



St. Joseph's Secondary School, Castlebar. Critical Incident Management Policy

Mission Statement

St. Joseph's Secondary School, Castlebar, Co. Mayo is a voluntary Catholic Secondary School for girls under the trusteeship of **CEIST** (Catholic Education, an Irish Schools Trust). We aim to provide a holistic Christian Education in co-operation with staff, students, parents/guardians, Board of Management and the community. We work to create equality for all in an atmosphere of mutual respect. We strive to excellence in learning and endeavour to help each student to reach her full potential in a positive, caring and happy environment.

CEIST - Core Values

The core values of CEIST are:

- Promoting Spiritual & Human Development
- Achieving Quality in Teaching & Learning
- Showing Respect for Every Person
- Creating Community
- Being Just and Responsible

Mission Statement

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School Ethos

The characteristic spirit of St. Joseph's Secondary School, Castlebar is based on the Mercy Philosophy of Education which espouses the core values of respect, justice, care and joy. The School's Ethos is holistic and person centred. The school encourages students to use and share their talents to their full potential, to recognise God's presence in their lives, to celebrate their Christian faith and to show respect to all persons in all areas of life and work. Students are encouraged by school staff to strive for excellence in learning and to participate to the best of their ability in all aspects of school life.



Introduction

The aim of the Critical Incident Management Policy is to help our school's Critical Incident Management Team and staff to react quickly and effectively in the event of an incident, to enable us to maintain a sense of control and to ensure that appropriate support is offered to our students and to our staff. In effect, our Critical Incident Management Plan should enable us to return to normality as soon as possible.

Definition of a Critical Incident

A critical incident is any incident or sequence of events which overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of the school. Such an event seriously affects members of the school community. The following are some examples of a critical incident: -

- Death of a member of the school community.
- Serious accident involving a member(s) of the school community.
- Suicide of a member of the school community.
- Attempted suicide of a member of the school community.
- Serious injury or death of a member(s) of the school community while involved in a school activity.
- Disappearance of a member(s) of the school community.
- Serious violence or the threat of serious violence to a member(s) of the school community either within or without the school.
- An intrusion into the school.
- Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism.
- External incidents such as a local tragedy.

Critical Incident Management Team

The members of the Critical Incident Team will be selected on a voluntary basis and will retain their roles for at least one academic year. Each member of the team will have a dedicated Critical Incident Folder which will contain a copy of the Policy Document and designated materials pertaining to her/his role, to be used in the event of an incident.

The Critical Incident Management Team for 2016/2017 should include:

- Principal – Ms. Marie Mac Cabe
- Deputy Principal - Ms. Ann Farrell
- Guidance Counsellor – Ms. Siobhan Kilkenny
- Senior Catechist – Ms. Maura McHugh
- Learning Support Teacher – Ms. Úna Griffin
- S.P.H.E. Teacher – Ms. Adele Tuffy
- Administration Staff – Ms. Maura Lavelle



- Administrative Staff- Ms. Katrina Conlon

In the event of a critical incident the following may be included:

- Chaplain – Fr John McCormack
- Relevant Year Head
- Relevant Class Tutor
- Chairperson of Board of Management – Mr. John Caulfield

The Principal or Deputy Principal or the person acting in their absence shall act as Team Leader.

The following, outlines suggested roles and responsibilities for the CIMT according to the DES/NEP's Guidelines

Roles and Responsibilities

1. Team Leader
2. Garda Liaison
3. Staff Liaison
4. Student Liaison
5. Parent Liaison
6. Community Liaison
7. Media Liaison
8. Administrator

Team Leader (Principal)

- Alerts the team and convenes a meeting. (Conference Room/ Principal's Office)
- Co-ordinates the tasks of the team.
- Liaises with the BOM, DES, NEP's, SEC etc.
- Liaises with the affected/bereaved family.
- Delegate where necessary.

Garda Liaison (Principal)

- Liaises with the Garda.
- Ensures that information is correct and checks accuracy before sharing information.

Staff Liaison (Principal/Deputy Principal)

- Leads briefing meetings for staff on facts as known, gives staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and asks questions, outlines the routine for the day.
- Advises staff on procedures for identification of vulnerable students.



- Provides materials for staff (from critical incident folder in conference room).
- Keeps staff updated as the day progresses.
- Is alert to vulnerable staff members and makes contact with them individually.
- Advises them of the availability of the Carecall Service and gives contact number.

Student Liaison (Guidance Counsellor)

At post primary level, may co-ordinate information from class teachers/tutors, and Year Heads about students they are concerned about.

- Alerts other staff to vulnerable students (appropriately).
- Keeps records of students met with by external agency staff.
- Looks after the setting up and supervision of quiet room where agreed. (Prayer Room, Room 41 and Room 45).
- Liaises with School Chaplain, R.E. Department with regard to the organisation of appropriate liturgies.

Community /Agency Liaison (Ms. Ann Farrell)

- Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of :
- Key parents/guardians (e.g. members of Parents' Council).
- Emergency support services and other external contacts and resources.
- Liaises with agencies in the community for support and onward referral.
- Is alert to the need to check credentials of individuals offering support.
- Co-ordinates the involvement of these agencies.
- Reminds agency staff to wear name badges.
- Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies.

Parent Liaison (Principal)

- Visits the affected/bereaved family with a member of the Critical Incident Team.
- Arranges parent/guardian meetings, if held.
- May facilitate such meetings and manage 'question and answer' sessions.
- Manage the 'consent' issues in accordance with agreed school policy.
- Ensures that sample letters are typed up, on the school's system and ready for adaption.
- Sets up room for meetings with parents/guardians.
- Meets individual parents/guardians.



- Provides appropriate materials for parents/guardians, if requested. (In Critical Incident Folder).

Media Liaison (Principal and/or Chairperson of the Board or other designated person.)

- In advance of an incident, will consider issues that may arise and how they might be responded to (e.g. students being interviewed, photographers on the premises).
- In the event of an incident, will liaise, where necessary, with the SEC, relevant unions etc.
- Will draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews (as agreed by school management).

Administrators (Ms. Maura Lavelle & Ms Katrina Conlon)

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

The Team Leader will determine the level of response required by the Critical Incident Management Team and make contact with N.E.P.S. and other relevant agencies.

Establish the Facts

- It is critical that the school has the correct information before taking any action.
- In order to establish the facts it may be necessary for the Principal, Deputy Principal or the person acting in their absence to make contact with family, Garda Síochána, relevant staff, hospital, emergency services etc.
- Once a critical incident is brought to the attention of a member of the school community, she/he should inform the Principal, Deputy Principal or the person acting in their absence. In the first instance, it may be necessary to contact the emergency services.

Initial Action Plan

- Convene a meeting of some or all of the members of the Critical Incident Management Team (C.I.M.T.) in order to agree the implementation of the required plan of action.
- Make contact with staff members as soon as possible.



- Inform Board of Management, Trustees
- Make contact with affected family or families.
- Agree a factual and sensitive statement with regard to the crisis
- Liaise with relevant support groups — N.E.P.S., H.S.E., D.E.S.
- Appoint person(s) to answer phone calls, to take messages and to respond to inquiries.
- Identify a dedicated telephone line which will be kept free for important outgoing and incoming calls.
- Designate a point where a log of events and telephone calls made and received will be kept.
- Agree arrangements for dealing with normal school business.
- Appoint person to speak to the Media.
- Prepare a statement for the Media.
- Organise Staff Meeting.
- Agree a prepared script to be read at assemblies, in class groups etc regarding the incident.
- Identify rooms which may be used for various purposes – individual and group support sessions, meeting parents/guardians, a waiting room etc.
- Designated person to liaise with the family and or families to clarify their wishes regarding the school's involvement in funeral or memorial service.
- Respect the traditions of different faith groups.

Staff Meeting

- All staff members will be invited to Staff Meeting.
- Matters to be addressed at the meeting should include:
 - A sensitive account of the facts as known, having regard for the privacy of those involved in the incident. Information needs to be provided on a need to know basis.
 - Feelings and views of staff members.
 - How to inform the students of the incident (Critical Incident Folders).
 - An outline of the timetable/plan for the day that has been drawn up by the C.I.M.T.
 - Details regarding outside agencies that have been contacted.
 - Details of support programme that will be put in place for staff, students and other members of school community.
 - Support for each other and consideration for vulnerable staff members.
 - Identifying vulnerable students or class groups or friendship groups.
 - Agreeing a common statement about the incident before meeting students.
 - Provision of relevant literature, leaflets, photocopied material.



- Arrangements for setting up and monitoring of quiet room.
- Arrangements for supervision of students.

Critical Incidents and the State Examinations

- Immediately contact the SEC in order that Examinations Assessment Manager (EAM) for the school can be contacted.
- Contact the NEPS Psychologist for the school.
- Identify student's who may need support and advice, these may include relatives, friends, siblings, teaching staff and other staff members.
- The main sources of help in the community should be identified and contacted as necessary.
- The Psychologist may have to have face to face dealings with some students.
- If at all possible students should be encouraged to sit their examination, there is no re-sit facility.
- If students need to leave the examination due to distress the Psychologist may have to talk with them to help them settle down.
- It is vital that they are accompanied at all times to preserve the integrity of the examinations.
- Allowances are not given in the marking, marks only given for what is presented.
- If the EAM (Exam Area Manager) is agreeable a student who comes out of an exam and goes back in can be allowed the time lost to be made up at the end of the examination.

The integrity of the examination should never be breached.

With SEC approval a separate examination centre can be set up for distressed students.

The school will refer to the relevant/current RACE guidelines for provision of support for students experiencing distress and/or illness.

Medium Term Action

- It is sometimes the case that the first day following an incident is quite calm as people may be in shock. Day 2 and the following days may be days when more support is needed as the news begins to sink in. It would be necessary for the C.I.M.T. to meet each day and to communicate with staff until the school returns to normal functioning.
- Make a decision about school closure.
- Develop a plan for monitoring students who have been identified as being vulnerable.



Follow- up Action Plan

- Follow-up is the work carried out in the weeks and months following a critical incident. The goal of follow up is to help our school community cope with the impact of a critical incident in the longer term.

Points to be considered:

- Be sensitive to the needs of affected member(s).
- Prepare for the return of affected member(s) of the school community.
- Support students, close friends, relatives and staff member(s) who continue to show significant signs of distress in the weeks after the incident. Onward referral may be necessary.

Monitoring and Review

This policy was Reviewed and Ratified by Board of Management at its Meeting on: _____

This policy is operational from: _____

Mr. John Caulfield
Chairperson of Board of Management

Ms. Marie Mac Cabe
Principal