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# **Critical Incident Policy**

##### 23rd June, 2015

## 1.0 Introduction

Holy Family Community School aims to protect the well-being of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times as per the school’s Vision Statement in Appendix 1. Holy Family Community School has put systems in place to address both the physical and psychological safety of the school community. These include:

* Code of Behaviour and Discipline;
* Child Protection Policy;
* Anti-bullying Policy;
* Health and Safety Policy;
* regular fire drills;
* regular maintenance of fire and security equipment;
* supervision of students before school, during break-times and after school,
* Pastoral Care System;
* Student Support System;
* Students’ Council;
* Mentoring Scheme for first year students;
* comprehensive extra-curricular activities programme;
* Parents’ Association;
* SPHE Programme for students;
* Positive Mental Health Promotion Week;
* Links to external agencies;
* CPD for staff;
* Mentoring Scheme for new staff;
* access to counselling for students and staff.

This policy has been formulated in consultation with the staff, students, parents and Board of Management of the Holy Family Community School and in consultation with the National Educational Psychological Services (NEPS). The Board of Management adopted this policy as official school policy on 23rd June, 2015.

Upon its adoption, copies of this policy will be made available to the staff, the Board of Management, the Trustees, the Parents’ Association and the Students’ Council. It will be made available to all new staff. Copies of this policy will be freely available from the school office and the school’s website.

**1.1 Definition**

In this policy, the term ‘critical incident’ denotes ‘any incident or sequence of events which overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of the school and disrupts the running of the school’ and includes:

* the death of a member of the school community through sudden death, accident, violence, terminal illness or suicide;
* an accident involving a member of the school community;
* a physical attack on staff member(s) or student(s);
* a criminal incident occurring during school time;
* an intrusion into the school;
* serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism, etc.;
* lack of services e.g. electricity;
* the disappearance of a member of the school community;
* an accident / tragedy in the wider community.

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 as a result of suicide. The phrases ‘tragic death’ or ‘sudden death’ may be used instead. The term ‘murder’ will not be used until it is legally established that a murder was committed. The term ‘violent death’ may be used instead.

### 2.0 Key Roles and Tasks in the Critical Incident Management Process

### 2.1 Critical Incident Management Team

The Critical Incident Management Team may consist of:

* Principal and Deputy Principal;
* Year Head(s);
* Chaplain and Career Guidance Counsellors;
* Special Educational Needs Coordinator;
* Health and Safety Representative;
* Secretary;
* Caretaker;
* Chairperson of the Students’ Council;
* Chairperson of the Parents’Association;
* Chairperson of the Board of Management;
* NEPS psychologist.

The roles of the Critical Incident Management Team members, staff, Students’ Council and Parents’ Association are detailed below. The Critical Incident Management Team will delegate the responsibilities of any member of the team who is unable to fulfil their responsibilities. The key roles which need to be covered are as follows:

* Team Leader;
* Garda Liaison;
* Staff Liaison;
* Student Liaison;
* Parent Liaison;
* Community Liaison;
* Media Liaison;
* Administrator.

# The Principal and Deputy Principal will normally be responsible for:

* the care of and communication with staff;
* organising the supervision of students;
* gathering accurate information about the incident;
* liaising with the administrative, care-taking and ancillary staff;
* liaising with the Board of Management, Trustees, Students’ Council and the Parents’ Association;
* liaising with external support agencies, the emergency services, the Gardaí, the State Examinations Commission and the Department of Education and Skills (DES);
* liaising with the family of affected / bereaved student(s);
* drawing up a letter informing all parents of the critical incident and the school’s response;
* reporting incidents to the Health and Safety Authority and the State Claims Agency;
* communicating with the media;
* record keeping.

The Year Head(s) will normally be responsible for:

* the care of and communication with students;
* identifying and monitoring students at risk;
* communication with parents of students involved or affected;
* gathering accurate information about the incident;
* record keeping.

The Chaplain, Career Guidance Counsellors and SEN Coordinator will normally be responsible for:

* the care of students and staff immediately involved or affected;
* the care of students with Special Educational Needs;
* the care of distressed visitors;
* liaising with external support agencies e.g. NEPS and the HSE.

# The Health and Safety Representatives and Committee will normally be responsible for:

* assessing the Health and Safety issues;
* liaising with the Principal, Deputy Principal, Caretaker and other members of the Critical Incident Management Team;
* assisting the Principal with reports of dangerous occurrences or accidents for the Health and Safety Authority.

The Secretaries will normally be responsible for:

* ensuring the office is manned at all times;
* liaising with the Principal, Deputy Principal and other members of the Critical Incident Team;
* maintaining an up-to-date list of contact details for students, parents, staff, Board of Management, Trustees and external agencies.

The Caretakers will normally be responsible for:

* controlling access to the school premises;
* maintaining security procedures;
* maintaining services e.g. heating;
* liaising with the Principal, Deputy Principal and other members of the Critical Incident Team.

### The teaching staff will normally be responsible for:

* supervising their own and colleagues’ classes;
* assisting in identifying and supporting students and staff at risk or in distress;
* assisting in information gathering;
* maintaining normal procedures.

The Special Needs Assistants and other non-teaching staff will normally be responsible for:

* maintaining normal procedures;
* assisting in identifying and supporting students at risk or in distress.

The members of the Students’ Council and in particular, the Student Mentors will normally contribute by:

* assisting in identifying and supporting students at risk or in distress;
* representing students’ concerns and wishes re the school’s response to the critical incident.

The members of the Parents’ Association will normally contribute by:

* assisting in identifying students at risk or in distress;
* representing parents’ concerns and wishes re. school’s response to critical incident.

The members of the Board of Management will normally contribute by:

* attending an emergency Board meeting if necessary;
* deciding on school closure;
* liaising with the Department of Education and Skills and Trustees.

### 2.2 Critical Incident Rooms

In the event of a critical incident, the Board Room, Oratory, Library and room 3 will be the main rooms used to meet the staff, students, parents and visitors involved. Rooms 6, 7, 12, 13 and 15 may also be used if necessary.

### 2.3 Contact numbers / Emergency information

The school secretary has responsibility for maintaining an up-to-date list of contact numbers for students and their parents/guardians. The clerical officer has responsibility for maintaining an up-to-date list of contact numbers for staff, Board of Management, Trustees and external agencies. The Health and Safety Representative and Committee have responsibility for ensuring that a list of contact numbers for the emergency support services (Appendix 2) is displayed in the teachers’ and caretakers’ staff rooms, the reception office and the offices of the Principal, Deputy Principal, Year Heads, Chaplain, Career Guidance Counsellors and SEN Coordinator.

The organising teachers for foreign tours and educational trips have responsibility for compiling a list of all the students and staff involved in the trip, a list of mobile numbers for parents and accompanying teachers and also medical information on students involved in the trip.

### 2.4 Evacuation Procedures

The evacuation procedures are displayed near the door of every classroom and in each student’s dialann (homework journal). The evacuation procedures (Fire Drill) are practiced once a term.

**2.5 Training and Staff Development**

The school will provide opportunities for staff and members of the Board of Management to attend information / training meetings on issues such as suicide, grieving, first aid, bullying, positive mental health and child protection.

**2.6 Visitors**

Visitors, including parents must report to the school’s reception office, identify themselves and state their business in the school. Visitors will not be allowed beyond the school’s reception office except at the invitation of a member of staff.

**2.7 The Media / Social Media**

The Principal, Deputy Principal and Year Heads will remind students, parents and staff not to comment on the incident on social media or to members of the media. Parents will be advised not to allow their children to be interviewed as they do not have the maturity or judgement to handle this situation. Students may say something that they later regret or which increases the distress of those affected.

Members of the media must report to the school’s reception office, identify themselves and state their business in the school. Members of the media will not be allowed beyond the school’s reception office except at the invitation of the Principal or Deputy Principal.

**Only the Principal or Deputy Principal will communicate with the media.** Students, parents and staff have a responsibility to protect the privacy and good name of the people involved in the incident and need to be sensitive to the consequences of any public statement including those on social media.

The Principal and Deputy 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 person(s);
* the facts about the incident (following consultation with affected / bereaved families);
* what has been done;
* what is going to be done.

**3.0 Procedures in the event of a Critical Incident**

**3.1 Short-term Actions (1st Day) may include:**

* ensure the safety of students, staff and visitors;
* as far as possible maintain normal school routine;
* convene a meeting of the Critical Incident Management Team and delegate responsibilities;
* gather accurate information (incident report form, Appendix 3);
* identify high risk students and staff;
* contact appropriate agencies and organise support;
* contact NEPS, the DES, the BOM, the Trustees and the Parents’ Association;
* appoint people e.g. Year Heads, teachers, SNAs to support the secretary and caretaker in handling phone enquiries and manning the reception office and the front gate;
* arrange the supervision of students;
* brief staff and distribute resource material;
* organise a timetable for the day;
* hold a Students’ Council meeting;
* inform students and parents;
* remind students, parents and staff not to comment on the incident or upload; photographs / recordings on social media;
* make contact with / arrange a visit to the affected / bereaved family;
* organise reunion of students with their parents;
* respond to the media (Principal or Deputy Principal only);
* report to the HSE, Health and Safety Authority and State Claims Agency, if necessary;
* make decisions re school closure.

**3.2 Medium-term Actions (24-72 hours) may include:**

* convene a meeting of the Critical Incident Management Team to review the events of the first 24 hours and to delegate responsibilities;
* arrange support for students, staff and parents;
* update staff, students and the Students’ Council;
* update NEPS, the DES, the BOM, the Trustees, the Parents’ Association and the relevant external agencies;
* update the media, if necessary (Principal or Deputy Principal only);
* liaise with the family and clarify the school’s involvement in funeral / memorial services;
* plan visits to the injured;
* plan for the reintegration of students and staff;
* assess the roles of the BOM, the Parents’ Association and the Students’ Council;
* plan the restoration of normal school routine;
* consider the legal and financial consequences.

### 3.3 Longer Term Actions may include:

* plan for return of injured / bereaved students and staff;
* monitor students and staff for signs of continuing distress;
* plan the long-term counselling needs of individuals;
* plan for anniversaries and memorials;
* ensure that a report, agreed with parents, is sent to the new school when an affected student is transferring;
* evaluate the school’s response to the critical incident and amend the Critical Incident Policy appropriately;
* evaluate the effect on the student / teacher relationships;
* evaluate the long-term effect on the educational progress of students;
* ensure that new staff are aware of the Critical Incident Policy and are informed of which students / staff were affected in any recent incident;
* evaluate the legal and financial consequences;
* report to the BOM, the Trustees, the Parents’ Association and the DES.

**4.0 Monitoring, Review and Evaluation**

The Critical Incident Policy Committee will review the policy every 3 years or before the formation of a new Board of Management. Ongoing review and evaluation will take cognisance of changing information, legislation, developments in the school-based programme and feedback from parents/guardians, teachers and students. The policy will be revised as necessary in the light of such review and evaluation and within the framework of school planning.

# **Appendix 1 - Vision Statement**

The Holy Family Community School is a community of students, staff, parents and Board of Management.

1. We are committed to the development of a community of learners concerned for each individual in our care
2. We believe that education provides opportunity for all
3. We strive for excellence in all areas
4. We nurture the well-being of all so that they may grow in knowledge, integrity and compassion.

We aim to provide:

A school which promotes academic excellence and enables all students to realise their full potential

A programme, curricular and extra-curricular, which develops the whole person

A Christian value system encompassing respect, responsibility, co-operation, honesty, fairness and friendship

A partnership with parents, primary schools and the local community.

### Appendix 2 - Emergency Contact List

# **In an emergency Tel: 999 or 112**

### Gardai

### Rathcoole (Community Garda, Frank Howe) Tel: 01-6667900 / 01-4589111

Juvenile Liaison Officer (JLO), Clondalkin Tel: 01-6667642

Juvenile Liaison Officer (JLO), Tallaght Tel: 01-6666000

Juvenile Liaison Officer (JLO), Naas Tel: 045-884311

# Tallaght Drugs & Alcohol Task Force Tel: 01-4649300

# Clondalkin Drugs & Alcohol Task Force Tel: 01-4579445

South Western Regional Drugs &Alcohol Task Force Tel: 045875111

### Hospitals / Doctors

# Tallaght (The Adelaide and Meath Hospital) Tel: 01-4142000

Naas (General Hospital) Tel: 045-849500

St. James’s Hospital Tel: 01-4103000

Poisons Information Services, Beaumont Hospital Tel:  01-8092566 / 01-8379964

Dr James Clarke, Main St., Rathcoole Tel: 01-4589655 /

Dr Derek Graham, Main Rd., Newcastle Tel: 01-4589975

Dr Desmond Marshall, Kill Tel: 045-877314

Dr Kenneth Olinger, Saggart / Clondalkin Tel: 01-4589381 / 01-4592596

Saggart Medical Centre Tel: 01-4586805

### Education

# State Examination Commission Tel: 090-6642700

# Department of Education and Science Tel: 01-8896400

TUSLA (NEWB) Tel: 01-5313321 /045-866 018

NEPS Psychologist Tel : 076-1108430

# Trade Unions ASTI (01-6040160), TUI (01-4922588), IMPACT (01- 8171500)

### Local Clergy

Fr Enda Cunningham (Saggart, Rathcoole & Brittas) Tel: 01-4589002

Rev. Alan Rufli (Clondalkin & Rathcoole) Tel: 01-4592160

### Health and Safety

National Health and Safety Authority Tel: 01-6147000 / 1890289389

South Dublin County Council Tel: 01-4149000

### HSE

Mary Mercer Centre Tel: 01-4585700

Cherry Orchard Social Worker Tel: 01-6206387

Social Worker, St. Mary’s, Craddockstown, Naas Tel: 045 882400

### Local Counselling Services

Rape Crisis Centre Tel : 01-6614911 / 1800-778888

Pieta House (Lucan, 01-6010000), (Ballyfermot, 01-6235606)

Jigsaw (Tallaght, 01 464 9350), (Clondalkin, 01 538 0087)

### Appendix 3 – Incident Report form



