**St John Bosco Community College**

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|  | St John Bosco Community College  Critical Incident Policy (19/2021)  BOM Chairperson: \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_  BOM Secretary: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_  DATE:\_\_\_19/10/2021\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |
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**Aim of the policy**

The aim of this policy is to lessen the effect of a critical incident on the staff, students and parents at St. John Bosco Community College and to help school management and staff to react quickly and effectively in the event of an incident, to enable us to maintain a sense of order and to ensure that appropriate support is offered to students and staff.

It is anticipated that by adopting the procedures outlined in this policy it will be possible to provide a more secure environment for everyone associated with the school. Having a good plan should also help ensure that the effects on the students and staff will be limited and it will be possible for the school community to return to normality as soon as possible.

**Definition of a critical incident.**

The staff and management of St. John Bosco Community College recognise a critical incident to be *“an incident or sequence of events that overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school”.* Critical incidents may involve one or more students or staff members, or members of our local community. Types of incidents might include:

• The death of a member of the school community through accident, violence, suicide or suspected suicide or other unexpected death.

• An intrusion into the school.

• An accident involving members of the school community.

• An accident/tragedy in the wider community.

• Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism, etc

• The disappearance of a member of the school community.

This list is not exhaustive.

**Practice within the School**

Individual class teachers, class tutors and Year Heads have an important role to play in managing critical incidents and may well be the best people to deal with the students in their classes. The main role of specialist agencies such as NEPS (National Education Psychological Service) is one of support, empowerment and to support students who cannot be helped by the teachers within the school alone. In times of crises, teachers must react sensitively and sensibly and there can be no easy formula for dealing with critical incidents. However, by ensuring good communication within the school, a crisis may be managed more effectively. By outlining the appropriate actions to be taken in the event of a critical incident, the school aims to reduce the effect.

**Creation of a supportive and caring ethos in the school**

We have put systems in place to help to build resilience in both staff and students, thus preparing them to cope with a range of life events. These include measures to address both the physical and psychological safety of the school community.

**Physical safety**

* Evacuation plan formulated
* Regular fire drills occur
* Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked.

**Psychological safety**

The management and staff of St. John Bosco Community College aim to use available programmes and resources to address the personal and social development of students, to enhance a sense of safety and security in the school and to provide opportunities for reflection and discussion.

* Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is integrated into the work of the school. It is addressed in the curriculum by addressing issues such as grief and loss; communication skills; stress and anger management; resilience; conflict management; problem solving; helpseeking; bullying; decision making and prevention of alcohol and drug misuse. Promotion of mental health is an integral part of this provision.
* Staff are familiar with the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures. All staff are compliant with procedures.
* Information is provided on mental health in general and such specific areas as signs and symptoms of depression and anxiety
* Staff are informed in the area of suicide awareness and some are trained in interventions for students at risk of suicide
* The school has developed links with a range of external agencies such as NEPS, CAMHS, TUSLA
* Inputs to students by external providers are carefully considered in the light of criteria about student safety, the appropriateness of the content, and the expertise of the providers. See DES Circular 0023/2010 (Post-Primary)
* The school has a clear policy on bullying and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy.
* There is a care system in place in the school using the *"Continuum of Support"* approach which is outlined in the NEPS documents published on 2010 for post primary schools. See also ‘*Student Support Teams in Post Primary Schools’* (2014). These documents are available on *www.education.ie*
* A weekly Student Support Team meeting involving key staff members is held which identifies new referrals and monitors current students at risk.
* Students who are identified as being at risk are referred to the Student Support Team, concerns are explored and the appropriate level of assistance and support is provided. Parents are informed, and where appropriate, a referral is made to an appropriate agency.
* The school has a school chaplain and Guidance Counsellor on staff who are also members of the Student Support team
* Staff are informed about how to access support for themselves through the *‘Employee Assistance Scheme’.*

**Critical Incident Team**

A ‘*Critical Incident Team’*has been established in line with best practice. The members of the team will meet annually to review and update the policy and plan. Each member of the team has a dedicated critical incident folder. This contains a copy of the policy and plan and materials particular to their role, to be used in the event of an incident. A central component of this policy is the identification of the composition, roles and responsibilities of the Critical Incident Team. The function of the team is to review and direct the handling of the incident and the response and recovery process in order to:

* Provide support and direction when a crisis occurs.
* Implement an immediate plan to respond to a critical incident.
* Assist the school community to manage the questions, fears and anxiety and to monitor the reaction of the whole school community.
* Co-ordinate and monitor the plan.

**Members of the Critical Incident Team**

The Critical Incident Team in St John Bosco Community College is made up of the following members:

School Principal: Denis O’ Rourke

Deputy Principal: Deirdre Convey

Staff Representative: Paddy Canny

School Chaplain: Joanne O’ Brien-Boyce

Guidance Counsellor: Josephine Ryan

**Role of Each Member of the Critical Incident Team**

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| **Role** | **Name** |
| **Team Leader** | Denis O’ Rourke |
| **Garda Liaison** | Denis O’ Rourke |
| **Staff Liaison** | Deirdre Convey |
| **Student Liaison** | Deirdre Convey, Joanne O’ Brien-Boyce |
| **Interagency Contact** | Josephine Ryan |
| **Parent Liaison** | Denis O’ Rourke |
| **Media Liaison** | Denis O’ Rourke |
| **Administrator** | Paddy Canny, Nora Coyle |

**Duties Assigned to each Role in the Critical Incident Team**

**Role of the Team leader: Denis O’ Rourke**

* Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting
* Coordinates the tasks of the team.
* Liaises with the Board of Management; DES; NEPS; SEC
* Liaises with the bereaved family

**Role of the Gardaí Liaison: Denis O’ Rourke**

* Liaises with the Gardaí
* Ensures that information about deaths or other developments is checked out for accuracy before being shared.

**Role of the Staff liaison: Deirdre Convey**

* Leads briefing meetings for staff on the facts as known, gives staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions, outlines the routine for the day.
* Advises staff on the procedures for identification of vulnerable students.
* Provides materials for staff (from their critical incident folder)
* Have staff hand-outs ready on handling a classroom session and common reactions after an incident.
* Advises staff on the procedures for identifying high-risk students and outline what supports are available.
* Prepare a sample statement for Administration staff for use when answering phone calls.
* Keeps staff updated as the day progresses.
* Is alert to vulnerable staff members and makes contact with them individually.
* Advises them of the availability of the EAS (Employee Assistance Scheme) and gives them the contact number.
* Liaise with Principal on an on-going basis.

**Role of the Student liaison: Deirdre Convey and Joanne O Brien-Boyce**

* Maintain link between staff and students (take updates from Year heads on vulnerable students).
* Liaise with Coordinator/Principal/Year Head to ensure student records up to date annually, mobile numbers, addresses etc.
* Observes vulnerable students.
* Alerts other staff to vulnerable students as appropriate.
* Enlists the help of the SEN Co-Coordinator, SET’s and SNA’s to give students with SEN advance notice about changes to the regular schedule of the school as soon as possible.
* Recommend referrals to School Chaplain/ Guidance Counsellor as appropriate.
* Provides materials for students (from their critical incident folder)
* Looks after the setting up and supervision of ‘quiet’ room where agreed.
* Liaise with Principal on an on-going basis.

**Role of the Media Liaison: Denis O’ Rourke**

* In advance of an incident, will consider issues that may arise and how they might be responded to (e. g. students being interviewed, photographers on the premises, etc.)
* Maintains an up-to-date list of contacts including (NEPS, Garda Siochána, Emergency Services, (See Emergency contacts list), ETB, Duty Social Worker, CAMHS, local GPs)
* Makes contacts list readily available to staff, SST, administrative staff, parents.
* Maintains an up-to-date list of Parents’ Council members.
* Prepares a sample press statement on system.
* Will give media briefings and interviews (as appropriate)
* Identifies a room to contain media if they arrive on campus.
* Liaises with community agencies for support and onward referral
* This person is the **only person** to make a statement to the media.

**Role of the Interagency liaison: Josephine Ryan**

* Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of - Key parents, such as members of the Parents Council - Emergency support services and other external contacts and resources.
* Liaises with agencies in the community for support and onward referral.
* Is alert to the need to check credentials of individuals offering support.
* Coordinates the involvement of these agencies.
* Reminds agency staff to wear name badges.
* Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies.
* Assists the Student liaison as appropriate

**Role of the Parent liaison: Denis O’ Rourke**

* Visits the bereaved family.
* 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).

**Role of the Administrator: Paddy Canny, Nora Coyle (School Secretary)**

* Maintenance of up-to-date telephone numbers of - Parents or guardians - Teachers - Emergency services.
* Takes telephone calls and notes those that need to be responded to.
* Ensures that templates are on the school database in advance and ready for adaptation
* Prepares and sends out letters, emails and texts. ***Be careful not to send a text to the bereaved family.***
* Photocopies materials needed.
* Liaise with the Principal on an on-going basis.

**Record keeping**

In the event of an incident each member of the team will keep records of phone calls made and received, letters sent 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.

**Confidentiality**

Management and staff of St. John Bosco Community College have a responsibility to protect the privacy and good name of people involved in any incident and will be sensitive to the consequences of public statements. Members of school staff will bear this in mind, and seek to ensure that students do so also. For instance, the term ‘suicide’ will not be used as in the absence of an autopsy and without the consent of the parents/carers. The phrases ‘tragic death’ or ‘sudden death’ may be used instead. Similarly, the word ‘murder’ will not be used until it is legally established that a murder was committed.

**Funeral Arrangements**

The Principal/Deputy Principal/ Chaplain will call to the home of the deceased to sympathise with the family on behalf of the school community. They will liaise with the family on any funeral arrangements. Each situation is to be taken as a unique case – on some occasions a class or a year group or whole school may attend a funeral- each situation is different and will be decided on in consultation with the family The school will remain open for all students if the deceased is a student of the school. If the deceased is a staff member, the school will close on the day of the funeral to allow all staff to attend

**Consultation and communication regarding the plan**

All staff were consulted and their views canvassed in the preparation of this policy and plan. Our school's final policy and plan in relation to responding to critical incidents has been presented to all staff. Each member of the Critical Incident Team has a personal copy of the plan. All new and temporary staff will be informed of the details of the plan. The plan will be updated annually.

**CRITICAL INCIDENT: IMMEDIATE RESPONSE/ UP TO 12 HOURS**

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| **Summary Checklist for Principal/Deputy and Coordinator** |
| **The school principal has overall responsibility in the event of a critical incident and will facilitate the operation of the CI plan** |
| ● Gather the facts – what has happened? When? Where? How? Who is injured or dead? |
| ● Consult appropriate agencies (e. g. ETB, NEPS, Garda Siochána, emergency services, See Emergency contacts list, ETB, DES, SEC) |
| ● Gather together the CIT |
| ● Organise the supervision of students |
| ● Have administrative staff photocopy appropriate literature. |
| ● Convene a staff meeting and inform of immediate plan |
| ● Identify high-risk students and staff |
| ● Appoint someone to deal with phone queries |
| ● Organise timetable for the day |
| ● Maintain the normal school routine when at all possible |
| ● Inform students |
| ● Inform parents/guardians |
| ● Make contact with bereaved family, including a visit to the family |
| ● Withdraw siblings |
| ● Organise support |
| ● Prepare a statement/respond to the media |
| ● Draft a letter for parents |
| ● Meet with CIT to review the day |
| ● In the event of a sudden death, including a death by suicide it is not recommended that the school host a guard of honour or in any way gives undue attention which may glamorise the tragedy |

**AGENDA FOR THE FIRST MEETING OF THE CRITICAL INCIDENT TEAM**

Meeting to be chaired by Principal and facilitated on an ongoing basis by the Co-ordinator.

* Agree a statement of facts for staff, students, parents and the media.
* Delegation of responsibilities of the CIT
* Discussion of what support services to contact
* Preparation of what to say to staff
* Preparation of what to say to students
* Preparation of what to say to media
* Make a decision about school closure
* Organise the schedule/timetable for the day
* Ensure that a phone line remains open for the day and available for enquiries
* Appoint someone to handle phone enquiries and deal with the media
* Organise a staff meeting
* Organise the supervision of students during any staff meetings
* Preparation of a letter for parents
* Copying and printing of letters for parents
* Deciding which external agencies should be involved

**MEDIUM TERM ACTIONS - DAY 2 and following days)**

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| * Review events of first 24 hours |
| * Arrange support for individual students/learner, groups of students, parents/guardians etc. |
| * Plan for the reintegration of students and staff |
| * Liaise with family regarding arrangements |
| * In consultation with parents/guardians arrange attendance and participation at service |
| * Decide on School closure |

**FOLLOW-UP ACTIONS: - beyond 72 Hours**

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| * Monitor students for signs of continuing distress. |
| * Liaise with agencies regarding referrals. |
| * Plan for return of bereaved student(s). |
| * Plan for giving of ‘memory box’ to bereaved family (as necessary/appropriate). |
| * Decide on memorials and anniversaries (as necessary/appropriate). |
| * Review response to incident and amend plan. |

**EMERGENCY CONTACTS**

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| **Agency** | **Contact Number** |
| Ennis Garda Station | 065-6848100 |
| Ennis General Hospital | 065-6824464 |
| Ennis Fire Station 065 | 065-6846302 |
| Ennis Cathedral (Parish Office) | 065-6824043 |
| Parish Priest (Kildysart)  Fr. Albert | 085 7811823 |
| G.P. (Kildysart)  Dr. Marie Quigney | 065- 6832012 |
| HSE, Sandfield Centre, Ennis | 065-6868054 |
| Community Care Team | 065-6822575 |
| Child and Family Agency, Unit 3, St. Camillus’ Hospital, Shelbourne Road, Limerick | 061-58688 |
| Child and Family Mental Health Service (CAMHS), Ennis | 065-6706601 |
| NEPS Ennis | 061-108819 |
| NEPS Educational Psychologist  Dr. Orla Murphy | 087-4414183 |
| TUSLA | 061-588688 |
| DES | 090-6483600 |
| TUI | TUI 01-4922588 |
| State Exams Commission | 090-6442700 |
| Employee Assistance Service | 1800 411 057 |