



HOLY FAMILY JUNIOR NATIONAL SCHOOL

River Valley, Swords, Co Dublin.

Principal: Ms M McNally
Deputy Principal: Ms E Keely
Chairperson: Ms Ú Whelan

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CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT POLICY

Holy Family Junior National School aims to protect the well-being of its students by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. The Board of Management, through Ms Mary McNally, Principal, 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 (CMIT) have consulted resource documents available to schools on www.education.ie and www.nosp.ie including:

Responding to Critical Incidents Guidelines and Resources for Schools (NEPS 2016)
Suicide Prevention in Schools: Best Practice Guidelines (IAS, National Suicide Review Group 2002)
Well-Being in Primary Schools – Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion (DE, DOH, HSE 2015)

What is a Critical Incident? Instead of Define what you mean by the term 'critical incident'

The staff and management of Holy Family JNS recognises 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 pupils, staff, the school, or our local community. Types of incidents might include:

- The death of a member of the school community through sudden death, accident, terminal illness, suicide or murder
- An intrusion into the school or a physical attack on staff member(s) or pupil(s)
- 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
- An accident involving members of the school community.

Aim

The aim of the Critical Incident Management Policy (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 pupils and staff. Having a good plan should also help ensure that the effects on the pupils 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 pupils, 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

- Evacuation plan is formulated
- Regular fire drills occur
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked and clearly marked
- All external doors are closed during school hours. Access to school building during the day is via the front door/school secretary. This door has a maglock.
- Rules of the playground encourage positive and safe playtime interaction.
- First Aid training has been undertaken by a number of staff. Defibrillator available in the school hall
- First Aid supplies are available in each playground
- Adherence to the Code of Behaviour is promoted at all times.

Psychological safety

The management and staff of Holy Family JNS aim to use available programmes and resources to address the personal and social development of pupils, to enhance a sense of safety and security in the school and to provide opportunities for reflection and discussion.

- SPHE programmes are included in the curriculum to address issues such as grief and loss, communication skills, stress and anger management, conflict management, problem solving, help-seeking, decision making, and alcohol and drug prevention
- Our Code of Behaviour/Discipline and Anti-Bullying Policies include an approach to developing strategies for dealing with bullying
- Our Child Safeguarding Statement Policy endeavours to safeguard all our children
- Relevant staff are informed of difficulties affecting individual students and are aware and vigilant to their needs
- All staff have access to books and resources on difficulties affecting the primary school child
- The school has developed links with outside agencies, which may be contacted in the event of an emergency and for onward referral of students
- 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 2007 for primary schools. This document is available on www.education.ie
- Pupils who are identified as being at risk are referred to the relevant staff member, 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 (a summary of this support is set out in R23)
- Staff are informed about how to access support for themselves.

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.

Team Leader – Mary McNally

Role

- Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting
- Makes decisions e.g. school closures, attendance a memorial service etc.
- Co-ordinates the tasks of the team
- Liaises with the Board of Management, Department of Education and NEPS
- Liaises with affected family.

Deputy Team Leader – Emma Keely

Garda Liaison – Mary McNally & Marlane Moore

Role

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

Staff Liaison – Emma Keely, Niamh Culleton & Joanne Corr

Role

- Leads briefing meetings for staff on the facts as known, gives staff members a opportunity to express their feeling and ask questions, outlines the routine for the day
- Advises staff on the procedures for identification of vulnerable pupils
- Provide 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 Employee Assistance Scheme (EAS) and gives them the contact number.

Community/Agency Liaison – Danielle Carty & Audrey Ginty

Role

- Maintains up-to-date lists of contact number of
 - Key parents, such as member of the Parents' Association
 - 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
- Co-ordinates the involvement of these agencies
- Reminds agency staff to wear name badges
- Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies.

Parent Liaison – Emma Keely & Michael Murphy

Role

- Visits the affected 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
- Ensure that sample letters are typed up, on the school's system and ready for adaption
- 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 – Mary McNally & Sinead Hayes

Role

- In advance of an incident, will consider issues that may arise and how they might be responded to (e.g. pupils being interview, photographers on the premises etc)
- In the event of an incident, will liaise with the SEC; relevant teacher unions etc.
- Will draw up a press statement, give media briefing and interviews (as agreed by school management).

Administrator – Marlane Moore

Role

- Maintenance of up-to-date telephone number of
 - Parents or guardians
 - Teachers
 - Emergency services
- Takes telephone calls and notes those that need to be responded to
- Ensure that templates are on the school's system in advance and ready for adaptation
- Prepares and sends out letters, emails and texts
- Photocopies materials needed
- Maintains records.

Record Keeping – Mary McNally

In the event of an incident each member of the team will keep records of phonecalls made and received, letters sent and received, meetings held, persons met, interventions used, materials used etc. Marlane Moore 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 Holy Family JNS 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 pupils 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

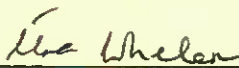
In the event of a critical incident, the following rooms are designated for the indicated purposes

Room Name	Designated Purpose
Staff Room	Main room for meeting staff
Classroom	Meetings with pupils
Principal's Office/Hall	Meeting with parents
School Grounds/Principal's Office	Meetings with media
Classroom	Individual sessions with pupils
Principal's Office/Hall	Meetings with other visitors

Development and Communication of this Policy

This policy has been presented to all relevant members of the school community. Each member of the Critical Incident Team has a personal copy of the policy.

This policy was reviewed May 2025 with the Critical Incident Team and Dr Nollaig Carberry, NEPS Psychologist and will be reviewed annually.

Signed: 
Ms Ú Whelan, Chairperson
Board of Management, Holy Family J.N.S.

Dated: 24th June 2025