**Critical Incident Policy**

**Our Lady of Victories GNS**

Our Lady of Victories GNS aims to protect the well being of its students by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times.

Our Lady of Victories is a Catholic School which has taken a number of measures to create a coping, supportive and caring ethos in the school.

The school has formulated a number of policies and procedures to be followed with a view to ensuring the physical and psychological safety of staff, students, both in ordinary time and in the event of a critical incident.

***A critical incident is “an incident or sequence of events that overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school and disrupts the running of the school” (Responding to Critical Incidents in schools –NEPS)***

Types of incident might include***:***

* **The death of a member of the school community through sudden death, accident, terminal illness or suicide**
* **An 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 involving members of the school community**
* **Death, major illness/ outbreak of disease (e.g. Swine Flu)**
* **Criminal incidents (e.g. Dunblane shooting, shooting at First Communion in Ballymun, Newcastle/Rathcoole tragedies)**
* **Major accidents, serious injury (e.g. Navan bus crash)**
* **Suicide**
* **Fire, natural and technological disaster (e.g. school ceiling collapsing in Cork)**
* **Disappearance of student from home or school (e.g. Middleton incident in Cork)**
* **Unauthorised removal of student from school or home**
* **World events that may affect the student body and/or staff. May be a need for provision of discussion and involvement in ceremonies e.g. 9/11, Tsunami**

**Critical Incidents (CI) Management Team**

OLV GNS has set up a CI Management Team in line with best practice and will maintain this team in future. The members of the team will review the plan on a regular basis. The team will access the Critical Incident box in the principal’s office for relevant resources.

* **Team Leader/Garda Liaison: Ms Lorna Greene**
* **B.O.M. Rep. & Media Liaison: Mr Dermot Murphy**
* **Staff Liaison: Ms Sorcha Fleming**
* **Student Liaison: Ms Joanne Smith**
* **Community/Family Liaison: Ms Lorna Murphy**
* **Chaplaincy Role: Fr Frank Reburn**
* **Administrator/Critical Incident Pack: Ms Sandra Durnin**
* **NEPS Support Contact: Mr Dermot Bergin**

**Roles and Responsibilities**

**Team Leader/Garda Liaison: Lorna Greene**

Intervention

* Alert team members to the crisis and convene a meeting.
* Lead briefing meetings for staff on the facts as known, give staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions, and outline the routine for the day.
* Liaise with other relevant agencies—Gardaí, Emergency services, Board of Management, DES, NEPS.
* Decide how news will be communicated to different groups (staff, pupils, outside school).

After the event

* Ensure provision of ongoing support to staff and students
* Facilitate any appropriate memorial events
* Work in partnership with Critical Incident team
* Review Plan

**BOM rep & Media Role: Dermot Murphy**

Intervention

* With Team, prepare a public statement
* Organise a designated room to address media promptly
* Ensure telephone lines are free for outgoing and important incoming calls
* Designate mobile numbers for contact
* Liaise with relevant outside agencies

After the event

* Review and evaluate effectiveness of communication response.
* Work in partnership with Critical Incident team

**Staff Role: Sorcha Fleming**

Intervention

* Provides materials for staff (from their critical incident folder)
* Is alert to vulnerable staff members and makes contact with them individually
* Advises staff on the procedures for identification of vulnerable students
* With the team leader, 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
* Keeps staff updated as the day progresses
* Advises them of the availability of the EAS and gives them the contact number.
* Liaise with other team members to keep them updated with information and progress.

After the event

* Provide ongoing support to vulnerable staff members.
* Work in partnership with Critical Incident team

**Student Role: Jennifer Haughton**

Intervention

* Coordinate information from class teachers about students they are concerned about
* Alerts other staff to vulnerable students (appropriately)
* Provides materials for students where appropriate
* Looks after setting up and supervision of ‘quiet’ room where agreed.

After the event

* Liaise with school principal/class teacher re ongoing supports deemed necessary for vulnerable students.
* Work in partnership with Critical Incident team

**Family/Community/Agency Liaison Role: Claire Thomas**

Intervention

* Meets individual parents.
* Facilitates “Question and answer” meetings
* Assist with all communication dealing with parents of any student affected by critical incident.
* Visits bereaved family with the team leader.
* Liaises with agencies in the community for support and referral e.g. HSE, CAMHS.

After the event

* Provide ongoing support to families affected by the incident.
* Involve, as appropriate, the family with community in school liturgies/memorial services
* Offer to link family with community support groups
* Work in partnership with Critical Incident team

**Chaplaincy Role: Frank Reyburn**

Intervention

* Visit home(s), if appropriate
* Assist with prayer services
* Make contact with other local clergy
* Be available as personal and spiritual support to staff

After the event

* Provide follow-up support to families in conjunction with Home School Community Liaison
* Work in partnership with Critical Incident team

**Administrator: Ms Sandra Durnin**

Intervention

* Have access to all passwords/keys needed to provide contact details for staff/students
* When necessary send messages/make phone calls on behalf of team members
* Prepares and sends out letters, emails and texts
* Photocopies materials as needed
* Maintains records

After the event

* Liaise with relevant team members as necessary
* Store records safely
* Work in partnership with Critical Incident team

**Action Plan**

**Short –term actions (Day 1)**

* Immediate contact with family/families
* Consult with the family regarding appropriate support from the school, e.g. funeral service
* Ensure that a quiet place can be provided for students/staff

**Media Briefing (if appropriate)**

* Designate a spokesperson (Chairperson)
* Gather accurate information
* Prepare a brief statement (Team)
* Protect the family’s and school’s privacy
* It is important to obtain accurate information about the incident
  1. What happened, where and when?
  2. What is the extent of the injuries?
  3. How many are involved and what are their names?
  4. Is there a risk of further injury?
  5. What agencies have been contacted already?

**Contact appropriate agencies**

* 1. Emergency services
  2. Medical services
  3. H.S.E. Psychology Departments/ Community Care Services
  4. NEPS

**Medium–term actions (24-72 Hours)**

* Preparation of students/staff attending funeral
* Involvement of students/staff in liturgy if agreed by bereaved family
* Facilitation of student’s/staff’s responses, e.g. sympathy cards, flowers, Book of Condolences etc.
* Ritual within the school
* Review the events of the first 24 hours
* Reconvene Key staff/Critical Incident Management Team
* Decide arrangements for support meetings for parents/students/staff.
* Decide on mechanism for feedback from teachers on vulnerable students.
* Have review of Critical Incident Management Team meeting
* Establish contact with absent staff and pupils
* Arrange support for individual students, groups of students, and parents, if necessary
* Hold support/information meeting for parents/students, as necessary, in order to clarify what has happened
* Arrange, in consultation with outside agencies, individual or group debriefings or support meetings with parental permission
* Plan for the re-integration of students and staff (e.g. absentees, injured, siblings, close relatives etc)
* Student Liaison person to liaise with above on their return to school
* Plan visits to injured
* Family Liaison person, Chaplain, class teacher and Principal to visit home/hospital
* Attendance and participation at funeral/ memorial service to be decided by team.
* Decide this in accordance with parents’ wishes, school management decisions and in consultation with close school friends.
* School closure (if appropriate). Request a decision on this from Board of Management

**Longer term actions**

* Monitor students for signs of continuing distress
* Evaluate response to incident and amend Critical Incident Management Plan appropriately
* Inform new staff/new school pupils affected by Critical Incidents where appropriate
* Ensure that new staff are aware of the school policy and procedures in this area
* Ensure they are aware of which pupils were affected in any recent incident and in what way
* When individual pupils or a class of pupils affected by an incident are transferring to a new school, the Principal/HSCL should brief the Principal of the new school
* Decide on appropriate ways to deal with anniversaries (be sensitive to special days and events)
* Plan a school memorial service if appropriate
* Update and amend school records

**Record Keeping**

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

**Confidentiality**

The school has a responsibility to protect the privacy and the good name of the people involved in any incident and will be sensitive to the consequences of any public statements. Staff will bear this in mind and will strive to ensure that pupils do so also.

Adopted by the Board of Management of Our Lady of Victories GNS on

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Signed:

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Chairperson