

ST GABRIEL'S CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY

This policy is closely aligned to the Department of Education and Skills document "Responding to Critical Incidents NEPs Guidelines and Resource Materials for schools" available on www.education.ie. All Page references are to that document.

St. Gabriel's school recognises a critical incident to be "an incident or sequence of events that over-whelms 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 and require different response levels (pg. 20)

Types of incidents might include:

- An intrusion into the school
- Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism, etc
- The death of a parent/sibling.
- The death of a member of the school community through sudden death, accident, terminal illness or suicide
- An accident/tragedy in the wider school community
- The disappearance of a member of the school community
- An accident involving a member of the school community

Aim

Recognising that the key to managing critical incidents is planning, St. Gabriel's school has 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 and effectively and to maintain a sense of control. They should also help us to achieve a return to normality as soon as possible.

Prevention

Creation of a coping supportive and caring ethos in the school

Systems have been put in place to lessen the probability of the occurrence of an incident. These include measures to address the physical and psychological safety to staff and students.

Physical safety: (See also Health & Safety Statement)

- Safety Guidelines for School Trips are in place in the Educational Trips and Health & Safety policies.
- Relevant medical information and needs are recorded and made known to teachers
- The Caretakers phone number is permanently on display in staffroom and school office
- SNA's monitor entry/exit doors in mornings
- Regular fire drills occur and evacuation plans are clear and communicated to all
- Fire exits and extinguishers are checked every 3 months
- The main gate to the playground is closed during school hours
- CCTV cameras are in use.
- The Code of Behaviour includes safety rules for indoors and outdoors.

- Regular monitoring of school building and playground takes place to ensure it is in good safe condition and the prompt repairs occur where necessary.
- The school maintains a record of dangerous incidents and take steps to prevent reoccurrence.

Psychological safety

St. Gabriel's aims to create an open and psychologically safe environment where students and staff are encouraged to talk and seek help with difficulties. The following supports are in place:

- Staff members are reminded annually of the availability of the Employee Assist Service.
- Stress management and positive mental health is promoted.
- Training is provided in relevant areas.
- Difference and diversity is welcomed and respected.
- There is an Adult Anti-bullying policy and Grievance Procedures policy in place.
- The Code of Behaviour for children is accompanied by an Anti-bullying policy.
- Fortnightly care-team meetings identify vulnerable students and address their needs.
- SPHE programmes address issues such as grief and loss, communication skills, stress / anger management, conflict, problem solving, decision making and seeking help.
- Staff members are informed of difficulties affecting individual students and are vigilant.
- Staff members have access to books/resources on difficulties affecting children.
- Our Religious Education programmes include lessons on morals and values.
- The school has developed links with outside agencies, which may be contacted in the event of an emergency and for onward referral of students.
- The School Completion Programme supports at-risk students and families
- Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) support is available if teachers have concerns.
- HSCL teachers work towards building positive home-school links.

Critical Incident Management Team

St. Gabriel's has set up a C.I. Management Team in line with best practice and will maintain this team in future. The members of the team are linked to their role in the school and are voluntary. Members will retain their roles for at least one school year. The members of the team will meet once a year, usually in the first term, to review and update the plan. New staff members will be given access to the plan and briefed as part of their induction.

Roles

Key roles have been identified and assigned as follows:

- Team Leader - Principal
- Staff Liaison – Deputy Principal
- Student Liaison - Assistant Principal and relevant Class Teacher
- Parent Liaison – HSCL teacher
- Media/Community Liaison – Chairperson BOM
- Chaplin – Local Parish Priest
- Administration – School Secretary

In the event of a critical incident the responsibilities of each role-holder will be as follows

TASK	NAME
Overall Management of Response	Ms. Loretta Dunphy
Communication	Ms. Patricia Slavin
Administration Tasks	Ms. Joyce Gahan – Secretary
Staff Liaison	Ms. Suzanne Smyth
Media Liaison	Ms. Patricia Slavin
Parent/family Liaison	Ms. Laura Smyth
Community Liaison	Ms. Loretta Dunphy
Student Liaison	Ms. Laura Smyth
Chaplain	Fr. Adrian Egan

Team Leader

- Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting.
- Coordinates the tasks of the team.
- Clarifies facts around the event
- Decides how news will be communicated to other groups; staff, children, families etc.
- Liaises with Gardaí/Emergency service
- Liaises with the Board of Management and Department of Education & Science.
- Liaises with the affected/bereaved family.

Staff Liaison

- Leads meetings to brief staff on the facts as known, gives staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and outlines the routine of the day.
- Is available to talk to staff members in non-counselling role
- Is alert to vulnerable staff members and makes contact with them individually
- Outlines specific services available in the school
- Provides information and materials to staff from the Ready-To-Go-Pack
- Facilitates provision of other on-going support for staff afterwards e.g. NEPs, Care-Call

Student Liaison

- Liaises with other team members to update them of progress & other information
- Alerts staff to vulnerable students
- Advices staff on the procedures for identifying vulnerable students
- Outlines specific services available in the school
- Provide materials for students from Ready-To-Go-Pack
- Monitor class most affected – after the incident
- Refer students to outside agencies/school supports as appropriate – after the incident

Community Liaison

- Liaises with agencies in the community for support and onward referral
- Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies
- Coordinates the involvement of these agencies

Parent/Family Liaison

- Co-ordinates on-going contact with families (following first contact by Principal)
- Facilitates "questions and answers" meetings in collaboration with principal/chairperson
- Assists with all communication dealing with parents of any student affected by critical incident
- Meets with individual parents.
- Visits the bereaved family with the team leader
- Consults with family around involvement of school in e.g. funeral/school liturgies/memorial services
- Provides materials for parents from the Critical Incident Ready-To-Go-Pack.
- Offers to link family with community support groups after the incident
- Provides ongoing support to families affected by the incident

Media Liaison/Communication

- In preparing for the role, s/he will consider issues that may arise during an incident and the appropriate response (e.g. media requesting student interviews, photographers etc)
- With Team, prepare a public statement
- Organise a designated room to address media promptly
- Designate telephone numbers/mobile numbers for contact
- School website will be used where appropriate
- In the event of an incident, will liaise where necessary with the Communications section in DES.

Chaplaincy Role:

- Visit home(s), if appropriate
- Assist with prayer services
- Make contact with other local clergy
- Be available as spiritual or personal support to staff
- Provide follow-up support to families in conjunction with Home School Community Liaison
- Work in partnership with Critical Incident team

Administrative Tasks

- Maintain up to date lists of contact numbers of:
 - Emergency support services and other external contacts and resources
 - Staff
 - Parents or guardians
 - Key parents such as members of the parent's council
- Respond to telephone calls, send letters and photocopy materials.
- Keep record of phone calls, meetings, emails, materials etc

Record Keeping

In the event of an incident each member of the team will keep detailed records of phone calls made and received, letters sent and received, meetings held, persons met, intervention's used, materials used etc. The school secretary will have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters, photocopying materials etc. Following an incident, the Principal will compile and keep the records indefinitely. They will be stored with other Board of Management records in the archiving cupboard. They will be accessed on a needs basis through the Principal.

Letter to Parents

The principal will prepare a brief, written statement (samples in pack) to include:

- The sympathy of the school community for the affected/bereaved family
- Positive information or comments about the deceased/injured person(s)
- The facts of the incident
- What has been done
- What will be done

Confidentiality and good name considerations

The school has a responsibility to protect the privacy and good name of the people involved in any incident and will to 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 pupils do so also. (For instance, the term 'suicide' will not be used without the consent of the family involved or until it has been established categorically that the person's death was a result of suicide. The phrases 'tragic death' or 'sudden death' may be used instead.)

Critical Incident Room

In the event of a critical incident, Room 6 will be the main room used to meet the staff, students, parents and visitors involved.

Development and communication of this policy and plan

All staff members were consulted and their views sought in the preparation of the draft plan. Parent representatives were also consulted and asked for their comments. Our school's final policy and procedures in relation to responding to critical incidents has been presented to all staff. Each member of the critical incident team has a personal copy.

Signed:

Date: 8/04/2024

Review date: 2028

CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT PLAN APRIL 2024

CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT (CIM) TEAM

- Patricia Slavin - Chairperson B.O.M.
- Loretta Dunphy - Principal
- Suzanne Smyth - Deputy Principal
- Laura Smyth – Assistant Principal
- Laura Smyth – Home School Coordinator
- Joyce Gahan - Secretary
- Martin Douglas - Caretaker

INITIAL ACTION PLAN (See pg. 21)

- Gather accurate information & Establish facts
- Open file on server to log events meetings phone calls etc. (Resources/Critical Incidents/ log)
- Contact NEPs / other appropriate agencies and arrange meeting/s if necessary/agree roles and procedures.
- Convene a meeting with key staff/CIM team (See NEPs doc 4.3 for sample agenda)
- Organise timetable/routine for the day – adhering to normal routines as far as possible
- Photocopy appropriate literature
- Hold staff meeting if appropriate
- Ensure absent members of staff are kept informed
- Inform parents. Draft letter (pg. 54, 55). Agree content of communication for website/texts (pg. 89)
- Inform students (pg. 57)
- Identify any vulnerable students (pg.69)
- Class teachers list absentees who might need to be contacted. This and other relevant information should be given to the Student Liaison person
- Organise space for meetings (Room 6)
- Organise quiet space for time – out for students (Library)
- Contact outside agencies: Emergency, Medical or Community care services, H.S.E.
- Make contact with the affected/bereaved family
- Convene end of day meeting with key staff/CIM team

Dealing with Media (pg. 44 – 56)

- Designate a spokesperson (Chairperson/Principal)
- Obtain accurate information about the incident
 - What happened, where and when?
 - Identify those involved.
 - What is the extent of the injuries?

- Is there a risk of further injury?
- What agencies have been contacted?
- Prepare a brief statement (Team)
- Advise students, parents and staff that only the nominated person will deal with the media
- Protect the family's privacy

MEDIUM TERM ACTIONS (24 – 72 HOURS)

- Reconvene Key Staff/Critical Incident Management Team (pg. 29)
- Review the events of the first 24 hours
- Discuss School closure (if appropriate) - request a decision on this from school management bearing in mind that routine is normally best for children.
- Meet with staff.
- Liaise with family re: funeral arrangements/ memorial service and school role in these
- Preparation of students/staff attending funeral including involvement of students/staff in liturgy if agreed by bereaved family
- Facilitate student/staff responses, e.g. Sympathy cards, flowers, Book of Condolences.
- Organise service/ritual within the school
- Decide arrangements for support meetings for parents/students/staff
- Decide on mechanism for feedback from teachers on vulnerable students
- Arrange support for individual students, groups of students, and parents, if necessary
- Hold support/information meeting for parents/students, if necessary, in order to clarify what has happened
- Arrange, in consultation, with outside agencies, individual or group debriefings or support meetings with parental permission
- Plan for the re-integration of students and staff e.g. absentees, injured, siblings, close relative (pg. 66)
- Student Liaison person to liaise with above on their return to school.
- Plan visits to injured - family liaison person, class teacher, principal to visit home/hospital as appropriate

LONGER TERM ACTIONS - BEYOND 72 HOURS (pg. 30)

- Review situation and plan evaluate response to incident and amend CI plan accordingly
 - What went well?
 - Where were the gaps?
 - What was most/least helpful?
 - Have all necessary onward referrals to support services been made?
 - Is there any unfinished business?
- Monitor students for signs of continuing stress
 - Uncharacteristic behaviour
 - Deterioration in academic performance
 - Physical symptoms — e.g. weight loss/gain, lack of attention to appearance, tiredness, restlessness
 - Inappropriate emotional reactions
 - Increased absenteeism
 - In case of suicide/suspected suicide extra vigilance is required (pg. 38)
- If over a prolonged period of time, a student continues to display the above he/she may need assistance from the Health Board. Constant communication with family is essential.
- Monitor staff for signs of stress
- Decide on appropriate ways to deal with anniversaries – be sensitive to special days and events. Anniversaries may trigger emotional responses in students/staff and they may need additional support at this time
- Consider role in digital RIP sites, obituaries and legacies
- Consider role in hardcopy obituaries Inform new staff/new school pupils affected by Critical Incidents where appropriate
- Ensure that new staffs are aware of the school policy and procedures in this area
- Ensure new staff are aware of which pupils were affected in any recent incident and in what way
- Consider appropriate care of deceased person's possessions
- Update and amend school records

EMERGENCY CONTACT LIST

PRINCIPAL – LORETTA DUNPHY – 087-7959139
CHAIRPERSON BOM, PATRICIA SLAVIN - 087 2848422
CHAPLAIN, FR. ADRIAN EGAN – 6264881/086 0640159
CARETAKER – MARTIN DOUGLAS – 087-6120496
GARDAI BALLYFERMOT - 6667200
OUR LADY'S HOSPITAL, CRUMLIN - 4096100
NATIONAL CHILDRENS HOSPITAL, TALLAGHT - 4142000
FIREBRIGADE, TARA STREET- 6734000 / 999
DOCTORS – SEE COMMUNITY DIRECTORY
CAMHS - CHILD & FAMILY CENTRE BALLYFERMOT - 7782085/7782083/7782052
H.S.E. SOCIAL SERVICES, BRIDGE HOUSE - 6206000
D.E.S COMMUNICATIONS (Press Officer) - GERALDINE BUTLER - 8896400
NEPS - SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST- 4614820/4614861/4614824/mobile
NEPS – MARLBOROUGH STREET – 8892700
INTO, Press Officer - 8047000/0862643558

FOLLOW UP SERVICES

AWARE - 6617211/ 1890 303302
BARNARDOS – 4530355 / HEAD OFFICE – 1800 902337
BEREAVEMENT COUNSELLING SERVICE – 01 6767727 / 01 8391766 / 01 6768882
CARECALL – EMPLOYEE ASSIST - COUNSELLING SCHOOL EMPLOYEES - 1800 817433
CHILDLINE - 1800 902 826 / 01 6767960
LOCAL COUNSELLING SERVICES – 4578700 (ACCESS COUNSEL – 5240708)
NATIONAL SUICIDE BEAREAVEMENT SUPPORT - 024 95561
PIETA HOUSE – 01 6235606
ACCESS COUNSEL 5240708
PARENTLINE - 1890 927277
SAMARITANS – 116 123

SAMPLE LETTER TO PARENTS (See pg. 54 & 55)



St. Gabriel's Primary School,

Ballyfermot Road

Dublin 10

01-6265958

Email: stgabrielsprimaryschool@gmail.com

April 2024

Dear Parents,

The school has experienced (the sudden death, accidental injury) of one of our students. We are deeply saddened by the death/ events. Our thoughts and prayers are with the family. Give facts of the incident....

(Brief details of the incident, and in the event of a death, perhaps some positive remembrances of the person lost.) Sympathies lie with

We have support structures in place to help your child cope with this tragedy. Elaborate. Outline what has been done to date.... Explain what is going to be done

It is possible that your child may have feelings that s/he may like to discuss with you. You can help your child by taking time to listen and encouraging them to express their feelings. It is important to give truthful information that is appropriate to their age.

If you would like advice you may contact the following people at the school. Details.

Principal

SAMPLE LETTER REQUESTING CONSENT FOR INVOLVEMENT OF OUTSIDE PROFESSIONALS



St. Gabriel's Primary School,

Ballyfermot Road

Dublin 10

01-6265958

Email: stgabrielsprimaryschool@gmail.com

April 2024

Dear Parents/Guardians,

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

Your child has been identified as one of the students who would benefit from meeting with xxxx. If you would like your son/daughter to receive this support please complete the attached referral form / permission slip (from their organisation) and return it to the school by

If you would like further information on the above or to talk to _____ /the xxx please indicate this on the slip or telephone the school.

Yours sincerely,

School Principal

REFERENCES

- Responding to Critical Incidents – NEPS Guidelines and Resource Materials for Schools, NEPS, 2016
- Responding to Critical Incidents – Resource Materials for Schools, NEPS, 2016
- When Tragedy strikes - Guidelines for Effective Critical Incident Management in Schools, INTO
- CPSMA Management Board Members' Handbook, 2016

WEBSITES

DES – NEPS	www.education.ie
Health and Safety Authority	www.hsa.ie/osh
Allianz (<i>Church and General</i>)	www.cg-online.ie
INTO	www.into.ie