

## St. Cronan's Junior National School



# Critical Incident Policy & Plan

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### Policy Summary Details:

Policy Title	Critical Incident Policy
Date Written	June 2022
Date Reviewed & Updated	June 2023
Date Ratified by BOM	20 <sup>th</sup> June 2023
Roll Number	19456B

**St. Cronan's Junior National School** aims to protect the well-being of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times.

Our mission statement states:

**St. Cronan's Junior National School**, Brackenstown, is a Catholic school, which nurtures a positive co-operative educational environment where each child can develop his/her potential in a caring environment. **We believe each child has a unique and special contribution to make. We believe every child matters.**

We strive to develop independence in our students together with the ability to self-evaluate, self-motivate and internalise discipline. We want our students to be happy with themselves, others and their world.

We want our pupils to enjoy school.

These aspirations can only be achieved through the co-operation of students, teachers, support staff, parents/guardians, Board of Management and Parish.

**Our Motto – To Be The Best That We Can Be.**

The Board of Management, through Edel Blake (Principal) along with the staff, have drawn up a critical incident management plan as one element of the school's policy and plan.

The staff and management of **St. Cronan's Junior National School** have formulated a number of policies and procedures to be followed with a view to ensuring the physical and psychological safety of both staff and students, and the creation of a supportive and caring ethos in the school, in ordinary time as well as in the event of a critical incident. They have established a Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) to steer the development and implementation of the plan.

#### Definition:

The staff and management of **St. Cronan's Junior National School** recognise a critical incident to be "an incident or sequence of events that overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school".<sup>1</sup> 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*

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Responding to Critical Incidents: Guidelines for Schools – NEPS. 20070

- *An intrusion into the school*
- *An accident involving members of the school community*
- *An accident/tragedy in the wider school community*
- *Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism, etc*
- *The disappearance of a member of the school community*
- *A physical assault on a pupil or staff member.*
- *Unexpected evacuation of the school. (e.g. bomb threat)*

#### Aim:

The aim of the CIMP is 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 control and to ensure that appropriate support is offered to students and staff. Having a good plan should also help ensure that the effects on the students and staff will be limited. It should enable us to effect a return to normality as soon as possible.

#### Creation of a coping 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:

Recognising that the key to managing critical incidents is planning, St. Cronan's JNS has other policies/plans in place that will work in tandem with this Critical Incident Plan. We have a Health and Safety Statement in place which is reviewed regularly. Measures are in place to address the physical safety of the pupils and the staff. Among the measures to ensure physical safety include:

- Health and Safety Statement for the school.
- Regular fire drills and evacuation procedures.
- Regular checking of fire exits and extinguishers.
- Access to the school is strictly monitored.
- Procedures are in place for the safe entrance and collection of pupils to the school...
- Yard gates kept closed during yard times.
- School yard rules and Code of Behaviour in place and regularly discussed with children.
- Sign-out procedures are in place for pupils leaving during school hours.



### First Aid

It is the policy of St Cronan's JNS that some members of staff shall be trained to provide First Aid to staff and pupils where necessary.

(1) Notices are posted in office detailing:

- arrangements for giving first aid,
- location of first aid boxes,
- procedure of calling ambulances etc...,
- telephone numbers of local Doctor, Gardaí, Hospital.

(2) All incidents, whether to employees or to students or to members of the public must be recorded in the Accident Book. Incidents of a more serious nature must be immediately brought to the attention of the principal and/or safety officer. This is necessary to monitor the progress of safety standards and to ensure that the proper medical attention is given where required.

(3) Records are kept of all pupils who have specific medical needs. Posters with child's photo and medical information and guardian contact numbers are on display in their classroom, in the staffroom and in a folder which is brought to the yard during yard time each day. Children with medical conditions may also wear a fluorescent armband for immediate identification should an accident occur in the yard.

(4) The Safety officer oversees that the First Aid box available to the school is properly equipped. Defibrillator is also checked periodically.

(5) Notifiable infectious diseases are notified and steps are taken to ensure the safety of staff and pupils against all such diseases.

(6) The school will provide opportunities for staff to attend training in relation to First Aid, CPR, and the use of the defibrillator.

### Psychological safety

The management and staff of [St. Cronan's Junior National School](#) 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.

A number of policies and strategies also support the psychological safety of the pupils and staff.

- The Child Safety Statement and Risk Assessment
- Staff are familiar with the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures.
- 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; help-seeking; bullying; decision making. Promotion of mental health is included in this provision.
- Staff have access to training for their role in SPHE.
- The school has developed links with a range of external agencies – e.g. NEPS, Primary Care Psychology.
- 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 Section 7 of *Responding to Critical Incidents: Guidelines for Schools*)
- The school has a clear policy on bullying and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy
- There is a School Code of Discipline.
- Students who are identified as being at risk are referred to the designated staff member (e.g. SET teacher), 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
- Staff are informed about how to access support for themselves.
- Access to resources and support e.g. Employee Assistance Service, NEPS: 'When Tragedy Strikes', Online Resources etc.

### Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)

A CIMT has been established in line with best practice. The members of the team were selected on a voluntary basis and will retain their roles for at least one school year. 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.

Critical Incident Management Team members:

- Edel Blake
- Sarah Boylan
- Frances Mather
- Bríd Palmer
- Donal Farrell
- Gillian McSweeney
- Robyn Hargadon
- Bridie Shortall
- Dawn Sherlock
- Yvonne Kane
- Aisling Lynch
- Dave Pepper

### Roles:

Team Leader: Edel Blake, Principal

Garda Liaison: Edel Blake

Staff Liaison: Sarah Boylan & Bridie Shortall

Student Liaisons: Sarah Boylan & Gillian McSweeney

Community / Agency Liaison: Donal Farrell & Frances Mather

Parent/Family Liaison: Bríd Palmer & Edel Blake

Media Liaison: Robyn Hargadon

Administrator: Dawn Sherlock, Yvonne Kane & Aisling Lynch

Health and Safety rep. Frances Mather

### Responsibilities:

Team Leader: Edel Blake (Principal)

- 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
- Liaises with the bereaved family

In the absence of the Team leader – Edel Blake (Principal) – Sarah Boylan (Deputy Principal) will take on that role and Frances Mather (Assistant Principal I) will take on Staff Liaison.

Gáarda liaison: Edel Blake (Principal)

- Liaises with the Gárdaí



- Ensures that information about deaths is checked out before being shared

**Staff liaison: Sarah Boylan & Bridie Shortall**

- 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)
- Keeps staff updated as day progresses
- Is alert to vulnerable staff members and makes contact with them individually. Advises them of availability of EAS and gives them the contact number.

**Student liaison: Sarah Boylan & Gillian McSweeney**

- Alerts other staff to vulnerable students (appropriately)
- Disseminate appropriate information to pupils as necessary
- Organise an assembly/ prayer service or Mass for the school community to congregate
- Provides materials for students (from their critical incident folder)
- Keeps records of students seen by external agency staff
- Provide ongoing support to vulnerable students.
- Monitor class most affected.
- Looks after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room where agreed

**Community/agency liaison: Donal Farrell & Frances Mather**

- 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 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

Parent/ family liaison: Edel Blake & Bríd Palmer

- 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)

Media liaison: Robyn Hargadon

- 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)
- In the event of an incident, will liaise where necessary with the relevant teacher unions etc.
- Will draw up press statements as agreed by school management

A critical incident may on occasion necessitate dealing with the media. Only the Principal, Deputy Principal or Chairperson of the Board of Management will communicate with the media. The Dept. of Education and/or NEPS may also be consulted as necessary for guidance on media briefings.

Members of the media must report to the reception office and identify themselves. They will not be allowed beyond the reception area except at the invitation of the Principal or Deputy Principal. The media will not be allowed to interview or photograph pupils on the school premises.

As necessary, the Principal /Deputy Principal/ Chairperson will prepare a brief media statement to include the following;

- Expressing sympathy for the affected /bereaved family.
- Stating that it is a difficult time for the school community.
- Positive information or comments about the deceased/ injured parties.
- The facts about the situation (following consultation with the families.)



- The terms / language to be used will be decided in advance depending on the circumstances, after establishment of the facts and in consultation with families as necessary.
- Outline what is being done to support pupils and staff.

Administrator: Dawn Sherlock & Yvonne Kane

- Maintenance of up to date telephone numbers of
  - Parents or guardians
  - Teachers
  - Emergency support services
- Takes telephone calls and notes those that need to be responded to
- Ensures that templates are on the schools system in advance and ready for adaptation
- Prepares and sends out letters, emails and faxes
- Photocopies materials needed
- Maintains records

### 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.

Administrators Dawn Sherlock and Yvonne Kane and Aisling Lynch will have key roles in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters, photocopying materials, etc.

### Confidentiality and good name considerations

The management and staff of [St. Cronan's Junior National School](#) have 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 seek to ensure that students do so also. For instance, the term 'suicide' will not be used unless there is solid information that death was due to suicide, and that the family involved consents to its use. The phrases 'tragic death' or 'sudden death' may be used instead. Similarly, the word 'murder' should not be used until it is legally established that a murder was committed. The term 'violent death' may be used instead.

### Critical incident rooms

In the event of a critical incident,

- Library will be the main room used to meet the staff
- Classrooms for meetings with students
- School Hall for parents

- Library for press
- Deputy Principal Office for individual sessions with students
- Parent's Room for other visitors

### Consultation and communication regarding the plan

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

Parent representatives were also consulted and asked for their comments.

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.

All new and temporary staff will be informed of the details of the plan by Donal Farrell

The plan will be updated annually in Term 3 – May.

## Critical Incident Management Plan

### Critical Incident Management Team

Role	Name	Telephone number (home and mobile)
Team Leader	Edel Blake	
Garda Liaison	Edel Blake	
Staff Liaison	Sarah Boylan Bridie Shortall	
Student Liaison	Sarah Boylan Gillian McSweeney	
Community / agency Liaison	Donal Farrell Frances Mather	
Parent / family Liaison	Edel Blake Bríd Palmer	
Media Liaison	Robyn Hargadon	
Health and safety rep	Frances Mather	
Administrator	Dawn Sherlock Yvonne Kane Aisling Lynch	
Caretaker	Dave Pepper	

### Short term actions – Day 1

Task	Name
Gather accurate information: Who, what, when, where?	Edel Blake
Convene a CIMT meeting – specify time and place clearly	Edel Blake
Contact external agencies – NEPS contact immediately	Frances Mather & Donal Farrell



Arrange supervision for students	Sarah Boylan
Hold staff meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include decision on terminology to be used</li> </ul>	All staff
Agree schedule for the day	Edel Blake
Inform students –(close friends and students with learning difficulties may need to be told separately)	Gillian McSweeney & Sarah Boylan to liaise with and support teachers and SNAs involved
Compile list of vulnerable students	Sarah Boylan
Contact/visit the bereaved family	Bríd Palmer & Edel Blake
Prepare and agree media statement and deal with media	Robyn Hargadon & Edel Blake
Inform parents	Edel Blake & Sarah Boylan
Hold end of day staff briefing	All staff

### Medium term actions – (Day 2 and following days)

Task	Name
Convene a CIMT meeting – review the events of day 1	CIMT
Meet external agencies	Donal Farrell & Frances Mather
Meet whole staff	Edel Blake & Sarah Boylan
Arrange support for students, staff, parents	CIMT
Visit the injured	Edel Blake & Bríd Palmer
Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements	Edel Blake & Bríd Palmer
Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service	CIMT

Make decisions about school closure	BOM
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### Follow-up – beyond 72 hours

TASK	NAME
Monitor students for signs of continuing distress	Class teachers
Liaise with agencies regarding referrals	Donal Farrell & Frances Mather
Plan for return of bereaved	Class teacher, Gillian McSweeney & Sarah Boylan
Plan for giving of 'memory box' to bereaved family	Class teacher, staff & CIMT
Decide on memorials and anniversaries	BOM/Staff and parents
Review response to incident and amend plan	Staff/BOM


## Emergency Contact List

**EIRCODE K67DP28**

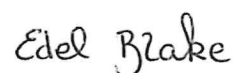
AGENCY	CONTACT NUMBERS
GARDA	999 / 112 01 666 4700
HOSPITAL	01-8784200 (Temple Street) 01-4096100 (Crumlin Hospital) 01-8093000 (Beaumont Hosp) 01-8032000 (Mater Hospital) 041-9837601 (Drogheda)
FIRE BRIGADE	999 /112 Swords Fire Station: 01 673 4000
LOCAL GPS	Swords Family Practice (Brackenstown Village): 01-8403275 Salus Medical Centre (Main Street): 01-8405352 Boroimhe Medical Centre: 01- 8406423
Tusla HSE	Swords: 01 870800 Swords Health Centre: 01-9212100
INSPECTOR	Sinead Patton: sinead_patten@education.gov.ie
NEPS PSYCHOLOGIST	Claire Donnelly Claire_donnelly@education.gov.ie
DES	Marlborough St 01 8896400
INTO/ Forsa	INTO 01 8047700 Forsa 01 8171500
PARISH PRIEST/CLERGY	Parish Office: 01 8401188 Fr Richard Sheedy: :
EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE	1800 411 057

Policy will be reviewed annually.

This version of the policy was ratified in June 2023.



Mary-Liz Donaghue  
Chairperson BOM



Edel Blake  
Principal

20/06/2023

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