



CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT POLICY

Our Lady of Lourdes Secondary School aims to protect the well-being of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. This policy is guided by our Mission Statement, which states that

“Our school is a learning community based on faith, hope and love, where respect, responsibility and Christian commitment grow, allowing all our students to prepare for a meaningful life.”

The Board of Management, through The Principal, Miss Toni Ormond, has drawn up a Critical Incident Management Plan as one element of the school’s policies and plans.

Review and Research

The Critical Incident Management Team has consulted resource documents available to schools on www.education.ie (Department of Education and Skills) and www.nosp.ie (National Office for Suicide Prevention) including the following;

- Responding to Critical Incidents Guidelines and Resources for Schools (NEPS 2016)
- Suicide Prevention in Schools: Best Practice Guidelines (IAS, National Suicide Review Group (2002)
- Suicide Prevention in the Community - A Practical Guide (HSE 2011)
- Well-Being in Post-Primary Schools Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention (DES, DOH, HSE 2013)

Definition of ‘critical incident’

The staff and management of Our Lady of Lourdes 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 expected or 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 or other*

- *The disappearance of a member of the school community*

Aim

The aim of the Critical Incident Management Policy 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 us 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

The physical safety of students, staff and ancillary staff in Our Lady of Lourdes is of key importance to the Management of our school, therefore our Health and Safety Policy is adhered to in the following ways;

- An evacuation plan has been formulated
- Regular fire drills occur
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
- Supervision of the school and school yard occurs prior to the school day, at break and lunchtime and after the end of the school day

Psychological safety

The management and staff of Our Lady of Lourdes 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. The following are the programmes and resources used to benefit those affected by a critical incident.

- 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 and prevention of alcohol and drug misuse. Promotion of mental health is an integral part of this provision
- Staff have access to training for their role in SPHE
- Staff are familiar with the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures
- Books and resources on difficulties affecting the post primary school student are available
- 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
- The school has developed links with a range of external agencies; NEPS, Counsellors, Health Service Executive, DES,

- 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 in 2010 for post primary schools and also in Student Support Teams in Post Primary Schools (2014). These documents are available on www.education.ie
- Students who are identified as being at risk are referred to the designated staff member (e.g. guidance counsellor or support 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 is informed about how to access support for themselves.

Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)

- **Principal**
- **Deputy Principal**
- **Guidance Counsellor**
- **Relevant Year Head and Relevant Class Tutor**
- **Garda Liaison**
- **School Secretary**

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.

Team leader: (Principal, Miss Toni Ormond)

Role

- 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

(In the event of the Team Leader being unavailable, the Deputy Principal, Mrs Catherine O' Donoghue will assume the role of Team Leader)

Garda liaison (Principal, Miss Toni Ormond will liaise with Garda Halley)

Role

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

Staff liaison (Principal, Miss Toni Ormond as Team Leader)

Role

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

Student liaison (Deputy Principal, Mrs Catherine O' Donoghue, as part of the CIMT)

Role

- At post-primary level, may co-ordinate information from tutors and year heads about students they are concerned about
- Alerts other staff to vulnerable students (appropriately)
- Provides materials for students (from their critical incident folder)
- Maintains student contact records (R1).
- Looks after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room where agreed

Community/agency liaison (Deputy Principal, Mrs Catherine O' Donoghue, as part of the CIMT)

Role

- 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

Parent liaison (Deputy Principal, Mrs Catherine O' Donoghue, as part of the CIMT)

Role

- 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 (Principal, Miss Toni Ormond, as Team Leader)

Role

- 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 and so forth)
- In the event of an incident, will liaise where necessary with the SEC; relevant teacher unions etc.

- Will draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews (as agreed by school management)

Administrator (School Secretary)

Role

- 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 schools system in advance and ready for adaptation
- Prepares and sends out letters, emails and texts
- Photocopies materials needed
- Maintains records

Record keeping (School Secretary)

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 and good name considerations

Management and staff of Our Lady of Lourdes 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, e.g. 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, the following rooms are designated for the indicated purposes	
Room Name:	Designated Purpose:
Staff Room	Main room for meeting staff
The Assembly Hall	Meetings with students
Principal's Office	Meetings with parents
Principal's Office	Meetings with media
Deputy Principal's Office Guidance Counsellor's Office	Individual sessions with students
Principal's Office	Meetings with other visitors

Consultation and communication regarding the plan

All staff members were consulted and their views canvassed in the preparation of this policy and plan. Students and parent/guardian 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 of the plan.

All new and temporary staff will be informed of the details of the plan by (The Principal, Miss Toni Ormond)

The plan will be updated annually (March 2020)

Approval

This policy has been approved by Our Lady of Lourdes Board of Management.

Signed: 

Date: 19-6-19

Chairperson,
Board of Management

Critical Incident Management Team		
Role	Name	Phone
Team leader:	Miss Toni Ormond	087 2794598
Garda liaison	Garda John Halley	051 421204
Staff liaison	Miss Toni Ormond	087 2794598
Student liaison	Mrs Catherine O' Donoghue	087 6737569
Community liaison	Mrs Catherine O' Donoghue	087 6737569
Parent liaison	Mrs Catherine O' Donoghue	087 6737569
Media liaison	Miss Toni Ormond	087 2794598
Administrator	School Secretary	051 4221277

Short term actions – Day 1

Task	Name
Gather accurate information	Principal
Who, what, when, where?	Principal
Convene a CIMT meeting – specify time and place clearly	Principal
Contact external agencies	Principal
Arrange supervision for students	Deputy Principal
Hold staff meeting	All staff
Agree schedule for the day	Principal/ Deputy Principal / Staff
Inform students – (close friends and students with learning difficulties may need to be told separately)	Principal/ Guidance Counsellor
Compile a list of vulnerable students	Guidance Counsellor/ Year Heads
Prepare and agree media statement and deal with media	Principal
Inform parents	Principal/ Deputy Principal
Hold end of day staff briefing	Principal/ Deputy Principal

Medium term actions - (Day 2 and following days)

Task	Name
Convene a CIMT meeting to review the events of day 1	Principal
Meet external agencies	Principal
Meet whole staff	Principal/ Deputy Principal
Arrange support for students, staff, parents	Principal/ guidance Counsellor NEPS
Visit the injured	Principal/ Deputy Principal
Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements	Principal/ Deputy Principal
Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service	Principal/ Deputy principal
Make decisions about school closure	BOM

Follow-up – beyond 72 hours

Task	Name
Monitor students for signs of continuing distress	Class Tutors and Year Heads
Liaise with agencies regarding referrals	Principal and Guidance Counsellor
Plan for return of bereaved student(s)	Principal, Class Tutors and Year Heads
Plan for giving of 'memory box' to bereaved family	Principal and Deputy Principal
Decide on memorials and anniversaries	BOM/Staff, parents and students
Review response to incident and amend plan	Staff/BOM

EMERGENCY CONTACT LIST

AGENCY	CONTACT NUMBERS
Garda/ John Halley / New Ross Garda Station	051 421204
Hospitals Waterford Ardkeen St. Luke's Kilkenny Wexford General	051 848000 056 7785000 053 9153000
Fire Brigade Wexford Waterford	053 9176585 051 849982
Local GPs/ Dr O'Beirne Caredoc	051 420300 1850 334999
HSE/ Health Care Centre New Ross	051 421445
Community Care Team/ Hospital Grounds New Ross	051 440200
Child and Family Centre/ Raheen Family Resource Centre	051 428805
Child and Family Mental Health Service (CAMHS)	053 9259860
School Inspector/ Julie Lynch	087 6630574
NEPS Psychologist/ Valerie Jones	087 2391876
DES / Athlone	090 6483600
ASTI/ Dublin	01 6040160
Clergy/ Fr Kavanagh	051 421515
State Exams Commission	090-6442700
Employee Assistance Service & Wellbeing	1800 411 057