



St. Vincent's Secondary School

Critical Incident Policy

Policy Amended: _____

Adopted by Board of Management: _____

Critical Incident Management Plan

Rationale behind this policy

The purpose of the CIMT is to prevent/respond to any significant trauma that may occur in the life of the school. The key to managing any critical incident is planning. This helps staff maintain a sense of control and enables staff to act quickly and effectively. The policy seeks to limit the negative/harmful effects of trauma on students and staff and helps school life to return to normal as soon as possible. The policy applies to all teaching and non-teaching staff, students, parents /guardians with the approval of Board of Management (BOM)

Defining a Critical Incident

It is an accident or a sequence of events which overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of St Vincent's Secondary School and disrupts the running of the school.

Examples of crises affecting schools are:

- The death of a member of the school community through sudden death, accident, terminal illness or suicide.
- An accident involving pupils or staff on or off the school premises.
- A physical attack on staff member(s) or student(s) or intrusion into the school.
- Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism etc.
- The disappearance of a member of the school community.
- An accident or tragedy in the wider community.

Role of Senior Management (Principal, Deputy Principal)

- Oversee the plan/CIMT
- Facilitate in-service to staff, parents
- Facilitate implementation of relevant programmes in the curriculum
- Liaise with family, media, BOM and DES (NEPS) as required
- Supportive presence to others in the school
- Review of process

Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)

A CIMT has been established in the school. The team has a supportive role to the Whole-School Community in response to all emergencies.

Roles within the CIMT

Staff Liaison Person

- Offer staff support
- Responsibility for staff briefing
- Monitor signs of concern
- Maintain relevant staff contact details
- Co-ordinate in-service to staff regarding issues of loss, emergency management and suicide

Student Liaison Person

- Promote links between staff and students
- Maintain and update student contact details regularly (with parent liaison)
- Observe vulnerable students (in liaison with year heads/class & subject teachers)
- Organise student support/counselling
- Assist with development of programmes associated with loss, crisis

management and suicide

Parent Liaison Person

- Co-ordinate and participate in parent support
- Maintain and update parent contact details regularly (with student liaison)
- Offer support regarding coping with loss

Network/Community and Media Liaison Person

- Maintain and update emergency/external agency contact details list regularly
- Contact with local/external agencies i.e., NEPS, social workers etc.,
- Develop template of media briefs/press release statements in event of ongoing emergency

Staff assigned to CIMT roles in St. Vincent's Secondary School

Overseeing the CIMT – Mr. James Deane (Principal), Rosemarie Ferriter (Deputy Principal)

Staff Liaison	Rosemarie Ferriter
Student Liaison	Irene Ryan
Parent Liaison	James Deane & Michelle Fitzgerald
Network/ Community Media Liaison	James Deane

The Critical Incident Management Team may co-opt other members of staff to assist them, should they deem it necessary.

Critical Incident Room

Parents' Room and room(s) for outside agencies e.g. Parents, Media, Board of Management, Psychologists

PROCEDURES TO BE FOLLOWED IN THE EVENT OF EMERGENCY/CRITICAL INCIDENT

Checklist – Day of incident

1. Gather the facts – Who? What? Where? When?
2. Contact appropriate agencies e.g. Gardai, hospitals, parents
3. Convene the CIMT and key staff
 - a. Agree statement of fact – to be drafted and outlined to staff, non-teaching staff, students, parents, BOM, media. What can be said?
4. Organise for the supervision of students
5. Decide student groups and venues for announcement
6. Read agreed statement to staff at meeting.
7. Distribute agreed statement for all enquiries via, phone, school gate, reception, etc.
8. Read/Announce agreed statement to students – to be communicated in sensitive manner, highlighting supports available and indicating actions planned
9. Identify ‘at risk’ students
10. Log all incoming and outgoing telephone calls relevant to situation
11. Organise timetable for the day
 - i. timetabled teachers will supervise class groups
 - ii. allow students to support each other in groups
 - iii. identify vulnerable students
 - iv. inform students where extra support is available e.g. GC
12. If appropriate, inform Parents/Guardians by letter of incident and supports available
13. Make contact with the family concerned
14. Organise support for individual students, class groups as appropriate
15. Establish contact with absent staff

MAINTAIN THE SCHOOL ROUTINE WHEN AT ALL POSSIBLE

Checklist – Day Two

1. Check in with CIMT
2. Review Events – check how people are coping
3. Confirm arrangements for support meetings for parents/ students/staff
4. Arrange support for individual students, groups of students, staff and parents if necessary
5. Plan for re-integration of students and staff into regular school routine (e.g. absentees, injured, siblings, close relatives)
6. Plan a visit to injured – home/hospital (parent liaison and school management)
7. Liaise with family regarding funeral arrangements/memorial services. In accordance with parents wishes, decide on attendance and participation at funeral/memorial service
8. School Closure – only in the most critical of circumstances where the school community is unable to or prevented from functioning.

Checklist – Long Term

1. Monitor students for signs of continuing stress
2. Evaluate response to incident and amend the CIMT Plan appropriately
3. Inform new staff/schools students regarding policy and/or incidents where appropriate
4. Decide on appropriate ways to deal with anniversaries (within school context) in consultation with parent/guardians
5. Ensure contact details for Students, Parents/Guardians, Teachers and Auxiliary Staff, BOM, and Parents Associations are updated regularly.
6. Details for CIMT file: Contact details of 1st year students; new students and staff should be received within two weeks of entering the school
7. A shadow team to be established
8. Staff to be encouraged to attend training in CIMT Management
9. Review the policy on an annual basis
10. Regular provision of programmes regarding loss, emergency management and suicide
11. Regular monitoring of vulnerable students by the care group

Guidelines for Teachers (in the event of a student death)

- The class of student should be told with the Counsellor, Year Head/Class Teacher, Principal/Deputy Principal and Chaplain present.
- Only if the tragedy is confirmed as a suicide by the family can it be relayed as such.
- Other classes are told by their class teacher using an agreed statement.
- Let them know the name of the person who has died.
- Only the facts should be made known.
- Allow for reaction in many forms.
- Do not allow students to leave alone, all students need to be supervised.
- Inform them of your support and help and that the School Counsellor and Chaplain are available.

Monitoring, Review and Evaluation

The monitoring, review and evaluation process will focus mainly on whether provision of this policy has been implemented. The policy will be reviewed after an incident and updated on a regular basis.

Policy approved on: _____

For Review: _____

Consultation Support Documents

Irish Association of Suicidology, Suicide Prevention in Schools – Best Practice Guidelines, pg. 31-37

Caroll B. & T. Crawford, Putting the Student First – A School Response Health Service Executive, Mid-Western Area Initiative

Appendix 1:

SAMPLE LETTER TO PARENTS/GUARDIANS

Dear Parents/Guardians

The school has experienced (the sudden death/injury) to one of our students/staff.
We are deeply saddened by this death/injury

(Brief details of the incident, and in the case of death, perhaps some positive remembrances of persons lost)

We have support structures in place to help your child cope with this tragedy.
(Elaborate)

It is possible that your child may have some feelings that he may like to discuss with you. You can help your child by taking time to listen to her and encouraging her to express her feelings. It is important to give truthful information that is appropriate to his age.

If you would like any advice or support you may contact the following people at school *(Details)*

Principal.

Appendix 2

Sample letter requesting consent for Involvement of
Outside Professionals.

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Following the recent (tragedy/ death of x) we have arranged specialist support for students in the school who need particular help. (X) is available to help us with this work. The support will usually consist of talking to students either in small groups or on a one to one basis, and offering reassurance and advice as appropriate

Your daughter has been identified as one of the students who would benefit from meeting with (X). If you would like your daughter to receive this support, please sign the attached permission slip and return it to the school by

If you would like further information on the above or if you would like to talk to the psychologist, please indicate this on the slip, or contact the school.

Principal

I/We consent to having our daughter meet with

I understand that my daughter may meet x in an individual or group session, depending on the arrangements that are thought most appropriate.

Name of Student: _____

Class: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Signed: _____