

Loreto Secondary School

Critical Incident Policy



Review Dates

Stakeholder	Date	Draft/review/ratified
Staff	8 th March	
Parents	30 th March	
Student Council	22 nd March	
BOM	31 st March 2022	

Signed _____

(Chairperson of BOM)

Date _____

Due for next review on _____

Loreto School Fermoy Mission Statement

Loreto Secondary School Fermoy's ethos is derived from Mary Ward's vision of education, which is grounded in Catholic Faith and Gospel Values. In keeping with Mary Ward's philosophy our ethos embraces the intellectual, physical, cultural, emotional, social, moral and spiritual growth of each student.

As a Loreto Catholic Secondary School we strive to be a community in which learning and teaching can take place in an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust.

Our aims are:

- To provide a safe and happy environment in which each student can achieve her full potential.
- To ensure that each student knows she is respected and valued.
- To encourage high standards while at the same time affirming and appreciating diversity of gifts and goals.
- To allow staff to work in a safe and happy environment and to support their professional development.
- To facilitate Social justice awareness education and action within the school community.

The ideal which we set before ourselves is that our school community should be permeated by a sense of Christian joy. We seek to promote justice and integrity, inclusivity and mutual care

Rationale

In Loreto Secondary School we endeavour to provide a safe and happy environment for all our students. In keeping with this we aim to provide a caring response to students in crisis and those who experience loss in a calm supportive environment. This policy refers to the response taken by the school should a critical incident occur.

Definition

For the purposes of this policy, a critical incident is defined as any incident or sequence of events which overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of the school and disrupts the running of the school e.g.

- The death of a member of the school community
- An accident involving pupils or staff on or off the school premises
- A physical attack on staff member(s) or student(s) or intrusion into the school
- Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism etc.
- The disappearance of a member of the school community
- An accident or tragedy in the wider community ('Responding to Critical Incidents', NEPS, p.5)

Critical Incident Team

As is good practice, Loreto Fermoy has a Critical Incident Team that will convene in the event of a critical incident taking place. The team consists of the following staff members:

Principal
Deputy Principal
Guidance Counsellor(s)
Year Head(s) as relevant
RE Team as relevant
SENCO as relevant

(In the event of a Critical Incident involving damage school buildings/environment then the caretaker will join the critical incident team.)

Contact Details and Communication

Depending on the nature of the critical incident, the school may access professional support from agencies such as:

- Department of Education Psychological services
- National Suicide Bereavement Support Network
- Rainbows
- Parish Priest
- Gardai
- Counsellors

Key administrative tasks in planning for a critical incident:

Maintaining an up-to-date list of contact numbers for

- a) Staff
- b) Pupils, parents / guardians
- c) Emergency support services

An up-to-date list of contact numbers for emergency support services is kept in the main school office and is attached as an appendix to this policy on Teacher Data. The list will be updated annually by administrative staff.

In the case of overnight school tours/overnight trips the Tour Leader will bring the following details with him/her:

- A list of all participating teachers and pupils
- A list of mobile phone numbers for all participating teachers and pupils. Parental permission will be obtained by the lead teacher to use pupil mobile numbers in the event of an emergency. The list of these numbers will be destroyed on return to school.
- Home contact numbers of all involved
- Passport details (in the case of tours outside the country)
- Relevant medical information on pupils and permission forms from parents in case of a medical emergency
- Insurance details

The Principal will be provided with a copy of the itinerary.

A school mobile phone will be made available to staff for outings, trips etc.

Communication

Staff members will be notified by text in the event that a critical incident takes place outside of school hours. If the event occurs during school hours details will be shared through appropriate means depending on the circumstances e.g. school intercom, staff email/text, staffroom information screen, announcements in staffroom, sharing details in person class- to- class etc.

Immediate Procedures to be followed in the event of a Critical Incident:

On notification of a critical incident the Principal will convene the Critical Incident Response Team who will then:

- Ascertain the facts of the critical incident
- Contact appropriate agencies (National Education Psychological Services, Department of Education and Skills etc.)
- Make contact with the family/families concerned
- Inform staff, Board of Management and Loreto Office
- Agree on a statement of facts for staff, pupils, parents/guardians, and the media and inform these parties as appropriate.
- Identify high risk pupils including relatives of those involved in the incident
- Appoint one person to deal with phone calls
- Organise supervision/substitution as necessary
- Make contact/visit the home of the student where appropriate.
- Respond to the media through a nominated spokesperson decided by the board of management.
- Send a general message to parents about the incident.
- Contact the school solicitor as required.
- Every effort will be made to maintain the regular school routine where at all possible, while supporting those affected by the incident.
- Teachers will go to their normal timetabled classes.
- Students will be directed to the sports hall if the main school building is unfit for use.

Guidelines for teachers in the classroom

Prepare the class by telling them that you have sad news and that is hard for you to impart this news to them. This prepares the students for what they are about to hear.

Let them know what the news is about.

Tell the class that *'.....has died (tragically/sadly). We are not fully aware of the circumstances yet. We know how shocked you are, but we are here to support you. Teachers and counselling support will be available throughout the day'*.

Check that students have correctly heard what you have said.

Let the class know the range of reactions they may have to this news. Allow students to ask questions, tell their stories and express their feelings. Let them know how they can be of support to one another.

Allow students time to talk to each other/to write about how they feel/ make cards. The class may write prayers for the bereaved family. Prayers may be said in class with teachers & critical incident team members may organise a brief prayer service if appropriate.

Be attentive to those that are particularly upset. It may be appropriate for those who are particularly upset to be taken to the SNA Room and to make contact with their parents to ask them to take them home.

Medium Term Tasks

In the event of the death of a student or staff member it will be necessary to:

- Inform staff and students of funeral arrangements
- Organise a Book of Condolence for members of the school community
- Hold a prayer service for the deceased and the bereaved family
- Ensure relevant support is available.
- Take care of the deceased person's belongings and arrange for their return to the bereaved family
- Support siblings and friends of the deceased and facilitate their return to school.
- Monitor siblings and friends of the deceased carefully.
- Update and amend school records

Statements

Media:

A spokesperson may be designated to brief the media where necessary. All communication with the media should be simple, factual and brief. The school will at all times endeavour to protect the privacy of the family. The statement could include:

- The facts about the incident
- The school's response
- Support available for the pupils
- Positive information or comment about the deceased person
- Condolences extended to the family

Sample media statement – to be developed and personalised.

This statement is to confirm that N has died tragically. (Include a sentence about the type of person N was). The school community is deeply shocked and saddened by the news. We extend our sympathy and support to N's family in the difficult times ahead. Counselling services are being provided to support our staff and students at this sad time.

Parent enquiry – I can confirm that ‘N’ has died tragically but cannot give any further details at this time. The school will remain open for the remainder of the day and classes will operate as normally as possible. Counselling services will be provided for students.

Administrative requirements:

- organise supervision or substitution
- make necessary phone calls
- reserve rooms for meetings / counselling
- record events, letters to parents, telephone calls made and received
- deal with normal school business
- organise practical requirements (snacks/ drinks/ tissues)
- maintain the normal school routine where possible

Postvention support

In the aftermath of a critical incident, it will be important to

- Provide appropriate support for staff and students affected by the incident.
- Recognise and facilitate the support students offer each to each other to help them in their own grieving and in the healing process. Cairdeas groups should bring concerns about classmates to the attention of a teacher/Year Head/guidance counsellor.
- Keep in contact with the family/families concerned.
- Be sensitive to occasions such as birthdays, anniversaries, Christmas etc.
- Review the school response to the incident.

In keeping with international best practice in dealing with critical incidents the school will endeavour to ensure that the school community returns to normal as soon as is sensitively possible.

Relevant Policies:

The Health and Safety Policy
The School Tour Policy

**This Critical Incident Policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 31st March 2022.
Date of review: 2024 or after a critical incident event.**