*Presentation Convent N.S.,   
Castlecomer  
Co. Kilkenny  
  
Tel: 056 - 4441426  
Email: prescomer@gmail.com  
Web: www.prescomerns.scoilnet.ie*  
**Critical Incident Management Plan Reviewed March 2020**

In February 2020, the Principal and teachers of the Presentation Convent N.S., attended a planning and information day on Critical Incidents with NEPS psychologists, Caroline Donnelly and Aideen Carey. It was decided that a Critical Incident Management plan would be reviewed to reflect new procedures and new personnel in school.

This policy provides a framework for dealing, with any significant critical incident which may occur in the school community or an incident outside of the immediate school community which impacts on school life.

**Definition of 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.

Such incidents include suicide, sudden death of a pupil(s) or staff, accidents which may or may not be fatal, involving pupils or staff.

The following are the members of the current team as of March 2020:

* Mrs Mary Jacob
* Ms Anne McGrath
* Mrs Valerie Keogh
* Ms Michelle O’ Sullivan
* Mrs Marie Kenny
* Ms Louise Jordan
* Mrs Carmel Kenny
* Mrs Patricia McDonald
* Mrs Sally Moynagh

Key Roles Assigned

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Task** | **Name** |
| Team leader: Overall management of response | \* Mary Jacob (Principal) Marie Kenny (Deputy Principal) |
| Communication with staff, B.O.M., emergency services etc. | \* Mary Jacob (Principal) Marie Kenny (Deputy Principal) |
| Implementation of Plan | \* Mary Jacob (Principal) Marie Kenny (Deputy Principal) |
| Supervision of pupils | Louise Jordan (downstairs)  Michelle O’Sullivan (upstairs)  Mrs Patricia McDonald (SNA),  Mrs Sally Moynagh (SNA) |
| Media liaison | \* Mary Jacob (Principal) Marie Kenny (Deputy Principal) |
| Parent liaison | Marie Kenny |
| Community liaison | Anne McGrath, Marie Kenny |
| Student liaison | Valerie Keogh |
| Staff liaison | Michelle O’ Sullivan |
| Chaplaincy role | Fr Ian Doyle (BOM) |
| BOM representative | Pat Parle (or nominated substitute) |
| Administrative role | Helen Stone, secretary |

Note: descriptions of the above roles will be outlined further in this document.

\*The first-named person has the responsibility as defined.

The second-named person assists and assumes responsibility on the absence of the first-named.

**Preventative Approaches:**

The school ethos, the Religious Education and SPHE programmes are all instrumental in promoting:

* Positive mental health,
* The importance of health and safety, and
* A safe, secure atmosphere for pupils and staff.

**Supporting the staff in these preventative strategies, are:**

1. **The Curriculum:**

Circle – time

SPHE programmes including Walk Tall and Stay Safe programmes, Anna Freud mental health workshop, activities on World Mental Health Day.

Grow In Love series

1. **School policies:**

Anti – bullying

Behaviour policy

SPHE and R.S.E policies

Health and Safety

Acceptable Use Policy

1. **Support:**

NEPS

Parish priest / clergy

In-service provision

Barnardos

Rainbows

G.P.

Regional Suicide Office

1. **Physical environment:**

Fire drill – evacuation of pupils

Maintenance of fire extinguishers

Staff ability to use fire extinguishers

Playground supervision

Hazardous substances ,cleaning products, medicines,gardening tools/machinery etc. all kept under lock and key and only accessed with adult supervision.

###### Plan of action for the first 24 hours following Critical Incident

1. Notify staff by text/phone and / or meet (depending on time).
2. Inform BOM
3. Consult and co–operate, to fullest extent, with emergency services
4. Organise the pupils in the school
5. Organise room for parents in the school– kitchen, if possible.
6. Field phone – calls from concerned parents / guardians
7. Contact appropriate agencies, e.g., Department of Education and Science, Rainbows, etc
8. Notify ancillary staff members and assign roles, e.g., supervision of pupils.

##### Task Descriptions at time of Crisis (ref. Section 4 responding to Critical Incidents, NEPS Guidelines and Resource Materials for Schools)

**Management Team:**

* Convene to consider appropriate response
* Decide on what relevant information should be given to classes by class teachers
* Liaise with relevant services e.g. NEPS, when required

**Follow up actions**

* At time of anniversary, significant dates, investigations, arrange family visits and provide support to concerned family and / or friends.

**Principal (Team Leader):**

* Gathers accurate information and confirms the incident has occurred
* Contacts appropriate agencies e.g. Emergency services, Gardaí, medical services, NEPS, BOM etc,
* Mobilises the management team and convenes a meeting ( Agenda Section 4.3 Of Guidelines)
* Lead briefing meetings for staff on the facts as known, give staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions, outlines the routine for the day
* Co-ordinates tasks for team
* Sympathises with family and offers support
* Consult with family around involvement of school in e.g. funeral service

1. Coordinates all communication dealing with parents of any student affected by critical incident

**Follow up actions**

1. Ensure provision of ongoing support to staff and students and families affected by the incident
2. Facilitate any appropriate memorial events
3. Review Plan

**Staff Liaison:**

* Helps brief teachers on routine/timetable for the day
* Ensure any absent staff members are kept informed
* Is alert to vulnerable teachers and organises support/ cover where necessary
* Advises them of availability of counselling service

## Parent Liaison

* Meets parents who may call to the school, in a designated room
* Convenes a meeting for parents or prepares letter for parents – Gives the facts and includes information about who to refer to if symptoms of trauma persist after a few months

## Student Liaison/ Counsellor

* Identifies vulnerable students and alerts staff to these.
* Counsels and monitors
* Liaises with teachers and parents about students
* During first 24 hours after incident, may counsel pupils that class teacher feels need assistance, outside of own classroom.
* Liaises with HSE and NEPs to seek further support for pupils where necessary

**Administrative role:**

**1.  Maintains an up-to-date list of contact numbers**

Numbers are available for :

* Students, parents, guardians
* Members of staff
* Emergency support services (See Emergency Contact List in Appendix 1)

 This list is displayed in the Staff room, principal’s office and Secretary’s office.

**2. Compiles emergency information for school trips which should include:**

* List of students/members of staff involved and teacher in charge
* List of mobile phone numbers for accompanying teacher(s)
* Up-to-date medical information on pupils with allergies, epilepsy, etc …
* Ensures the checklist for all educational outings is completed.

**During crisis**

**Maintains administration and services such as:**

* Telephone (ensure that a line is free for outgoing and important incoming calls)
* Rooms for debriefing, parents, quiet room, counselling, etc …
* Log of events, letters to parents, telephone calls made and received
* Dealing with normal school business

**All members of the Teaching Staff:**

* Inform own classes of the incident, using age – appropriate language
* Have a moment’s silence or say a prayer
* Give honest answers and reassure pupils that feeling angry and tearful and sad are part of a normal response
* Be alert to “copy – cat” behaviour amongst pupils and alert student liaison to this
* Class teachers to take note of any absentees who might need to be contacted, list of friends etc, or any other relevant information. This is to be given to the Student Liaison person
* Notify student liaison of vulnerable pupils who may need individual support

\* A member of staff may assist the chaplain to prepare a prayer service in the school, which all pupils and staff can attend.

\* Another staff member may be present at the main door of the school, to monitor visitors, e.g. members of the community, parents, media personnel, who may wish to enter the school. This staff member uses her discretion on permitting entry to such visitors.

**Community Liaison:**

* Networks with community agencies
* Co–ordinates community involvement in school
* Keeps a record of groups / individuals involved, e.g., in funeral, in services
* Updates team members

**Media Liaison:**

* Initially say press release is being prepared
* Prepares and issues agreed press release, including facts on the incident, stating what action has been taken, and what is going to be done (Keep information simple, brief, appropriate)
* Is the only person on the staff to liaise with the media
* Contacts DES Communication’s Office, if necessary
* No comments whatsoever on social media. Advise parent body of same out of respect to bereaved

**When dealing with the media or providing information to parents or the community the following points should be adhered to:**

* Seek permission from the family/families involved must be sought
* Inform family of any proposed press release
* Tell them what you are going to say, when and how

**Some points to remember if asked to give a live interview:**

* Consider assigning the task to someone skilled or familiar with dealing with the media.
* Take the time to prepare the interview by asking in advance for an outline of the questions you will be asked
* Remember that everything you say is on record and therefore keep it simple, factual and brief
* Decline it if you feel it inappropriate or you are not ready for it
* Avoid sweeping statements and generalizations
* Avoid being drawn into speculation
* Seek guidance from INTO, IPPN, CPMSA or other body for advice and guidance
* Do not answer questions you do not know the answer to.
* Do not use “No comment”
* Do not read the statement to the camera
* Remember to control access of the media to students and staff
* Consider letting the media inside the school and if yes, set aside a room
* Brief staff and all members of staff and advise them on how to deal with the media and insist that all queries should be referred to the Principal

Chaplaincy Role:

**Follow up actions**

* Visit home(s) with principal, if appropriate
* Assist with prayer services
* Make contact with other local clergy
* Be available as personal and spiritual support to staff

# **Short Term Actions and Roles Assigned: First 24 hours**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Task** | **Name** |
| Gather relevant information | Mary Jacob |
| Contact appropriate agencies | Mary Jacob |
| Convene a meeting with appropriate staff | Mary Jacob |
| Arrange supervision of students | Michelle O’Sullivan and Louise Jordan |
| Hold staff meeting | Mary Jacob, Valerie Keogh |
| Organise timetable for the day | Valerie Keogh |
| Inform parents | Mary Jacob, Anne McGrath, Marie Kenny |
| Inform pupils | Each class teacher |
| Make contact with bereaved family | Mary Jacob, class teacher, Chaplain |
| Dealing with media | Mary Jacob |

**Medium Term Actions and Roles Assigned (24 – 72 Hours)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Task** | **Name/ Group** |
| Decisions – Closure of School | Chairperson of B.O.M., Principal & Staff |
| Review the events of the first 24 hours | Management team, staff |
| Arrange Support for individual / groups of students, parents etc. | Michelle O Sullivan, Anne McGrath |
| Plan the reintegration of students and staff | Carmel Kenny, Valerie Keogh |
| Plan visits to injured | Mary Jacob |
| Liaise with family re funeral arrangements / memorial service | Mary Jacob, |
| Participation of students at funeral ceremony | Mary Jacob, Michelle O’Sullivan |
| Monitoring of vulnerable students | Class teachers, Valerie Keogh |

**Longer Term Actions and Roles Assigned (Beyond 72 Hours)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Task** | **Name/Group** |
| Monitor students for signs of continuing stress | Class teachers |
| Evaluate response to incident and amend CI plan appropriately | Staff / B.O.M |
| Formalise plan for future | Staff / B.O.M |
| Inform new staff / pupils | Staff/ B.O.M |
| Decide on appropriate ways to deal with anniversaries | Staff / B.O.M |

###### Responding to close family bereavements in our school community

* Have room designated near exit where parent can speak with child if notifying of bad news
* Principal notifies staff and BOM and Parents’ Council, particularly if bereavement happens outside of school time e.g. holidays
* Class teachers speak to children in school and tell them the facts of the incident in an age appropriate manner.
* Principal to liaise with family (or organises liaison with family) around what support the school community can give re. funeral and reintegration of child/children into school (School will be led in all by the family wishes)
* Flowers to be sent on behalf of the school community if the deceased is a parent or sibling of current child or staff member or member of former teaching staff (if family accepting flowers).
* Teachers to support children to make sympathy cards if in school around time of funeral
* Plan as staff for reintegration of pupils into school using NEPs lesson plan in NEPS guidelines around Critical Incidents.
* All staff members alerted to be mindful of bereaved children in the time following the bereavement.
* Seek support and advice from NEPS and Kilkenny Bereavement Support regarding supporting bereaved children in school
* Use the resources *The Little Book of Bereavement for Schools to aid in supporting children on their return to school, Muddles, Puddle & Sunshine; Let’s Talk about when someone dies.*
* Have a plan, discussed with the bereaved child(ren) where different options are discussed and agreed as to where children might go if they get upset or find it difficult to be in class e.g. to learning support teacher or for a walk in school grounds with classmate
* Ensure that all staff are mindful to the potential for sensitive incidents/ topics to arise in class or in school life and prepare children for this eventuality in advance.

Emergency contact lists and lists of contact information for Parents’ Council, BOM and staff are maintained in the Critical Incident file box in the principal’s office, along with a copy of this policy and NEPS Guidelines and resource material.

**This policy was reviewed by the Board of Management on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_.**

**Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  
 Chairperson**

## Appendix 1

## STAGES OF GRIEF

In adults can take about two years, in children it may take a more extended time frame with different issues arising as they go through developmental milestones

* **Denial, numbness, shock** (up to 6 weeks – but varies with individuals)  
  - suppression of feelings, keeping busy, confusion, withdrawn behaviour, outbursts of crying / screaming.
* **Acute grief** – searching and longing for the deceased (6 weeks to 4 months)  
  - physical pangs of pain, crying, emotional pain, fears, guilt, anger, etc
* **Adaptation to life without the deceased** (6 – 18 months)  
  - sense of isolation, fear of forgetting the deceased, exacerbation of existing emotional problems e.g. children with low self-esteem may be at greater risk of emotional behavioural difficulties.
* **Re-organisation**- Getting on with life, returned sense of humour and play, able to participate emotionally in new relationships, changed relationships with the deceased person – able to think of them without pain, Reduction in physical / emotional symptoms, less guilt.
* People may not go through stages in order, may go through stages at different rates, skip stages or get ‘stuck’.

## NORMAL REACTIONS TO A CRITICAL INCIDENT

What might pupils be: -

* Feelings:  
  e.g. guilt, confusion, numbness etc.
* Thoughts:  
  e.g. disbelief, preoccupation with images of event / person etc
* Physical responses:  
  e.g. tiredness, sleeplessness, headaches etc.
* Behaviour:  
  e.g. bedwetting, nightmares, over dependency, loss of concentration, aggression, withdrawal etc. (If they go on too long they become abnormal)

#### There is no right or wrong way to respond – everyone is different