



# Joseph's National School

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## **Ballyadams N.S**

### **Critical Incident Policy**

#### **Introduction**

Ballyadams National School aims to protect the wellbeing of its pupils and staff by attempting to provide a safe, caring and nurturing environment at all times. We have 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 staff and pupils, both in ordinary time and in the event of a critical incident.

Our Critical incident policy follows 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

The BOM through consultation with the Principal, the Staff and the Parents Association has formulated this critical policy. Copies of this policy will be disseminated to staff, the Board of Management and the Parent's Association. A copy will also be made available in the school Office.

#### **Aim of this Policy**

We hope that this policy will help staff to react quickly and effectively in the event of a critical incident. It also aspires to achieve a return to normality as soon as possible and ensure that the effects on pupils and staff are kept to a minimum.

#### **Definition of a Critical Incident**

We 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. (NEPS/DES 2008)

It may involve one or more pupils, staff, the school, or our local community.

Examples of incidents would include

- Death, suicide, major illness, serious injury, outbreak of disease of member/s of school community
- Criminal incidents, intrusion into the school, serious damage to the school building
- An accident involving member/s of the school community
- An accident/ tragedy in the wider community
- Fire and natural disaster
- Civil war/ unrest

**Measures currently taken to address physical and psychological safety of pupils and staff.**

**Physical Safety (Please refer also to the health & Safety Statement)**

- Evacuation Plan and termly fire drills
- Exits and fire extinguishers are checked regularly
- Front door security system and camera recording devices.

**The following policies also assist with physical safety**

- Code Of Behaviour and Anti-Bullying Policy
- Health & Safety Policy
- Adult Equality & Dignity At Work Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- Administration of Medicine Policy
- Yard Supervision and Injury Policy
- Complaints / Grievance Procedures Policy

**Psychological Safety**

- Anti-Bullying policy
- Equality & Dignity At Work Policy
- SPHE Programme taught at all levels
  
- Relevant staff informed of difficulties affecting individual children and are vigilant to their needs
- Provision of resources/ books to address various areas of need
- Links with outside agencies; NEPS, TUSLA, EWO etc.

### **Critical Incident Management Team**

Ballyadams National School has set up a Critical Incident Management Team. Each member has an assigned role which s/he will retain for at least one school year. The Critical Incident Policy & Plan has been made accessible to all members of the Critical Incident Management Team and all members of the team have been made aware of their respective duties and responsibilities as per the Critical Incident Plan & Policy.

Leadership Role/ Team Leader: Rory Stapleton-Principal

- Communication/ Agency Role: Rory Stapleton- Principal
- Student Liaison: Class Teacher
- Chaplaincy Role: Fr Daniel Dunne / Diocesan Appointee
- Staff Liaison: Elizabeth Holden & all members of the SEN Team in the calendar year.
- Garda Liaison: Emma O'Flaherty
- Staff Health & Safety Representative: Anna Malone
- BOM Health & Safety Representative: Emma O'Flaherty
- Chairperson of Parents Association/ Parent and Guardian Liaison: Marion Flynn
- Chairperson of Board of Management/ Media Liaison: Brian Ramsbottom / Fr Daniel Dunne - Rory Stapleton Principal
- Secretary: Nicola O'Brien Dunne
- Cleaner & Caretaker: Mags Maloney & Peter Maloney

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

Leadership Role/ Team Leader: Principal

#### **Intervention**

- Confirm the event
- Activate the Critical Incident response team
- Liaise with the Gardaí/Emergency services, Board of Management, Department of Education & Skills
- Lead briefing meetings for staff on the facts as known, give staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions, outlines the routine for the day
- Express sympathy to family
- Clarify facts surrounding event
- Make contact with other relevant agencies
- Decide how news will be communicated to different groups (staff, pupils, outside school)
- Liaise with Parents Association Chairperson
- Report incidents to the Health & Safety Authority
- Communicate with the media
- Roles and Responsibilities

#### **Post- Intervention**

- Ensure provision of ongoing support to staff and students

- Facilitate any appropriate memorial events

### **Communication/ Agency Role: Principal**

#### **Intervention**

- With Team, prepare a public statement
- Organise a designated room to address media promptly
- Ensure telephone lines are free for outgoing and important incoming calls
- Designate mobile numbers for contact
- Liaise with relevant outside support agencies including NEPS
- Advise the staff on the procedures for identification of vulnerable pupils
- Review & evaluate plan

#### **Post Intervention**

- Review and evaluate effectiveness of communication response
- Review & evaluate plan

### **Garda Liaison – Deputy Principal - Emma O’Flaherty**

- Liaises with the Gardaí
- Ensures information about deaths or other developments is checked out for accuracy before being shared.
- Reporting to Board of Management on any Health & Safety aspects

### **Student Liaison: Class Teachers – Special Needs Assistants will support intervention as directed by Class Teachers & Team Leader.**

#### **Intervention**

- Alert other staff to vulnerable pupils
- Activate specific services available in the school
- Put in place clear referral procedures
- Access materials for staff (from Critical Incident Folder in Office / Shared Folder On Staff Drive)
- Provide information to leader

#### **Post Intervention**

- Provide ongoing support to vulnerable students
- Monitor class most affected
- Refer as appropriate
- Review and evaluate Plan

### **Chaplaincy Role**

#### **Intervention**

- Visit home(s), if appropriate
- Assist with Prayer Services
- Make contact with other local clergy
- Be available as personal and spiritual support to staff

**Post Intervention**

- Provide follow-up support to families in conjunction with Parish team and NEPS
- Work in partnership with Critical Incident team

**Staff Health & Safety Representative: Anna Malone****Intervention**

- Assessing the Health and Safety issue
- Liaising with other members of Critical Incident Management Team
- Assisting with reports of dangerous occurrences or accident for the Health and Safety Authority

**Post Intervention**

- Work in partnership with Critical Incident team
- Review and Evaluate Plan

**Chairperson of the Parent's Association/ Parent and Guardian Liaison: Marion Flynn****Intervention**

- Representing parents' concerns and wishes with regard to the school's response to the critical incident

**Post Intervention**

- Work in partnership with Critical Incident team
- Review and Evaluate Plan

**Chairperson of the Board of Management : Fr Daniel Dunne – Acting Chairperson  
Brian Ramsbottom**

- Liaising with Principal regarding incidents and issues occurring on the ground
- Consider legal & financial consequences
- Consult with Principal & Critical Incident team in preparing a media statement .
- **Post Intervention**
- Work in partnership with Critical Incident team
- Review and Evaluate Plan

**Secretary/ Administration : Nicola O'Brien Dunne****Intervention**

- Ring the emergency services immediately
- Ensuring that the Office is manned at all time's
- Liaising with other members of Critical Incident Management Team.

## **Contact Numbers & Emergency Information**

- The Secretary has responsibility for maintaining an up to date list of Contact numbers for pupils and their parents / guardians. Private and Confidential forms will be sent out in June to ensure all contact information is available from the first day of the new school year.

The following lists will be kept on file.

1. Emergency contact list with all contact details for each child.

2. Aladdin Connect lists with all parent contact details.

- It will be the **responsibility of each parent** to ensure that this phone number is current. Should a number be changed during the school year, it is the parent's responsibility to inform the Secretary who will immediately update the contact list.
- The Health and Safety Representative has responsibility for ensuring that a list of contact numbers for the emergency support services is displayed in the Staff Room, the Secretary's Office and the Principal's Office. This will be reviewed and updated at the beginning of each school year.

All staff:

## **Intervention**

- Controlling access to the school premises
- Maintaining security procedures
- Maintaining services such as heating, light, water and communication lines
- Liaising with other members of Critical Incident Management Team
- **Post Intervention**
- Work in partnership with Critical Incident team
- Review and Evaluate Plan

## **Training & Staff Development**

The school will provide opportunities for staff and members of the Board of Management to attend information /training meetings on issues such as suicide, grieving and first aid. The school will use the resources of NEPS as an advisor in planning for, and as a support facility after an incident.

***Only the Team Leader will speak to the media unless directed otherwise by the Critical Incident Management Team***

## Action plan

### ***Procedures to be followed in the event of a Critical Incident***

#### **SHORT-TERM ACTIONS (Day 1)**

- Ensure the safety of all students, staff & visitors
- Convene a meeting of the Critical Incident Management team and delegate responsibilities
- Organize a staff meeting, if appropriate – Ensure any absent staff members are kept informed
- Gather accurate information (use Incident Report form)
- Identify high risk, vulnerable pupils
- Ensure that a quiet place can be made for students/staff (BOM room)
- Immediate contact with affected/bereaved family/families
- Contact appropriate agencies and organise support
- Contact BOM, DES, NEPS, HSA & PA
- Appoint people to assist Secretary & Caretaker in handling phone queries & manning Secretary's Office & school gates
- Arrange the supervision of pupils
- Organise a timetable for the day
- Respond to the media – only the leader will speak to the media; all other staff will refrain from commenting
- The Chaplain/Principal will liaise with the family, to extend sympathy and clarify the family's wishes regarding the school's involvement in funeral/memorial service
- Arrange a home visit by two staff representatives within 24 hours, if appropriate. (Leader, Chaplain, Student Liaison person or Class teacher)
- Have regard for different religious traditions and faiths

***As far as possible, maintain normal school routine.***

#### **Contact appropriate agencies**

1. Emergency services
2. Medical services
3. Psychology Departments/Community Care Services
4. NEPS
5. BOM
6. DES/Schools Inspector

## **MEDIUM-TERM ACTIONS (24-72 HOURS)**

Principal will convene a meeting of the Critical Management Team to review the events of the first 24 hrs and to delegate responsibilities

- Decide on mechanism for feedback from teachers on vulnerable students
- Establish contact with absent staff and pupils
- Decide arrangements for support meetings for parents/students/staff in order to clarify what has happened
- Arrange support for individual students, groups of students, and parents, if necessary
- Update BOM, DES, PA & other relevant external agencies
- Update the media
- Plan visits to the injured
- Class Teacher + Principal to visit home/hospital
- Attendance and participation at funeral/memorial service (To be decided)
- Decide this in accordance with parent's wishes, school management decisions and in consultation with close school friends
- Plan for the re-integration of students and staff e.g. absentees, injured, siblings, close relative etc)
- Plan restoration of normal school routine
- Consider the legal & financial consequences
- School closure (if appropriate) – Request a decision on this from school management
- In the case of a bereavement, consider the following actions;
- Preparation of students/staff attending funeral
- Involvement of students/staff in liturgy if agreed by bereaved family
- Facilitation of students/staffs responses, e.g. Sympathy cards, flowers, Book of Condolences, etc.
- Ritual within the school

## **LONGER TERM ACTIONS**

### ***Monitor students for signs of continuing distress***

If over a prolonged period of time, a student continues to display the following, he/she may need assistance and/or long term counselling from the HSE. 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

### **Monitoring, Review and Evaluation**

This policy is in review of the 2017 same policy. This Critical Incident Policy was developed in 2024 by the staff, the Parent's Association Committee and the Board of Management.



The Critical Incident Policy Committee will review the policy every 3 years or on formation of a new Board of Management. Ongoing review and evaluation will take cognisance of changing information, legislation and feedback from parents/guardians, staff and pupils. The policy will be revised as necessary in the light of such review and evaluation and within the framework of school planning.

Brian Ramsbottom  
Chairperson Board of management

Date: 29.2.24

Rory Stapleton  
Principal

Date: 29.2.24

