



## Critical Incident Policy

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St. Mochta's National School aims to protect the well-being of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times.

School Mission Statement:

**Everyone gets opportunities to succeed. Everyone is treated with respect.**

The Board of Management, through our Principal - Ms. Maria Farrell - has drawn up a Critical Incident Management Plan as one element of the school's policies and plans.

Our aim is to establish a Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) to steer the development and implementation of the Critical Incident Management Plan.

What is a 'Critical Incident'?

The staff and management of St. Mochta's National School recognise a critical incident to be "**an 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.

A classification of Critical Incident response levels is proposed, which is linked to a number of factors impacting on the situation. This classification in no way diminishes the seriousness of any particular event. Please see Appendix 2 which gives guidelines on appropriate response levels and the steps to be taken.

### Aim

The aim of the CIMP is to help school management 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 students and staff. Having a good plan should also help ensure that the effects on the students and staff will be limited. It should enable us to effect a return to normality as soon as possible.

### Creation of a coping supportive and caring ethos in the school

We have put systems in place to help to 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

Examples of what St. Mochta's National School is doing include:-

- Evacuation plan formulated
- Regular fire drills occur
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
- Pre-opening supervision in the school yard – officially, St. Mochta's National School commences at 8.50am. However, supervision is available on the yards from 8.30am.

- Apart from Visitor Entrance, access gates are locked during school hours
- Pupil Entrance door is locked during school time
- Rules of the playground – see St. Mochta’s National School Code of Behaviour Policy
- Weather – see St. Mochta’s National School Winter Ready Policy
- New school build – the Health & Safety Committee and the CIMT will liaise regularly to ensure the safe phasing in of new structures.

## **Psychological safety**

The management and staff of St. Mochta’s National School aim to use available programmes and resources to address the personal and social development of students, to enhance a sense of safety and security in the school and to provide opportunities for reflection and discussion.

*Some examples include:-*

- Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is integrated into the work of the school. It is addressed in the curriculum by addressing issues such as grief and loss; communication skills; stress and anger management; resilience; conflict management; problem solving; help-seeking; bullying; decision making and prevention of alcohol and drug misuse. Promotion of mental health is an integral part of this provision
- Staff have access to training for their role in SPHE
- Staff will be made familiar with the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures when they first join the school, including details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures. At the first staff meeting of the year, there will be a recap of procedures for all staff with regular reminders throughout the school year. The name of our Designated Liaison Person, our Principal is Maria Farrell, and our Deputy Designated Liaison Person is our Deputy Principal Margaret O’Boyce.
- Some books and resources on difficulties affecting the primary school student are available in the school
- Information is/will be provided on mental health in general and such specific areas as signs and symptoms of depression and anxiety
- Staff will be informed in the area of suicide awareness when available by HSE
- The school has developed links with a range of external agencies e.g. NEPS, Barnardos, Túsla and NCSE, etc.
- 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. See DES Circulars 0022/2010 (Primary) or 0023/2010 (Post-Primary)
- The school has a clear policy on bullying and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy
- There is a care system in place in the school using the "Continuum of Support" approach which is outlined in the NEPS documents published on 2007 for primary schools and 2010 for post primary schools. These documents are available on [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie)
- Students who are identified as being at risk are referred to the designated staff member (e.g. support teacher), concerns are explored and the appropriate level of assistance and support is provided. Parents are informed, and where appropriate, a referral is made to an appropriate agency.
- Staff are informed about how to access support for themselves.

## **Prevention**

St. Mochta’s National School attends to prevention by having systems in place which help to promote emotional health and wellbeing and which build resilience in both staff and students, thus preparing them to cope with a range of life events. Mental health promotion is a vital element of this work.

One of the key means available to schools in their work of supporting healthy development for all students is Social, Personal and Health Education.

SPHE is a key element of a school's prevention work. It is a required element of the curriculum at Primary School level. SPHE supports the physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual development, and wellbeing of all members of the school community.

### **Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)**

A CIMT has been established in line with best practice. The members of the team were selected on a voluntary basis and will retain their roles for as long as required. The members of the team will meet once a term to review and update the policy and plan. Each member of the team has a dedicated critical incident 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.

A breakdown of the roles can be viewed in Appendix 3. The key roles which need to be covered are as follows:

- Team Leader
- Student Liaison
- Media Liaison
- Parent/Guardian Liaison
- Administrator
- Garda Liaison
- Community Liaison
- Chaplaincy Role

### **Confidentiality and good name considerations**

The management and staff of St. Mochta's National School have a responsibility to protect the privacy and good name of people involved in any incident and will be sensitive to the consequences of public statements. Members of school staff will bear this in mind, and seek to ensure that students do so 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.

### Critical Incident Rooms

In the event of a critical incident, the following rooms are designated for the indicated purposes

<b>Room Name:</b>	<b>Designated Purpose:</b>
<i>Hall</i>	Main room for meeting staff
<i>Hall/Class Rooms</i>	Meetings with students
<i>Hall/Library</i>	Meetings with parents
<i>Library</i>	Meetings with media
<i>Meeting Room</i>	Individual sessions with students
<i>Meeting Room/Library</i>	Meetings with other visitors

### **Consultation and communication regarding the plan**

All staff were consulted and their views canvassed in the preparation of this policy and plan. Students and parent/guardian representatives were also consulted and asked for their comments.

Our school's final policy and plan in relation to responding to critical incidents has been presented to all staff.

Each member of the critical incident team has a personal copy of the plan.

The plan will be reviewed with all staff at the first staff meeting of a new academic year.

The plan will be updated every 3 years or in the aftermath of any critical incident that the school has to deal with.

This policy is open to review by the Board of Management.

Ratified and signed on behalf of the Board of Management of St. Mochta's National School.



**Valerie Haslam**  
**Chairperson**



**Maria Farrell**  
**Principal**

16<sup>th</sup> June 2020

**Date**

CIM Team

<b>Critical Incident Management Team</b>		
<b>Role</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Phone</b>
<b>Team leader:</b>	<i>Maria Farrell Margaret O'Boyce</i>	
<b>Garda liaison</b>	<i>Maria Farrell Margaret O'Boyce</i>	
<b>Staff liaison</b>	<i>Maria Farrell Margaret O'Boyce John Cryan Fiona Hayden</i>	
<b>Student liaison</b>	<i>Maria Farrell Margaret O'Boyce John Cryan Aisling Walsh Rosemary Duff</i>	
<b>Community liaison</b>	<i>Maria Farrell Margaret O'Boyce</i>	
<b>Parent liaison</b>	<i>Maria Farrell Lorraine Connolly</i>	
<b>Media liaison</b>	<i>Maria Farrell</i>	
<b>Administrator</b>	<i>Catherine Hong-Minh</i>	

## Response Levels

<p><b>STEP 1</b> What type of response is needed?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><u>Response Level 1</u></b>: the death of a student or staff member who was terminally ill; the death of parent/sibling; a fire in school not resulting in serious injury; serious damage to school property.</li> <li>• <b><u>Response Level 2</u></b>: the sudden death of a student or staff member.</li> <li>• <b><u>Response Level 3</u></b>: an accident/event involving a number of students; a violent death; an incident with a high media profile or involving a number of schools.</li> </ul>
<p><b>STEP 2</b> Should a psychologist be involved?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider the nature of the event and how your school is coping. What support do you need from NEPS and/or other agencies?</li> </ul>
<p><b>STEP 3</b> How do I assess the needs of the school?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there a feeling of being overwhelmed by this event?</li> <li>• Has there been a previous incident? How recent? What kind of incident? If more than one, how many? (If the school has experienced a recent incident or a number of incidents staff may be exhausted or distressed. On the other hand, they may feel more experienced and better able to deal with the situation).</li> <li>• Is there a critical incident plan/team in place?</li> <li>• Is there a good pastoral care system in the school?</li> <li>• Is there significant media interest in the incident?</li> <li>• Are other agencies already involved?</li> </ul>
<p><b>STEP 4</b> What action do I take?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For an incident requiring a Level 1 response, it may be sufficient to talk to the psychologist on the phone. Locate your Responding to Critical Incidents: refer to these and talk you through relevant sections. A copy of these has been made available to all schools. It is also available on <a href="http://www.education.ie">www.education.ie</a> by following the links to NEPS.</li> <li>• In the case of an incident requiring a Level 2 &amp; Level 3 response, make contact with NEPS. Depending on the incident at least one psychologist will visit the school.</li> </ul>

## **Breakdown Of The Roles**

### **Team Leader Role**

- Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting
- Coordinates the tasks of the team
- Liaises with the Board of Management; DES; NEPS; SEC
- Liaises with the bereaved family

### **Garda liaison Role**

- Liaises with the Gardaí
- Ensures that information about deaths or other developments is checked out for accuracy before being shared

### **Staff liaison Role**

- Leads briefing meetings for staff on the facts as known, gives staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions, outlines the routine for the day
- Advises staff on the procedures for identification of vulnerable students
- Provides materials for staff (from their critical incident folder)
- 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 EAS and gives them the contact number.

### **Student liaison Role**

- Alerts other staff to vulnerable students (appropriately)
- Provides materials for students (from their critical incident folder)
- Maintains student contact records (R1).
- Looks after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room where agreed

### **Community/agency liaison Role**

- Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of
  - Key parents, such as members of the 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
- Coordinates the involvement of these agencies
- Reminds agency staff to wear name badges
- Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies

### **Parent liaison Role**

- Visits the bereaved family with the team leader
- Arranges parent meetings, if held
- May facilitate such meetings, and manage 'questions and answers'
- Manages the 'consent' issues in accordance with agreed school policy
- Ensures that sample letters are typed up, on the school's system and ready for adaptation
- Sets up room for meetings with parents
- Maintains a record of parents seen
- Meets with individual parents
- Provides appropriate materials for parents (from their critical incident folder)

### **Media liaison Role**

- 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, etc)
- In the event of an incident, will liaise where necessary with the SEC; relevant teacher unions etc.
- Will draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews (as agreed by school management)

### **Administrator Role**

- Maintenance of up to date telephone numbers of
  - Parents or guardians
  - Teachers
  - Emergency services
- Takes telephone calls and notes those that need to be responded to
- Ensures that templates are on the schools system in advance and ready for adaptation
- Prepares and sends out letters, emails and texts
- Photocopies materials needed
- Maintains records

### **Record keeping**

In the event of an incident each member of the team will keep 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.

Actions**Short term actions – Day 1**

<b>Task</b>	<b>Name</b>
<b>Gather accurate information</b>	Maria Farrell & Margaret O'Boyce
<b>Who, what, when, where?</b>	Maria Farrell & Margaret O'Boyce
<b>Convene a CIMT meeting – specify time and place clearly</b>	Maria Farrell & Margaret O'Boyce
<b>Contact external agencies</b>	Maria Farrell & Margaret O'Boyce
<b>Arrange supervision for students</b>	Fiona Hayden
<b>Hold staff meeting</b>	<b>All staff</b>
<b>Agree schedule for the day</b>	Maria Farrell & Margaret O'Boyce
<b>Inform students – (close friends and students with learning difficulties may need to be told separately)</b>	Margaret O'Boyce and Fiona Hayden
<b>Compile a list of vulnerable students</b>	Maria Farrell & Margaret O'Boyce
<b>Prepare and agree media statement and deal with media</b>	Maria Farrell, Margaret O'Boyce & Valerie Haslam
<b>Inform parents</b>	Maria Farrell, Lorraine Connolly and Catherine Hong-Minh
<b>Hold end of day staff briefing</b>	Maria Farrell & Margaret O'Boyce

**Medium term actions - (Day 2 and following days)**

Task	Name
Convene a CIMT meeting to review the events of day 1	Maria Farrell & Margaret O'Boyce
Meet external agencies	Maria Farrell & Margaret O'Boyce
Meet whole staff	Maria Farrell & Margaret O'Boyce
Arrange support for students, staff, parents	Maria Farrell & Margaret O'Boyce & Fiona Hayden
Visit the injured	Maria Farrell & Margaret O'Boyce
Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements	Maria Farrell
Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service	Maria Farrell
Make decisions about school closure, if required	BOM

### Follow-up – beyond 72 hours

Task	Name
Monitor students for signs of continuing distress	Class teachers
Liaise with agencies regarding referrals	Maria Farrell & Margaret O'Boyce
Plan for return of bereaved student(s)	Maria Farrell
Plan for giving of 'memory box' to bereaved family	Maria Farrell, Fiona Hayden & Teachers
Decide on memorials and anniversaries	BOM/Staff, parents and students
Review response to incident and amend plan	Staff/BOM

### Useful Resources

Additional guidance is contained in Responding to Critical Incidents Guidelines and Resource Materials for Schools (2016) R19-21 P.79-90, including:-

- Guidance on Social Media Use and Critical Incidents
- Suicide/Suspected Suicide
- 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 Post-Primary Schools Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention (DES, DOH, HSE 2013)
- Well-Being in Primary Schools - Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion (DES, DOH, HSE 2015)

<https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/National-Educational-Psychological-Service-NEPS-/responding-to-critical-incidents-covid19.pdf>

### Useful Websites

Barnardos	<a href="http://www.barnardos.ie/resources">www.barnardos.ie/resources</a> ; <a href="http://www.barnardos.ie/teenhelp">www.barnardos.ie/teenhelp</a>
Childhood Bereavement Care	<a href="http://www.irishchildhoodbereavementnetwork.ie">www.irishchildhoodbereavementnetwork.ie</a>
Professional Development for Teachers Health & Well Being Team	<a href="http://www.pdst.ie">www.pdst.ie</a>
SPHE Support Service	<a href="http://www.sphe.ie">www.sphe.ie</a>
National Office for Suicide Prevention	<a href="http://www.nosp.ie">www.nosp.ie</a>
Irish Association for Suicidology	<a href="http://www.ias.ie">www.ias.ie</a>
Irish Hospice Foundation	<a href="http://www.hospicefoundation.ie">www.hospicefoundation.ie</a>
Lifelines	<a href="http://www.selfharm.org">www.selfharm.org</a>
Winstonswish Foundation help for grieving children and their families	<a href="http://www.winstonswish.org.uk">www.winstonswish.org.uk</a>
Resources and support for those dealing with suicide, depression or emotional distress, particularly teenagers and young adults	<a href="http://www.papyrus-uk.org">www.papyrus-uk.org</a>
A national charity committed to improving the mental health of all children and young people	<a href="http://www.youngminds.org.uk">www.youngminds.org.uk</a>
An Irish website covering all aspects of health, lifestyle, culture and craic – youth information centre	<a href="http://www.spunout.ie">www.spunout.ie</a>
A site focussing on issues relating to youth in Ireland today	<a href="http://www.youth.ie">www.youth.ie</a>
An Australian site that helps young people through tough times	<a href="http://www.reachout.com.au">www.reachout.com.au</a>
Mental Health Ireland	<a href="http://www.mentalhealthireland.ie">www.mentalhealthireland.ie</a>
Non-judgemental information and support	<a href="http://www.gayswitchboard.ie">www.gayswitchboard.ie</a>
Internet Safety Initiative by Department of Education & Skills	<a href="http://www.webwise.ie">www.webwise.ie</a>

EMERGENCY CONTACT LIST	
AGENCY	CONTACT NUMBERS
Garda	112/999
Hospital	112/999
Fire Brigade	112/999
HSE	Relevant Departments
Child and Family Mental Health Service (CAMHS)	076-695-6700
School Inspector	01-889-6553
NEPS Psychologist	01-899-2700 Head office 0761 10 8673 Blanchardstown Office
DES	01889-6400
INTO	01-804-7700
Clergy – St. Mochta's Parish	01-821-3218
Employee Assistance Service	1800 411 057