ST JOSEPH'S HIGH SCHOOL CROSSMAGLEN



CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT POLICY & IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

October 2022
Updated February 2025

CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT POLICY
ST JOSEPH'S HIGH SCHOOL

Introduction

A critical incident, especially one which results in the tragic death of a young person, exerts enormous pressures on individuals and the whole school community. The resulting wave of emotion is intense, difficult to deal with and can be over-whelming. The prior establishing, maintenance and on-going promotion of a school ethos as one of a caring and supportive community is an important pre-requisite for helping everyone- staff and pupils, to cope and feel valued at a time of great stress.

Response strategies, everyone's role in them and sources of help and support need to be in place in every school as part of a pre-planned proactive process of staff development as opposed to being hastily thought out at a time of a sad event.

Being aware of essential tasks to be undertaken, specific roles in a collaborative, multi-agency and well-coordinated response will greatly assist the school population and broader community to cope with and recover from, the emotional fall-out.

The monitoring and support arrangements necessary for all young people, especially those individuals with delayed or complicated grief reactions and who may be 'at risk' require particular attention and coordination. A period of high-level vigilance for pupils' emotional well-being may need to be maintained for some time.

Teaching and support staff have an important role to play in maintaining a purposeful and supportive environment while sensitively helping restore harmony and routine back to the lives of pupils and the whole school community.

This document aims to provide the guidance necessary for an effective response to any future critical incident in St Joseph's High School. It is our intention to work to ensure that our response is proportionate and appropriate.

In St Joseph's High School, the following definition of a Critical Incident will apply

A critical incident may be defined as any sudden and unexpected incident or sequence of events which causes trauma within our school community and which overwhelms our normal coping mechanisms.

Some examples of critical incidents may include:

- Sudden death of a pupil or staff member;
- Disappearance of a pupil or staff member;
- Death or injury of a pupil or staff member on a school trip/outing;
- Severe injury or death of a pupil or staff member as a result of a road traffic collision;
- Violent intruder on a school premises;
- Serious damage to school premises.

Critical Incident Management Policy Aims

The aims of the Critical Incident Management Policy are to:

1 Recognise which incidents may be critical for the school community;
2 Respond to a critical incident in an informed manner;
3 Create a positive, open, communicative climate where the needs of staff and pupils are met in critical incident situations;
4 Create a safe school environment whereby the physical, social and psychological health of pupils and staff is prioritised;
5 Monitor and review the policy for dealing with emergencies;
6 Promote active coping skills within the curriculum; and
7 Establish positive working relationships and dialogue with outside agencies, thus enabling full and effective collaboration in the event of a critical incident.

Our school's response to any critical incident will differ according to the nature of the incident and the specific circumstances pertaining to it. Guidance for our response is described under the following three headings: 'Before the Event',' During the Event', 'After the Event'.

Links with Other School Policies

St Joseph's High School does not consider that the critical Incident Management Plan and Policy is a stand-alone policy document therefore we have ensured that we have established the links with the other relevant school policies such as:

- Pastoral Care Policy
- Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy
- Acceptable Internet/Mobile Use, Policy
- Safe Use of ICT Policy
- Special & Additional Needs Policy
- Health& Safety Policy
- Bereavement & Loss Policy
- Access Arrangements/Examination Contingency Policy
- Parental Partnership Policy
- CCTV Policy
- GDPR Policy

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CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT & IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

In St Joseph's High School, the guidelines and procedures identified in this document will form the basis of our response to a critical incident.

All information recorded as part of a critical incident should be treated as confidential and shared and stored in accordance with Data Protection and Child Protection procedures.

CRITICAL INCIDENT LINE 028 37512515

PLANNING –

BEFORE THE EVENT

Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) Members

Following a critical incident, the school's CIM will determine whether the critical incident requires a meeting of the full CIMT, and if not will call upon key members of the CIMT, as required.

Once established, the CIMT will take charge of the Critical Incident. The CIMT will be assembled as soon as reasonably practicable in the CIM's office.

If the critical incident is out of hours, the pre-prepared telephone tree will be used to contact CIMT members.

Team Leader/Principal	Mrs M Millar
Vice Principal for Pastoral & Designated Child Protection Officer	Mr S Murray
Vice Principal for Curriculum & Deputy Designated Child Protection Officer	Mrs A Carleton
SENCO/ School's Health & Safety Officer	Mrs A Cumiskey
Head of Senior School	Mrs S Brennan
Head of Junior School & Deputy Designated Officer	Mr P Mulholland
Head of Sixth Form	Mrs N McMahon
Head of LSC	Mrs E Byrne
Head of RE	Mrs B Traynor
Non-teaching members	Mrs M Hatzer (secretary) Mrs O Conlon (secretary) Mrs D Morton (Admin) Mrs J Rafferty (SENCo Assnt) Mr Michael Hearty (Building Supervisor)
Member of BOG	Mrs Therese Wallace
School Chaplain	Fr Dermot Maloney

The Critical Incident Management Team will seek the assistance of the Education Authority Critical Incident Response Team (02837512515) to assist with the critical incident

management, provide advice and support as required.

 **The school's 'Central Information Point' will be set up at Reception in the Main Foyer.**

The 'Hygiene' and 'Medical Inspection' Rooms located in Principal/Vice Principals' circle will be the designated recovery rooms/quiet spaces.

NAME	ASSIGNED RESPONSIBILITIES, TASKS AND ROLES
Mrs M Millar (Principal)	Will be responsible for the overall management of the incident and central information point.
Mrs M Millar (Principal)	Will be responsible for contacting the parents of pupil/s directly involved;
Mrs M Millar (Principal)	will be responsible for holding morning and afternoon staff briefings using 'Staff briefings and debriefings' section of policy as a guide. The CMIT will meet before staff briefings;
Mr S Murray (Designated Teacher)	Will be responsible for matters relating to child protection, safeguarding and welfare and will provide support, assistance information to staff and make contact/liaise with school counsellors and medical staff where appropriate.
Mrs M Millar	Will be responsible for communicating with staff who are absent;
Mrs M Hatzer Mrs O Conlon Mrs D Morton,	Will be responsible for the management of phone calls and enquiries; **The dedicated phone line will be 028 30861240**
Mrs M Hatzer	**Will be responsible for** setting up recovery and quiet rooms and coordinating First Aid support. **First Aiders:** **M Hatzer J Burke L Rice** **L Kenny S Hanratty** **R Devlin S Murray**
Mr S Murray Mrs A Carleton Mrs N McMahon Mrs S Brennan Mrs E Byrne Mrs B Traynor Mr P Mulholland Mrs J Rafferty	Working alongside school counsellors and external agencies and using their knowledge and experience of individuals (SEN/vulnerable) will provide support for pupils both on and off-site.
Mr S Murray Mrs A Carleton Mrs N McMahon Mrs S Brennan Mrs C Bradley	Working alongside school counsellors and external agencies will provide support for all staff. This work will be guided by 'Staff Welfare' section of policy and using their experience of established working relationships

Mrs B Traynor	
Mrs M Millar, Mr S Murray Mrs A Carleton SLT	Will manage communication with parents and will be guided by recommendations set out in the policy section 'Contact with Parents/Carers' below. Additional Communicators may be assigned by M Millar.
SLT E Byrne (LSC)	Will manage liaison with external agencies.
Mrs M Millar (Principal)	Will manage and coordinate all Media liaison. 'Managing Media' as per policy will be applied to ensure only accurate information is shared. A statement will be prepared prior to any media release.
Mrs A Cumiskey Health & Safety Officer	Will quality assure our response and ensure that essential tasks are completed.
Mr S Murray	Will coordinate staff members for the support of 'front line' staff to ensure that they have adequate breaks, that classes are covered and that they are supported to cope with the incident.
Mrs M Millar Mr S Murray	Will manage specialist support should any staff member identify/report concerns about colleagues or pupils.
Mr S Murray	Will lead staff on school's approach to **Breaking the news to pupils in line with the nature of the critical incident.** Recommendations as set out in our policy and appendices will be applied.
Mrs M Millar	Will direct and assign members of the SLT in the taking on of supporting roles during and after the event.
Mr S Murray	Will be responsible for maintaining and completing 'The Critical Incident Report'.
Form Teachers	Will be responsible for providing support, assistance and information to pupils affected by the CI and will liaise with Mr S Murray re medical/hospitals where appropriate.
Teaching Staff Support Staff	Will support SLT in helping maintain structures and routines where possible and in creating a calm and purposeful environment.
Building Supervisor Michael Hearty	Will be responsible for managing issues relating to the school site, premises and property and liaising with the CIM, regulatory bodies such as the Health & Safety Executive, the local authorities and environmental agencies as required.

- **Further guidance for dealing with such an event, making announcements to pupils, contacting parents, information for staff, bereavement support and managing media is contained in the appendices section of our policy.**

DURING THE EVENT

When a critical incident occurs it is necessary to inform key people of the event. The following list contains the relevant names and current phone numbers of those key people we may need to contact.

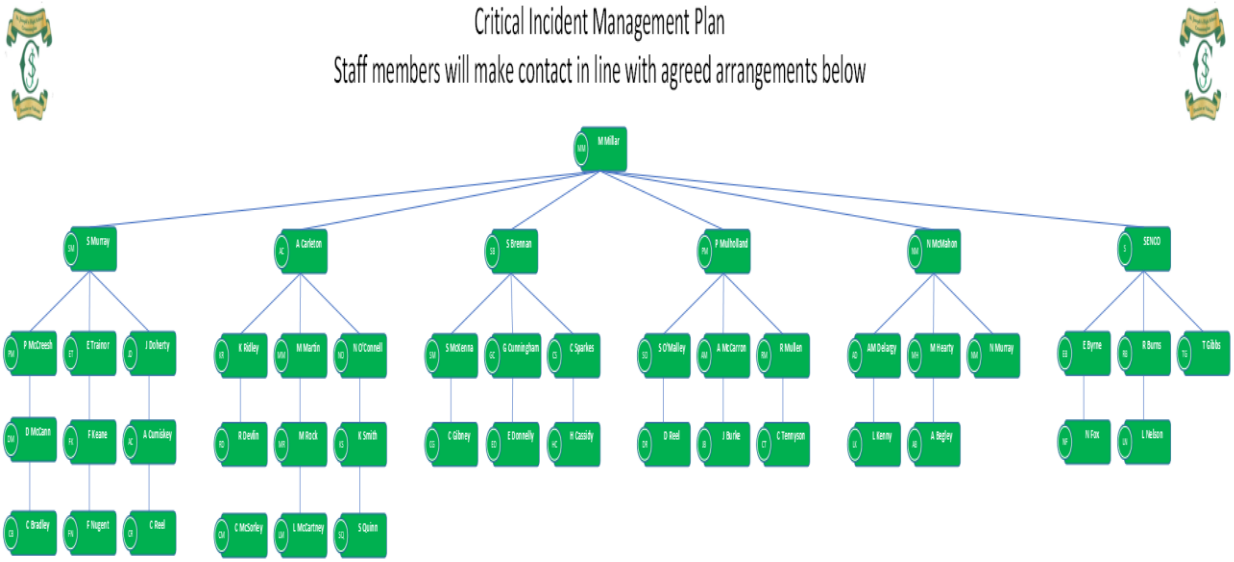
The Principal and Vice Principals retain copies of this management plan at home, as well as in school under secure storage arrangements.

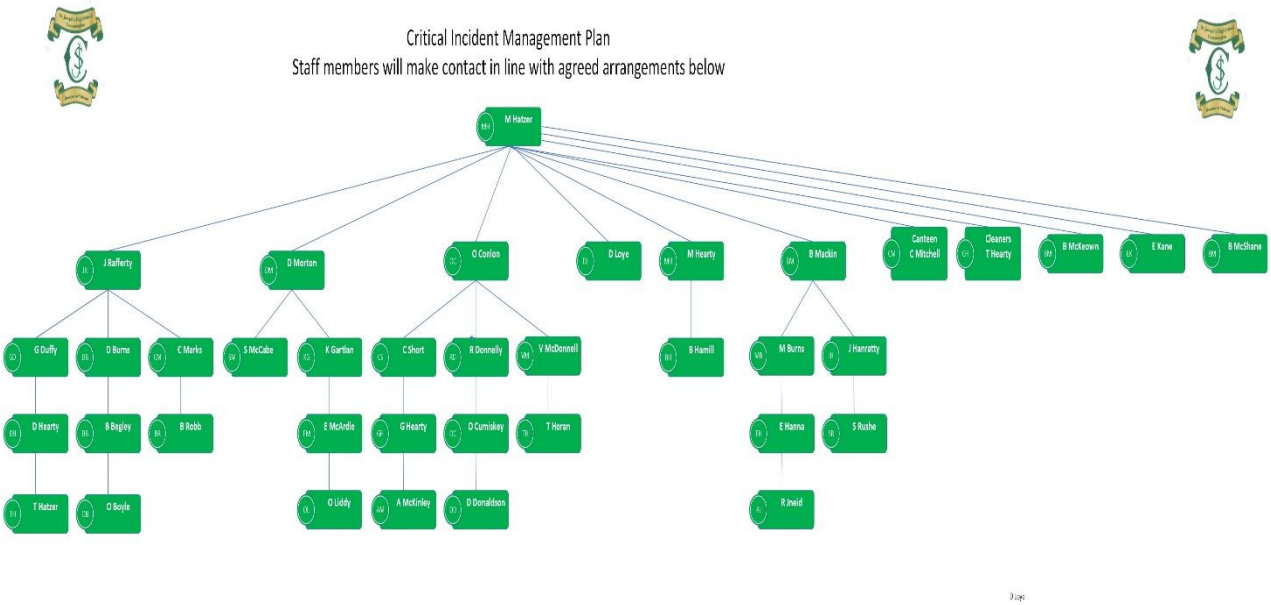
List of Key Contacts (name)	Phone Number
Principal **Vice-Principal S Murray** **Vice-Principal A Carleton**	**07783877720** **07729025396** **07894726734**
Education and Library Board's Critical Incident Response Team	**028 37512515**
Chair of Board of Governors (Mr O Mooney)	**077 10732498**
Council for Catholic Maintained Schools	**02892013014**
Local Clergy/Faith Workers	**02830861208**
Local Police	**999**
Fire Brigade	**999**
Local First Responders	**999 will direct**
Hospital	**999 / DHH 02830835000**
Communications Officer	**EA Armagh - 02837512200**
School Nurse/First Aider	**Majella Hatzer**
Educational Psychologist	**Newry Psychology Office 02830266443**
Educational Welfare Officer	**02830253167**
Counselling Services	**07703536123 D Small** **07936267598 K Larkin**
Key Holders	**00353877450334 M Hearty** **00353871040394 B Hamill**
EA Emergency out of hours	**02837512515** **02837512345**
EA Health & Safety Officer	**02837512504**
EA Transport Section	**02895985959**
EA Maintenance Officer	**02837512551 or 02837512243**
Social Services Local Team	**02830263168**
Staff Support & Welfare	**02890418023**

STAFF CONTACT DETAILS

Full Name	Mobile	Home Email	Work Email All @ c2kni.net
Mrs A Begley	07718954782		abegley484
Mrs B Begley	00353872407260		bbegley384
Ms O Boyle	07788926600		oboyle750
Mrs C Bradley	07706041022	krobtty@outlook.com	cbradley937
Mrs S Brennan	00353868317588		sbrennan952
Mr J Burke	07928107894		jburke763
Mrs D Burns	0035387 2436864		dburns232
Mrs M Burns	07846986116		mburns496
Mrs E Byrne	07749148632		ebyrne349
Mrs A Carleton	07894726734	aislinncarleton@hotmail.com	acarleton775
Miss H Cassidy	07748332233	gingercass2001@yahoo.co.uk	hcassidy886
Mrs O Conlon	07851160046		oconlon630
Mrs A Crowley	00353872730058		acumiskey874
Mrs A Cumiskey	07745364972		acumiskey177
Mrs O Cumiskey	07825663537		ocummiskey016
Mrs G Cunningham	07715111254		gcunningham480
Mrs A Delargy	07792942321		adelargy639
Mr R Devlin	07512644025		rdevlin862
Mrs J Doherty	07738929880		jdoherty488
Mrs D Donaldson	07500683079	donnahanratty@hotmail.com	ddonaldson193
Mrs E Donnelly	07467603279		edonnelly987
Mrs R Donnelly	00353868462294		rdonnelly367
Mrs G Duffy	07470334905		gduffy029
Miss N Fox	07713021745		nfox481
Mrs K Gartlan	00353872358075		kgartlan136
Mrs T Gibbs	07763808779		tgibbs396
Miss C Gibney	07938171102		cgibney744
Mr B Hamill	00353871040394		bhamill917
Mrs E Hanna	07984372650		ehanna905
Mr J Hanratty	07517811669		jhanratty909
Mrs M Hatzer	00353874161201	mhatzer67@btinternet.com	mhatzer884
Mrs T Hatzer	00353872183660	theresehatzer@yahoo.com	thatzer259
Mrs D Hearty	07470237666	denisehearty@icloud.com	dhearty825
Miss G Hearty	07775510452		ghearty178
Mrs M Hearty	07503119963	heartypm@btinternet.com	mhearty551
Mr P Hearty	00353877450334		phearty199
Mr T Hearty	00353868165217		thearty221
Mrs T Horan	07932004836		thoran635
Mrs R Jneid	07842157212		rjneid250
Mrs A Kane	00353872190782	canteen	
Mrs F Keane	07860905773		fkeane537
Miss L Kenny	07526899474		lkenny338
Mrs C Landers	07540862382		clanders272
Mrs K Larkin (C)	07936267598	Counsellor	
Miss O Liddy	07802210612		oliddy375
Mr D Loye	07594090320	Damo.Loye@hotmail.com	dloye606
Mrs B Mackin	07789310621	bernielarkin@hotmail.com	bmackin732
Mr M Mackin	07801150320	martinmackin@mac.com	mmackin458
Fr D Maloney	02830861208		dmaloney319
Mrs C Marks	00353876976319	liddycassie349@gmail.com	cliddy717
Mr M Martin	07763705388	michael.j.martin@hotmail.com	mmartin993
Mrs E McArdle	00353877974025		emcardle255
Mr S McCabe	07717095502		smccabe912
Ms B McCann	07802210612		bmccann486
Mrs D McCann	00353861920430		dmccann741
Ms A McCarron	07740123652		amccarron679
Mrs L McCartney	07802704456		lmccartney296
Mr P McCreesh	07835166631		pmccreesh074
Mrs V McDonnell	00353879912237		vmcdonnell225

Full Name	Mobile	Home Email	Work Email All @ c2kni.net
Mrs S McKenna	07774564782	srmckenna90@gmail.com	smckenna302
Mrs B McKeown	07799386255	canteen	
Miss A McKinley	07564024056		amckinley520
Mrs N McMahon	07465987761	noreenmcmahon@btinternet.com	nmcmahon623
Miss H McNamee	07751576408	holly_mcnamee@hotmail.com	hmcnamee508
Mrs B McShane	00353871274701		
Mrs M Millar	07783877720		mmillar468
Mrs C Mitchel	07543288726		cmitchel308
Mrs D Morton	00353872139964		dmorton930
Mr A Mulholland	07786354550		amulholland203
Mr P Mulholland	07715368008		pmulholland036
Miss A Mullen	00353873999157		amullen520
Mrs R Mullen	07746551249	roisinmullen4@hotmail.com	rmullen789
Ms G Mullin	07926487056		gmullin485
Mr N Murray	07541656242		nmurray394
Mr S Murray	07729025396		smurray019
Miss L Nelson	00353852196858	lucy.nelson99@hotmail.co.uk	lnelson531
Mr F Nugent	00353868737311		fnugent922
Mrs N O'Connell	07469219496		noconnell296
Mrs S O'Malley	07500684634	sineadh224@gmail.com	somalley537
Mrs C O'Neill	07968173643		
Mr R O'Neill	07842061761		roneill555
Mrs A Quinn	00353871217251		aquinn691
Mrs S Quinn	07515557048	suzydevlin1982@hotmail.com	squinn879
Mrs J Rafferty	07709743424		jrafferty945
Mrs C Reel	00353876903239		creel271
Mr D Reel	07961153373		dreel489
Mr L Rice	07751289853		lrice492
Miss B Robb	07507308380		brobb388
Mrs M Rock	00353872736437	crillymaria@hotmail.com	mrock478
Mrs S Rushe	00353862140053	stef411@hotmail.com	srushe714
Miss C Short	07842090492		cshort669
Mr D Small (C)	07703536123	Counsellor	dsmall437
Mrs K Smith	07746706059		ksmith200
Ms K Smylie	07812037306		ksmylie681
Mrs C Sparkes	07401079790	Christy200@hotmail.com	csparkes130
Miss C Tennyson	00353874134539		ctennyson243
Miss S Tiernan	07842871685		stiernan897
Mrs B Traynor	07775038199		btraynor715





TEACHING AND NON-TEACHING STAFF FURNISHED WITH A LEGIBLE COPY OF RESPECTIVE CONTACT TREE.

Or

PRINCIPAL WILL MAKE CONTACT WITH WHOLE SCHOOL STAFF SIMULTANEOUSLY VIA WHATSAPP AND/OR SCHOOL APP.

St Joseph's High School's **Critical Incident Response Team** will:

1. Assess the risk, gather factual information and take appropriate action. Begin use of Critical Incident Management Booklet (located at the end of this document) and follow tasks suggested. These will include:

   - Initiate agreed school evacuation procedures if necessary, arrange emergency agencies if required;
   - Mobilise the Critical Incident Management Team;
   - Establish a central information point, set regular briefing and debriefing times and, if possible, have a dedicated telephone line;
   - Notify the emergency services/other relevant authorities, Chairperson Board of Governors, CCMS, the EA's Critical Incident Response Team and other relevant agencies such as counselling agencies;
   - Maintain structures and routines where possible;

- Create a calm and purposeful environment.

2. Co-ordinate the school's response by following Critical Incident Management Booklet for guidance.

    - The School's Critical Incident Management Team will meet before staff briefings;
    - The Principal, Mrs M Millar or member of the school's CIMT will meet with staff in the morning to brief and in the afternoon to debrief;
    - The morning meeting with staff is to share information, liaise and delegate, discuss the intervention plan, agree how and what pupils will be told being mindful that in certain circumstances there may be a police investigation into an incident. There is a potential that shared information could form part of the evidence. The school's Critical Incident Management Team will liaise with the police for further guidance, if necessary;
    - Collect, record, verify and update details (time, place, those involved etc;
    - Prepare a media statement – be careful about naming any pupil without parental/PSNI permission;
    - Set up a recovery room in the school if needed (provide fluids, tissues, comfortable chairs and support personnel).

3. Organise contact with pupils and parents

    - Give the facts of the critical incident, keeping in mind legal implications, the potential for police investigations and issues of confidentiality;
    - Inform parents by telephone or in person if their child is involved, as soon as the initial information is confirmed. Remember, the media and/or children with mobile phones may have reached them first with news of the event, which may contain inaccuracies;
    - Ensure only accurate information is shared ;
    - Maintain appropriate communication between school and parents;
    - Provide appropriate information for parents on possible reactions of pupils and how to support them.

4. Restore the school to regular routine as soon as practicable

    - If planning visits to injured and bereaved, ensure that a senior member of staff remains on the school premises;
    - Continue to liaise with the Chairperson of Board of Governors, Critical Incident Response Team and others as appropriate.

5. Continue to monitor the well-being of pupils and staff, especially the most vulnerable

    - Identify at-risk pupils and staff, arrange for follow-up support, involvement with other professionals and referrals as necessary;
    - Assess the need for specialist intervention of staff and pupils.

Staff Briefing and Debriefing

In the event of a critical incident affecting the school, it is essential that staff receive information from the school's Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT). The Principal/CIMT Team member is responsible for relaying factual information on what has occurred, how the incident will be handled and how staff can contribute to the school's response.

In order to do this effectively it is our intention to have a formal staff briefing as soon as possible after a critical incident and then a debriefing at the end of the school day. Every effort will be made to keep staff updated on developments in the course of the day and this will be done informally during morning breaks and/or lunchtime using the school's staff room.

1 At the initial briefing session, staff will be given clear and factual information, as currently available, about the critical incident. If full details are not known at this point, we will still hold the briefing and share what has been confirmed. Staff will be assured that as further details become available they will be updated as appropriate;
2 Advice on how to inform and support pupils will also be provided;
3 Practical arrangements will be discussed;
4 Information will be given on how staff can be supported and the afternoon debriefing meeting should be announced;
5 The end of day debriefing will take place and that any staff concerns will be listened to. We will provide tea/coffee and biscuits. Staff will be asked what they have had to deal with, how they handled it, what was difficult and any other issues;
6 Staff will be informed of the tasks which need to be addressed in relation to the next day and will be made aware that there will be a meeting again in the morning;
7 Staff will be advised about self-care and support available to them;
8 While all members of staff should attend briefing meetings, we will ensure that any staff that are vulnerable and unable to cope, are not expected to take an active role;
9 Those members of staff who appear to be vulnerable will be offered additional support;
10. Substitute and absent teachers will also need to be informed of the situation and supported as above.

Breaking the News to Pupils

It is important to inform pupils of a critical incident as soon as possible. Delaying a formal announcement may make the situation worse, as rumour can add another dimension to the existing problem and pupils may feel that a delay communicates lack of concern or sensitivity by the school staff.

In St Joseph's High School the best person to communicate this difficult news will usually be the class teacher/ form tutor (supported by Senior Management) who is familiar to the pupils and trusted by them.

We are aware that there will likely be a range of different groups among the pupils with whom we will need to communicate. We will be mindful of pupils with SENs and other needs, those with English as a second language, 'Looked after Children' and those recently bereaved.

We are mindful that the manner in which a critical incident is announced to the pupils can have a major impact on the emotional responses of the whole school community. Before making the announcement of a traumatic event, such as an accident or sudden death, which is not already widely known in the school or community St Joseph's High School will give careful attention as to the content of what pupils are to be told by:

1 Carefully wording the content of the announcement and providing written copies to teachers for use;
2 Ensuring that the family's right to privacy is respected. In the case of suspected suicide, we will respect the wishes of the family being careful about language using the term *sudden death* instead of suicide;
3 Making a straightforward sympathetic announcement of a loss with a simple statement of condolence. As pupils may have heard rumours via text messages or word of mouth it is important therefore that the broad facts of the event, once verified, are communicated to the pupils in an appropriate manner (calm, controlled, caring, sensitive and containing). This will help minimise rumour, provide an opportunity for the pupils to talk, express their reactions and help to prevent hysteria developing;
4 Making the announcement simultaneously so that all pupils in the building will hear about it at the same time;
5 Reducing the potential for creating a highly charged emotional climate and providing a 'safe container' by informing pupils in small groups for example siblings, close friends, class

group, year group and in their regular classroom setting;

6 Allowing sufficient time for pupils to begin to discuss their feelings and assuring them that they will be kept updated as information is available.
7 Staff will be encouraged to remain calm and to listen to the pupils. They should not feel that they need to have all the answers to pupils' questions (as they will not) and indeed it may not be appropriate to give out detailed information. Theirs is a listening, supportive and containing role.
8 Be as truthful as possible when responding to the questions of pupils, but keep in mind that early information available about a traumatic event may not be accurate.
9 Monitor the reactions of the pupils.
10 Monitor corridors and school grounds to ensure pupils are appropriately observed and supported.
11 Provide designated area/areas for pupils should they wish to come out of their class. They may wish to go to a quiet place (where they can be supervised) or to talk to someone for example the school nurse, school counsellor, member of the school's pastoral care team or a member of the critical incident team supporting the school.
12 Staff members need to be able to respond to pupil's needs and reactions in a calm, caring, compassionate and containing manner. They need to know that they will be supported and affirmed in their efforts to maintain this level of control.
13 It is important to communicate that the staff care about those affected by the critical incident and to model appropriate concern.

Normal School Routine

Our school aims to restore normal school routine as soon as practicable following the news of a critical incident. Sustaining the normal routine with timetabling flexibility will allow pupils and staff to access support and will also maintain a sense of continuity and stability for the whole school community. In some schools some of the pupils/staff may not be overwhelmed by the incident and therefore will maintain normal timetabling throughout the response.

Pupils Off-Site

In St Joseph's High School it is our intention to be mindful of pupils who are off site because of link courses or curricular demands, work experience, educational trips etc. As with all other pupils, thought will need to be given as to how they are contacted, informed and supported. The school's CIMT will agree on the most sensitive and practical ways of breaking the news, bearing in mind those pupils may already have heard several versions by phone.

Pupils who are absent from school due to illness will be informed. This is of particular importance if the absent pupil is in the same class, or is the friend of a child who has died. In such a case, early contact should be made with the pupil's parent/carer. A pupil's return to school in any of these circumstances will be sensitively managed.

Pupils with Special Needs

Pupils with special needs including pupils with learning and communication difficulties will require special consideration from staff as they may be at a different developmental level to their peers, which may affect their understanding of trauma and death. These pupils will be told the news separately if possible by using short simple sentences in language appropriate to their level of understanding. They may ask the same questions repeatedly and may need extra patience and support. Non-verbal approaches such as pictures, drawings and photographs may help them to explore and express their feelings and concerns will be considered. Due to the diverse nature of pupils' special educational needs, the school's Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) will be consulted about the best approach for each child.

Contact with Parents/Carers

When a critical incident occurs parents will need to be informed. Parents of pupils directly involved will receive a telephone call or visited. If the death of a child has occurred we will be mindful of the bereaved parents' needs. The Principal will make contact as soon as possible to express sympathy, liaise over messages of condolence from staff/pupils and be apprised of funeral arrangements..

Other parents as appropriate will also need to be informed by letter. The letter might contain information about what has occurred and the school's response/intended response. Looked after children in residential accommodation should also be considered and carers notified. Consideration should also be given to the needs of parents of children whose first language is other than English.

We will provide parents/carers as required with information on how young people react to a traumatic event will be helpful and reassuring e.g. pupils may be anxious, lack concentration, and be restless or unable to sleep. Giving parents some practical and constructive suggestions on how to support their child will also be helpful i.e. make time for the child; let them talk; do not leave them unsupervised as bad news may cause them to become anxious and unsettled; keep them with familiar adults and keep a familiar structure for them. Where there are vulnerable pupils, some parents may need to be contacted personally.

(It needs to be remembered that a school cannot 'contain' information that is being shared within the community; it will 'leak out'. Bearing this in mind, consideration needs to be given to the use of social media and how to deal with some of the repercussions it can have.

Social media and media is instantaneous; be aware that there may be other sources spreading the news or an incorrect version of events around the community. Informing the school and the school community as soon as possible with correct information (with the family/ies' consent) in a language appropriate for the audience, will reduce anxieties and, hopefully, prevent the spread of rumours.

As well as communicating the news, social media can be used by the school community and family for information and bereavement support, but be aware that social media can be abused, for example through online bullying/negative comments, which can be very hurtful to bereaved families and young people.

Activity on social networking sites during a critical incident can be a source of potentially important information, such as suicide pacts, identification of vulnerable groups or individual young people who may be at increased risk of suicide. Given privacy restrictions to people's personal web pages, distressing information may be posted without the knowledge of parents or school staff. It is likely that users will block access so activity of this nature will not be accessible to everyone.

Monitoring sites raises issues of privacy and surveillance. Schools are not advised to engage in monitoring. However, should schools become aware of inappropriate posts by pupils, they could inform the parents/carers and encourage them to request that it is deleted. The easiest way to have a post removed is for the person who originally posted it to delete it from their account or request its removal).

Funeral Arrangements

In St Joseph's High School, the attendance at a funeral following a critical incident will be considered in line with our Bereavement Policy and Safeguarding Policy. NEEED TO CHECK THIS OUT

The welfare of all our pupils is paramount and therefore we will ….

(School should consider the following issues; attendance at funerals – staff and pupils, guard of honour, school choir attendance, memorials, flowers, attendance at wakes, religious cultural issues etc. Schools are reminded that their response should be the same for all critical incidents).

Managing the Media

The media can be useful for disseminating information, ascertaining the mood and reactions in a community and encouraging people to seek help. Given that it is advisable for schools to have agreed procedures in place to deal with the media well before a critical incident occurs, the Principal will seek advice from available Education Authority/CCMS Communications Officers whose role it is to facilitate media communications and act on behalf of the schools for which they are responsible, when requested to do so.

Each critical incident is unique and the dynamics of each situation will have to be assessed when it occurs. It is important that a structured approach to media management is developed to ensure the most positive and supportive response from the media.

In St Joseph's High School, all media enquiries will be channelled through M Millar (Principal) or Mr S Murray in Principal's absence. Staff will be reminded about this school policy and will be advised not to speak with the media directly. It is necessary to respond to questions accurately and factually as information becomes accessible. However, it may be necessary to explain to the media that it is not possible to answer their questions at a particular time because of the sensitive nature of the incident or because the information is not available for various reasons. M Millar will liaise directly with the media as more details become known. It may be necessary to check with the police, ambulance, fire and rescue service, EA/CCMS Communications Officers, as appropriate, before making a statement. The school accepts that co-operation with the media can make the difference between inaccurate reporting, resulting in a story that reflects negatively on the school and one which shows the school's caring role and ability to respond effectively in a crisis.

For safeguarding reasons and to ensure that 'normal' school life is disrupted as little as possible, the news media **will not be permitted on school property without the approval of the Principal.** The news media does not have legal access to school property without such consent. This applies to television, radio, print media and photographers.

Dealing with a death by suspected suicide

Legally and ethically the term suicide should not be used until this is determined by a Coroner's Court. This can be one to two years after the actual death. Despite this, pupils and members of the community might still be inclined to describe a death as a suicide before this has been established. The term 'suicide,' however, will not be used by the school until it has been categorically established that this was the case. Phrases such as 'tragic death' or 'sudden death' will be used instead. When talking to pupils it is especially important not to dwell on the cause of death.

In the aftermath of such a tragic event, any threat of suicide among pupils will be taken seriously and the pupil(s) referred immediately to the Designated Teacher for Child Protection and Safeguarding who will take appropriate action. Care should be taken to identify potentially vulnerable pupils and remind them of supports available, including talking to their teachers.

Potentially vulnerable pupils may include:

- Close friends and relatives of the deceased
- Pupils with a history of self harm, suicidal behaviour
- Pupils who have experienced a recent loss or separation
- Pupils who have been bereaved by suicide in the past
- Pupils with mental health difficulties

- Pupils with a history of substance abuse
- Pupils with child protection needs
- Non-communicative pupils who have difficulty talking about their feelings

- Pupils experiencing serious family difficulties, including mental or physical illness
- Pupils with special needs

In our school it is our intention to be vigilant around the time of the inquest, court cases and the anniversary of a death.

As with any death, our school community will wish to remember the person who has died and to pay tribute to their memory. When an apparent suicide has occurred, staff in St Joseph's High School will be careful to remember the person without glorifying the means of death.

We also acknowledge that it is important for events to be reported in a sensitive and measured way so that other vulnerable young people are not put at risk. The language used is very important.

Staff Welfare

A critical incident in school, particularly one which results in the death of a young person, exerts enormous pressures on individuals and the whole school community. It is followed by a prolonged trail of emotional devastation in others. The impact on staff may be distressing and some may find it difficult to cope. The extent of this impact will depend on staff involvement in the incident and the particular circumstances pertaining to the incident. The impact may well vary according to staff experience and training, coping skills, past trauma history and current stresses. Sources of help and support need to be in place as part of a pre-planned strategy and not hastily arranged at times of tragedy.

The promotion of a school ethos of a caring, supportive community is an important pre-requisite for helping all staff to feel valued and to cope at times of great stress. In addition to support arrangements for all staff from within St Joseph's High School, external sources of help will be identified and made known to all. During a crisis, consideration will to be given to the provision of opportunities for staff, as individuals or in groups, to discuss their own reactions to what has happened, to assess the climate of the school and to share their observations on the monitoring of vulnerable pupils.

The Principal will endeavour to ensure that staff are well supported at all times during the school year and even more so during a crisis. In order to support pupils effectively, staff will be kept informed, given clarification regarding their role and given support. The needs of all staff will be monitored so that vulnerable individuals can be identified and supported. There are a number of ways in which this will be done, through school and external support, both formally and informally.

Informal support in school may operate through colleagues who are also friends of a member of staff and who can look out for them and support them.

Formal support can be arranged by a staff member by contacting Inspire Workplaces.

The needs of the Principal and other senior members of staff, who are expected to exercise sensitive and strong leadership during the incident, will also be provided for in the planned support arrangements. While this group of senior staff may be well supported from within the school, it is likely that support will also come from outside the school.

School Closures

Depending on the nature of the critical incident and its impact on the school and wider community, it may be necessary to suspend the normal timetable for a short while to permit an appropriate response. In very exceptional circumstances, such as a death on school premises, it may be necessary to close the school. Further advice with regard to exceptional closures and the procedures to be followed are contained in the Department of Education circular, Circular Number: 2018/20
Date of Issue: 14 December 2018.

Critical Incidents during School Holidays

In St Joseph's High School, if a critical incident occurs during the school holidays we will inform staff and parents (who will in turn inform their child). When the school opens we will support the pupils as appropriate and plan a memorial to remember the deceased.

Unsolicited Support/Advice

In St Joseph's High School, we are aware that, during a critical incident, offers of help and support will come from many sources, some welcome and part of our planned response, and others which, though well intentioned, may only serve to complicate that response. Careful consideration will be given to the benefits to be gained for our school community of accepting help from any source, other than those which had been planned for. All contact with pupils from any agency or individuals will be governed by our current Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools Policy.

Police Investigation

In St Joseph's High School, we are also aware that the sudden death of a pupil may trigger an investigation and involve a number of agencies. This will depend on individual circumstances pertaining to the pupil. School staff may be asked to co-operate with enquiries by the PSNI or other investigating authorities. Such protocols, though necessary, can bring additional stress to bear during an already difficult time. The Principal and Senior Management Team have an important role to play in facilitating this process as well as providing the necessary support and reassurance for those staff who may be involved.

AFTER THE EVENT

The aim of the work carried out in St Joseph's High School during the weeks, months and sometimes years following a critical incident is to help its immediate and broader community cope with and recover from the tragedy and trauma of the event. The restoration of harmony and return to normal routine require careful and sensitive planning, timing and implementation. Alongside the maintenance of a purposeful and supportive environment will be the need for a high level of staff vigilance for pupils' emotional wellbeing (watchful waiting) and the monitoring of those individuals with on-going difficulties. Reactions and emotions may not surface for months, even years following the event. Painful feelings and reactions can be triggered by seemingly innocuous events.

Ongoing Support for Pupils

Following a critical incident, it is likely that there will be considerable distress evident among many pupils, especially close friends and relations. Our staff will be on the lookout for signs of delayed or complicated grief reactions. In St Joseph's High School, pupils who continue to show signs of significant distress after a number of months and who are finding the return to normal functioning difficult, will be considered for referral to appropriate personnel for specialist intervention.

The Pastoral Team will also consider the need for action plans of support for individuals and groups, and continue close liaison with external agencies for guidance and reassurance. This period of high-level vigilance (watchful waiting) for pupils' emotional wellbeing and the on-going identification of pupils 'at risk' may need to be maintained for some time. It is important to realise that safeguarding children is a multi-agency concern and can become a child protection issue. The welfare of the child or young person must always be paramount.

Within our school environment, subject teachers may have to cope with relevant issues as they arise during teaching and learning. The curriculum will also provide opportunities to deal with these issues in a more extensive way. It would be unwise to focus obsessively on the critical incident, yet issues arising from the event should not be avoided by staff.

When a bereaved pupil is due to return to school, the Pastoral Team/Year Head/Form Tutor will give due consideration as to how best to facilitate this and plan support for the pupil and his/her peers.

When a pupil moves school and has been subjected to a trauma, the transferring school will be informed.

Support for Families

The families affected by the incident will require support for a long time after the tragic event. Family members may also attend our school and have difficulty in adjusting to their loss. In the event of the death of a child, parents may wish to have mementos of their son/daughter's involvement in the life of the school and to hear about his/her achievements. The return of personal belongings and/or school work to the family, perhaps in a 'memory folder' or 'memory box' will be handled sensitively. Consideration will also be given with regard to events that the deceased pupil would have been part of, for example award ceremonies. If applicable, the managing of public examination results and the return of coursework will also be given careful management **and will always be in consultation with the Principal to ensure consistency of approach.** ***It should be remembered that whatever precedent the school sets at this time will apply to similar incidents in the future.***

Anniversaries and other significant times

Consideration will also be given to marking the anniversary of the incident in an appropriate manner, and in accordance with the wishes of the family affected. Anniversaries may revive deep feelings among pupils and staff and will receive careful handling if new problems are not to be created. Additional support for pupils and staff may be required at this time. Teachers will also need to be sensitive to significant days such as Birthdays, Christmas, Mother's Day and Father's Day. In addition, there will be a need to take account of any long-term legal processes, e.g. a court case or an inquest, possible media interest and any related public events which may be unsettling for the school community.

Monitoring and Review of Critical Incident Management Plan

In light of experience, the Critical Incident Management Team will review and evaluate our provision for coping with critical incidents after a critical incident, termly and annually. What went well? What was most/least helpful? Were there any gaps? Have all necessary referrals to support services been made? Is there any unfinished business? This review will be undertaken in collaboration with those support agencies involved and will include consultation with all parties concerned.

Staff Continuous Professional Development

The Principal of St Joseph's High School will seek to identify and arrange training for relevant staff.

APPENDICES

DE - A Guide to Managing Critical Incidents in Schools

Please see link below to the all the appendices:
https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/guide-managing-critical-incidents-schools-appendices

Critical Incident Management Guide – Initial Report and Running Record
https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/de/appendix-3.pdf

CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT BOOKLET

Initial Report

Initial Report

Date:_____ Time: _____

Information received from: _____

Contact details: _____

_____

Name of person informed: _____

Information passed to: _____
(Name of person with overall responsibility)

Time:_____ Date: _____

Facts of incident received so far: Brief Description of the Incident on (Date)

Unconfirmed reports:

Details of individuals known to be involved

Name	Pupil/Member of Staff or Local Community	Involvement	Known/ Suspected	Contact Details

IMMEDIATE ACTION

Critical Incident Team Management Informed_____*(Time)*_____*(Date)*

Name of Person: _____

Arrange Meeting of Critical Incident Management Team

_____ *(Time)* _____*(Date)*

Name of Person: _____

_____ *(Time)* _____*(Date)*

Day 1: Running Record

DAy 1

1. Assess the ongoing danger and take necessary action eg evacuation/first aid/ emergency services

Done: ❑ *Time:*_____ *Date:*_____

Name of Person: _____

2. Allocate roles to staff members

Lead Roles	Person Responsible	Mobile Number
Establish central information point		
Set up dedicated phone line		
Arrange staff briefing and debriefing (set regular times)		
Inform pupils		
Inform parents		
Manage Media (prepared statement)		
Arrange staff support		
Set up recovery room		

Done: ❑ *Time:*_____ *Date:*_____

Person responsible: _____

3. Establish a central information point

Done: ❑ *Time:*_____ *Date:*_____

Person responsible: _____

4. Set up dedicated phone line

Done: ❑ *Time:*_____ *Date:* _____

Person responsible: _____

5. Inform key people and seek support as appropriate/link with other relevant agencies

List of Key Contacts (name)	Phone Number	**Done**
Principal/Vice-Principal		❑
Education and Library Board's Critical Incident Response Team		❑
Chair of Board of Governors		❑
Council for Catholic Maintained Schools		❑
Local Clergy/Faith Workers		❑
Local Police		❑
Fire Brigade		❑
Hospital		❑
Designated Medical Officer		❑
Communications Officer		❑
School Nurse		❑
Educational Psychologist		❑
Educational Welfare Officer		❑
Counselling Services		❑
Key Holders		❑

Done: ❑ *Person responsible:* _____

*Time:*_____ *Date:* _____

6. Brief all staff

Remember:
- Clear factual information
- Advice on how to inform & support pupils
- Team working and practical arrangements (eg cover, flexible timetable, recovery room)
- Support for staff
- Identify vulnerable staff
- Inform absent staff
- Set time for debrief session

Done: ❑ *Person responsible:* _____

*Time:*_____ *Date:* _____

7. Inform all pupils

Remember:
- Clear language (no euphemisms)
- Dispel rumour
- Offer support
- Age appropriate factual information
- Assurances regarding updated information
- Identify vulnerable pupils
- Inform absent pupils

Done: ❑ *Person responsible:* _____

*Time:*_____ *Date:* _____

8. Inform all parents

Remember: Appropriate format eg by phone, letter, home visit.

Done: ❑ *Person responsible:* _____

How? _____

*Time:*_____*Date:* _____

9. Contact with Media (if appropriate)

Remember:
- Consult with Communications Officer
- Return media calls
- Use prepared statement
- Use measured tone
- Emphasise school pastoral care support as appropriate

Done: ❑ *Person responsible:* _____

*How?*_____

*Time:*_____ *Date:* _____

10. Debrief staff - End of day session

Remember:
- Thank staff
- Advise about self-care
- Information about next day
- Time to chat/reflect, tea and buns
- Next day arrangements

Done: ❑ *Person responsible:* _____

*Time:*_____ *Date:* _____

11. Meeting of Critical Incident Management Team (End of day session)

Remember:
- Support and debrief team
- Plan Day 2 - morning briefing for staff
- Arrange next meeting of Team

Done: ❑ *Person responsible:* _____

*Time:*_____ *Date:* _____

Day 2: Running Record

DAy 2

1. Record any further information/details since previous day

Done: ❑ *Person responsible:* _____

*Time:*_____*Date:* _____

2. Maintain central information point

Done: ❑ *Person responsible:* _____

3. Maintain dedicated phone line

Done: ❑ *Person responsible:* _____

4. Deal with staff cover/flexible timetable/allocate appropriate rooms etc as necessary

Done: ❑ *Person responsible:* _____

5. Briefing Staff - Morning session

Think: Practical arrangements
Support for pupils
Self-care
Time of debriefing session

Done: ❑ *Person responsible:* _____

Time: _____ *Date:* _____

6. Pupils

- Providing further information (as appropriate)
- Showing care and support
- Providing comforting routine and predictability
- Allowing pupils some involvement/outlet eg cards/drawings/poems/ceremonies
- Recovery room
- Refer vulnerable pupils for further action

Details of action taken or any follow up action required should be recorded separately.

7. Parents

Provide further information (as appropriate) eg letter/meetings etc

Details of action taken:

Person responsible: _____ *Date:* _____

8. Consideration of memorial services

Remember: Times/dates
Staff involved
Information to parents

Done: ❑ *Person responsible:* _____ *Date:* _____

9. Debriefing staff - end of Day 2 session

Remember: Ongoing practical arrangements
Longer term monitoring of pupils who may be at risk more detailed self-care advice
Time to reflect, chat, tea and buns

Done: ❑ *Person responsible:* _____

Time: _____ *Date:* _____

10. Meeting of Critical Incident Management Team end Day 2

Remember: Support and debrief team
Plan Day 3 - morning briefing, staff cover etc, if required
Discuss need for longer term actions these will include:

- Memorials, services and ceremonies (eg memory books, art work, school event, planting tree)
- Re-establishment of feelings of safety and predictability among school community
- Ongoing support of pupils' emotional coping (eg circle time, Personal Development and Mutual Understanding)
- School support for contact with families affected by the incident
- Ongoing monitoring of children who may be having difficulties - providing support and referring on as necessary
- Ongoing support for staff directly involved and those most affected

Done: ❑ *Person responsible:* _____

Time: _____ *Date:* _____

Details of Pupils and Staff Requiring Ongoing Support

Ongoing support for pupils and staff most affected

Potential Referral Agencies	Telephone Number
Family doctor (through GP)	
Other Counselling Agencies	
Educational Welfare	
Other Education and Welfare Services	
Schools' Counselling Service	

1. Details of Pupil Referrals for support following Critical Incident

Name of Child	Referred to	Referred by

Date of Referral	Outcome

Name of Child	Referred to	Referred by

Date of Referral	Outcome

Person responsible: _____ *Date:* _____

2. Details of ongoing support for staff directly involved and those most affected following Critical Incident

Details of action taken:

Person responsible: _____ *Date:* _____

Review

Management ofIncident

(To be completed 6 weeks after the incident.)

Reflection

Details of key lessons learned through management of this incident:

- What went well?
- What was most/least helpful?
- Were there any gaps?
- Have all necessary referrals to support services been made?
- Are there any identified training needs?
- Does the policy need to be reviewed/changed/updated?
- Is there any unfinished business?

Completed by: _____ *Position:* _____

Date: _____