

Mercy Primary School  
St Francis Street  
Galway  
Tel. 091-566452  
info@mercyprimary.ie  
[www.mercyprimary.ie](http://www.mercyprimary.ie)  
Roll No.: 04515G

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## CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY

### Mission Statement

**M**aking  
**E**ducation  
**R**ewarding  
**C**elebrating  
**Y**ou!

Our school is a school where:

- all children, staff and parents are valued for their contribution to school life.
- all achievements and efforts are celebrated.
- we aim to create a safe, welcoming, inclusive and happy environment.
- we promote active, positive and fun teaching and learning.
- we endeavour to enhance self-esteem and nurture the full potential of everyone in the school community.
- we respect, nourish and celebrate uniqueness and diversity in race, culture, religion, gender and ability.

### Vision Statement

**“Together we care, we share and for the future we prepare.”**

*We strive to create a happy, caring, inclusive and secure environment for our school community.*



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## Introduction

To this end Mercy Primary aims to protect the well-being of its students and staff by always trying to provide a safe and nurturing environment.

Mercy Primary has taken several measures to create a coping, supportive and caring ethos in the school. The school has also formulated a number of Policies and Procedures to be followed with a view to ensuring the physical and psychological safety of staff and students.

e.g. Anti - Bullying Policy and Code of Behaviour. These documents have been made available on our school website.

## What is a Critical Incident?

Mercy Primary BOM and Staff recognises a critical incident to be any incident or sequence of events that overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school and disrupts the running of the school.

Critical incidents may involve one or more students, staff members, their family members, or members of our local community e.g.

- The death of a member of the school community through accident, violence, suicide or suspected suicide or other unexpected death
- A threatening or violent intrusion into the school
- An accident involving members of the school community
- An accident/tragedy in the wider community which impacts on the school community
- Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism, bombing etc.
- The disappearance of a member of the school community
- The outbreak of disease or major illness in school or community
- Serious injury sustained by a member of the school community as a result of violence on or off school grounds
- Disappearance of student from home or school
- Unauthorised removal of student from the school



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## Aim

Recognising that the key to managing critical incidents is planning, Mercy Primary has developed this Critical Incident Management Policy and accompanying plan. Our aim is that in the event of an incident, this will help school management and staff to react quickly and effectively and to maintain a sense of control. The Plan should also help us to achieve a return to normality as soon as possible and help ensure that the effects on staff and students is limited. Appropriate support will be offered to students and staff in need.

Mercy Primary has put systems in place to help to build resilience in both staff and students through our SPHE/RSE programmes, thus preparing them to cope with a range of life events. We also ensure that the following systems are in place to address both the physical and psychological safety of the school community.

## Physical Safety

In addition to the relevant policies ( Health and Safety Policy, Child Safeguarding Statement, Code of Behaviour and Anti Bullying) Mercy Primary has the following procedures in place:

- Evacuation plan is formulated
- Regular fire drills occur
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
- Fire Alarm is serviced regularly
- Playground gates are closed during school hours
- Pupils leaving early will only be released by a member of teaching staff when an authorised adult arrives and phones/ calls to reception to accompany the child from the premises. Such departures are recorded in the 'Sign Out' book
- Pupils are adequately supervised at all times especially during physical activities and recess.
- First Aid boxes are maintained and staff are informed of their locations. There is a post holder responsible for First - Aid in the building.
- Pre - opening supervision in the school and on the yard from 8.30am
- Secure doors accessed by code only
- General school rules issued under the school's behaviour policy



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## Psychological Safety

The management and Staff of Mercy Primary 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 including such issues 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.
- Stay Safe is taught in its entirety in all classes.
- Staff are familiar with the Child Protection Procedures and the name of the DLP and DDLP
- The MindUp programme is implemented in all classes
- The Incredible Years programme is in use throughout the school
- Books and resources on difficulties affecting the primary school student are available

The school has developed links with a range of external agencies e.g. HSE/NEPS/CAMHS/Túsla Child and Family Agency/Local Community Guard

- Input 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
- The school has a clear policy on bullying and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy
- Students who are identified as being at risk are referred to a designated staff member (e.g. support teacher) concerns are explored and the appropriate level of assistance and support is provided. Parents/guardians are informed and where appropriate, a referral is made to an outside agency.
- There is a care system in place in the school using the “Continuum of Support” approach
- Staff are informed about how to access support for themselves



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## **Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)**

A CIMT has been established in Mercy Primary in line with best practice. The members of the team will retain their roles for one 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 schools Critical Incident Management Folder, which include all of the following:

- A copy of the Critical Incident Management Team/ and the Key Roles
- An emergency contact list/ school staff contact list
- A copy of the duties of each team member
- A copy of the BOM members & contact details for the Chairperson

### **CIMT - Key roles have been identified and assigned as follows:**

- Leadership Role / Team Leader
- Staff Liaison
- Pupil Liaison
- Parent/Family Liaison
- Community Liaison
- Media Liaison



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## Key Responsibilities of Each Role

**Note:** The first named person has the responsibility as defined.

The second named person assists and only assumes responsibility in the absence of the first named.

**Team Leader:** Principal / Ms. Lorna Crehan, Deputy Principal

### Pre-event

- Creates a folder with NEPS resources that can be readily accessed in the case of an incident- hard copy folder stored in Reception, soft copy on Google Drive
  - Agenda outlines for initial meetings with CIMT and Staff
  - Outline document for teachers for classroom session after an incident (NEPS)
- Information folders for all Critical Incident members, with outline of the roles and responsibilities
- Maintain staff details and emergency contact lists – hardcopy and softcopy.

### Intervention

- Confirms details of the event
- Alert the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting, decide what level of response is required (Guidelines Pg. 20 -21, attached as an appendix)
- Co-ordinate the tasks of the team
- Informs BOM of unfolding incident
- Liaise with the Gardaí/Emergency services/Departmental authorities/ NEPS and any other relevant agencies - Ensure that information is checked for accuracy before being shared
- Decide how news will be communicated to different groups (staff, pupils, outside school )
- Liaise with the bereaved family
- Liaise with local clergy when appropriate
- Provide materials for CIMT (from the Critical Incident Folder in Reception and on Google Drive)

### Post - event

- Ensure provision of ongoing support to staff and students



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- Ensure provision of information to affected families
- Facilitate any appropriate follow up events eg. memorial events
- Review Plan

**Staff Liaison: DP: Ms. Lorna Crehan**

### **Intervention**

- 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
- Arranges supervision for classes during staff briefings
- Arranges staff briefings
- Ensures any absent members of staff are kept informed
- Advises staff on the procedures for identification of vulnerable students
- Provides materials for staff from the CIF (Critical Incident Folder) regarding classroom session post incident, stages of grief etc.
- Is alert to vulnerable staff members and makes contact with them individually, advises them of the availability of the Employee Assistance Service

### **Post-event**

- Ongoing support to vulnerable students
- Monitor staff/class most affected
- Refer on, as appropriate
- Review and Evaluate Plan

**Pupil Liaison: AP1 – Ms. Aoife Mc Clafferty**

### **Intervention**

- Co-ordinates information from teachers about students they are concerned about
- Alerts other staff to vulnerable pupils (appropriately)
- Provides materials for students ( from NEPSs/ Critical Incident Folder)
- Collates and maintains records of any student seen by external agency staff
- Look after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room where agreed ( see NEPS guidance)



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### Post – event

- Provide ongoing support to vulnerable students
- Monitor pupils most affected
- Refer as appropriate

### Parents/ Family Liaison: HSCL

#### Intervention

- Co-ordinate contact with families (following first contact by the team leader/ Principal)
- Visit the bereaved family with the team leader
- Arrange for the set up and scheduling of parent meetings if being held and set up room for meetings with parents
- Meet with individual parents
- Maintain a record of parents seen
- Ensure that sample letters are typed up on the school's system and ready for adaptation
- Provide appropriate materials for parents (from the critical incident folder)

### Post-event

- Provide ongoing support to bereaved family
- Involve as appropriate family in school liturgies / memorial services
- Offer to link family with community support groups
- Review and evaluate plan

### Community Liaison:

AP2 – Ms Anne Walsh & Community Guard - Garda Cáit Ní Chualáin: 085 8514932

- Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of key parents, such as members of the Parents Association
- Emergency support services and other external contacts and resources



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- Liaises with agencies in the community for support and onward referral
  - Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies
  - Co-ordinates the involvement of these agencies
  - Is alert to the need to check credentials of individuals offering support

### **Community Liaison: HSCL**

- Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of
  - Key parents, such as members of the Parents Association
  - Emergency support services and other external contacts and resources
- Liaises with agencies in the community for support and onward referral
- Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies
- Co-ordinates the involvement of these agencies
- Is alert to the need to check credentials of individuals offering support

### **Media/Communication Liaison: Chairperson**

#### **Pre- Incident**

- In the advance of an incident will consider issues which may arise and how they might respond e.g. students being interviewed, photographers on the premises etc.

#### **Intervention**

- In the event of an incident, will liaise where necessary with DES, unions etc
- Will draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews ( as agreed by school management) and in line with NEPS guidance
- Organise a designated room to address media promptly
- Follow NEPS guidance on social media use ( R22, Pg.89)

#### **Post - event**

- Review and evaluate effectiveness of communication response



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### **Administrator: School Secretary & Principal**

- Maintenance of up-to-date lists of contact numbers of
  - Parents/ Guardians - Aladdin
  - Teachers, SNA's and Ancillary Staff - Aladdin
  - Emergency Contact List – printed list to be dated and displayed in School Office & Staff Room
  - Support Services
- Ensure that templates are on the school's system in advance and ready for adaptation
- Takes telephone calls and note those that need a response
- Prepares and sends out letters, emails and texts as assigned by Team Leader
- Photocopies materials as needed
- Maintain the log of events, telephone calls made and received
- All offers of help should be logged – the name of the agency, what they are offering, a contact name and number – to be contacted at a later date if necessary

### **Record Keeping**

In the event of an incident, each member of the team will keep records of phone calls made and received, letters emails and texts sent and received, meetings held, persons met, interventions used, materials used etc. The school secretary will have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters, etc.

### **Confidentiality and Good Name Considerations**

The management and staff of Mercy Primary have a responsibility to protect the privacy and good name of people involved in any incident and will be sensitive to the consequences of any public statements. The members of the school staff will bear this in mind and will seek to ensure that students do so also.



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## Location of Critical Incident Rooms

In the event of a critical incident:

- The staffroom will be the main room used for meeting with staff
- The school classroom for meeting with students
- Individual sessions with students will be held in an SEN room
- The hall/parent's room for meeting with parents
- The hall for meetings with the media
- Other visitors will be met in an SEN room/parent's room

## Consultation and Communication Regarding the Policy/Plan

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 access to a personal copy of the plan. All new and temporary staff will be informed of the details of the plan by the Principal/Management Team. The plan will be reviewed regularly and updated as required and will also be available on Google Drive.



## **ACTION PLAN**

### **SHORT TERM ACTIONS (DAY 1)**

- Gather accurate information, establish the facts – Who, what, when , where?
- Convene a meeting with key staff / CIMT (8:00 in the staffroom)
- Contact appropriate external agencies
- Arrange supervision of students
- Organise a staff meeting (8:30 in the staff room)
- Organise timetable/routine for the day (Adhering to the normal school routine is important, if this is possible)
- Inform students - Class teachers to take note of any absentees who might need to be contacted, list of friends etc. or any other relevant information and give to the Pupil Liaison person
- Compile a list of vulnerable students
- Immediate contact with bereaved family
- Draft a brief media statement
- Inform parents
- Hold end of day staff briefing
- Ensure that a quiet place can be made for students/staff - Rooms will be made available as follows
  - Individual meetings
  - Parents meetings
  - Prayer room

### **MEDIUM TERM ACTIONS (24-72 HOURS)**

- Convene a CIMT meeting to review the events of the first 24 hours
- Meet external agencies
- Meet whole staff
- Arrange support for students, staff, parents
- Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements
- Preparation of students/staff attending funeral
- Involvement of student/staff in liturgy if required by bereaved family
- Facilitation of students/staffs responses, e.g. sympathy cards, flowers, Book of Condolences etc
- Ritual within the school
- Decide arrangements for support meetings for parents/students/staff



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- Decide on mechanism for feedback from teachers on vulnerable students
- Establish contact with absent staff and pupils
- Arrange support for individual students/parents if necessary
- Hold a support/information meeting for parents/students if necessary
- Give any teacher who feels uncomfortable with involvement in support meetings the choice to opt out
- School closure (if appropriate)

### LONGER TERM ACTIONS

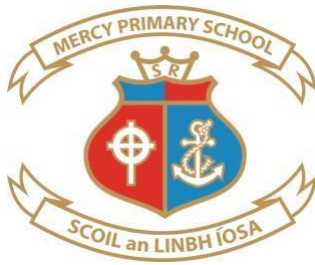
- Monitor students for signs of continuing distress
- If over a prolonged period of time, a student continues to display the following, he/she may need assistance from NEPs and Túsla. Constant communication with the family is essential.
  - Uncharacteristic behaviour
  - Deterioration in academic performance
  - Physical symptoms – e.g. weight loss/gain, tiredness, restlessness
  - Inappropriate emotional reactions
  - Increased absenteeism
- Plan for return of bereaved student
- Decide on memorials and anniversaries
- Evaluate response to incident and amend Critical Incident Management Plan if needed
  - What went well?
  - Where were the gaps?
  - What was the most/least helpful?
  - Have all necessary onward referrals to support services been made?
  - Is there any unfinished business?

Signed:



Chairperson

Policy ratified by Board of Management on 27/02/24



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