

## Critical Incident Policy

### Introduction:

This policy was formulated by the staff of Convent of Mercy N.S. in consultation with B.O.M., parent representatives, PDST advisor and pupil's representative.

### Rationale:

We at Convent of Mercy N.S. decided to formulate this policy as it is a priority area identified by the staff.

### Vision Statement:

Every effort will be made by all members of staff to ensure an effective response to all crisis situations. We will have effective emergency plans in place before a critical incident occurs.

### Aim:

The aim of this Critical Incidents Policy is to ensure that the school copes more effectively in the aftermath of a critical incident.

### Examples of Critical Incidents are:

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

*Some crises which affect the running of the school are listed below:*

- The death of a member of the school community through sudden death, accident, terminal illness or suicide.
- An accident involving pupils or staff on or off the school premises.
- A physical attack on staff member(s) or student(s) or intrusion into the school.
- Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism etc.
- The disappearance of a member of the school community.
- An accident/tragedy in the wider community.
- Parental separation.

### Critical Incident Management Team:

- Board of Management Chairperson .... Alan Traynor
- Principal..... Aoibhínn O'Neill
- Deputy Principal ..... Karen Gilroy
- Post Holder ..... Antionette Drumm

- Mainstream Teacher.....Sinéad Mc Kernan
- Secretary.....Mrs Gráinne Dolan
- Board of Management as a whole

*Procedures to be followed in the event of critical incidents:*

*Short term actions:*

1. Gather accurate information about the incident
2. Contact appropriate agencies:
  - Emergency services
  - Medical services
  - Health Board Psychology Departments/Community Care Services
  - NEPS
  - BOM
  - DES/School Inspector
3. Convene a meeting with Critical Incident Management Team to discuss possible topics to be covered.
  - Agreeing a statement of the facts for staff, students, parents and the media. If possible, there should be a written version of this.
  - Delegating responsibilities to the Critical Incident Management Team.
  - Appointing someone to handle phone enquiries and to deal with the media.
  - Ensuring that a phone line remains open and available for enquiries.
  - Organising the timetable/routine for the day. (Adhering to the normal school routine is important if this is possible).
  - Organising a staff meeting, if appropriate.
  - Organising the supervision of students during any staff meetings.
  - Deciding whether an outside professional be invited to the staff meeting.
4. Arrange Supervision of Students.
5. Hold Staff Meeting. - All staff should be asked to attend. The areas which should be covered are:
  - An account of facts as known.
  - Opportunity for staff members to express their views and feelings.



- Discussion with the staff about how the facts will be shared with the pupils.
  - Outline of the routine for the day.
  - Information for staff about which outside agencies have been contacted, or are involved, and the supports that will be put in place for both students and staff.
  - A procedure for identifying vulnerable students.
  - Distribution of relevant handout materials.
6. Organise timetable for the day. N.B. As far as possible maintain normal routines.
7. Inform Parents/Guardians of:
- Children Directly Involved:* Parents/Guardians should be contacted by Principal/Deputy Principal as soon as possible, and this first contact will need to be handled with great sensitivity. Agree who should share information with parents and how this should be done. Make a list of parents/guardians who have been contacted and those who still need to be told to avoid duplication of messages. Give parents/guardians relevant and factual information.
- Set a room aside for distressed students to meet their parents/guardians.
- Provide support to parents who are on their own when they arrive at the school.
- Give telephone numbers for enquiries.
- Children Not Directly Involved:* The parents of other children will be contacted by the Principal/Deputy Principal and will be informed of the incident and of the fact that their child may be upset.
8. Inform the Pupils.
- Before meeting with pupils to inform them of a critical incident, careful preparation will be undertaken.
  - Consideration will be given to the age of the pupils and the group size.
  - The information will be given to the pupils by a person i.e. teacher, who is known to them and who they can trust.
  - Any outside "expert" may help the "messenger" by providing them with ongoing advice and support as they manage it
  - The nature of the event will clearly have influence on how pupils are informed.

9. Make contact with the bereaved family.

10. Dealing with the media.

Prepare a written statement to include:

- The facts about the incident
- What has been done already
- What is going to be done
- Positive information or comments about the deceased person

11. Organise the reunion of students with parents if necessary.

Medium Term Actions: (24-72 hours)

1. Review the events of the first 24 hours.

- Reconvene key staff/Critical Incident Management Team
- Briefly check out how each person on this team is coping
- Decide arrangements for support meetings for parents/students/ staff.
- Decide on mechanism for feedback from teachers re vulnerable students
- Have review staff meeting with all staff if necessary. Ensure all staff are kept up to date on any developments.
- Be sensitive as to how all staff are coping on a personal and professional level.
- Establish contact with absent staff and pupils.
- Update media, if necessary.

2. Arrange support for individual pupils, groups of pupils and parents, if necessary.

- Provide a suitable room.
- Hold support/information meeting for parents/students in order to clarify what has happened.
- Offer advice and reassurance. Inform them about support services and provide relevant handouts.
- Give any teacher who feels uncomfortable with involvement in support meetings the choice of opting out.
- Arrange, in consultation with the outside agencies, individual or group debriefings or support meetings with parental permission.

3. Plan for the reintegration of students and staff. (e.g. absentees, injured, siblings, close relatives etc.)

4. Plan visits to injured.



5. Liaise with the family regarding funeral arrangements/memorial service.
6. Attendance and participation at funeral/memorial service.
7. School closure.

Longer Term Action:

1. Monitor pupils for signs of continuing distress.

If, over a prolonged period of time, a pupil continues to display the following, he/she may need assistance from the Health Board:

- Uncharacteristic behaviour
  - Deterioration in academic performance
  - Physical symptoms - e.g. weight loss/gain, lack of concentration, tiredness, restlessness
  - Inappropriate emotional reactions
  - Increased absenteeism
2. Evaluate response to incident and amend the Critical Incident Management Plan appropriately.
  3. Formalise the Critical Incident Policy for the future.
- +
4. Decide on appropriate ways to deal with anniversaries. (Be sensitive to special days and events)


PROCEDURES FOR EMERGENCY CLOSURES

Any decision to close the Convent of Mercy N.S., Belturbet in the event of a weather alert or some other emergency, such as a major failure of an essential utility, has serious implications. The decision to close the school for these reasons is likely to be a rare occurrence. Any decision to close the school will normally be taken by the principal in consultation with the Chairperson of the BOM, or in the absence of the chairperson, with senior members of the teaching staff. The decision will be made as soon as visible possible; the children will be told; an email/text message will be sent home via Aladdin to each family informing parents/guardians of the closure decision and, if possible, its duration. A sign stating that the school is closed will be placed on all main entrance doors. In periods of harsh winter

weather parents should be alert for these communications. Obviously, no children should attend school for the duration of the closure. Information on the reopening of the school will be sent by email/text message to all email addresses/mobile numbers which are given on application forms. Information will also be available from the parish secretary. The local radio stations will also be informed.

Parental contact numbers and staff contact numbers made out on spreadsheet.

Signed:-  
2024

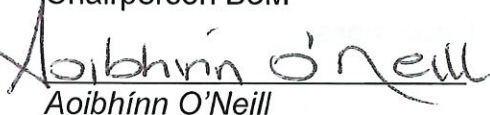


Alan Traynor  
Chairperson BoM

Date:- 31<sup>st</sup> January

Signed:-

2024



Aoibhinn O'Neill

Principal

Date:- 31<sup>st</sup> January

## Summary Checklist for Principals

- \*Gather the facts Who? What? When? and Where? Aoibhínn/Karen
- \*Contact appropriate agencies Aoibhínn/Gráinne
- \*Convene the Critical Incident Management Team Aoibhínn/Karen
- \*Organise for the supervision of student Karen/Antionette/Sinéad
- \*Inform staff Aoibhínn/Karen
- \*Agree on a statement of the facts Alan/Aoibhínn/Karen
- \*Identify high risk students  
(Check DEIS folder for list) Antionette
- \*Appoint someone to deal with phone enquiries Gráinne
- \*Organise timetable for the day Karen/Antionette/Sinéad

MAINTAIN THE NORMAL SCHOOL ROUTINE WHEN  
AT ALL POSSIBLE

- \*Inform parents/guardians Staff Meeting before  
school/late evening
- \*Inform students Limit detail/advice from NEPS
- \*Make contact with the bereaved family  
Organise support NEPS/Aoibhínn
- \*Respond to the media NEPS



## **IMPORTANT CONTACT LIST!**

|                                |   |                                       |
|--------------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|
| <b>Principal</b>               | Aoibhínn O'Neill                          | 087-6878786                           |
| <b>Deputy Principal</b>        | Karen Gilroy                              | 087-6657564                           |
| <b>AP2 Postholder</b>          | Antionette Drumm                          | 086-1727555                           |
| <b>Emergency Services</b>      | Service Required                          | 999/112                               |
| <b>Gardai</b>                  | Belturbet                                 | 049-9522122                           |
|                                | Ballyconnell                              | 049-9525580                           |
| <b>Local GP's</b>              | Dr Hanna                                  | 049-9522317                           |
|                                | Dr Bourke Ballyconnell                    | 049-9522642                           |
| <b>Public Nurse</b>            | Ann Grogan                                | 9522288/086-8310018                   |
| <b>Health Board - Tulsa</b>    | Social Worker on Call                     | 049-4377305/4377306                   |
| <b>Board of Management</b>     | Fr John Mc Tiernan                        | 086-8391439                           |
|                                | Alan Traynor (Chairperson)                | 087-8537192                           |
|                                | Aoibhínn O'Neill<br>(Principal/Secretary) | 087-6878786                           |
|                                | Sinéad Mc Kernan (Teacher's Rep)          | 087-7580478                           |
|                                | Nial Mc Kiernan                           | 086-8282207                           |
|                                | Deirdre Murphy                            | 087-2986568                           |
|                                | Ann Grogan                                | 086-8310018                           |
|                                | John Hoyne                                | 087-9946974                           |
| <b>Department of Education</b> | D.E.S.                                    | 09064-83600                           |
| <b>Inspector</b>               | Caitríona Uí Ghrianna                     | caitriona_uighrianna@education.gov.ie |
| <b>SENO</b>                    | Mary Hughes                               | 01-6033330                            |
| <b>NEPS - CAVAN</b>            | Jo-Anne Maher                             | 049-4325430/01-8892790                |
| <b>Psychologist NEPS Cavan</b> | Philip Clarke                             | 087-2042714                           |
| <b>Ancillary Staff</b>         | Gráinne Dolan (Secretary)                 | 087-7641187                           |
|                                | Lorraine Donohoe (Cleaner)                | 087-3960281                           |
|                                | Ben Monahan (Caretaker)                   | 087-9891175                           |
| <b>Maintenance</b>             | Martin Walsh (Plumber)                    | 086-2627166                           |
|                                | Lionel Johnston (Electrician)             | 087-9877789                           |
|                                | Rory - O'Rourke's Office Supplies         | 087-7636628                           |
| <b>Media/New</b>               | Northern Sound                            | 4361666                               |



## Convent of Mercy N.S., Belturbet 049-9522992

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|                  |                     |                         |
|------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|
|                  | Anglo Celt          | 4331100                 |
| <b>Clergy</b>    | Fr. John Mc Tiernan | 049-9522109/086-8391439 |
| <b>Playgroup</b> | Happy Days          | 049-95524863            |

## **Critical Incident Management Team/Roles**

### Appendix 1

| <b>Role</b>       | <b>Name/s</b> | <b>Telephone Number/s</b> |
|-------------------|---------------|---------------------------|
| Team Leader       |               |                           |
| Garda Liaison     |               |                           |
| Staff Liaison     |               |                           |
| Student Liaison   |               |                           |
| Parent Liaison    |               |                           |
| Community Liaison |               |                           |
| Agency Liaison    |               |                           |
| Media Liaison     |               |                           |
| Administrator     |               |                           |



**Appendix 2:**

| <b>Critical Incident Rooms</b>   |                                   |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| In the event of a critical incident, the following rooms are designated for the indicated purposes |                                   |
| <b>Room Name:</b>  | <b>Designated Purpose:</b>        |
| SEN Room   | Main room for meeting staff       |
| Individual Classrooms  | Meetings with students            |
| Classroom at main door   | Meetings with parents             |
| Office   | Meetings with media               |
| SEN Rooms  | Individual sessions with students |
| Office   | Meetings with other visitors      |

**Appendix 3:**

**NEPS Template: (MEDIA ANNOUNCEMENT)**

*Media Announcement This can be used as a template by schools to be emailed, posted on the school social media site or given to the media. It may help to decrease the number of media calls and callers to the school. In some instances, it is not appropriate to provide names or information that might identify individuals. This announcement will need to be changed based upon confidentiality issues, the wishes of the victim's family and the nature of the incident.*

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am the Principal of The Convent of Mercy National School.

We learned this morning of the death of \_\_\_\_\_.

This is a terrible tragedy for the \_\_\_\_\_ (Family Name), our school and our community. We are deeply saddened by these events.

Our sympathy and thoughts are with the (\_\_\_\_\_ Family Name) family and friends. (\_\_\_\_\_ Name) was a

(\_\_\_\_\_ e.g. \_\_\_\_\_ class girl/boy) and will be greatly missed by all who knew him/her.

We have been in contact with his/her parents and they have requested that we all understand their need for privacy at this difficult time. Offers of support have been pouring in and are greatly appreciated.

Our school have implemented our Critical Incident Management Plan. Psychologists from the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) and (insert other information if relevant) have been with us all day supporting and advising teachers in their efforts to assist our students at this time. The teachers have been helping students to deal with the tragic event.

The school has been open to parents and children, to support them and to offer them advice and guidance.

We would ask you to respect our privacy at this time.

Thank you