

St Vincent's Secondary School

Glasnevin

Dublin 11



St Vincent's Secondary School

Critical Incident Policy



Iontaobhas Scoileanna Éamainn Rís
Edmund Rice Schools Trust



St. Vincent's Secondary School, Glasnevin

Critical Incident Management Plan

"A critical incident is any incident or sequence of events which overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of the school."

Reviewed by the Critical Incident Management Team– December 2024

This plan should be implemented in the context of two NEPS publications:

"Responding to Critical Incidents: Guidelines for Schools" and

the accompanying

"Resource Materials for Schools".

THE CRITICAL INCIDENT TEAM MUST MEET AT THE START OF EACH SCHOOL YEAR.

CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT POLICY, St. Vincent's Secondary School, Glasnevin.

St. Vincent's Secondary School aims to protect the well-being of its students by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times.

The school 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 both staff and students during the normal course of the school day and in the event of a critical incident. Such policies include:

- Health and Safety Policy.
- Pastoral Care Policy.
- Anti-Bullying Policy.
- Code of Behaviour.
- Guidance and Counselling Policy.
- S.P.H.E Programme.
- Child Protection Procedures.

Physical safety

Our Health & Safety policy includes evacuation plan, regular fire drills, annual maintenance of fire exits and extinguishers and the supervision of students in the school etc.

Psychological safety

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

Promoting Health and Preventing Infection

Integral to the success of any infection control programmes is the education of all staff members, who in turn should pass on the information to the students. Thus promotion of personal hygiene, of hygienic practices and the prevention of infection becomes an integral part of the school curriculum. The school community with the intervention of the HSE is up to date with immunisations. Parents are included in this team approach to infection control. A co-operative approach with ready dialogue between parents and the school ensures a healthy environment for all. Parents are encouraged to inform the school of any infectious illness in their children. In turn the school informs parents if there are any outbreaks of infection in the school.

This Critical Incident Management Policy is just one of many policies aimed at safeguarding and supporting the school community.

Definition of Critical Incident:

St. Vincent's Secondary School recognizes a critical incident to be

"An incident or sequence of events that overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of the school".

Levels of Critical Incident

With the varied nature of critical incidents, the school needs to clarify the kind of response which is required for each level of incident.

Level 1: the death of a student or staff member who was terminally ill; the death of a parent/sibling; a fire in the school not resulting in serious injury or serious damage to school property.

Level 2: the sudden death of a student or staff member.

Level 3: unexpected tragic incident: an accident/event involving a number of students; an infectious or contagious disease outbreak in the school; a violent death; an incident with a high media profile or involving a number of schools.

Aim of the Plan

The aim of the Critical Incident Plan is that in the event of such an incident as outlined above, the plan will help staff and management to react quickly and effectively and to maintain control of the situation. The plan will also help the school to return to normality as soon as possible and limit the effects of the incident on staff and students.

Critical Incident Management Team

People can be co-opted into the team as necessary.

Principal	Ms Máire Quinn
Deputy Principal	Mr Neil McCann
School Chaplain	
School Guidance Counsellors	Mr. Neil Mc Cann/ Ms S Flood
School Secretary	Ms Mairin Maher
HSCCL Teacher	Mr Robert Doran
Relevant Class Tutor	
Board of Management Representative	Mr Ciarán O Hare
Parent Council member	
Member of Staff	Mr Robert Doran
NEPS psychologist	Dr Jacqueline Horan

The Critical Incident Management Team may co-opt other members of staff to assist them, should they deem it necessary. The Principal will act as Team Leader or in his absence the Deputy Principal.

Roles

The team leader alerts team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting of the team. He co-ordinates/delegates tasks of the other team members. He liaises with The Board of Management, NEPS and the Department of Education and Science. In case of bereavement, he liaises along with the Chaplain and other members of staff with the bereaved family.

The key roles which may be delegated to other members of the team include:

- Team Leader
- Garda liaison
- Staff liaison.
- Student liaison
- Parent liaison
- Community liaison
- Media liaison
- Administrator

Team Leadership Role:

Intervention

- Confirm the event.
- Activate the Critical Incident response team.
- Express sympathy to family.
- Clarify facts surrounding the event.
- Make contact with other relevant agencies.
- Decide how news will be communicated to different groups (staff, pupils, outside school).
Brief the private audience first.
- Consult with the Media Advisor Mr. Peter White. 01 2950680 Email peter@peterwhite.ie

Post Intervention

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

Record Keeping

All team members will keep written records of phone calls, letters, meetings, interventions etc.

Confidentiality

The school is conscious of its responsibility to protect the privacy and good name of people involved in any incident and will be sensitive to the consequences of any public statements.

KEY ROLES ASSIGNED BY TEAM LEADER

Name of Team Member	Task
School Principal	
Deputy Principal	
School Secretary	
Chaplain	
Guidance Counsellor 1	
HSCL Teacher	
Media Advisor	

Relevant Class Tutor	
Board of Management Representative	
Parent Council member	
Staff member	

See [/www.education.ie/servlet/blobServlet/neps_critical_incidents_resource_material_schools.pdf](http://www.education.ie/servlet/blobServlet/neps_critical_incidents_resource_material_schools.pdf)

Action Plan

- Consult the NEPS publications *Responding to Critical Incidents: Guidelines for Schools* and the accompanying *Resource Materials for Schools*.

Short Term Actions – Day 1

1. Principal to gather accurate information - Who, what, when, where?

Make contact with family or families involved. Consult with the family regarding appropriate support from the school. Respect family's privacy. Appoint a member of staff to liaise with the family.

Notify the Media Advisor.

Notify Chairperson of the Board of Management

Notify members of the Critical Management Team.

Notify the Parents Council.

Notify members of staff.

Notify NEPS and other support agencies.

Notify the Edmund Rice Schools Trust.

Notify Principals of other schools if their students have a close connection with the incident or relationship with the victim. Seek the assistance of the other schools' Guidance Counsellors.

2. Principal to convene a Critical Incident Management Team meeting as soon as possible that evening or very early the next morning before commencement of normal school day, specify time and place.

- Agree on a Press Statement for students, parents and the media in consultation with the Media Advisor. Decide arrangements for support meetings for students, staff and parents. Establish procedures for contact with absent staff and pupils.
 - Principal to convene a meeting of staff (teachers, SNAs, office, caretaking) an hour later, but again if possible at least an hour before the start of the normal school day. Input from NEPS. •
 - If an incident occurs on a Friday evening, a decision needs to be taken on whether or not to open the school on Saturday and Sunday when students can meet up and share their thoughts and feelings with one another and with staff members.
 - Be conscious of the need to have additional supervisors and substitute teachers in place on a school day for staff involved in managing the critical incident...
 - Discuss which rooms will be available to students and external agencies.
 - Agree on which phone line is to be kept open for outgoing and incoming emergency calls.
 - Agree schedule for the school day (**normal timetable as much as possible**).
 - Inform **students of agreed facts – not speculation – in their own class groupings. Close friends (and students with learning difficulties with their SNA) may need to be told separately.** Teachers should give students the opportunity to talk about what has happened and temporarily shelve all academic activities if necessary. While NEPS personnel will be there to advise the staff, students need to be with people they know and trust.
 - Identify and compile a list of vulnerable students and agree on referral procedures. A record should be kept of all students seen by school staff and agencies external to the school. One person should be appointed to collate the lists regularly.
 - Decide whether a quiet room should be made available for students, which must be supervised at all times. Students sign out of their regular class and sign into the quiet room for a certain time. Inform parents as soon as possible by text and letter.
 - Keep in regular contact or visit the bereaved family.
 - Hold end of day staff briefing for updates, feedback and collegial support.
- Review the Critical Incident Management Plan with the Team and plan for the next day.

Medium term actions - (Day 2)

- Convene a Critical Incident Management Team meeting to review the events of day one. (8.00am)
- Meet external agencies.
- Meet the whole staff.
- Arrange support for students, staff and parents.
- Visit the injured.
- Liaise with the bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements.
- Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service.
- Make decisions about school closure or school attendance at funeral – consult with the Board.
- In the case of suicide, it is recommended that the entire school does not close, but that representatives and friends attend the funeral.
- Discretion is also advised in relation to any memorials to victims, depending on the circumstances.

Follow-up – 3 days and beyond

Staff monitor students for signs of continuing distress and identify students who are particularly vulnerable or in distress.

If, over a period of time, a student continues to display the following, he may need assistance and/or counselling. 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.

Liaise with agencies regarding referrals. Plan for return of bereaved student(s).

Decide on memorials and anniversaries – consult with the Board of Management, staff, parents and students. Review response to incident and amend plan.

Appendix 1

EMERGENCY CONTACT NUMBERS

Emergency	999 or 112
Garda Joe, Community Garda.	085 8532748
Fire Brigade	999
Hospital	Dependent on hospital involved
ESB Emergency Line	1850 372999
Bord Gáis Emergency Line	1850 205050
Water Pollution Emergency	1890 445335
NEPS –	Regional HQ: Dublin: 01-8892700
HSE – Dept. of Public Health	
Edmund Rice Schools Trust	01- 2897511
Chairperson of BOM	0876217598
Department of Education and Science	090-6483600
State Examinations Commission	090-6442700
Parish Priest/	
HSE/ Community Care Team	
Employee Assistance Service for staff and SNAs	1800 411 057
Samaritans	1850 - 609090
National Suicide Bereavement Support	
Barnardos	01-450355
Bereavement Counselling	01-8391766
School Principal Máire Quinn	01 8304375
School Deputy Principal Neil McCann	01 8304375
Web text with school secretary Máirín Maher	
Media Advisor	To be acquired as needed

APPENDIX 2

SAMPLE LETTER TO PARENTS/GUARDIANS

Date

Dear Parents/Guardians

The school community of St. Vincent's Secondary School, Glasnevin, has experienced (the sudden death/injury) to one of our students/staff. We are deeply saddened by this death/injury.

(Brief details of the incident, and in the case of death, perhaps some positive remembrances of persons lost)

We have support structures in place to help your child cope with this tragedy.
(Elaborate)

It is possible that your son may have some feelings that he may like to discuss with you. You can help your son by taking time to listen to him and encouraging him to express his feelings. It is important to give truthful information that is appropriate to his age.

If you would like any advice or support you may contact our Guidance Counsellors at the school.

Máire Quinn
Principal.

APPENDIX 3

Sample letter requesting consent for Involvement of NEPS/Outside Professionals.

Date

Dear Parents/Guardians,

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

Your son has been identified as one of the students who would benefit from meeting with the NEPS psychologist. If you would like your son to receive this support, please sign the attached permission slip and return it to the school within 24 hours.

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.

Máire Quinn
Principal.

.....

.Reply Slip

I/We consent to having our son meet with the NEPS psychologist. I understand that my son may meet with the psychologist in an individual or group session, depending on the arrangements that are thought most appropriate.

Name of Student: _____

Class: _____

Signed Parent/Guardian: _____

Date: _____