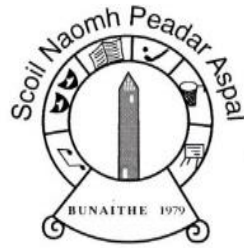




St. Peter Apostle Junior National School

St. Peter Apostle Junior School



Critical Incident Policy

Policy Summary Details

Policy Title:	Critical Incident Policy
Written/Reviewed/Adopted Date:	December 2023
Date Ratified by BOM:	6th December 2023



Introduction

A main priority in St. Peter Apostle Junior School is the health, safety and well-being of pupils and teachers within our school community. We strive to achieve this by creating a safe, supportive and caring environment. It is to this end we have formulated a number of policies (e.g. anti-bullying policy, code of behaviour, dignity at work and school rules) with a view to ensuring the physical and psychological safety of all staff and students. Consistent with efforts to protect the well-being of those connected to St. Peter Apostle Junior School, in this document, we set out our Critical incident policy. We have framed this policy to be in accordance with the guidelines for schools available in the following publications;

- Responding to Critical Incidents – Guidelines for Schools NEPS & DES 2007
- Responding to Critical Incidents – Resource Materials for Schools NEPS & DES 2007
- When Tragedy Strikes INTO 2000

1. What is a Critical Incident?

As per DES / NEPS guidelines, we in St. Peter Apostle Junior School recognise a critical incident to be *“an incident or sequence of events that overwhelms 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. Types of incidents might include:

- The death of a member of the school community through sudden death, accident, terminal illness or suicide.
- Outbreak of disease or major illness in school or community.
- Serious injury sustained by a member of the school community as a result of violence on or off school grounds.
- A threatening or violent intrusion into the school.
- An accident / tragedy in the school or wider community.
- Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism, etc.
- The disappearance of a member of the school community.
- Unauthorised removal of student from school.

2. Rationale

We in St. Peter Apostle JNS recognise that the key to managing critical incidents is planning. It is for this reason, we have developed a Critical Incident Management Policy that is detailed in this document. It is our hope that, in the event of an incident, the policy will provide a pragmatic framework that will empower staff to react quickly and effectively to the incident, as well as enable staff to maintain a sense of control. It is endeavoured that adherence to this policy should also help staff to return to a state of homeostasis and achieve a return to normality as soon as possible after the event has occurred. Equally, it is envisioned that adherence to this policy will, within reason, serve to limit the effects of the incident on the students and staff.



3. Preventative strategies for safeguarding the well-being of our school community

3.1 Safeguarding the physical well-being of our school community

The following policies and strategies have been put in place in order to maintain the physical safety of all members of the school community.

- Health & Safety Statement.
- Evacuation plan formulated.
- Regular fire drills occur.
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked.
- The Fire Alarm is serviced regularly.
- Playground gates are locked during school hours.
- Pupils leaving early will only be released by a member of teaching staff when an authorised adult arrives to accompany the child from the premises. Such departures are recorded in the 'Sign Out' book.
- Pupils are not released into the care of persons unknown to school staff without checking with a parent/ guardian.
- Pupils are reminded of playground rules by staff at regular intervals in the context of our School Code of Behaviour.
- Pupils are adequately supervised at all times
- First Aid box maintained and kept in the First Aid station in the hall and in the staffroom
- All cleaning products are kept out of reach and/or stored safely.

3.2 Strategies aimed at safeguarding the psychological well-being of our school community

3.2.1 Strategies for safeguarding children's psychological well-being

- SPHE is an integral part of the school curriculum and addresses issues such as grief and loss, communication skills, stress and anger management, conflict management, problem solving, help-seeking, decision making, and alcohol and drug prevention.
- The Stay Safe programme is taught
- The RSE programme is taught
- Establishment of a student council who can voice concerns to the principal in a formal format
- School Anti-Bullying Policy; Friends for Life programme four members of staff have been trained in the use of the programme; Staff are fully aware of Mental Health Guidelines
- Child Protection Policy; Child Safeguarding Statement
- Staff have completed 'Introduction to Children First' programme and 'Child Protection Procedures for all School Personnel' PDST



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- Staff are informed of difficulties effecting individual students and are aware of and vigilant in identifying their needs.
- Staff have access to books and resources on difficulties effecting the primary school child.
- The school has developed links with outside agencies, which may be contacted in the event of an emergency and for onward referral of students. These include: NEPS, Túsla Child and Family Agency; CAMHS and Ronanstown Garda Stations

3.2.2 Strategies for safeguarding the psychological well-being of school staff

- We strive to create an open, non-judgemental, caring, and supportive culture where staff can talk about or confide in management about their difficulties and seek help for same.
- All staff are treated in line with our Dignity at Work policy
- Staff are aware that they are protected by our Protected Disclosures
- Teaching staff are expected to adhere to the Teaching Council's code for professional conduct
- Establishment of a well-being committee
- Dedication of Croke Park hours to well-being – e.g, Shane Martin Talk on resilience and positive psychology
- Where necessary staff will be supported to access services that they may need if/when they are negotiating difficulties in their lives
- Staff are aware that they can access counselling through INSPIRE with INTO

3.2.3 Strategies for safeguarding the psychological well-being of Parents

- We strive to create an open, non-judgemental, caring and supportive culture where parents can talk about their difficulties and seek help for same.
- Where necessary staff and parents will be supported to access services that they may need if/when they are negotiating difficulties in their lives
- Parents will be treated in line with the principles that govern our Dignity at Work policy
- Teachers will treat parents in line with the code of conduct set out for teachers by the teaching Council



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4. Critical Incident Management Team

We in St. Peter Apostle Junior National School have set up Critical Incident Management Team in line with best practice and will maintain this team in future. The names of each team member along with their assigned role in detailed in the table below. It should be noted that the members of the team were selected on a voluntary basis and will retain their roles for at least one school year.

Assignment of Roles		
Critical Incident Team role	Name	Role in the School
Team Leader	Orla Healy	Principal
Staff Liaison	Anne Barry Aoife Cassidy Deirdre Rushe Rena Campion Barbara Jones	Assistant Principal II Assistant Principal II Assistant Principal II Special Needs Assistant Special Needs Assistant
Student Liaison	Emma Flynn	Assistant principal 1
Parent Liaison	Kathy Gleeson	Deputy Principal
Community Liaison	Marie Duffy	HSCL
Administration Tasks	Lorraine Doyle	School Secretary

4.1 The duties assigned to the team Leader – (Principal)

- Confirm the event (and facts surrounding the event)
- Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting.
- Co-ordinates the tasks of the team
- Contact and liaise with the Gardaí/Emergency services, Board of Management, Department of Education & Skills, NEPS, and all relevant parties
- Express sympathy to family
- Where appropriate report incidents to the Health & Safety Authority
- The Deputy Principal will take the lead in the absence of the team leader.

4.2 The duties assigned to the staff liaisons (Postholders and SNA representatives)

- Contact the staff members who have been assigned to them to inform them of the incident (Vide Appendix 1)
- Co-ordinate and lead meetings to brief staff on the facts known to give staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and to inform them of the plan for the day



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- Keeps staff updates as the time unfolds
- Advises staff on the identification of vulnerable students
- Is alert to vulnerable staff members and contacts them individually
- Advises them of the availability of Support Services and gives them the contact number.

4.3 Student Liaison (Emma)

- Contact the staff members who have been assigned to her to inform them of the incident (Vide Appendix 1)
- Co-ordinate information for teachers about students that may be affected by the incident and students they are concerned about.
- Alerts other staff to vulnerable students (appropriately).
- Provides materials for students (from their critical incident folder).
- Keeps records of students seen by external agency staff.
- Looks after the logistics of setting up and providing supervision of spaces that may be required for students' use (such as if they are seeing a councillor, interviews etc)

4.4 Community Liaison (HSCL)

- Contact the staff members who have been assigned to her to inform them of the incident (Vide Appendix 1)
- Liaises with agencies in the community for support and onward referral
- Up-dates team members on the involvement of external agencies
- Co-ordinates the involvement of these agencies
- Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of key parents such as members of the parent's council
- Emergency support services and other external contacts and resources

4.5 Parent Liaison (Deputy principal)

- Contact the staff members who have been assigned to her to inform them of the incident (Vide Appendix 1)
- Visits the bereaved family with the team leader.
- Arranges parent meetings, if held.
- May facilitate such meetings, and manage 'questions and answers'.
- Manages the 'consent' issues in accordance with agreed school policy.
- Ensures that sample letters are typed up, on the school's system and ready for adaptation.
- Sets up room for meetings 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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4.6 Media Liaison (Principal and Chairperson only)

- In the event of an incident, will liaise where necessary with the Communications Section in the DES.
- Principal and the Chairperson of the Board will consider issues that may arise during an incident and how they might be responded to (e.g. student being interviewed and/or photographers on the premises etc)
- In the event of an incident, will liaise where necessary with the Patron; DES; NEPS etc.
- Only the Principal and the Chairperson of the Board, will draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews if necessary.
- A letter or text will be sent home to parents requesting them not to speak to the media.
- NEPS advise School Staff not to speak to media.
- The media will not be allowed on the school campus.

4.6 Administrative Tasks (School Secretary- Lorraine Doyle)

- Contact the staff members who have been assigned to her to inform them of the incident (Vide Appendix 1)
- Maintenance of up to date lists of contact numbers – Parents often don't inform the school when they change address or phone numbers. From now on any note that goes out will always ask for change of address or phone number.
- In the case of a critical incident, Secretary might be called in over holidays.
- Emergency Support Services to be displayed in Office and Staff Room.

5. Record Keeping

- Hardbacked A4 Book for each Team Member to keep records. In the event of an incident, each member of the team will keep detailed records of phone calls made and records of phone calls made and received, meetings held, persons met, interventions used, material used etc.
- The school secretary will have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters, photocopying materials etc.

6. Letter to Parents

The Principal will prepare a brief, written statement 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 is going to be done



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7. 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 be sensitive to the consequences of any public statements. The members of the school staff will bear this in mind and will see to ensure that pupils do 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.]*

8. Critical Incident Room

In the event of a critical incident, the main office (principal's office) will be the main room used to meet the staff, students, parents and visitors involved. In the event of a need to accommodate second and/or larger group, the staffroom will be used. In the event of need to cater for a particularly large group, the school hall will be used.

9. Development and Communication of this Policy and Plan.

All staff were consulted and their view canvassed in the preparation of this policy. 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.

Ratified by the Board of Management on _____

Signed:
Chairperson of the BOM

Date:

Signed:
Principal

Date:

This policy will be reviewed on a yearly basis or as before that if assistant principal roles are assigned to new staff members in either a permanent or acting up capacity



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Appendix 1

Staff who will be contacted and briefed by each member of the critical incident team:

Orla Healy	Management and relevant agencies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The critical incident team • The BOM • Relevant outside agencies (NEPS, Guards , Department etc)
Kathy Gleeson	Broader school community <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents • Allocated outside agencies (delegated by the principal)
Emma Flynn	Teachers of older children in the school <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers in first and second class in the mainstream setting
Deirdre Rushe	Teachers of younger years <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers in Junior and Senior infants • Teachers and childcare workers in Early Start
Aoife Cassidy	Senior school and external staff <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sophia O’Hara • Emma Kiernan and SCP staff • Kevin Murphy • Music generation • Fr. Hugh • Sr. Carmel • Speech and language therapists/Drama therapists
Anne Barry	SETs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mainstream setting • Butterfly Suite
Marie Duffy	Relevant community agencies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents association • Dochas • Blue skies
Rena Campion and Barbara Jones	Special Needs Assistants <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SNAs in the Butterfly Suite (Rena) • SNAs in the Mainstream (Barbara)
Lorraine Doyle	Non-teaching staff <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tony • Cleaning staff • Sharon (Bus escort)