (9.00 a.m.)
  2. Organize timetable/routine for the day. (Adhering to the normal school routine is important, if this is possible).
  3. 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
  4. Arrange supervision of students
- Liaise with the family regarding funeral arrangements/memorial service
  1. The Chaplain/Principal will liaise with the family, to extend sympathy and clarify the family's wishes regarding the school's involvement in funeral/memorial service
  2. Arrange a home visit by two staff representatives within 24 hours, if appropriate (Principal and/or Deputy + Class teacher)
  3. Have regard for different religious traditions and faiths

## **MEDIUM-TERM ACTIONS (24-72 HOURS)**

- Preparation of students/staff attending funeral
- Involvement of students/staff in liturgy if agreed by bereaved family
- Facilitation of students'/staffs' responses, eg. Sympathy cards, flowers, book of condolences, etc.
- Ritual within the school
- Review the events of the first 24 hours
  1. Reconvene Key Staff/Critical Incident Management Team. (8.30 a.m.)
  2. Decide arrangements for support meetings for parents/students/staff
  3. Decide on mechanism for feedback from teachers on vulnerable students
  4. Have review of Critical Incident Management Team meeting. (3.00 p.m.)
  5. Establish contact with absent staff and pupils



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- Arrange support for individual students, groups of students, and parents, if necessary
  1. Hold support/information meeting for parents/students, if necessary, in order to clarify what has happened.
  2. Give any teacher who feels uncomfortable with involvement in support meetings the choice of opting out.
  3. Arrange, in consultation, with outside agencies, individual or group debriefings or support meetings with parental permission.
- Plan for the re-integration of students and staff e.g. absentees, injured, siblings, close relative etc)
  1. Student Liaison person to liaise with above on their return to school
  2. Plan visits to injured
  3. Family Liaison person + Class Teacher + Principal 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
  6. School closure (request a decision on this from school management)

## 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 Service Executive
  1. Uncharacteristic behavior
  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.
- Evaluate response to incident and amend Critical Incident Management Plan appropriately
  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?
- Formalize the Critical Incident Plan for the future
  1. Consult with NEPS Psychologist
- Inform new staff/new school pupils affected by Critical Incidents where appropriate
  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 in 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 but only with consent of parents.
- Decide on appropriate ways to deal with anniversaries (be sensitive to special days and events)
  1. Anniversaries may trigger emotional responses in students/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.
- Plan a school memorial service
- Care of deceased person's possessions. What are the parent's wishes?
- Staff de-briefing & counseling
- Review Incident – what went well – what could we do better
- Update and amend school records



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Lorna Gerrard

Signed on behalf of the Board of Management

Chairperson: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



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