



**Holy Family Community School**  
**Education is Opportunity**  
**Critical Incident Policy**

Title:	Critical Incident Policy
Approved by:	The Board of Management
Date:	23 <sup>rd</sup> October 2024
Responsibility for implementation:	The Board of Management, Senior Management Team and All Staff
Policy Review Date:	23 <sup>rd</sup> October 2027

## **1.0 Introduction**

Holy Family Community School aims to protect the well-being of its students and staff by always providing a safe and nurturing environment as per the school's Vision Statement (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
- Child Protection Policy, Safeguarding Statement, and Risk Assessment
- Anti-bullying Policy
- Internet Safety – Acceptable Use Policy
- Policy on the use of Student Personal Electronic Devices
- 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 Team
- Additional Needs Team
- Student Support Team
- Students' Council
- Parents' Council
- Amber Flag Initiative
- Allies Group
- Wellbeing Coordinator
- Health and Safety Coordinator
- Mentoring Scheme for first year students
- Comprehensive extra-curricular activities programme
- 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 Holy Family Community School, the National Educational Psychological Services (NEPS) and is in line with the NEPS Responding to Critical Incidents Guidelines (2017). The Board of Management adopted this policy on 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2024.

## **1.0 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
- extreme weather conditions.

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 Principals
- Assistant Principals
- Chaplain and Career Guidance Counsellors
- Additional Needs Coordinators
- Health and Safety Representatives
- Health and Safety Committee
- Trained first aid staff members (Appendix 3)
- Secretaries
- Caretakers
- Chairperson of the Students' Council
- Chairperson of the Parents' Council
- Chairperson of the Board of Management
- NEPS psychologist.

The roles of the Critical Incident Management Team members, staff, Students' Council, Parents' Council and Board of Management 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 team leader is usually the Principal. In the event that the Principal is unavailable a Deputy Principal will assume the role of Team Leader by agreement with the other Deputy Principals. If the Principal and Deputy Principals are not available, one of the staff members deputising for the Principal and Deputy Principals will assume the role of Team Leader with the agreement of the other deputising staff members.

Principal and Deputy Principals will normally be responsible for:

- the care of and communication with staff
- briefing staff in relation to Child Protection
- 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' Council
- 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 Assistant Principals will normally be responsible for:

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

The Chaplain, Career Guidance Counsellors and Additional Needs Coordinators will normally be responsible for:

- the care of students and staff immediately involved or affected
- identifying and monitoring students most at risk
- the care of students with additional needs
- the care of distressed visitors
- liaising with external support agencies e.g. NEPS and the HSE.

The Health and Safety Representatives and members of the Health and Safety Committee will normally be responsible for:

- assessing the Health and Safety issues
- liaising with the Principal, Deputy Principals, Caretakers and other members of the Critical Incident Management Team
- assisting the Principal with reports of dangerous occurrences or accidents to the Health and Safety Authority

Trained First Aid Staff will normally be responsible for:

- coordination of First Aid response.

The Secretaries will normally be responsible for:

- ensuring the office is manned at all times
- liaising with the Principal, Deputy Principals and other members of the Critical Incident Management 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 Principals and other members of the Critical Incident Management 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' Council will normally contribute by:

- assisting in identifying students at risk or in distress
- representing parents' concerns and wishes re the school's response to the 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 Trustees.

## **2.2 Critical Incident Rooms**

In the event of a critical incident, the Board Room in Phase 2, Library and room G03 will be the main rooms used to meet the staff, students, parents and visitors involved. Rooms G04, G05, and G06 may also be used.

## **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 the members of the Health and Safety 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 AN 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 regularly.

## **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. Visitors must be accompanied by a staff member during their visit to the school

## **2.7 The Media / Social Media**

The Principal, Deputy Principals 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.

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 Principals.

Only the Principal or Deputy Principals 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 Principals 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 (1<sup>st</sup> 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 and record accurate information (incident report form);
- identify high risk students and staff;
- contact appropriate agencies and organise support;
- contact NEPS, the DES, the BOM, the Trustees and the Parents' Council;
- 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 Principals 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' Council and the relevant external agencies;
- update the media, if necessary (Principal or Deputy Principals 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' Council 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' Council and the DES.

### **4.0 Monitoring, Review and Evaluation**

The Critical Incident Policy Committee will review the policy every 3 years. The policy will be revised as necessary

## Appendix 1 - Vision Statement

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

- We are committed to the development of a community of learners concerned for each individual in our care
- We believe that education provides opportunity for all
- We strive for excellence in all areas
- 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

<b>In an emergency</b>	<b>Tel:</b>	<b>999 or 112</b>
<b>Gardai</b>		
Rathcoole (Community Garda, Liam Sex)	Tel:	01-6667900
Clondalkin Juvenile Liaison Office	Tel:	01-6667900
Tallaght Juvenile Liaison Officer	Tel:	01-6666000
Naas Juvenile Liaison Officer (David Prendergast)	Tel:	045-884300
Tallaght Drugs & Alcohol Task Force	Tel:	01-4649303
Clondalkin Drugs & Alcohol Task Force	Tel:	01-4579445
<b>Hospitals / Doctors</b>		
Tallaght (The Adelaide and Meath Hospital)	Tel:	01-4142000
Naas (General Hospital)	Tel:	045-849500
St. James's Hospital	Tel:	01-4103000
Crumlin Children's Hospital	Tel:	01-4096100
Poisons Control Unit	Tel:	01-8092166
St. James's Hospital National Burns Unit	Tel:	01-4162326
Poisons Information Services, Beaumont Hospital	Tel:	01-8092166
Rathcoole Medical Centre	Tel:	01-4589655
Newcastle Medical Centre	Tel:	086-3182629
Saggart Medical Centre	Tel:	01-4586805 / 089-0476666
<b>Education</b>		
State Examinations Commission	Tel:	090-6642700
Department of Education, Dublin 1	Tel:	01-8896400

TUSLA (Cherry Orchard)	Tel:	01-6400650
NEPS Psychologist	Tel:	01-8892700
ACCS	Tel:	01-4601150
<b>Trade Unions</b>		
ASTI	Tel:	01-6040160
TUI	Tel:	01-4922588
Fóras	Tel:	01-8171500
<b>Local Clergy</b>		
Fr. Joseph Ryan (Rathcoole)	Tel:	087-2403791
Rev. Alan Ruffli (Clondalkin & Rathcoole)	Tel:	01-4592160

### Health and Safety

Health and Safety Authority  
South Dublin County Council

Tel: 0818-289389

Tel: 01-4149000

### HSE

Mary Mercer Centre  
Cherry Orchard Social Worker  
TUSLA, Vista Primary Care, Naas

Tel: 01-4585700

Tel: 01-6400650

Tel: 045-839300

### Buses and Local Schools

Dublin Bus, Pearse Street  
Dublin Bus (Alan Silver – school contact person)

Tel: 01-7034533

Tel: 086-8850411

### Local Counselling Services

Rape Crisis Centre  
Pieta House Lucan  
Ballyfermot  
Jigsaw, Tallaght

Tel : 01-6614911 / 1800-778888

Tel: 01-6010000

Tel: 01-6235606

Tel: 01 5380087

## Appendix 3 – List of First Aiders, list of De-Fib Locations

Safety Representatives	O’Gara, Ann
Safety Officer	Fallon, Ingrid
Occupational First Aiders	O’ Gara, Ann Phipps, Joanna Ryan-Clarke, Caroline Quinn, Elaine
Basic First Aiders	Duffy, Jennifer Ferguson, Liam Hogan, Laura Munds, Matthew Murphy, Áine Murphy, Seán Tierney, Darren
Defib Locations	Main Staffroom – Ground Floor New Building (inside the door) Staff Workroom – First Floor New building (inside the second door) PE Hall (in the hall way)