

St Brendan's NS

Sunset Drive, Cartron Point, Sligo F91YTK2

071 914 5449

principal@stbrendanscartron.com

secretary@stbrendanscartron.com

Principal: Marie Hurley



Critical Incident Plan for St. Brendan's NS

Rationale:

This plan had been put together initially following the school experiencing two major critical incidents within the year 2007-2008. It was updated in 2014, 2017, 2021 and 2022 as part of our health and Safety Procedure review. Our NEPS Psychologist was consulted on the initial drafts of the policy and advised the school when contacted in the aftermath of the aforementioned critical incidents.

The aim of the plan is to enable staff to cope more effectively in the aftermath of a critical incident. Having a plan enables staff to react quickly and effectively and to maintain a sense of control. It may also ensure that normality returns as soon as possible and that the effects on students and staff are limited. At the time of a crisis there are a large number of tasks to be carried out. By identifying key roles in advance of an incident there is a clear statement of who will do what, when and how. A good plan also ensures that no individual is overburdened and that important elements in the response are not forgotten.

This plan will be instantly accessible in the Critical Incident Box File kept in the Principal's Office along with a copy of the "Responding to Critical Incidents Guidelines and Resource Materials for Schools" manual from NEPS and the INTO guidelines "When Tragedy Strikes" and other materials on Suicide, bereavement etc A copy of the plan is also kept in the Health and Safety File in the Principal's Office.

The Board of Management, through Principal, Marie Hurley, has drawn up a Critical Incident Management Plan as one element of the school's policies and plans. All staff members were consulted.

Mission Statement:

St. Brendan's NS aims to protect the well-being of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. In our school mission statement we state that "We promote physical and mental well being".

Review and Research

The CIMT 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)
- Suicide Prevention in the Community - A Practical Guide (HSE 2011)

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- Well-Being in Primary Schools - Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion (2015)
- Various Wellbeing, Managing Anxiety, Dealing with Trauma documents produced by DES and NEPS 2020-2022

Definition of a 'critical incident'

The staff and management of St. Brendan's NS 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
- 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
- A serious incident of violence in the school building or on the school grounds
- The disappearance of a member of the school community

Aim

The aim of the 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 students and staff. Having a good plan should also help ensure that the effects on the students 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 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

- Evacuation plan formulated
- Regular fire drills occur
- Fire exits and extinguishers are serviced annually via a maintenance contract
- Bell and door control systems for all entrance doors during school hours
- Gate from footpath into Junior playground locked at all times
- High level of playground supervision and clear procedures
- Classes subdivide to three playgrounds, one teacher and 2/3 SNAs on each playground

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- Every teacher and SNA given clear roles on playground, reviewed and updated at monthly SNA meetings and termly staff meetings
- Yard book for all playgrounds kept by supervising teacher on duty each day
- Playground checked before pupils enter during frosty weather
- Adult enters playground first each day
- Regular clean-ups of stones, pebbles by school grounds by maintenance contractor
- Line-up procedures clear for pupils and staff. Regularly reinforced at Assemblies.
- Health and Safety Statement had been prepared and updated
- Risk Assessments are carried out at least twice a year by the Health and Safety Officers: Michael Maye (teacher) and Keith Farragher (BOM)
- Regular reminders to pupils NEVER to open doors
- Regular reminders to staff at staff meetings to check and verify identity of visitors to the school building and school grounds and to not allow a child to go with an unknown person
- Parental permission is sought (preferably in written format) in the event that there is a change to a child's collection routine.
- All classes from Junior Infants to second class will only be released at the door when there is a known adult present to collect
- Younger pupils will only be allowed to walk home with parental consent. Changes must be verified through a written note or by phone.
- Messaging, email system and online learning systems to be used to inform parents of school trips/excursions off the premises
- All staff are given an Emergency Contacts list for their Admin Folders in digital format and hard copy format

Psychological safety

The management and staff of St. Brendan's NS aim 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

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- Books and resources on difficulties affecting the primary school student are available in the SEN Room
- A bank of digital SEN and support materials available on the school's Google Drive
- Information is provided on mental health in general and such specific areas as signs and symptoms of depression and anxiety.
- The school has introduced the Weaving Wellbeing Programme to all classes from second to sixth
- Staff are informed in the area of suicide awareness and some are trained in interventions for suicidal students
- The school has developed links with a range of external agencies – SCP, NEPS, HSE, CAMHS, TUSLA, NEWB, Sports Partnership. Youth Sports West, Foroige, HYL
- Inputs to students by external providers are carefully considered in the light of criteria about student safety, the appropriateness of the content, and the expertise of the providers. See DES Circulars 0022/2010 (Primary) or 0023/2010 (Post-Primary)
- 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 on 2007 for primary schools and 2010 for post primary schools. These documents are available on www.education.ie
- Students who are identified as being at risk are referred to the designated SEN teacher, 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.
- SCP provide the Incredible Years, Zippys Friends, Decider Skills. DESTY Programme and Friends for Life programmes for pupils and classes.
- NEPS have provided training to two staff members, Lorraine Keane and Sandra O'Sullivan on the Friends for Life programme
- Several teachers are trained in the Incredible Years programme- Marie Hurley, Olwyn Parslow, Lorraine McKenna and further staff will be trained as part of our DEIS supports.
- Several teachers and SNAs are trained in the de-escalation and safe intervention techniques of Studio 3: Marie Hurley, Carmel Kenny, Olwyn Parslow, Hazel Oates, Lorraine O'Malley, Emer Keaveney
- The staff undertake regular in-house training and procedural reviews based on the Mental Health and Wellbeing Guidelines and the Inclusive Education Framework documents.
- St. Brendan's is taking part in the Healthy Schools' Initiative and have identified 3 strands to our programme: Healthy Eating; Active Schools; Mental Health and Wellbeing
- Staff are informed about how to access support for themselves- INTO and DES phone numbers in relation to staff counselling and wellbeing have distributed

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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: Marie Hurley

Role

- 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

(Note - It is important to consider who will take the lead in the absence of the team leader.)

Garda liaison: Keith Farragher (BOM)

Role

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

Staff liaison- Carmel Kenny Deputy Principal/ Michael Maye, Member of ISM Team

Role

- Leads briefing meetings for 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
- Advises them of the availability of the EAS and gives them the contact number.

Student liaison:

Role

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- Alerts other staff to vulnerable students (appropriately)
- Provides materials for students (from their critical incident folder)
- Maintains student contact records (R1).
- Looks after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room where agreed

Community/agency liaison: Principal Marie Hurley

Role

- Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of
- Key parents, such as members of the Parents Council
- 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: Maria Kennedy

Role

- 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: Marie Hurley

Role

- 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)

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Administrator: Fina Golden, Secretary

Role

- 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 an incident each member of the team will keep records of phone calls made and received, letters sent and received, meetings held, persons met, interventions used, material used etc.

Fina Golden, the school secretary, 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 St. Brendan's NS 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 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:
Room 22	Main room for meeting staff
Room 22	Meetings with students
Principal's office or halla	Meetings with parents
Principal's Office	Meetings with media
SEN rooms	Individual sessions with students
Principal's Office	Meetings with 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/guardian representatives were also consulted and asked for their comments.

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 of the plan.

All new and temporary staff will be informed of the details of the plan by Marie Hurley in digital format

The plan is made available under the policies section of the school website.

The plan will be updated annually in November each year.

Signed:

Noel Rooney

Fr. Noel Rooney, Chairperson of BOM

Marie Hurley

Marie Hurley, Principal/Secretary to BOM

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Critical Incident Management Team		
Role	Name	Phone
Team leader:	Marie Hurley	
Garda liaison	Keith Farragher	
Staff liaison	Mick Maye	
Community liaison	Marie Hurley/Carmel Kenny	
Parent liaison	Maria Kennedy	
Media liaison	Marie Hurley/ Fr. Noel Rooney	
Administrator	Fina Golden/Marie Hurley	

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Short term actions – Day 1

Task	Name
Gather accurate information	Marie Hurley/Fr. Noel Rooney/Keith Farragher
Who, what, when, where?	Marie Hurley
Convene a CIMT meeting – specify time and place clearly	Marie Hurley
Contact external agencies	Marie Hurley
Arrange supervision for students	Carmel Kenny
Hold staff meeting	All staff
Agree schedule for the day	All staff
Inform students – (close friends and students with learning difficulties may need to be told separately)	All staff
Compile a list of vulnerable students	SEN team; HSCL
Prepare and agree media statement and deal with media	Marie Hurley
Inform parents	Marie Hurley/Maria Kennedy/Carmel Kenny/HSCL
Hold end of day staff briefing	All staff

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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	Marie Hurley
Meet whole staff	ISM team
Arrange support for students, staff, parents	ISM team
Visit the injured	Maria Kennedy/Fr. Noel Rooney/Marie Hurley
Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements	Maria Kennedy/Fr. Noel Rooney/Marie Hurley
Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service	CIMT
Make decisions about school closure	BOM

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Follow-up – beyond 72 hours

Task	Name
Monitor students for signs of continuing distress	Class teachers; SEN teachers; Mary McHugh SCP; HSCL
Liaise with agencies regarding referrals	SEN team ; HSCL
Plan for return of bereaved student(s)	Class teachers and SEN team;HSCL
Plan for giving of 'memory box' to bereaved family	Carmel Kenny
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 Sligo	071 91570000
Hospital	071 9171111
Fire Brigade	071 9111403/1404/1413
Local GPs- Primary Care Building, Barrack Street	071 9162355/6
HSE Psychology	071 9155100
Community Care Team	071 9155133
Family Resource Centre, The Mall St. Michael's Family Resource Centre , Church Hill	071 9146315 071 9170329
Child and Family Mental Health Service (CAMHS)	071 9113960
School Inspector	Address: Department of Education, Inspectorate Secretariat, Marlborough Street, Dublin 1 , D01 RC96 Email: inspectorate@education.gov.ie Phone number: (01) 889 6553

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NEPS Psychologist- Patricia Conway	018650690
DES	(090) 648 3600
INTO	Phone:+35318047700 Member Queries: info@into.ie General
Clergy- Fr. Noel Rooney	086 6054106
Employee Assistance Service	Free Phone: 1800 411 057 SMS and WhatsApp – Text 'Hi' to 087 369 0010 Login to the Spectrum.Life website

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