



ST. BRIGID'S NATIONAL SCHOOL KILLYGARRY



CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY

St Brigid's National School aims to protect the wellbeing of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. This policy was first completed and approved by the Board of Management on the 4th of December 2017 and it was revised in January 2025.

Mission Statement

St Brigid's National School, Killygarry is a Catholic Primary School which welcomes children of all religions and nationalities.

We, the school community, believe in the education of the whole child.

Following a child-centred and holistic approach, we endeavour ...

1. To recognise and acknowledge the talents and abilities of each child.
2. To nurture each child's talents and self-esteem in a caring and supportive environment.
3. To provide the learning opportunities which will foster and develop the skills and resources necessary to reach their current and future potential.
4. To uphold the catholic ethos of the school.
5. To listen to and respect the child's voice
6. To build a sense of respect, responsibility and resilience in our students.
7. To up hold the catholic ethos of the school.

St Brigid's N.S. has taken 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 students, both in ordinary time and in the event of a critical incident.

Mrs. Serena Prior, School Principal, has drawn up a critical incident management plan as one element of the school's policies and plans.

The aim is to establish a Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) to steer the development and implementation of the Critical Incident Management Plan.

What is a Critical Incident?

The staff and management of St Brigid's NS recognises a critical incident to be "an incident sequence of events that overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school and disrupts the running of the school". Critical incidents may involve one or more pupils, staff, the school or our local community. Types of incidents may include:

- The death of a member of the school community through accident, violence, suicide or suspected suicide or other unexpected death.
- An intrusion into the school
- An accident involving members of the school community
- A major accident/tragedy in the wider community
- Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood vandalism, etc.
- The disappearance of a member of the school community.

Aim

The aim of the CIMP is to help the 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 impact on students and staff will be limited. It should enable us to affect 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:

The school has a Health and Safety Policy which is in line with the Safety, Health and Welfare Act 1995. The following measures are taken in this school to ensure the physical safety of all pupils, staff and visitors to the school.

- Evacuation plan formulated
- Regular fire drills
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
- Front gate closed during school hours
- Locking door system in the school with fob access for staff
- Yard Supervision during morning and afternoon breaks
- Code of Behaviour
- Administration of Medicine Policy

Psychological safety

The management and staff of St Brigid's N.S. aims to use 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.

- Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is integrated into the work of the school. 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 are addressed in the SPHE curriculum. Promotion of mental health is an integral part of this provision.
- Our Code of Behaviour Policy includes an approach to bullying
- The school has a clear Anti-Bullying Policy and deals with incidents of bullying in accordance with this policy.
- Staff have access to training for their role in SPHE
- Staff are familiar with the Child Protection Procedures and the name of the Designated Liaison Person.
- Staff are informed of difficulties affecting individual students and are aware and vigilant to their needs.
- Books and resources on difficulties affecting the primary school child are available.

- Information is provided on mental health in general and such specific areas as signs and symptoms of depression and anxiety.
- 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 from primary schools.
- Students who are identified as being at risk are referred to the DLP, concerns are explored and the appropriate level of assistance and support is provided. Parents/Guardians are informed, and where appropriate, a referral is made to an appropriate agency.
- The school has developed links with outside agencies, which may be contacted in the event of an emergency and for onward referral of students.

Critical Incident Management Team

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.

Roles

Key roles have been identified and assigned as follows:

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| ➤ Team Leader: | Serena Prior (Principal) |
| ➤ Staff Liaison: | Marie White (Deputy Principal) |
| ➤ Student Liaison: | Ashley Wynne (Assistant Principal) |
| ➤ Parent Liaison: | Serena Prior (Principal) |
| ➤ Community Liaison: | Mr. Kevin Reilly (Chairperson B.O.M.) |
| ➤ Media Liaison: | Serena Prior (Principal) |

In the event of a critical incident the responsibilities of each role-holder will be as follows.

Team Leader

The team leader carries the authority to make decisions during a crisis e.g. school closure, attendance at memorial services, etc.

- Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting

- Coordinates the tasks of the team.
- Liaises with the Board of Management and the Department of Education and Science and NEPS.
- Liaises with the bereaved family
- Liaises with the Gardaí
- Ensures that information about deaths or other developments is checked out for accuracy before being shared.

Staff Liaison

- Leads meetings to brief staff on the facts as known, gives staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and outlines the routine for the day.
- Advises staff on the procedures for identification of vulnerable students.
- Is alert to vulnerable staff members and makes contact with them individually.
- Advises them of the availability of the EAS (Employee Assistance Service) and gives them the contact number.
- Provides materials to staff from the critical incident folder.
- Keeps staff updated at the day progresses

Student Liaison

- Liaises with other team members to keep them up-dated with information and progress.
- Alerts other staff to vulnerable students (appropriately)
- Provides materials for students from the critical incident folder
- Maintains student contact records
- Looks after setting up and supervision of ‘quiet’ room where agreed

Community/Agency Liaison

- Liaises with agencies in the community for support and onward referral.
- Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies.
- Is alert to the need to check credentials of individuals offering support.
- Reminds agency staff to wear name badges.
- Coordinates the involvement of these agencies.
- Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of
 - Key parents e.g. members of the Parents Association.
 - Emergency support services and other external contacts and resources.

Parent Liaison

- Arranges meetings, if held
- May facilitate such meetings, and manage 'questions and answers' sessions.
- Manages the 'consent' issues in accordance with agreed school policy
- Ensures that sample letters are prepared and available on the school's IT system ready for adaptation.
- Sets up room for meetings with parents
- Maintains a record of parents seen
- Meets with individual parents
- Provides materials for parents from the critical incident folder
- Visits the bereaved family with the team leader.

Media Liaison

- In advance of an incident will consider issues that may arise during an incident 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 Communications section of DES, media officer with the INTO, etc.
- Will draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews (if agreed by the Board of Management).
- Medial Liaison Officer never to give photos to the media. This is the responsibility of the family in question.

Administrative Tasks

- Maintenance of up-to-date lists of contact numbers of parents or guardians, teachers and emergency support services
- Take telephone calls and notes those that need a response
- Ensures that templates are available on the schools IT system and ready for adaptation.
- Prepares and sends out letters, emails and texts.
- Photocopies materials as needed
- Maintains records

Record Keeping

In the event of an incident each member of the team will keep detailed records of phone calls made and received, letters sent and received, meetings held, persons met, interventions used, materials 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

The management and staff St. Brigid's 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 confirmed 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.

Letter to Parents

St Brigid's N.S. will prepare a brief, written statement to include:

- The sympathy of the school community for the affected/bereaved family
- Positive information or comments about the deceased/injured persons)
- The facts of the incident
- What is going to be done

Critical Incident Rooms

In the event of a critical incident,

The staffroom will be the main room used to meet the staff

The learning support rooms will be used for meetings with students

The general-purpose room will be used for parents

The Hotel Kilmore will be used for media

The learning support rooms/library will be used for individual sessions with students

The general-purpose room will be used 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.

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.

The plan will be updated annually if necessary.

This policy and plan was ratified by the Board of Management at its meeting on the 6th day of February 2025.