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**St Michael’s NS,**

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**Co. Monaghan, Website:** [**www.stmichaelsns.ie**](http://www.stmichaelsns.ie)

**A81 EA37.**

***Principal: Ms F Whelan***

***Vice Principal: Mrs R Campbell***

**Critical Incident Policy**

The Board of Management of St Michael’s National School aims to protect the well - being of all students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times in accordance with our mission statement. The school has formulated policies and procedures to be followed with a view to ensuring the physical and psychological safety of staff and students, both on a daily basis, but also in the event of a critical incident occurring.

**Review and Research**

The CIMT have consulted resource documents available to schools on www.education.ie, [www.neps.ie](http://www.neps.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)
* Suicide Prevention in the Community - A Practical Guide (HSE 2011)
* Well-Being in Post-Primary Schools Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention (DES, DOH, HSE 2013)
* Well-Being in Primary Schools - Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion

(DES, DOH, HSE 2015)

**What is a Critical Incident?**

The staff and management of St Michael’s National School recognise 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 students or staff members, or members of our local community. Types of incidents might include,

* The death of a member of the school community through accident, violence, suicide or suspected suicide or other unexpected death
* The death of a member of the school community through major illness or the outbreak of disease
* An intrusion into the school
* An accident involving members of the school community
* An 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
* A major accident involving members of the school community

**Aim**

In acknowledgement of the fact that the key to managing critical incidents is have effective planning in place, the Board of Management have developed this Critical Incident Management Policy and accompanying plan. The aim is that, in the event of a critical incident, school management and staff, react quickly and effectively, maintain a sense of control and ensure that appropriate support is offered to students and staff. This will help to achieve a return to normality as soon as possible and to ensure that the effects on students and staff are limited.

**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**

St Michael’s National School have the following procedures in place to ensure the physical safety of Staff and Students:

* Security system, including intruder alarm
* Fire Alarm (Fire Drill and Evacuation Policy)
* Evacuation plan formulated
* Regular fire drills occur
* Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
* Fully operational yard supervision rota (Supervision Policy)
* Front gate closed during school hours
* School doors locked during class time
* Playground rules to avoid accidents (Code of behaviour policy)
* Regular Safety Audits (Health and Safety Policy)
* Statutory requirements for Garda Vetting are adhered to.

Our Child Protection Policy & Home school communication policies pay specific emphasis on ensuring the physical safety of staff and students.

**Psychological Safety**

The management and staff of St Michael’s National Schoolaim to use available 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. It is addressed in the curriculum by addressing 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. Promotion of mental health is an integral part of this provision
* Staff have access to training for their role in SPHE
* Staff are familiar with the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures
* Books and resources on difficulties affecting the primary student are available
* Information is provided on mental health in general and such specific areas as signs and symptoms of depression and anxiety, health and well-being
* The school is recognised as a health Promoting school.
* The school has a clear Anti- Bullying policy in place 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 on 2007 for primary schools and 2010 for post primary schools. See also Student Support Teams in Post Primary Schools (2014). These documents are available on [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie)
* Staff is informed about how to access support for themselves.

**Critical Incident Management Team**

The Board of Management of St Michael’s National School have established a critical Incident Management Team in line with best practice and will maintain this team in the future. The members of the team were appointed on a voluntary basis and will retain their roles for at least one school year. The members of the team will meet once a year to review and update the plan. Materials relevant to the role of each team member are attached to this policy. Key roles have been identified and assigned as follows:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Critical Incident Management Team** | |
| **Role** | **Name** |
| **Team leader** | Ms Fiona Whelan |
| **Staff liaison** | Mrs Roisín Campbell  Mrs Aileen Lennon |
| **Community liaison** | Father Seán Nolan  Siobhán Downey |
| **Parent liaison** | Gráinne Thornton  James McBride |
| **Media liaison** | John Doolan  Fintan McGeough |
| **Administrator** | Debby Fee |

**In the event of a critical incident the duties of the role holders will be as follows:**

**Team Leader: Ms. Whelan (Mrs. Campbell in the absence of Ms. Whelan)**

* Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting
* Coordinates the tasks of the team
* Liaises with the Board of Management; DES; NEPS; SEC
* 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: Mrs. Campbell & Mrs. Lennon**

* Leads briefing meetings for other staff on the facts as known, gives staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions, outlines the routine for the day
* Advises staff on the procedures for identification of vulnerable students
* Provides 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

**Community Liaison: Fr Sean Nolan & Siobhan Downey**

* Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of
* Key parents, such as members 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
* Coordinates the involvement of these agencies
* Reminds agency staff to wear name badges
* Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies

**Parent Liaison: Grainne Thornton & James Mc Bride**

* Visits the bereaved 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
* Ensures that sample letters are typed up, on the school’s system and ready for adaptation
* 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: John Doolan & Fintan Mc Geough**

In advance of an incident, will consider issues that may arise 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 SEC; relevant teacher unions etc.
* Will draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews (as agreed by school management)

**Administration: Debby Fee**

* Maintenance of up to date telephone numbers of
* Parents or guardians
* Teachers
* Emergency services
* Takes telephone calls and notes those that need to be responded to
* Ensures that templates are on the schools system in advance and ready for adaptation
* Prepares and sends out letters, emails and texts
* Photocopies materials needed
* Maintains records

**Record Keeping**

In the event of a critical incident, each member of the team will keep detailed records of phone calls made and received, meetings held, persons met, interventions used, materials used etc. The school secretary (Debby Fee) will have a vital role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters, photocopying materials etc.

**Confidentiality and good name considerations**

Management and staff of St Michael’s National Schoolhave 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 students 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.

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| **Critical Incident Rooms**  In the event of a critical incident, the following rooms are designated for the indicated purposes | |
| **Room Name:** | **Designated Purpose:** |
| Ms Whelan’s / Mrs Campbell’s room | Main room for meeting staff |
| Ms Whelan’s / Mrs Campbell’s room | Meetings with students |
| Ms Whelan’s / Mrs Campbell’s room | Meetings with parents |
| Ms Whelan’s / Mrs Campbell’s room | Meetings with media |
| Ms Whelan’s / Mrs Campbell’s room | **I**ndividual sessions with students |
| Ms Whelan’s / Mrs Campbell’s room | Meetings with other visitors |

**Development and communication of this Policy and Plan**

All staff members and BOM members were consulted and their views were canvassed in preparation of the draft plan. The Critical Incident Policy and Plan is available to view, by all relevant members of the school community, on the school’s website. Each member of the Critical Incident Team has a personal copy of the plan. A master copy is held in the school office. Essential numbers are displayed in the school office. All new and temporary staff are introduced to the details of the plan by the Staff Liaison person.

**Policy Review**

St Michael’s National School will review their Critical Incident Policy annually or more frequently if required.

Reviewed policy was ratified by BOM in March 2023.

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

(Chairperson)

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

(Principal)

**SHORT TERM ACTIONS – DAY 1**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Task** | **Name** |
| Gather accurate information |  |
| Who, what, when, where? |  |
| Convene a CIMT meeting – specify time and place clearly |  |
| Contact external agencies |  |
| Arrange supervision for students |  |
| Hold staff meeting |  |
| Agree schedule for the day |  |
| Inform students – (close friends and students with learning difficulties may need to be told separately) |  |
| Compile a list of vulnerable students |  |
| Prepare and agree media statement and deal with media |  |
| Inform parents |  |
| Hold end of day staff briefing |  |

**MEDIUM TERM ACTIONS - (DAY 2 AND FOLLOWING DAYS)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Task** | **Name** |
| Convene a CIMT meeting to review the events of day 1 | Team leader |
| Meet external agencies |  |
| Meet whole staff |  |
| Arrange support for students, staff, parents |  |
| Visit the injured |  |
| Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements |  |
| Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service |  |
| Make decisions about school closure | BOM |

**FOLLOW UP – BEYOND 72 HOURS**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Task** | **Name** |
| Monitor students for signs of continuing distress | Class teachers |
| Liaise with agencies regarding referrals |  |
| Plan for return of bereaved student(s) |  |
| Plan for giving of ‘memory box’ to bereaved family |  |
| Decide on memorials and anniversaries | BOM/Staff, parents and students |
| Review response to incident and amend plan | Staff/BOM |

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| --- | --- |
| **EMERGENCY CONTACT LIST** | |
| **AGENCY** | **CONTACT NUMBERS** |
| Garda Station (Carrickmacross) | 042 9690190 |
| Hospital (Our Lady of Lourdes, Drogheda) | 041 9837601 |
| Fire Brigade / Ambulance | 999 |
| Local GPs  Carrickmacross Group Practice  Dr Laura Breen | 042 9663233  042 9690222 |
| HSE | 041 6850300  1850 24 1850 |
| Primary Care Team (Carrickmacross) | 042 9661597 |
| Child and Family Centre (Tusla) | 01 7718500 |
| Child and Family Mental Health Service (CAMHS, Monaghan) | 047 95444 |
| School Inspector | Diarmuid Dullaghan  01 8892049 |
| NEPS Psychologist (Dr, Richard Ruttledge) | 087 9506356 |
| DES | 01 8896400 |
| IPPN | 021 4824070 |
| CPSMA | 1850 407200 |