

**Mount Sion Primary School**

**Critical Incident Policy**

**Introductory Statement**

This policy was devised and formulated by the school community, involving Board of Management, Parents/Guardians and Staff of Mount Sion Primary School, in accordance with the Rules and Regulations of the Department of Education and Skills and the C.P.S.M.A.

**Ethos**

Mount Sion Primary School is an all boys primary school, which strives to provide a well ordered, caring, happy and secure atmosphere and where we strive to cater for the intellectual, spiritual, physical, moral and cultural needs of the pupils. While respect is paid to all religious and/or value systems, Mount Sion Primary School is a Catholic school under the patronage of the Bishop of Waterford & Lismore and vested in the Trusteeship of the Edmund Rice Schools’ Trust. We uphold the Ethos of Blessed Edmund Rice and the Christian values he espoused.

The school supports the principles of inclusiveness, equality of access and of participation in school life, with respect for diversity of tradition, values, beliefs, languages and ways of life in society, whilst working within the context of the Rules and Regulations of the Department of Education and Skills.

**Schedule as prescribed by the**

**Catholic Primary Schools’ Management Association**

As a Roman Catholic School (which is established in connection with the Minister) Mount Sion Primary School aims at promoting the full and harmonious development of all aspects of the person of the pupil: intellectual, physical, cultural, moral and spiritual, including a living relationship with God and with other people. The school models and promotes a philosophy of life inspired by belief in God and in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Catholic School provides Religious education for the pupils in accordance with the doctrines, practices and tradition of the Roman Catholic Church and promotes the formation of the pupils in the Catholic Faith.

**Aims of this Critical Incident Policy**

* To outline the steps that should be taken should a critical incident take place
* To clearly establish roles and responsibilities in order to ensure a swift and an effective response to a crisis situation
* To ensure that school life returns to normal as soon as possible and that the effects on students and staff are limited.

**What is a Critical Incident?**

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

**Examples (**this list is not exhaustive**)**

* Death of Student, Teacher
* Sudden Youth death (e.g. sports related)
* Major illness/outbreak of disease
* Criminal Incidents (e.g. Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting), Murder or violent death
* Major accidents, serious injury (e.g. Navan bus crash)
* Suicide of Pupil, of Parent or Sibling
* Accident on Field trip
* Civil unrest, war (refugees may be traumatised by events that happened elsewhere)
* Fire, natural and technological disaster (e.g. school ceiling collapsing)
* Disappearance of student from home or school
* Unauthorised removal of student from school or home
* An enactment of the Waterford City Critical Incident Plan

**Critical Incidents Management Team**

* B.O.M. Representative Chairperson Terry O’Sullivan
* Leader: Principal – Michael Walsh
* Community/Agency Contact: Principal – Michael Walsh
* Communication/Media: Principal – Michael Walsh
* Chaplaincy: School Chaplain – Fr. Michael Mullins
* Family Liaison: HSCL – Geri Oakes
* Parent Contact: Chairperson of Council – Cathal Maher
* Administrator/Record Keeper: School Secretary – Paula Coady
* Student Liaison: Principal /Deputy Principal Michael Walsh/ Helena Molloy
* NEPS: School Psychologist– Teresa Thornton
* Counselling Counsellor Play Therapist Elaine Burke

**Roles and Responsibilities:**

**Leadership Role/Community/Agency Contact:**

Intervention

* Confirm the event
* Activate the C.I. response team
* Express sympathy to family
* Clarify facts surrounding event
* Make contact with other relevant agencies
* Contact and inform Family/Friends of incident (where and when appropriate)
* Establish lines of communication with agencies dealing with incident with a view to being kept informed of developments as they occur.
* Decide whether a site visit is appropriate (Site visit by Principal or person nominated by Principal)
* Decide how news will be communicated to different groups (staff, pupils, outside school)

In the 1st instance the Principal will communicate to all staff by text

In the event of the Principal not being able to communicate the School

Secretary will advise staff

In the event that neither the Principal nor the Secretary can communicate the

Deputy Principal will advise staff of events.

Postvention

* Ensure provision of ongoing support to staff and students
* Facilitate any appropriate memorial events
* Review plan immediately following incident

**Communication/Media Role:**

Intervention

* With team prepare a public statement
* Organise designated room to address media promptly
* Ensure telephone line free for outgoing and important incoming calls
* Liaison with relevant outside support agencies

Postvention

* Review and evaluate effectiveness of communication response

**Student Liaison:**

Intervention

* In consultation with NEPs; outline specific services available in school
* Put in place clear referral procedures
* Address immediate needs of pupils/staff
* Decide on information to be presented to children with team leader
* Provide information on counselling services available

Postvention

* Ongoing support to vulnerable students
* Monitor class most affected
* Refer on, as appropriate
* Review and evaluate plan

**Chaplaincy Role:**

Intervention

* Visit home, if appropriate
* Assist with prayer services
* Make contact with local clergy
* Be available as personal and spiritual support to staff

Postvention

* Provide follow-up support to family in conjunction with Community Liaison Role.
* Work in partnership with religious education team
* Review and evaluate plan

**Family Liaison Role:**

Intervention

* Coordinate contact with families (following first contact by C.I. Team Leader)
* Keep families of pupils involved informed of current developments in incident.
* Consult with family around involvement of school in possible events e.g. funeral service
* Assist with all communication dealing with parents of any student affected by critical incident.
* Home visit if appropriate
* Establish phone contact
* Provide physical space for Parents/Families = Parents’ Room

Postvention

* Provide ongoing support to bereaved/affected family/families
* Involve as appropriate family in school liturgies/ memorial services
* Offer to link family with community support groups.
* Review and evaluate plan

**Parent Council Contact:**

Intervention

* Coordinate with the C.I. Team Leader
* Coordinate contact with the Parents’ Council (if necessary)
* Organise events via Parents’ Council (if necessary)

**NEPS Role:**

Intervention

* Roles and responsibilities will depend on request from School

**Administrator/Record Keeper:**

Log events, outgoing and incoming phone calls and emails, offers of help and name.

A letter will be sent to parents based on the need as it arises and may include:   
the sympathy of the School Community, positive information or comments about the deceased/injured person(s), if appropriate, the facts of the incident, what has been done and what is going to be done.

**Confidentiality and good name considerations**The school has a responsibility to protect the privacy and good name of the people  
involved in any incident and will to be sensitive to the consequences of any public  
statements. The members of the school staff will bear this in mind and will see to ensure that pupils to do also.

**Action Plan**

**Short-Term Actions (Day 1)**

* Confirm the facts
* Immediate contact with families involved in incident
* Consult with the family regarding appropriate support from the school, e.g. funeral service.
* Contact with families of the other children affected, option a) in school support b) withdrawal by family.
* Ensure a quiet place can be made for pupils/staff/Parents/Families
* Rooms will be made available as follows:
  + Prayer/Reflection Room: Reading Room
  + Individual Meetings: Principal’s Office
  + Meeting room for Parents: Parents Room, in the case of a major incident the School Hall will be used.

**Media Briefing (0 - 24 hours)**

* Designate a spokesperson. (Leader/Chairperson)
* Prepare a brief statement. (Team)
* Protect the family's privacy.
* Gather accurate information.
  1. What happened, where and when?
  2. What is the extent of the injuries/fatalities?
  3. How many are involved and what are their names?
  4. Is there a risk of further injury?
  5. What agencies have been contacted already?
* Contact appropriate agencies
  1. Emergency services
  2. Medical services
  3. H.S.E Psychology Departments/Community care services
  4. NEPS
  5. B.O.M.
  6. DES/Schools inspector
  7. Insurance Company (Willis)
  8. ERST
* Convene a meeting with Key Staff/Critical Management Team (8.15 a.m. or as necessary)
  1. Organise a staff meeting, if appropriate. (8:45 a.m.) During holiday time the Principal will inform the Critical Incident Team. Staff will be requested to confirm the receipt of any text messages. If message delivered from Principal, respond to Principal, if received from Aladdin respond to School Secretary, if received from Deputy Principal respond to Deputy Principal.
  2. Organise timetable/routine for the day. (Adhering to the normal school routine is important, if this is possible).
  3. Class teachers to take note of any absentees who might need to be contacted, list of friends etc., or any other relevant information and give to the student Liaison person
  4. Arrange supervision of pupils
* Liaise with the family regarding funeral arrangements/memorial service.
  1. 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.
  2. Arrange a home visit by two staff representatives within 24 hours, if appropriate.(Principal + Class Teacher + or HSCL)
  3. Have regard for different religious traditions and faiths.

**Medium-Term Actions (24-72 Hours)**

* Preparation of pupils/staff attending funeral
* Involvement of pupils/staff in liturgy if agreed by bereaved family
* Facilitation of pupils/staffs responses, e.g. Sympathy cards, flowers, book of condolences, etc.
* Ritual within the school.
* Review the events of first 24 hours.
  1. Reconvene Key Staff/Critical Incident Management Team. (8.30 a.m. Staff will be convened to meetings as required.)
  2. Decide arrangements for support meetings for parents/pupils/staff.
  3. Decide on mechanism for feedback from teachers on vulnerable students.
  4. Have reviews Critical Incident Management Team meeting. (3.00 p.m.)
  5. Establish contact with absent staff and pupils.
* Arrange support for individual pupils, groups of pupils, and parents, if necessary.
  1. Hold support/information meeting for parents/pupils, if necessary, in order to clarify what has happened.
  2. Teacher for each class group to talk separately (depending on age) certain things they don’t need to know.
  3. The C.I. Team will be sensitive to Staff Needs
  4. Arrange, in consultation, with outside agencies, individual or group debriefings or support meetings: (with parental permission).
* Plan for the re-integration of pupils staff e.g., absentees, injured, siblings, close relative etc.)
  1. Student Liaison person may liaise with above on their return to school.
  2. Plan Visits to injured.
  3. Family Liaison person + Class Teacher + HSCL + Principal to visit home/hospital.
  4. Attendance and participation at funeral/memorial service (to be decided).
  5. Decide this in accordance with Parents’ wishes and school management decisions and in consultation with close school friends. School closure.
  6. Request a decision on this from school management.

**Longer Term Actions**

* Monitor Pupils for signs of continuing distress
* If, over a prolonged period of time, a student continues to display the following, he/she may need assistance from the HSE.
  1. Uncharacteristic behaviour
  2. Deterioration in academic performance
  3. Physical symptoms - e.g. weight loss/gain, lack of attention to appearance, tiredness, restlessness
  4. Inappropriate emotional reactions
  5. Increased absenteeism.
* Evaluate response to incident and amend Critical Incident Management Plan appropriately
  1. What went well?
  2. Where were the gaps?
  3. What was most/least helpful?
  4. Have all necessary onward referrals to support services been made?
  5. Is there any unfinished business?
* Formalise the Critical Incident Plan for the future.
* Consult with NEPS psychologist
* Inform new staff/new school pupils affected by Critical Incidents where appropriate.
  1. Ensure that new staff is aware of the school policy and procedures in this area.
  2. Ensure they are aware of which pupils were affected by any recent incident and in what way.
  3. When individual pupils or a class of pupils affected by an incident are transferring to a new school, it would be useful to brief the Principal of the new school.
* Decide on appropriate ways to deal with anniversaries. (Be sensitive to special days and events)
  1. Anniversaries may trigger emotional responses in pupils/staff and they may need additional support at this time.
  2. Acknowledge the anniversary with the family.
  3. Be sensitive to significant days like Birthdays, Christmas, Mother's Day, and Father's Day.
* Plan a school memorial service e.g. plant tree(closure)
* Care of deceased persons possessions. What are the parents’ wishes?
* Update and amend school records.

**Resources**

"Young People and Loss, A Handbook for Schools" Robin Cooper

"Silver Linings: Community Crisis Response" Rainbows

"Responding to Critical Incidents - Resource Materials for Schools"  DES

"Responding to Critical Incidents -“Guidelines for Schools" DES

**Review**

This policy was sanctioned by the Board of Management on 13th November 2013. This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Mr. Terry O’Sullivan, Chairperson Board of Management

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**Contact numbers in the event of a Critical Incident**

* 1. **Chairperson 087 744 0027**
  2. **Principal 087 216 2068**
  3. **Deputy Principal 085 149 1544**
  4. **HSCL 086 896 5733**
  5. **Fr. Mullins 086 661 1834**
  6. **Parents’ Council 087 953 1177**
  7. **Counsellor/Play Therapist 087 282 9764**
  8. **School Secretary 086 177 3409**
  9. **NEPS 087 945 2516**
  10. **School Nurse 087 629 7177**
  11. **Doctor Rowe-Creavin 051-370057**
  12. **Gardaí 051 305 300**
  13. **Caretaker 087 942 1399**
  14. **Lollipop Lady 085 740 8084**
  15. **Fire Service 051-849982 (After hours non-fire**

**875555)**

* 1. **Civil Defence (Paul Nolan) 051-872656**
  2. **Staff Counselling 1800 411 057**
  3. **WRH 051-848000**
  4. **Waterford Teachers’ Centre 051-311000**
  5. **HSE Community Care 051-842800**
  6. **Inspectorate noreen\_bambury@education.gov.ie**
  7. **ERST 087-6172925 (Helen O’Brien)**
  8. **DES 051-310000 (Waterford Regional Office)**
  9. **Insurance Company 01- 6396392 (Bob Fitzpatrick, Willis)**
  10. **SENO 087-6949475 (Seán Carthy)**
  11. **Waterford City Council 051-309900**