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# Patrician Presentation Secondary School

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Fethard, Co. Tipperary  
Email: ppssadmin@gmail .com

Telephone: (052) 6131572  
Fax: (052) 6132939



*"Our mission is to encourage all pupils to reach their potential in a caring and Christian environment"*

## Critical Incident Management Plan

### 1. Introduction

Patrician Presentation Secondary School is a caring, enabling, learning community where staff and students work together with mutual respect to fulfil their potential with integrity, compassion and fairness. In keeping with the School Mission Statement, the Board of Management is committed to the care of staff and students at our school.

This policy refers to the response taken by this school should a critical incident occur.

### 2. Definition

For the purposes of this policy a critical incident is defined as any incident or sequence of events which overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of the school and disrupts the running of the school e.g.

- The death of a member of the school community
- A serious accident involving pupils or staff
- A traumatic event involving the school
- Serious accident or tragedy in the wider community

As each Critical Incident will require the school to respond in a manner appropriate to that particular incident at that time, this C.I.M.P. is intended to serve as a general outline of procedures to be followed in the event of a critical incident occurring.

In general, it is regarded as good practice for the school to:

(a) Form a Critical Incident Management Team to include:

- The Principal
- The Deputy Principal
- Year Heads
- Guidance Counsellor & Student Support Staff (SCLP and Home-School Liaison Person)
- Representative of Board of Management – Chairperson

- Representative of Administrative Staff – School Secretary and Caretaker

This team will meet annually.

(b) It will maintain an up-to-date list of contact numbers for:

- Staff
- Parents/guardians of students
- Emergency support services

Copies of contact lists will be kept in the Administrative office and Principal's office. These lists will be updated when necessary by administrative staff.

(c) The team will also establish a 'loop' system among staff so that information can be conveyed one to another should a critical incident happen outside of school hours.

In the case of School Tours, the Tour Leader will compile an information pack to include:

- Name of the Tour Leader
- A list of all participating teachers and pupils
- A list of mobile phone numbers for all participating teachers and pupils
- Passport details and (in the case of tours outside the country) photographs of participating pupils
- Home contact numbers and mobiles of all involved
- Relevant medical information on pupils and permission forms from parents in case of a medical emergency
- Insurance details
- Copy of itinerary

A copy of this file should be left with the Principal prior to departure.

By way of protection of our staff and students, all staff will be made aware of the Health and Safety Document, Fire Evacuation Procedures, the location of the defibrillators and the names of those trained in their use and in First Aid. These lists will also be posted on the notice board in the staff room and attached to this document.

Staff will be reminded of these procedures at the initial staff meeting annually and this information included in the packs provided to new and substitute teachers.

### **3. Trauma Response Plan**

#### **Procedures to be followed in the event of critical incidents:**

On notification of a critical incident the Principal will convene the Critical Incident Management Team to:

- Ascertain the facts
- Make contact with the family/families concerned

- Contact appropriate agencies (e.g. N.E.P.S., D.E.S)
- Inform Staff, B.O.M. and Le Cheile office
- Agree on a statement of the facts for staff, pupils, parents/guardians and the media and inform these parties as appropriate
- Identify high risk pupils
- Appoint one person to deal with telephone calls and media queries
- Organise timetable/supervision rota for the day
- Organise support and rooms for counselling/assistance where appropriate
- Endeavour to maintain the regular school routine, if possible
- When appropriate arrange for representatives from the school to visit the home(s) of the person(s) concerned.

In the event of death:

- Inform staff and pupils re funeral arrangements
- Arrange involvement in liturgy, if agreed with bereaved family
- Facilitate staff and pupils' response e.g. book of condolence, school council's vote of sympathy, flowers.
- Support distressed pupils and staff.
- Ensure counselling service is available.
- Care of deceased person's possessions in keeping with parental/guardians' wishes
- Facilitate return to school of siblings and close friends.
- Monitor siblings and friends of the deceased.
- Update and amend school records and inform DES.

#### **4. Long Term Tasks**

In the aftermath of a critical incident, a death, accident, serious illness or any such incident:

Awareness of the need to:

- Keep in contact with the family/families concerned
- Be sensitive to occasions such as anniversaries, birthdays, Christmas etc
- Organise school services/memorial as appropriate
- Review the support structures available
- Provide the appropriate support
- Review overall school response.

#### **5. Development and Communication of this Critical Incident Management Policy:**

All Staff, the Students Council, the Parents' Association and the Board of Management were consulted in the formulation of this policy and their recommendations included in this document.

This Critical Incident Management Policy was ratified by the Board of Management on \_\_\_\_\_.

It is proposed to review this C.I.M.P. in the 2020/2021 academic year and in each subsequent year.

### **Appendix 1:**

#### **First Aid Training**

The following staff members have completed a First Aid Course held at Patrician Presentation Secondary School:

Justin McGree

Helena Walsh

#### **Location of Defibrillators**

Back of the school building

#### **Persons Trained to use the defibrillators (Code 9182):**

12 members of the teaching staff trained in August 2019

## **Appendix 2:**

### **Roles:**

Key roles have been identified and assigned.

The team includes:

Team Leader... Billy Walsh

Staff Liaison... Caitriona McKeogh & Justin McGree

Student Liaison... Caitriona McKeogh, Helena Walsh & Justin McGree

Community Liaison... Elaine Shine/Roisin Slattery/Noreen O'Brien

Parent Liaison... Billy Walsh/Caitriona McKeogh

Media Liaison... Billy Walsh/Caitriona McKeogh

Administrative Tasks... Gwen Cronin

Health & Safety... Billy Walsh

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

#### **Team Leader: Billy Walsh**

(A person who carries authority and can make decisions during a crisis (e.g. school closure, attendance at memorial services etc))

1. Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting.
2. Co-ordinates tasks of the team.
3. Liaises with the Board of Management and Department of Education & Skills.
4. Liaises with the affected family/staff member.

#### **Staff Liaison: Caitriona McKeogh and Justin McGree**

(A staff member, known, trusted and liked by the staff)

1. Leads meetings to brief staff on the facts as known, gives staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and outlines the routine of the day.
2. Advises staff on the identification of vulnerable students.
3. Is alert to vulnerable staff members and makes contact with them individually.
4. Provides materials to staff from the Ready-to-go-pack.

#### **Student Liaison: Helena Walsh and Justin McGree**

(A trusted and familiar person known to the students.)

1. Liaises with other team members to keep them up-dated with information and progress.
2. Alerts staff to vulnerable students.
3. Provides materials for students from the Ready-to-go-pack.

#### **Community Liaison: Elaine Shine**

(Someone with good contacts with agencies and relevant individuals in the community).

1. Liaises with agencies in the community for support and onward referral.
2. Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies.
3. Co-ordinate the involvement of these agencies. Key parents such as members of the parents council to be involved. Emergency support services and other external contacts and resources to be liaised with.

**Parent Liaison: Billy Walsh/Caitriona McKeogh**

(Someone who is well-known to parents. This person should be comfortable speaking before a large group and have skills to manage emotional reactions of individual or groups of parents.)

1. Facilitates “questions and answers” meeting.
2. Meets with individual parents.
3. Provides materials for parents from the Ready-to-go-pack.
4. Visits the bereaved family with the team leader.

**Media Liaison: Billy Walsh/Caitriona McKeogh/Br. Matthew Hayes**

(Someone with good interpersonal skills who would be comfortable talking to the media, by phone, or in person. A person who is able to set limits without being offensive.)

1. In preparing for the role, she/he 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.)
2. In the event of an incident, will liaise where necessary with the Communications Section in the DES.

**Administrative Tasks: Gwen Cronin**

1. Maintenance of up to date lists of contact numbers of:
  - Parents or Guardians.
  - Teachers.
  - Emergency Support Services.
2. Telephone calls need to be responded to, letters send and materials photocopied.

**To do list: (Order will be determined by the nature of the event)**

Contact parents/guardians

Contact accident and emergency services.

Contact Fr. Liam Everard (School Chaplain)...life or death situation.

Contact Principal or Assistant Principal.

Contact Class Teacher.

Contact First Aid Person/Health & Safety Officer.

Contact the ASTI, Le Cheile, etc.

**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, meeting 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.

**Letter to Parents:**

Assistant Principal 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(s).
- The facts of the incident.
- What has been done?
- What is going to be done?

(See sample in Appendix 3)

**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 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 do so also. (For instance, the term "suicide" will not be used without the consent of the family involved or until it has been established categorically that the person's death was a result of suicide. The phrases "tragic death" or "sudden death" may be used instead).

**Critical Incident Room:**

In the event of a critical incident, the Principal's Office will be the main room used to meet the staff, students, parents and visitors involved.

**Development and communication of this policy and plan:**

All staff was consulted and their views canvassed in the preparation of the draft plan.

Parent representatives were also consulted and asked for their comments. Our school's final policy and procedures in relation to responding to critical incident has been presented to all staff and Board of Management.

Each member the critical incident team has a personal copy.

All new and temporary staff will be informed of the details of the plan by **Billy Walsh**.

### **Appendix 3:**

Dear Parents

The school has experienced (the sudden death, accidental injury, etc.) of Name of student(s). We are deeply saddened by the deaths/events.

Our thoughts are with (family name).

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 and questions that he/she may like to discuss with you. It is important to give factual information that is appropriate to their age.

You can help your child by taking time to listen and by encouraging him/her to express feelings. All children are different and will express their feelings in different ways. It is not uncommon for children to have difficulty concentrating or be fearful, anxious, or irritable. They may become withdrawn, cry, complain of physical aches and pains, have difficulty sleeping or have nightmares. Some may not want to eat. These are generally short term reaction. Over the course of the coming days, please keep an eye on your child and allow him/her to express their feelings without criticism.

Although classes will continue as usual, I anticipate that the next few days will be difficult for everyone. (Optional)

An information night for parents is planned for (date, time and place). At that time, further information about how to help children in grief will be given.

We have enclosed some information which you may find useful in helping your child through this difficult time.

If you would like advice you may contact the following people at the school. (Details). Young people frequently turn to social media to see what others are saying, or to find out more. At these times it is important that you monitor their use and engage with them about what they read. We urge you to reinforce the need to be extremely sensitive and careful about what they post.

If you would like advice you may contact the following people at the school. (Details).

Principal's signature



#### **Appendix 4:**

Sample Announcement to the Media:

My name is Billy Walsh and I am the principal of Patrician Presentation Secondary School. We learned this morning of the death of (one of our students or Name of student). This is a terrible tragedy for the \_\_\_\_\_ family(ies), our school and our community. We are deeply saddened by these events. Our sympathy and thoughts are with (Name) family and friends. (Name of student/students) was a (5th year boy) and will be greatly missed by all who knew him. We have been in contact with his/her parents and they have requested that we all understand their need for privacy at this difficult time. Offers of support have been pouring in and are greatly appreciated. Our school has implemented our Critical Incident Management Plan. Psychologists from the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) and (insert other information if relevant) have been with us all day supporting and advising teachers in their efforts to assist our students at this time. The teachers have been helping students to deal with the tragic event. The school has been open to parents to support them and to offer them advice and guidance. We would ask you to respect our privacy at this time. Thank you.

**All other documents, samples etc. are available in the “Ready-to-go” pack. Available from:**

<https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/National-Educational-Psychological-Service-NEPS-/responding-to-critical-incidents-covid19.pdf>