



CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY

St Joseph's NS is committed to the provision of the highest quality education for all its pupils by nurturing each child to reach his/her full potential and maximise the benefits of the educational system.

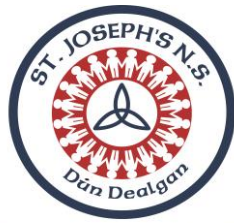
St Joseph's NS has taken a number of measures to create a coping, supportive and caring ethos in the school. The school has also formulated a number of policies and procedures to be followed with a view to ensuring the physical and psychological safety of staff and students, both in ordinary time and in the event of a critical incident.

Supports available in the school or through local agencies:

- A supportive caring Board of Management
- A caring supportive staff
- An ethos of respect and the value of positive relationships
- Springboards Family Support Initiative on campus
- A committed Parish Team
- School Completion Programme
- I.S.P.C.C.
- Vincent de Paul
- Rainbows Programme
- Anti-Bullying Programmes
- Contact with Counselling Agencies
- Personal Development for Staff
- Dedicated workers from local community
- Health & Safety Support
- Child Protection Personnel in Parish
- Genesis / Incredible years

What is a Critical Incident?

St Joseph's NS recognises a critical incident to be "an incident or sequence of events that overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school and disrupts the running of the school." Critical incidents may involve one or more pupils, staff, the school or our local community. Types of incidents might include:



- The death of a member of the school community through sudden death, accident, terminal illness or suicide.
- An intrusion into the school / unauthorised removal of a student from home or school
- An accident / tragedy in the wider school community
- Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism, criminal incidents etc.
- The disappearance of a member of the school community
- An accident involving members of the school community
- A dramatic unexpected upheaval in school life
- Fire, natural and technological disasters.

Aim

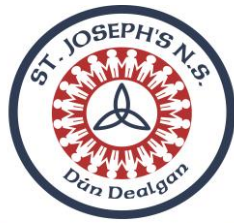
Recognising that the key of managing critical incidents is planning, St Joseph's NS had developed this Critical Incident Management Policy and accompanying Plan. Our hope is that, in the event of an incident, these will help staff to react quickly, effectively and to maintain a sense of control. They should also help us to achieve and return to normality as soon as possible and ensure that the effects on the students and staff will be limited.

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 (See also St Joseph's Health and Safety policy)

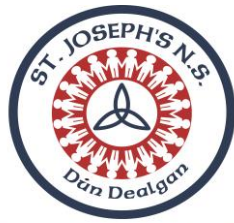
- Evacuation plan formulated
- Regular fire drills occur
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
- Pre-opening supervision in the school yard from 8.50am - 9.00am
- Entrance doors are locked during school hours. A buzzer entry system is in place.
- Gates locked during playtimes
- Rules of the playground are enforced regularly



Psychological safety

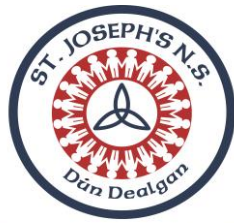
The management and staff of St. Joseph's aim to use available programmes and resources to address the personal and social development of students, to enhance a sense of safety and security in the school and to provide opportunities for reflection and discussion.

- 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 been trained for their role in SPHE
- Staff are familiar with the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures and details of how to proceed with suspicions and disclosures
- Books and resources on difficulties affecting the primary/post primary school student are available
- Information is provided on mental health in general and such specific areas as signs and symptoms of depression and anxiety
- In the immediate aftermath of a critical incident e.g. suicide or death; the class teachers are supported by a member of the Critical Incident Team or external professional.
- The school has developed links with a range of external agencies – NEPS; TUSLA; Garda; Rainbows Programme; Genesis/Incredible Years
- 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
- 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
- Students who are identified as being at risk are referred to the designated staff member, 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.



CRITICAL INCIDENT TEAM 2023/2024

- I. Team Leaders:**
 - 1. Dr Rosalyn Morris (*Principal*)
 - 2. John Farrell (*Chairperson*)
- II. Staff Liaison Persons:**
 - 1. Shane McEntee (*Deputy Principal*)
 - 2. Dr Rosalyn Morris (*Principal*)
- III. Parent Liaison Persons:**
 - 1. Kathryn Thomas (*Home School Community Liaison*)
 - 2. Lily Durnin (*SNA*)
- IV. Student Liaison Persons:**
 - 1. Avril Donnelly (*AP1*)
 - 2. Bernie Lennon (*SNA*)
- V. Community Liaison Person:**
 - 1. Kathryn Thomas (*Home School Community Liaison*)
- VI. Media Liaison Persons:**
 - 1. Dr Rosalyn Morris (*Principal*)
 - 2. John Farrell (*Chairperson*)
- VII. Language Liaison Person:**
 - 1. Janice Faherty
- VIII. S.N.A. Liaison Person:**
 - 1. Susan Dixon
- IX. B.O.M Liaison Person:**
 - 1. Sinead McGill (*Teacher*)
- X. N.E.P.S Persons:**
 - 1. (01) 8650635
- XI. Chaplaincy Role**
 - 1. Fr Michael Murtagh (*Parish Priest*)
- XII. Evacuation Co-ordinator:**
 - 1. Tess Hughes (*Teacher*)



Roles

The key roles which need to be covered are as follows;

- Team Leader
- Garda Liaison
- Staff liaison
- Student liaison
- Community liaison
- Media liaison
- Administrator

Team leader (*Dr Roz Morris / John Farrell*)

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

Paul Mc Gee will take the lead in the absence of the team leader

Garda Liaison

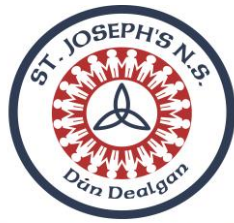
- Liaises with the Gardaí
- Ensures that information about deaths or other developments is checked out for accuracy before being shared.

Staff Liaison (*Dr Roz Morris / Shane McEntee*)

- 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 (*Anthony Keenan*)

- Co-ordinates information from the staff about students they are concerned about
- Alerts other staff to vulnerable students (appropriately)
- Provides materials for students (from their critical incident folder)
- Keeps records of students seen by external agency staff



- Looks after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room where agreed

Community / Agency Liaison (*Kathryn Thomas*)

- 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
- 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 (*Kathryn Thomas / Lily Durnin*)

- Visits the bereaved family with the team leader
- Arranges parent meeting, 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 schools 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)

Chaplaincy Role (*Fr Michael Murtagh*)

Media liaison (*Dr Roz Morris / John Farrell*)

- 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; INTO etc.
- Will draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews (as agreed by school management)

Administrator (*Lisa Duffy*)

- 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 faxes



- Photocopies materials needed
- Maintains records

SAMPLE LETTERS FOR PARENTS/ GUARDIANS

Consent Letter - Individual or Group Support Session Critical Incident

Dear Parents/Guardians,

You may already know that our teachers and staff have been providing support to our students following _____).

Additional support is also being provided to our school by psychologist/s from the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS).

The psychologist will be available, where necessary, to meet with individuals or with groups of students to help them during this difficult time.

The aim of such sessions will be to:

- Provide information about dealing with grief and loss in a healthy way
- Allow students the opportunity to express their thoughts and feelings in a safe environment
- Allow students time to comfort and support each other, under the guidance of experienced staff from St. Joseph's.
- Help students resume their normal routines as soon as possible

If you would like for your daughter to participate in such a session and any follow-up meetings that might be scheduled, please give your consent by signing below.

You should return it to the school immediately. If you have any questions, please contact the Principal.

Yours Sincerely

Principal

ST. JOSEPH'S N. S.
TOM BELLEW AVENUE
DUNDALK
CO. LOUTH
IRELAND



Nurturing excellence in education

Roll No.: 19673J

Fax: +353 42 9337676

Phone: +353 42 9337170

Email: schooloffice@sjns.ie

Principal: Dr. Rosalyn Morris

Chairperson: Sr. Joan Watters

I give my consent for _____ to participate in a Group/Individual Session

Parent or Legal Guardian: _____ Date: _____

Consent Letter - Individual or Group Support Session

Distressing Incident at home/ community

Dear Parents/Guardians,

You may already know that our teachers and staff have been providing support to you child. Additional support is also available in our school by Kathryn Thomas. Our HSCL

Kathryn Thomas , our HSCL, is available, where necessary, to meet with individuals or with groups of students to help them when required.

The aim of such sessions will be to:

- Provide information about dealing with serious upset/ anxiety in a healthy way
- Allow students the opportunity to express their thoughts and feelings in a safe environment
- Allow students time to comfort and support each other, under the guidance of experienced HSCL
- Help students resume their normal routines as soon as possible

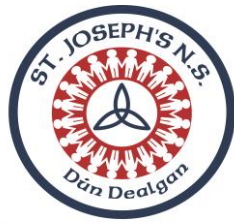
If you would like for your daughter/son to participate in such a session and any follow-up meetings that might be scheduled, please give your consent by signing below.

You should return it to the school immediately. If you have any questions, please contact the Principal.

Yours Sincerely

Dr. Roz Morris
Principal

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I give my consent for _____ to participate in a Group/Individual Session

Parent or Legal Guardian: _____ Date: _____

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.

School secretary will have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters, photocopying materials, etc.

Confidentiality and good name considerations.

The management and staff of St Joseph's have a responsibility to protect the privacy and good name of the people involved in the incident and will be sensitive to the consequences of any public statements. The members of the school staff will bear this in mind, and will seek to ensure that students do so also. For instance, the term 'suicide' will not be used unless there is solid information that the 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.

Consultation and communication regarding the plan.

All staff was consulted and their views canvassed in the preparation of this policy and plan.

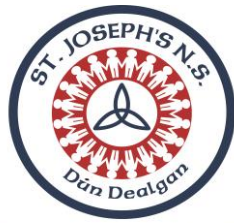
Parent representatives were also consulted and asked for their comments

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

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

All new and temporary staff will be informed of the plan by Dr. Roz Morris.

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REVIEWED by school community **Sept 2017**

This policy was ratified by the B.O.M in **October 2017** and it will be reviewed in **October 2020**

Reviewed by school community Sept 2020

This policy will be ratified by the BOM in October 2020 and it will be reviewed in October 2020

Reviewed and amended by BOM on 19th October 2021

Reviewed and amended by BOM on 6th December 2022

Critical Incident Team list amended 27th October 2023

Policy to be reviewed December 2023

The Board of Management of St Joseph's N.S. reserves the right, in consultation with the education partners to review and modify the Critical Incident Policy as necessary.

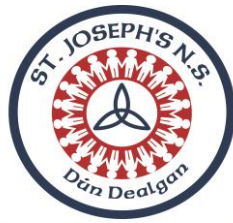
Dr Roz Morris
Principal

Date: _____

John Farrell
Chairperson, B.O.M

Date: _____

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