

Critical Incident Policy

St Patrick's Comprehensive School, Shannon, Co Clare

Signed:

Chairperson of Board of Management

Date:

Review Date: **Reviewed April 2021.**

Defining a Critical Incident

A Critical Incident is any incident or sequence of events, which overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of the school and disrupts the running of the school. Critical Incident team will meet to decide whether it's a critical incident or not.

Overview and Aim

The goal of the Critical Incident Management Policy (CIMP) for St Patrick's Comprehensive School Shannon is to provide a caring, safe and supportive environment, which respects the whole school community, so that all those involved will emerge from any critical incident knowing that there are structures in place that will help them deal appropriately with the event.

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 affect a return to normality as soon as possible.

Though the Principal obviously exercises a pivotal role in the school's response to a critical incident, best practice recommends the formation of a Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) composed of key school personnel, in providing a supportive role. The role of NEPS is to support schools in supporting students and staff.

The rationale for this plan is to enable the school to identify risks and to have a communication plan in place that can be effectively put into action when an incident occurs relating to the school. It will be used in conjunction with all other school policies and procedures in promoting positive mental health and in creating effective care systems in the school.

Prevention

St Patrick's Comprehensive School Shannon is committed to the welfare of its students. All staff has been made aware of the '*Children First Guidelines and Procedures*' and the Principal is the designated liaison person. The school's pastoral care team meet regularly. School policies are up to date and regularly reviewed in consultation with key stakeholders.

Objectives

1. A Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) exists in St Patrick's Comprehensive School Shannon. The members of the team will meet annually to review and update the Critical Incident Policy and Plan. The principal as Team Leader will have a copy of the policy and plan and materials to be used in the event of an incident.
2. St Patrick's Comprehensive School Shannon will endeavour to communicate clearly and appropriately with all the relevant stakeholders to its Critical Incident Policy and Procedures. (Board of Management, Parents' Association, and Staff)
3. The management and staff of St Patrick's Comprehensive School Shannon have a responsibility to protect the privacy and name(s) of the person(s) involved in any incident and will be sensitive around the dissemination of any information.
4. St Patrick's Comprehensive School Shannon will develop a good working relationship with the local media based on respect for all parties involved in the communication of events and crisis situations.

Roles and Responsibilities in the Critical Incident Management Team

Team	Responsibility
<p>Team Leader – M Costello – (Principal)</p>	<p>Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting informing them of all relevant facts. Delegates and coordinates the tasks of the team.</p> <p>Informs and liaises with the Board of Management, NEPS, Túsla, DES and with the local Gardaí (where appropriate).</p>
<p>Staff Liaison – S. Brooks (Deputy principal)</p>	<p>Briefs staff at the earliest opportunity. Students will be supervised at these times. The facts, as known, will be disclosed to the staff members who will be given an opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions. Staff will be briefed on the procedures for identification of vulnerable students. Materials for staff (from critical incident folder) will be provided. Staff will be updated as appropriate.</p>
<p>Student Liaison Chaplain – Nuala Murray Guidance Counsellor – Anika Schous</p>	<p>Inform students of the facts of the incident, coordinate information from subject teachers regarding students whom they are concerned about, alert other staff to vulnerable students, provide materials for students from critical incident folder, keep records of students seen by external agencies, organisation and supervision of 'quiet room'</p>
<p>Parent Liaison – S. Brooks (Deputy Principal) Chaplain – Nuala Murray Guidance Counsellor – Anika Schous</p>	<p>Liaise with the family, visits the family with the Principal.</p>

Office Staff in conjunction with Team Leader	Alert Year Head regarding late arrivals. Ensures that sample letters are typed up and stored on the school system ready for adaptation, sets up office for meeting with parents, maintains a record of parents seen, meets with individual parents, provides appropriate materials for parents (from their critical incident folder).
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The Critical Incident Management Team

Team Leader	M. Costello (Principal)
Staff Liaison/Garda Liaison	S.Brooks
Counselling Coordinator	N. Murray (Chaplain) A. Schous (Career Guidance)
Students' Liaison / Council	Clodagh O' Hara
Parents' Liaison	Jennifer Justice
Community Liaison / IT	Jacque Murphy
Media Liaison	M. Costello (Principal)
Relevant Year Head	As appropriate
Administrator	Office Staff - Diane Webb and Sharon Slattery 061-361428

Procedures to be followed in the event of a critical incident - Day One:

Principal and Deputy Principal

1. Gather the facts of the incident (who, what, when, where).
2. Contact appropriate agencies, if necessary (Emergency services, Health Service Executive, Community Care Services, NEPS, DES, and the Board of Management. The family resource centre and the parish priest.
3. Convene a meeting of the Critical Incident Management Team
4. Debriefing at end of day for Critical Incident Management Team at 3.20 / 4.00

Critical Incident Management Team

Full details of the agenda page 20&21 of *Responding to Critical Incidents Guidelines for schools*.

1. Agree a statement of facts for staff, students, parents and media.
2. Inform all staff of incident -Staff communication via text which includes detail of staff meeting.
3. Delegate responsibilities to the CIMT members.

All Staff

1. Decide on how, and what facts will be shared with students. (Signed relevant sheets from pack here)
2. Inform staff of what outside agencies have been contacted.
3. All staff share factual information with student population.
4. Maintain the normal routine as far as possible for classes not immediately affected.

Identify high risk students. Relatives and close friends informed separately. (Children with SEN, neighbours, Late arrivals, children who are absent)

1. Review the events of the first 24 hours.
2. Check how everyone is coping.
3. M. Costello & S. Brooks to hold information meeting with year head.
4. Arrange support for students, (*NEP's Guidelines*) providing a suitable room for this to happen (Prayer Room)– subject teacher makes referrals.
5. It is recommended that school management will endeavour to have a male and female teacher on corridor supervision.

Procedures to be followed in the event of a critical incident - Day Two/Three:

Principal and Deputy Principal

1. Convene Critical Incident Management Team
2. Convene staff meeting. (Decide who will contact absent staff, a friend of absent staff member to make said contact). Staff agenda will be included in critical incident pack.

Critical Incident Management Team

3. Review the events of the first 24 hours.
4. Check how everyone is coping.
5. M. Costello & S. Brooks to hold information meeting with year head.

All Staff

1. Look for feedback from teachers on vulnerable students (S. Brooks).
2. Designated staff member to liaise with family/families involved in incident. In the case of bereavement arrange with the family the school's involvement in the funeral/memorial service. (N.Murray)
3. Teachers who are uncomfortable with providing support will not be required to do so. (They request Guidance Counsellor / Chaplain and Year Head to arrange necessary support)
4. Seek parental approval for support meetings with outside agencies.

Follow-up – beyond 72 hours

Monitor students for signs of continuing distress	All subject teachers
Liaise with agencies regarding referrals	Principal, Deputy Principal, Guidance Counsellor and Chaplain
Plan for return of bereaved student(s)(R13 Guidelines)	Principal & Pastoral Care Team & Year Head
Plan for giving of ‘memory box’ to bereaved family	Principal, Year Head & Pastoral Care team
Decide on memorials and anniversaries	BOM
Review response to incident and amend plan	BOM & CIMT

Plan for the return of absent students and staff

Plan for reintegration of siblings, close relatives, injured students etc., involved in the incident is developed by the Pastoral Care team and the relevant year heads.

Evaluation

Evaluation is a vital part of the process of maintaining a viable critical Incident Strategy. Crisis management can only develop with analysis of past incidents, feedback in the light of past responses and systematic evaluation of all protocols in place.

Issues to be aware of in the light of effective evaluation include:

- The confidence of the Crisis Management Team in their roles in the event of an incident.
- Was internal communication effective between staff?
- Were all staff furnished with accurate facts and kept updated on a consistent basis?
- Was the overall communication strategy successful?
- Was information disseminated quickly to avoid speculation and rumour?
- Was there adequate and effective communication with the family involved?
- What lessons could be learned from an analysis of this strategy?
- Was feedback obtained from staff as to whether they felt sufficiently equipped to deal emotionally and physically with the incident?
- Was there sufficient guidance and support to individual teachers, staff and students?
- Were students adequately supervised during the Crisis Meeting?
- Was there sufficient Pastoral Care provided to deal with the incident?
- Was communication with the media effective?
- Have all necessary referrals to support services been made?
- Were external support agencies met with for feedback in the aftermath of the incident?
- Were all expenses incurred met and dealt with in a timely manner?
- What amendments need to be made to any further crisis management incidents in the light of the review of this incident?

Emergency Telephone Numbers

Garda	999 or 112
Fire	999 or 112
Ambulance	999 or 112
Shannon Garda Station	061-361212
Limerick Regional Hospital	061-301111
Ennis	065-6824464
National Education Psychological Service	065-6865904
Louise Fitzsimons (NEPS Psychologist)	087-6529039
Dept of Education	090-6483600 01-8896400
Clergy Fr Arnold Rosney	087-8598710
State Exam Commission	090-6442700
Employee assistance service	1800 411 057
<u>DOCTORS:</u>	
Dr. M. Flynn	061-362903
Dr. Akamnonu	061-364755
Dr. P Flynn	061-364274
Dr Y Williams	061-705000
Shannon Medical Centre	061-705000
Shannon Doc	1850 212 999
Shannon Family Resource Centre	061 - 707600

Appendices

Appendix 1

Sample Teacher Communication Text Message

Student Death

Dear Staff,

It is with great sorrow that I inform you of the death of one of our student's _____ in class _____, due to a _____. This is a huge loss for _____'s family, our school and the community. The School's Critical Incident Management Team has met to plan our response.

Principal

Appendix 2

Sample Teacher Communication Text Message

Teacher Death

Dear Staff

It is with great sorrow that I inform you of the death of one of our teacher's _____ due to a _____. This is a huge loss for _____'s family, our school and the community. The School's Critical Incident Management Team has met to plan our response.

Principal

Appendix 3

Sample Announcement to the Media – Student Death

My name is _____ and I am the Principal of St Patrick’s Secondary School Shannon. We learned this morning of the death of _____, a _____year student in our school. This is a terrible tragedy for _____’s family, our school and the wider community. We are deeply saddened by these events. Our sympathies, thoughts and prayers are with _____’s family and friends.

We have been in contact with their parents and they have requested that we respect their need for privacy at this very difficult time. Offers of support have been pouring in and are greatly appreciated. Our school has implemented our Critical Incident Management Plan. Psychologists from the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) are supporting and advising teachers in their efforts to assist our students at this time. The school staff has been helping students to deal with the death. The school has been open to parents and guardians to support them and offer advice and guidance. We would ask you to respect their privacy at this challenging time.

Thank You

Appendix 4

Sample Letter to Parents – Student Death

Dear Parents/Guardian

The school has learned of the sudden death of _____, one of our students. We are all deeply saddened by this loss. The school has support structures in place to deal with this tragedy.

Our Pastoral Care team has been working closely with counsellors from the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS). It is possible that your Son / daughter may have feelings that they may like to discuss with you. You can help them by taking time to listen to them and encourage them to express their feelings.

It is important to let them know that their feelings, concerns and reactions are normal and that they will experience a number of emotions over the next few days and weeks. If you have any additional questions or concerns please feel free to contact the school.

I anticipate that the next few days will be difficult for everyone, however school will continue as usual.

Principal

Appendix 5

Sample Parent Communication Text -Student Death

Today, with great sadness we learned of the death of _____ one of our _____Year students. Our thoughts and prayers are with _____'s family and friends during this difficult time. Further communication will follow in due course.

Principal

Appendix 6

Sample Community Notice (to be read at Mass)

The community of Shannon is extremely saddened to hear of the death of _____ who was a _____ year student in St Patrick's Comprehensive. I am sure all of us will make every effort to comfort and support _____'s family as they attempt to come to terms with their traumatic loss. We remember (name) in our prayers in Mass today and we extend our heartfelt sympathies to the family, relatives, teachers and classmates

Appendix 7

Sample letter requesting consent for Involvement of outside Professionals

Dear Parent/Guardian

Following the recent (tragedy/death of x) we have arranged specialist support for students in the school who need particular help. (X) is available to help us with this work. The support will usually consist of talking to the students either in small groups or on a one to one basis, and offering reassurance and advice as appropriate.

Your Son /daughter has been identified as one of the students who would benefit from meeting with (x). If you would not like your Son / daughter to receive this support, please sign the attached slip and return it to the school by-----.

If you would like further information on the above or if you would like to talk to the psychologist, please indicate this on the slip, or contact the school.

Principal

I/We do not wish our Son / daughter meet with _____

I/We understand that my Son / daughter may meet x in an individual/group session, depending on the arrangements that are thought most appropriate.

Name of Student: _____

Class: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Signed: _____