



Introduction: Critical Incident Policy for

St. Ultan's Special School

19216E

In St. Ultan's Special School we the teachers, Special Needs Assistants (SNA) and The Board of Management (BoM) aim to protect the well-being of our pupils and staff by providing a safe and secure environment as outlined in our school mission statement.

The Board of Management through the Principal, Staff and the Parents Association has drawn up a Critical Incident Management Plan. They have established a Critical Incidents Management Team to steer the development and implementation of the plan.

What is a Critical Incident?

'A critical incident can be any incident or sequence of events, sudden or prolonged which overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the teachers and students at the school and disrupts the running of the school'.

Examples:

There are many examples of a Critical Incident and these would include:

- Death of a pupil, staff member major illness or outbreak of infection, disease or pandemic.
- Criminal incidents, e.g. death of pupil by criminal act
- Major accidents causing serious injury to pupils or staff at St. Ultan's
- Disappearance of a pupil, such as the incident in Middleton, Cork
- Unauthorised removal of a St. Ultan's student from school or home.
- Death by suicide. (need to organize postvention support)
- Fire or hazardous substances in the school, or its environs.
- Civil unrest, due to acts of war or terrorism caused by criminal gangs/ organisations.
- National or world events that may adversely affect students and staff at St. Ultan's

Critical Incidents Management Team:

The first-named person has the responsibility as defined.

The second-named person assists and only assumes responsibility on the absence of the first-named.

Leadership Role:	Jean Cunningham / C. Cunningham Cunningham
Communication Role:	Jean Cunningham / C. Cunningham
Student Liaison/ Counselling Role :	David O Brien / Karen Smith / C. McMahon
Family Liaison Role:	C. McMahon / Karen Smith
Chaplaincy Role:	Navan Parish
B. o. M. Representative:	Pat McCreanor

Roles and Responsibilities

1. Leadership Role:

Intervention

- Confirm the event and commence logging the event and the actions taken eg, the time of the event, those notified etc.
- Activate the Critical Incident response team
- Liaise with the Gardaí/Emergency services
- Lead briefing meetings for staff on the facts as known, give staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions, outlines the routine for the day
- Express sympathy to family
- Clarify facts surrounding event
- Make contact with other relevant agencies
- Decide how news will be communicated to different groups (staff, pupils, outside school)

Postvention

- Ensure provision of ongoing Counselling and other appropriate support to staff and students.
- Facilitate any appropriate memorial events
- Review Plan

2. Communication Role: Intervention

- With the Team, review the facts and prepare a statement of the sequence of events. Organise a designated room to address the media as soon as is practical.
- Ensure telephone lines are free for outgoing and important incoming calls
 - Agree what numbers are to be provided to the public and nominate a spokesperson for the event.
 - Designate mobile numbers for contact
 - Liaise with relevant outside support agencies and the BoM of St. Ultan's

3. Student Liaison/ Counselling Role: Intervention

- Advise the staff on the procedures for identification of vulnerable pupils
 - Alert staff to vulnerable pupils
 - Outline specific services available in the school
 - Put in place clear referral procedures
 - Address immediate needs of staff
- Provide advisory materials for staff
- Provide information
- Provide counselling

Postvention

- Provide ongoing support to vulnerable students
- Monitor class most affected
- Refer as appropriate
- Review and evaluate the Critical Incident Plan

4. Family Liaison Role:

Intervention

- Co-ordinate contact with families (following first contact by Principal)
- Consult with family around involvement of school in e.g. funeral service
- Assist with all communication dealing with parents of any student affected by critical incident

Postvention

- Provide ongoing support to families affected by the incident
- Involve as appropriate the family in school liturgies/memorial services

- Offer to link family with community support groups
- Review and evaluate plan

5. Chaplaincy Role:

Intervention

- Visit home(s), if appropriate
- Assist with prayer services
- Make contact with other local clergy
- Be available as personal and spiritual support to staff

Postvention

- Provide follow-up support to families in conjunction with Home School Community Liaison
- Work in partnership with Critical Incident team
- Review and Evaluate Plan

ACTION PLANS Short Term Actions (Day 1)

- * Immediate contact with family/families
- * Consult with the family regarding appropriate support from the school.
- * Organise a quiet room for students and staff to rest, but no one is to be left feeling alone.

Media Briefing (if appropriate)

- * Designate a spokesperson(Leader) * Gather accurate information
- * Prepare a brief statement(Team) * Protect the family's privacy

* It is important to obtain accurate information about the incident

1. *What happened, where and when?*
2. *What is the extent of the injuries?*
3. *How many are involved and what are their names?*

4. *Is there a risk of further injury?*
5. *What agencies have been contacted already?*

* Contact appropriate agencies

1. *Emergency services*
2. *Medical services*
3. *H.S.E. Psychology Departments/Community Care Services*

4. NEPS

Board of Management - DES/Schools Inspector

- Convene a meeting with Key Staff/Critical Management Team
 - Organize a staff meeting, if appropriate
 - Ensure any absent staff members are kept informed
 - Organise timetable/routine for the day. (Adhering to the normal school routine is important, if this is possible)
 - Class teachers to take note of any absentees who might need to be contacted, list of friends etc, or any other relevant information. This is to be given to the Student Liaison person
 - Arrange supervision of students
 - Liaise with the family regarding funeral arrangements/memorial service
 - The Chaplain/Principal will liaise with the family, to extend sympathy and clarify the family's wishes regarding the school's involvement in funeral/memorial service

 - Arrange a home visit by two staff representatives within 24 hours, if appropriate. (e.g. principal, student liaison person, class teacher, SNA)
 - Have regard for different religious traditions and faiths
- Medium Term Actions (24-72 Hours)**
- Preparation of students/staff attending funeral
 - Involvement of students/staff in liturgy if agreed by bereaved family
 - Facilitation of students/staffs responses, e.g. Sympathy cards, flowers, Book of Condolences, etc.
 - Ritual within the school
 - Review the events of the first 24 hours
 - Reconvene Key Staff/Critical Incident Management Team
 - Decide arrangements for support meetings for parents/students/staff
 - Decide on mechanism for feedback from teachers on vulnerable students
 - Have review of Critical Incident Management Team meeting
 - Establish contact with absent staff and pupils
 - 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
 - Give any teacher who feels uncomfortable with involvement in support meetings the choice of opting out
 - 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 etc)
 - Student Liaison person to liaise with above on their return to school.
 - Plan visits to injured

* Family liaison person/class teacher/SNA/principal to visit home /hospital

- Attendance and participation at funeral/memorial service (To be decided). Decide this in accordance with parent's/guardians wishes, school management decisions and in consultation with close school friends
- School closure (if appropriate). Request a decision on this from school management

Longer Term Actions

- Monitor students for signs of continuing distress, e.g.
 - * *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*

If over a prolonged period of time, a student continues to display signs similar to those above, he/she may need assistance from the HSE or NEPS. Constant communication with family is essential.

Review of the Critical Incident Management Policy

- Evaluate response to incident and amend Critical Incident Management Plan appropriately
 - * *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?*
- Formalise the Critical Incident Plan for the future
- Consult with NEPS Psychologist
- Inform new staff/new school pupils affected by Critical Incidents where appropriate
- Ensure that new staff members are aware of the school policy and procedures in this area
- Ensure they are aware of which pupils were affected in any recent incident and in what way
- When individual pupils or a class of pupils affected by an incident are transferring to a new school, the Principal should brief the Principal of the new school
- 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*
 - * *Acknowledge the anniversary with the family*
 - * *Be sensitive to significant days like Birthdays, Christmas, Mother's Day, and Father's*

Day

* Plan a school memorial service

* Care will be taken of all possessions in accordance with the families

* Update and amend school records

The above Critical Incident Policy was reviewed by the In School Management Team (ISM) in April 2021 and ratified by the Board of Management in May 2021.

It was reviewed by the Board of Management in November 2022

Signed: Pat McCreanor

Pat McCreanor, Board of Management

Date: 09-11-22