**St. Joseph’s Special School,**

**Thomas Hynes Rd, Newcastle, Galway.**

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**Chairperson of the Board of Management: Audrey Pidgeon**

**Principal: Sarah McGinley**

# Timetable for Review

As necessary

 **Critical Incident POLICY**

**7.26**

**Introduction**

St Joseph’s Special School aims 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.

To this end the school has formulated a number of policies and procedures to be followed with a view to ensuring the physical and psychological safety of staff and students, both in ordinary time and in the event of a critical incident.

The Board of Management through the Principal, the staff and the Parents’ association has drawn up this critical incident management plan. A Critical Incidents Management Team has been established to steer the development and management of the plan

**What is a Critical Incident?**

A critical incident is ‘any incident or sequence of events that overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school’ (*Responding to Critical Incidents: Guidelines and Resource Materials for Schools (2016).* Critical incidents may involve one or more pupils, staff, the school, or the 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 in the 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 a pupil from the school.

**CRITICAL INCIDENTS MANAGEMENT TEAM**

**Roles:**

Leadership: Sarah McGinley (Principal)

Communication: Siobhán Butler (Deputy Principal)

School Community Liaison: Assistant Principal II – Jane Bastable

Family Liaison: Assistant Principal II – Pauline Dolly

Chaplain (if required) Fr. Martin Whelan

B.O.M Rep: Audrey Pidgeon

Other personnel (if required) - Nurse, Caretaker, Secretary

**RESPONSIBILITIES**

**Leadership Role**

Actions taken by the Principal will depend on the nature and circumstances of the critical incident. The actions may include the following:

* Confirm what has occurred and collect accurate information in relation to the incident.
* Contact the family to express sympathy and offer support
* Organise a meeting of the CIM Team.
* Assess if there is need for support from Psychology, Social Work
* Contact Ability West support services (if necessary)
* Contact the Gardai if necessary.
* Devise a process for dealing with telephone enquiries.
* Plan a staff meeting (if required)

**Communication Role**

* Notify the Board of Management.
* Decide on how news will be communicated to staff, pupils and parents
* Prepare an announcement for staff and pupils.
* Prepare a statement for the media (if required)
* Prepare a communication statement for parents
* Contact parents if some pupils need to go home.
* Prepare a written and / or oral response to enquiries.
* Request staff not to deal with the media.

**Liaison/Counselling role**

* Assist class teacher(s) of the class(es) affected in breaking the news.
* Access support for dealing with responses to grief
* Contact local Priest/Imam/other as appropriate
* Organise a prayer service (if appropriate)
* Meet with and support any distressed parents or staff.

**Family Liaison**

* Contact/visit the bereaved family.
* Consult with family in relation to school involvement in a funeral service
* Liaise with family re involvement in a school memorial service

**ACTION PLAN**

**Short Term**

* Gather accurate information- What happened? When? Where? How? Who is involved?
* Contact the people affected- family, staff, pupils
* Convene a meeting of the CMIT
* Prepare a statement for media, designate a spokesperson, protect privacy of the family and of the school community.
* Inform Chairperson of BOM
* Contact external agencies- Health services, Ability West Psychology, Ability West Social Work
* Meet with staff directly involved with the pupil
* Organise a brief staff meeting (if required)
* Liaise with the family re funeral arrangements
* Arrange a home visit by two staff (if appropriate) in consultation with social work
* Contact appropriate religious minister.
* Prepare information notice for parents.
* Contact Parents’ Association Representative

**Medium Term**

* Provide resources for staff to assist in presenting information to pupils- Consult Ability West SLT department for support
* Organise for staff and pupils to attend funeral service
* Organise involvement of staff and pupils in the funeral service (if agreed by family)
* Facilitate staff and pupil responses- cards, flowers, book of condolences etc
* Arrange support for individual pupils, parents, family members (if necessary).
* Organise meeting for parents (if necessary)
* Plan visits to injured persons
* Plan for school closure in consultation with the Board of Management and Inspector (if appropriate)

**Long Term**

* Monitor pupil’s response/changes in emotional reactions etc
* Facilitate individual or group discussion
* Plan a school memorial service in consultation with family and religious minister
* Plan for memorial - E.g: Photo album, Photograph of individual(s) for display, lighted candle, memorial tree, school garden feature
* Facilitate staff debriefing (if necessary)
* Inform staff of the Employee Assistance Scheme (DES). (email: eas@vhics.ie or on 1800 411 057)
* Ensure that new staff are made aware of any recent incident and of the individuals affected.
* Liaise with family re: the anniversary of the incident

These guidelines were drafted by the In-school Management Team (ISM) in consultation with the staff and with the Parents’ Association.

The policy was ratified by the Board of Management at a meeting held on 2019

The policy will be reviewed when deemed necessary.

# Success Criteria

# We will know that this assessment policy is working well

* when procedures run smoothly because there is clarity about what is expected and who is responsible for different aspects

# Implementation Date

The plan has been implemented since 2019

# Timetable for Review

As necessary

# Review and Ratification

The Board of Management is aware that this plan was reviewed in September 2020. The amended document was presented for ratification.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

(Chairperson of Board of Management)

 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

 (Principal)