



# Our Lady's Grove Primary School

## Critical Incident Plan

Our Lady's Grove aims to protect the well-being of the children and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times.

### **Mission Statement**

Our Lady's Grove Primary School is a Roman Catholic, co-educational community in keeping with the educational philosophy of St. Claudine Thévenet. We strive to create a loving, caring and nurturing environment conducive to the attainment of the true educational, spiritual and moral potential of each individual, thereby enabling our children to participate as responsible individuals within their immediate communities at present and ultimately within society as a whole.

The Board of Management, through the 'Critical Incident' committee, which included the principal, a board member and three parents has drawn up a Critical Incident Management Plan as one element of the school's policies and plans.

### **Review and Research**

The committee consulted resource documents available to schools on [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie) and [www.nosp.ie](http://www.nosp.ie) including:

- Responding to Critical Incidents Guidelines and Resources for Schools (NEPS 2016)
- Suicide Prevention in Schools: Best Practice Guidelines (IAS, National Suicide Review Group (2002)
- Suicide Prevention in the Community - A Practical Guide (HSE 2011)
- Well-Being in Post-Primary Schools Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention (DES, DOH, HSE 2013)
- Well-Being in Primary Schools - Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion (DES, DOH, HSE 2015)

### **What is a Critical Incident?**

The committee recognises a critical incident to be "an incident or sequence of events that overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school". Critical incidents may involve one or more children or staff members, or members of our local community. Types of incidents might include:

- *The death of a member of the school community through accident, violence, suicide or suspected suicide or other unexpected death*

- *An intrusion into the school*
- *An accident involving members of the school community*
- *An accident/tragedy in the wider community*
- *Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism, etc*
- *The disappearance of a member of the school community*

## **Aim**

The aim of the Critical Incident Management Plan is to help school management and staff to react quickly and effectively in the event of an incident, to enable us to maintain a sense of control and to ensure that appropriate support is offered to children and staff. Having a good plan should also help ensure that the effects on the children and staff will be limited. It should enable us to affect a return to normality as soon as possible.

## **Creation of a Coping Supportive and Caring Ethos in the School**

The leadership team and teachers have put systems in place to help to build resilience in both staff and children, thus preparing all of us to cope with a range of life events. These include measures to address both the physical and psychological safety of the school community.

### **Physical Safety**

- Evacuation plan formulated
- Regular fire drills occur
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
- Gate at the top of the ramp is locked during school hours
- School doors locked during the school day
- Rules of the playground are clear and understood

### **Psychological Safety**

The management and staff of Our Lady's Grove aim to use available programmes and resources to address the personal and social development of the children 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 culture of the school. Through the curriculum issues such as grief and loss, communication skills, stress and anger management, resilience, conflict management, problem solving, help-seeking, bullying, decision-making and prevention of alcohol and drug misuse are addressed. Promotion of mental health is an integral part of this provision
- Staff have access to training for their role in teaching the SPHE curriculum
- Staff are familiar with the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures of how to proceed with suspicions, disclosures and reporting to Tulsa

- Books and resources on difficulties affecting the children are available
- Information is provided on mental health in general and such specific areas as signs and symptoms of depression and anxiety
- Staff are informed in the area of suicide awareness, and some are trained in interventions for suicidal students
- The school has developed links with external agencies such as NEPS, HSE and Barnardos
- Inputs to students by external providers are carefully considered in the light of criteria about student safety, the appropriateness of the content, and the expertise of the providers. See DES Circulars 0022/2010 (Primary)
- Our Lady's Grove has a robust anti-bullying policy
- The "Continuum of Support" as outlined in the NEPS documents, published in 2007 is the approach used by our school. These documents are available on [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie)
- Children identified as being at risk are referred to a designated learning support teacher, concerns are explored, and the appropriate level of assistance and support is provided. Parents are informed, and where appropriate, a referral is made to an appropriate agency.
- Staff are informed about how to access support for themselves through Spectrum Health

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

A CIMT has been established in line with best practice. The members of the team were selected on a voluntary basis and will retain their roles for at least one school year. The members of the team will meet to review and update the policy and plan. Each member of the team has a dedicated critical incident folder. This contains a copy of the policy and plan and materials particular to their role, to be used in the event of an incident.

#### **Team Leader: Principal**

##### **Role**

- Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting
- Coordinates the tasks of the team
- Liaises with the Board of Management, DES, NEPS, SEC
- Liaises with family if appropriate

#### **Garda Liaison: Principal**

##### **Role**

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

## **Staff Liaison: Principal, Deputy Principal and Assistant Principal 1**

### **Role**

- Leads briefing meetings for staff on the facts as known, gives staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions, outlines the routine for the day
- Advises staff on the procedures for identification of vulnerable students
- Provides materials for staff (from their critical incident folder)
- Keeps staff updated as the day progresses
- Is alert to vulnerable staff members and makes contact with them individually
- Advises them of the availability of the EAS and gives them the contact number.

## **Student Liaison: Principal, Deputy Principal and Assistant Principal 1**

### **Role**

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

## **Community/Agency Liaison: Board of Management and Parents**

### **Role**

- Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of
  - Key parents, such as members of the Parent Association (Aladdin)
  - Emergency support services and other external contacts and resources
- Liaises with agencies in the community for support and onward referral
- Is alert to the need to check credentials of individuals offering support
- Coordinates the involvement of these agencies
- Reminds agency staff to wear name badges
- Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies

## **Parent Liaison: Principal and Parents**

### **Role**

- Visits the bereaved family with the team leader
- Arranges parent meetings, if held
- May facilitate such meetings, and manage 'questions and answers'
- Manages the 'consent' issues in accordance with agreed school policy
- Ensures that sample letters are typed up, on the school's system and ready for adaptation
- Sets up room for meetings with parents
- Maintains a record of parents seen
- Meets with individual parents

- Provides appropriate materials for parents (from their critical incident folder)

## **Media Liaison: Board of Management and Parents**

### **Role**

- In advance of an incident, will consider issues that may arise and how they might be responded to (e.g. students being interviewed, photographers on the premises, etc)
- In the event of an incident, will liaise where necessary with the SEC; relevant teacher unions etc
- Will draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews (as agreed by school management)

## **Administrators**

### **Role**

- Maintenance of up-to-date telephone numbers of
  - Parents or guardians
  - Teachers
  - Emergency services
- Takes telephone calls and notes those that need to be responded to
- Ensures that templates are on the school's system in advance and ready for adaptation
- Prepares and sends out letters, emails and texts
- Photocopies materials needed
- Maintains records

**If for any reason the Principal is absent, the role is automatically taken up by the Deputy Principal, and the role taken up by the Assistant Principal 1.**

## **Record Keeping**

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

**Administrators** will have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters, photocopying materials, etc.

## **Confidentiality and Good Name Considerations**

Management and staff of Our Lady's Grove has a responsibility to protect the privacy and good name of people involved in any incident and will be sensitive to the consequences of public statements.

### Critical Incident Rooms

In the event of a critical incident, the following rooms are designated for the indicated purposes

| Room Name:                           | Designated Purpose:               |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <i>Staffroom</i>                     | Main room for meeting staff       |
| <i>Hall/Library</i>                  | Meetings with students            |
| <i>Hall</i>                          | Meetings with parents             |
| <i>Library or Principal's Office</i> | Meetings with media               |
| <i>Resource rooms</i>                | Individual sessions with students |
| <i>Principal's office</i>            | Meetings with other visitors      |

### Consultation and Communication Regarding the Plan

Staff members were consulted, and their views canvassed in the preparation of this policy and plan.

Our school's final policy and plan in relation to responding to a critical incident has been presented to the staff. Each member of the CIMT has a copy of the plan. New staff members will be briefed on all aspects of the CIMP by a designated member of the CIMT.

The plan will be updated annually.



Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

(Chairperson of Board of Management)



Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

(Principal)

Date: 6 February 2024 (*amended 28/08/24*)

Date of next review: February 2025

## Postvention

- Ensure provision of ongoing support to staff and students
- Facilitate any appropriate memorial events
- Review Plan
- Review and evaluate effectiveness of communication response
- Provide ongoing support to vulnerable students
- Monitor class most affected
- Refer as appropriate
- Provide follow-up support to families in conjunction with Home School Community Liaison
- Work in partnership with Critical Incident team
- Provide ongoing support to families affected by the incident
- Involve as appropriate the family in school liturgies/memorial services
- Offer to link family with community support groups

| <b>Critical Incident Management Team</b> |   |              |
|--|---|--------------|
| <b>Role</b>                              | <b>Name</b>                                       | <b>Phone</b> |
| <b>Team Leader:</b>                      | <i>Principal</i>                                  | 01-2988694   |
| <b>Garda Liaison</b>                     | <i>Principal</i>                                  |              |
| <b>Staff Liaison</b>                     | <i>Deputy Principal<br/>Assistant Principal 1</i> |              |
| <b>Student Liaison</b>                   | <i>Leadership Team</i>                            |              |
| <b>Community Liaison</b>                 | <i>Principal<br/>Board of Management</i>          |              |
| <b>Parent Liaison</b>                    | <i>Principal<br/>Parents</i>                      |              |
| <b>Media Liaison</b>                     | <i>Board of Management<br/>Principal</i>          |              |
| <b>Administrator</b>                     | <i>Administrators</i>                             | 01-2988694   |

### Short Term Actions – Day 1

| Task   | Name  |
|--|---|
| Gather accurate information  | JoAnna McDowell /<br>Marie Hanlon               |
| Who, what, when, where?  | JoAnna McDowell /<br>Marie Hanlon               |
| Convene a CIMT meeting – specify time and place clearly  | JoAnna McDowell                                 |
| Contact external agencies  | Fiona McBride                                   |
| Arrange supervision for students   | Fiona McBride                                   |
| Hold staff meeting   | <b>All staff</b>                                |
| Agree schedule for the day   | All staff                                       |
| Inform students – (close friends and students with learning difficulties may need to be told separately) | Leadership Team<br>Teachers                     |
| Compile a list of vulnerable students  | Leadership Team                                 |
| Prepare and agree media statement and deal with media  | Mervyn Feely<br>Marie Hanlon<br>JoAnna McDowell |
| Inform parents   | JoAnna McDowell<br>Fiona McBride                |
| Hold end of day staff briefing   | JoAnna McDowell                                 |

### Medium Term Actions - (Day 2 and following days)

| Task   | Name  |
|--|---|
| Convene a CIMT meeting to review the events of day 1       | JoAnna McDowell   |
| Meet external agencies                                     | JoAnna McDowell<br>Fiona McBride                                |
| Meet whole staff   | JoAnna McDowell<br>Leadership Team                              |
| Arrange support for students, staff, parents               | Paul Macgregor<br>Emer Ross<br>JoAnna McDowell<br>Fiona McBride |
| Visit the injured  | JoAnna McDowell<br>Paul Macgregor<br>Emer Ross<br>Fiona McBride |
| Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements | JoAnna McDowell<br>CIMT   |



|   |                     |
|---|---------------------|
| <b>Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service</b> | CIMT                |
| <b>Make decisions about school closure</b>                      | Mervyn Feely<br>BOM |

**Follow-up – Beyond 72 hours**

| <b>Task</b>   | <b>Name</b>                                    |
|---|--|
| <b>Monitor students for signs of continuing distress</b>  | Class teachers reporting to<br>JoAnna McDowell |
| <b>Liaise with agencies regarding referrals</b>           | JoAnna Mc Dowell<br>Fiona McBride              |
| <b>Plan for return of bereaved student(s)</b>             | Leadership Team                                |
| <b>Plan for giving of ‘memory box’ to bereaved family</b> | Class Teachers                                 |
| <b>Decide on memorials and anniversaries</b>              | BOM/Staff<br>Parents<br>Students               |
| <b>Review response to incident and amend plan</b>         | CIMT<br>Teachers                               |

**EMERGENCY CONTACT LIST**

| <b>AGENCY</b>                                  | <b>CONTACT NUMBERS</b>               |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| Garda  | Dundrum: 01 6665600                  |
| Hospital                                       | Tallaght: 01 4142000                 |
| Fire Brigade                                   | 999                                  |
| Local GPs                                      |                                      |
| HSE  | Ballinteer Health Centre: 01 2951111 |
| Community Care Team                            | 01 6100024                           |
| Child and Family Centre                        | 01 6100024                           |
| Child and Family Mental Health Service (CAMHS) | 01 8796800                           |
| School Inspector                               | John Miscal                          |
| NEPS Psychologist                              | Catherine Kinsella                   |
| DES  | 01-8896400                           |
| INTO/ASTI/TUI                                  | 1850-708708                          |
| Clergy   | Msg Paul Callan                      |
| Employee Assistance Service                    | 1800 411 057                         |