



## **Critical Incident Policy**

### **Mission Statement**

Every pupil of Nun's Cross N.S. is nurtured within a committed, caring and mutually supportive community; where staff, parents and the wider community alike, strive to achieve the best possible standards in all areas of school life.

The school is a community where moral values such as honesty, truthfulness, justice, fairness, sensitivity to others and civic responsibility are fostered and developed. The Church of Ireland school is a community where all pupils are equally valued and respected. Pupils experience a sense of caring and belonging. They are treated fairly, and their spiritual, moral and religious development is encouraged as is their intellectual, social and academic achievement. Every Friday the whole school participates in assembly in the multipurpose room and once per month this takes place in the church and is led by Reverend Jack Kinhead.

We continuously promote a positive attitude towards learning and enable each of our students to recognise their gifts and work towards achieving their full potential.

### **Introduction:**

In Nun's Cross NS we aim to protect the well-being of all members in our school community by providing a safe, caring and learning environment which nurtures the full educational potential of each child. We have taken a number of measures to create a supportive and caring environment in our school and we have formulated a number of policies and procedures to be followed with a view to ensuring the safety of staff and pupils.

Our Critical incident policy follows the guidelines for schools available in the following publications;

- Responding to Critical Incidents – NEPS Guidelines and Resource Materials for Schools
- When Tragedy Strikes INTO 2000

The BOM through consultation with the Principal, the Staff and the Parents Association has formulated this critical policy. Copies of this policy will be disseminated to staff, the Board of Management and the Parent’s Association. A copy will also be made available in the school Office.

This policy was formulated with all stakeholders in November/December 2022.

### **What is a Critical Incident?**

‘A critical incident is any incident or sequence of events which overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school’ (NEPS/DES 2016). Critical Incidents may involve one or more pupils, staff, the school or the local community and may include;

### **Examples:**

- Death of a member of school community through sudden death, accident, terminal illness or suicide
- Major illness/outbreak of disease (Foot & Mouth)
- A physical attack on staff member(s) or pupil(s)
- An intrusion into the school
- Serious damage to the school through fire, vandalism or flooding
- Criminal incidents (e.g. Dunblane shooting, Shooting at first communion in Ballymun.)
- Major accidents, serious injury (e.g. ‘Navan bus crash’)
- Civil unrest, war (foreign nationals may be traumatised by events that happened in their country of origin)
- Disappearance of student from home or school (e.g. Middleton incident in Cork)
- Local public tragedy (Creeslough tragedy - explosion at service station)

## Aim

The key to manage a critical incident is planning and Nuns Cross NS has formulated the Critical Incident Management policy and accompanying plan. The aim is that in the event of an incident, these will help staff to act quickly and effectively and to maintain a sense of control.

- **Team Leader:** Lisa Ward (principal)
- **Staff Liaison & Community Liaison:** Lorraine Gannon (Deputy Principal)
- **Student Liaison:** Jane Pearse leading with all teachers playing an important counselling and support role
- **Media Liaison & Pastoral Care Role:** Rev. Jack Kinhead
- **Parent/Guardian Liaison:** Lena Harte (SNA and parent)
- **Administrator:** Sandra Fitzpatrick

*The first-named person has the responsibility as defined.*

## Roles and Responsibilities

### 1. Team Leader - Lisa Ward (principal)

#### Intervention

- Confirm the event with the Gardaí. Link in with the Gardaí to verify the accuracy of the incident details before they are shared. It may require ongoing liaison depending on the nature of the incident.
- Maintain clear lines of communication with the Gardai and emergency services as necessary
- Activate the Critical Incident response team
- Liaise with the Gardaí/Emergency services, Board of Management, Department of Education & Skills
- 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
- Keep staff updated throughout the day
- Express sympathy to family
- Decide how news will be communicated to different groups (staff, pupils, outside school)
- Liaise with Parent, Staff and Student Liaison Officers
- Report incidents to the Health & Safety Authority

## **Postvention**

- Ensure provision of ongoing support to staff and students
- Facilitate any appropriate memorial events
- Lead the review of & evaluate this plan

### **2. Staff and Community Liaison - Lorraine Gannon (Deputy Principal)**

#### **Intervention**

- Provide materials for staff from the Critical Incident Guidelines
- Be alert to vulnerable staff and advise them of the availability of the employee assistance service (Spectrum Life)
- Organise designated meeting rooms for the Critical Incident Management Team and Staff team meetings
- Ensure telephone lines are free for outgoing and important incoming calls
- Designate mobile numbers for contact
- Maintain up to date list of contact numbers of key parents (eg. members of the Parents' Council) and emergency support services
  
- Make contact with other relevant agencies (NEPS, NCSE, etc.)
- Update CIMT members of the involvement of external agencies

#### **Postvention**

- Review and evaluate effectiveness of communication response
- Review & evaluate plan

### **3. Student Liaison- Jane Pearse**

#### **Intervention**

- Alert other staff to vulnerable pupils
- Advise the staff on the procedures for identification of vulnerable pupils
  
- Activate specific services available in the school
- Put in place clear referral procedures
- Access materials for staff (from Critical Incident Folder in Office) - including resources relating to death for pupils with SEN

- Provide information to team leader
- Setting up a 'quiet room' for vulnerable students

### **Postvention**

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

## **4. Counselling Role: All class teachers**

### **Intervention**

- Provide a calm, warm and welcoming environment appropriate for your class - based on age, level of grief, etc.
- Alert team Student Liaison to vulnerable students

### **Postvention**

- Refer as appropriate
- Review and evaluate Plan

## **5. Pastoral Care Role & [Media Liaison](#)- Rev Jack Kinkead**

### **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
- Liaising with Patron and Department of Education & Skills
- Liaising with Principal regarding incidents and issues occurring on the ground
- Consider legal & financial consequences

- In advance of an incident they will consider issues that may arise and how they might be responded to (eg/ students bring interviewed, photographers on the premises, etc.)
- They will draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews

### **Postvention**

- Provide follow-up support to families in conjunction with Parish team and NEPS
- Work in partnership with Critical Incident team
- Review and Evaluate Plan

## **6. Parent/Guardian Liaison - Lena Harte (SNA)**

### **Intervention**

- Visit the bereaved family with the team leader
- may facilitate meetings with groups of parents
- ensure that sample letter for parents are prepared
- set up rooms for meetings with parents
- provide appropriate materials for parents from the CI guidelines

## **7. Secretary (Administrator)**

### **Intervention**

- Ring the emergency services immediately
- Ensure all contact details are up to date at all times
- Have contact details at hand if phone lines or internet were down
- Ensuring that the Office is manned at all times
- Liaising with other members of Critical Incident Management Team
- Making contact with all parents of the school and liaising with the Parent Liaison team member

Note: when calling for an ambulance a second adult needs to be present in the office as emergency services may keep the secretary on the phone for an extended period while the 2<sup>nd</sup> person needs to contact the child's parents.

## 8. Controlling of access to the premises: Shona Nolan

Liaising with other members of Critical Incident Management Team

### Contact Numbers & Emergency Information

- The Secretary has responsibility for maintaining an up to date list of Contact numbers for pupils and their parents / guardians. Private and Confidential forms will be sent out in June to ensure all contact information is available from the first day of the new school year.

There will be one list kept on file.

#### 1. *Emergency contact list with all contact details for each child.*

- It will be the **responsibility of each parent** to ensure that this phone number is current. Should a number be changed during the school year, it is the parent's responsibility to inform the Secretary who will immediately update the contact list.
- The Health and Safety Representative has responsibility for ensuring that a list of contact numbers for the emergency support services is displayed in the Staff Room, the Secretary's Office and the Principal's Office. This will be reviewed and updated at the beginning of each school year.

### Postvention

- Work in partnership with Critical Incident team
- Review and Evaluate Plan

### Additional Responsibilities

#### Evacuation procedures

The evacuation procedures are displayed near the door of every classroom. The emergency evacuation procedure will be practised once per term using the fire alarm. **All visitors and parents must evacuate the building on the sound of the fire alarm, whether it is a practise drill or emergency manoeuvre.**

## **Red Card System**

Every classroom has a Red Card to be used for an Emergency within a classroom. Pupils are trained early in September should an emergency occur (such as a teacher fainting, a child taking seriously ill, a violent, abusive or intoxicated individual entering the classroom) a pupil takes the card to teacher next door. This teacher will respond immediately to the emergency. The child proceeds with the same card to the Office so that the secretary is informed immediately and can come to assist the situation. The Staff H&S Officer has responsibility to ensure each year that every class has a red card attached to the front door of the room and one on the desk.

## **Training & Staff Development**

The school will provide opportunities for staff and members of the Board of Management to attend information /training meetings on issues such as suicide, grieving and first aid. The school will use the resources of NEPS as an advisor in planning for, and as a support facility after any incident A rotating schedule for First aid will be established.

## **Visitors**

Visitors, including parents must report to the Office, identify themselves and state their business in the school. Visitors will not be allowed beyond the Secretary's Office except at the invitation of a member of staff. Any visitors who are carrying out work in the school will be instructed to wear a visitor lanyard.

## **After Schools Activities**

In the event of a situation occurring after school, the same short-term actions outlined below should be followed, including the following;

- Evacuate building immediately (if necessary)
- Get assistance from a 2<sup>nd</sup> adult (assistant coach, teaching staff still on site, cleaner, caretaker)
- Ensure safety of additional children as well as injured
- Contact emergency services (ambulance, gardai, fire service, etc)
- Contact Principal immediately
- Contact parents
- Record events & procedures taken



## The Media

Members of the media must report to the Secretary's Office, identify themselves and state their business in the school. Members of the media will not be allowed beyond the Secretary's Office except at the invitation of the Principal or Deputy Principal. Members of the media may be asked to remain outside school property if this in any way hinders the management of a critical incident.

***\*Only the Leader and Media Liaison will speak to the media unless directed otherwise by the Critical Incident Management Team***

- Ensure the safety of all students, staff & visitors
- Convene a meeting of the Critical incident Management team and delegate responsibilities
- Organise a staff meeting, if appropriate – Ensure any absent staff members are kept informed
- Gather accurate information (use Incident Report form)
- Identify high risk, vulnerable pupils
- Ensure that a quiet place can be made for students/staff (BOM room)
- Immediate contact with affected/bereaved family/families
- Contact appropriate agencies and organise support
- Contact BOM, DES, NEPS, HSA & PA
- Appoint people to assist Secretary & Caretaker in handling phone queries & manning Secretary's Office & school gates
- Arrange the supervision of pupils
- Organise a timetable for the day
- Respond to the media – only the leader will speak to the media; all other staff will refrain from commenting
- 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. (Leader, Chaplain, Student Liaison person or Class teacher)
- Have regard for different religious traditions and faiths

***As far as possible, maintain normal school routine. In serious cases of intruder or abduction, neighbouring schools will be informed***

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. S.E. Psychology Departments/Community Care Services
  4. NEPS
  5. BOM
  6. DES/Schools Inspector

## **MEDIUM-TERM ACTIONS (24-72 HOURS)**

The shock of day 1 can sometimes generate an unusual sense of calm. However, as reality sinks in on day 2, further challenges can arise and the need for additional support can become more evident. It is advisable that the Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) continues to meet each day until the school returns to normal functioning.

**Days 2 tasks include:**

- **Reviewing day 1 and what has been done to date**
- **Making a decision about school closures if necessary**
- **Assign roles for:**
  - **contacting other agencies**
  - **contacting the bereaved family regarding attendance and participation in funeral**
  - **listing potentially vulnerable students and staff and review how they are doing**
  - **developing a plan for monitoring vulnerable students and staff in the coming weeks**
- **Review the schedule for the day**
- **Address staff again to:**
  - **outline the schedule for the day**
  - **update on family, funeral information etc.**
  - **allow staff to raise any questions**
  - **see sample script for principal (page 29 of Guidelines)**
  
- Re-convene a meeting of the Critical Management Team to review the events of the first 24 hrs and to delegate responsibilities
- Decide on mechanism for feedback from teachers on vulnerable students
- Establish contact with absent staff and pupils
- Decide arrangements for support meetings for parents/students/staff in order to clarify what has happened
- Arrange support for individual students, groups of students, and parents, if necessary
- Update BOM, DES, PA & other relevant external agencies
- Update the media
- Plan visits to the injured
- Class Teacher + Principal to visit home/hospital
- Attendance and participation at funeral/memorial service (To be decided)
- Decide this in accordance with parent's wishes, school management decisions and in consultation with close school friends
- Plan for the re-integration of students and staff e.g. absentees, injured, siblings, close relative etc)
- Plan restoration of normal school routine
- Consider the legal & financial consequences

- School closure (if appropriate) – Request a decision on this from school management
- In the case of a bereavement, consider the following actions;
- 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

## LONGER TERM ACTIONS

- ***Monitor students for signs of continuing distress***

*If over a prolonged period of time, a student continues to display the following, he/she may need assistance and/or long term counselling from the HSE.*

*Constant communication with family is essential.*

- 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

### ***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 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

### **Monitoring, Review and Evaluation**

This policy was drawn up in 2022-2023 by the staff, the Parent's Association Committee and the Board of Management.

The Critical Incident Policy Committee will review the policy every 2 years or on formation of a new Board of Management. Ongoing review and evaluation will take cognisance of changing information, legislation and feedback from parents/guardians, staff and pupils. The policy will be revised as necessary in the light of such review and evaluation and within the framework of school planning.

**Ratified by the Board of Management of Nuns Cross NS 1st February 2023**

**Review date: June 2025**

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Chairperson of BOM

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Appendix 1 - Preventative measures through the Curriculum & Policy

- Code of Behaviour
- Anti-bullying Policy
- Walk Tall
- Stay Safe
- SPHE policy
- PE Policy
- Well-being Framework
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Zones of Regulation
- Emotional Literacy Development
- Child Protection training for Staff
- Friends for Life
- Weaving Wellbeing
- FUSE anti-bullying Programme in 4th - 6th class each year
- Staff concerns (bereaved pupils, self-harming, eating disorders, home difficulties)
- Amber Flag Committee
- Active Schools Committee
- Green Schools Committee
- Creative Committee
- Student Council
- School assemblies every Friday - Celebrating achievements as a school community (Star of the Week in each class)
- Involvement in Sports, art and writing competitions
- Special Education Teaching through the Continuum of Support, supporting not only Academic difficulties but also social and emotional issues

## Appendix 2 - Preventative measures through the Physical Environment

### Physical Environment

- Emergency Evacuation Drills
- Health & Safety Policy
- First Aid training
- Code of Behaviour
- Playground supervision
- Access to school
- Yearly fire inspections
- Insurance inspections



## **Appendix 3 - Current Support**

Responding to Critical Incident: Resource Materials for Schools [http://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/Educational-Psychologist-NEPS-/neps\\_critical\\_incidents\\_resource\\_material\\_schools.pdf](http://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/Educational-Psychologist-NEPS-/neps_critical_incidents_resource_material_schools.pdf)

NEPS contact –

Pastoral care – Rev. Jack Kinhead

HSE Social Workers (if appropriate)

### **Websites**

DES – NEPS [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie)

Health and Safety Authority [www.hsa.ie](http://www.hsa.ie)

Ecclesiastical Insurance

CIPSMA [www.cipsma.ie](http://www.cipsma.ie)

#### **Appendix 4 - Critical Incident Folder Contents Review to include:**

1. Emergency Services and External support service numbers
2. Class list of pupils for each class (should Rollas be lost during evacuation)
3. Websites & access materials for staff
4. Reports on Fire drill and other evacuations
5. Teacher support file of resources from NEPS