

St. Paul's S.N.S.



Critical Incident Policy

Critical Incident Policy of St. Paul's S.N.S.

The Board of Management of St. Paul's S.N.S. has adopted this policy on 5th December, 2023, following consultation with all staff members.

Mission Statement:

St Paul's aims to protect the well-being of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times as defined in our school's Mission Statement. The Board of Management, through the Principal, has drawn up this Critical Incident Management Plan as one element of the school's policies and plans.

St. Paul's SNS has taken a number of 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, both in ordinary time and in the event of a critical incident.

What is a Critical Incident?

As per DES / NEPS guidelines, St. Paul's SNS recognises a critical incident to be "an 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 pupils, staff, the school, or our local community. Types of incidents might include:

- The death of a member of the school community through sudden death, accident, terminal illness or suicide.
- 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.
- A threatening or violent intrusion into the school.
- An accident / tragedy in the school or wider community.
- Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism, etc.
- The disappearance of a member of the school community.
- Unauthorised removal of student from school.

Aim

Recognising that the key to managing critical incidents is planning, St. Paul's SNS has developed this Critical Incident Management Policy and accompanying plan. The aim is to establish a Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) to steer the development and implementation of the plan. Our hope is that, in the event of an incident, staff will react quickly and effectively to maintain a sense of control. This policy and plan should also help us to achieve a return to normality as soon as possible and ensure that the effects on the students and staff will be limited.

Creation of a coping, supportive and caring ethos in the school

We have put systems in place to lessen the probability of the occurrence of an incident. We have put systems in place to help to build resilience in both staff and students, thus preparing them to cope with a range of life events. These include measures to address both the physical and psychological safety of both staff and students.

Physical safety:

The following policies and strategies have been put in place in order to maintain the physical safety of all members of the school community.

- Health & Safety Statement.
- Evacuation plan formulated.
- Regular fire drills occur.
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked.
- The Fire Alarm is serviced regularly, at least once a year.
- Fire exit doors to be locked at all times, except when pupils exit for breaks.
- 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 to accompany the child from the premises. Such departures are recorded in the 'Sign Out' book.
- Pupils are not released into the care of persons unknown to school staff without checking with a parent/ guardian.
- Pupils are reminded of playground rules by staff at regular intervals in the context of our School Code of Behaviour.
- Pupils are adequately supervised at all times especially during physical activity and breaks. At least two members of the teaching staff supervise the children during breaks.
- First Aid box maintained and kept in:
 - a) Ms Crinion's office
 - b) Inside the back door
 - c) each classroom has a limited first aid pack.
 - d) ice-packs in staff room.

Psychological Safety:

The management and staff of St. Paul's also 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 is integrated into the work of the school. It is addressed in the curriculum by including 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. Promotion of mental health is an integral part of this provision.

- Staff have access to training for their role in SPHE.
- The Stay Safe programme/ RSE / Internet Safety is taught to each class as per guidelines.
- Staff are familiar with the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures.
- Students who are identified as being at risk are referred to the designated staff member (e.g. support teacher/HSC/ Schools Completion /DLP/DDLP). 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.
- The school has developed links with a range of external agencies e.g. HSE/ Community Care/ CAMHS/ NEPS.
- The school has a clear policy on bullying and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy.
- 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.
- Books and resources on difficulties affecting the primary school student are available.
- 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.
- There is a care system in place in the school using the "continuum of support" approach which is outlined in the NEPS documents published in 2007 for primary schools.
- Books and resources on difficulties affecting the primary school student are available.
- Staff are informed about how to access support themselves (Employee Assistance Service).

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 annually to review and update the policy and plan. Each member of the team has access to the 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
- An Action Plan Template.

Key Roles of the CIMT

- Team Leader: Caroline Corey
- Garda Liaison: Áine Carthy
- Staff Liaison: Áine Carthy
- Student Liaison: Áine Carthy
- Parent Liaison: Audrey Johnson
- Community Liaison: Audrey Johnson
- Media Liaison: Fr. John Conlon
- Administrator: Sally Kear

Responsibilities of the CIMT

Team Leader: Caroline Corey

- Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting.
- Co-ordinates the tasks of the team.
- Liaises with the Board of Management; DES; NEPS; etc.
- Liaises with the bereaved family.

Garda Liaison: Áine Carthy

- Liaises with the local Gardaí - Anita O'Shea.
- Ensures that information about deaths or other developments is checked out for accuracy before being shared.

Staff Liaison: Áine Carthy

- Leads meetings to brief staff on the facts as known, gives staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and outlines the routine for the day.
- Advises staff on the procedures for identification of vulnerable students.
- Provides materials to staff from the Critical Incident Folder.

- 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: Áine Carthy

- Alerts other staff to vulnerable students (appropriately)
- Provides materials for students (from their critical incident folder)
- Maintains student contact records (RI).
- Looks after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room where agreed.
- Keeps records of students seen by external agency staff

Parent Liaison: Audrey Johnson

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

Community Liaison: Audrey Johnson

- Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of:
 - members of the Parents Council.
 - 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.
- Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies.

Media Liaison: Fr. John Conlon

- 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 relevant teacher unions, Communications Section in the DES. etc.
- Will draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews (as agreed by school management)

Administrator: Sally Kear

- Maintenance of up to date telephone numbers of:
 - Parents or guardians
 - Teachers
 - Emergency support services
- Takes telephone calls and note 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.

Record Keeping

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

Letter to Parents

The Principal will prepare a brief, written statement to include:

- The sympathy of the school community for the affected/bereaved family.
- Positive information or comments about the deceased/injured person(s).
- The facts of the incident.
- What has been done.
- What is going to be done.

Confidentiality & Good Name Considerations

The management and staff of St Paul's have a responsibility to protect the privacy and good name of the 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. For instance, the term "suicide" will not be used unless there is solid information that death was due to suicide, and that the family involved consents to its use. The phrases, 'tragic death' or 'sudden death' may be used instead. Similarly, the word 'murder' should not be used until it is legally established that a murder was committed. The term 'violent death' may be used instead.

Critical Incident Rooms

Critical Incident Rooms	
In the event of a critical incident, the following rooms are designated for the indicated purposes	
Room Name:	Designated Purpose:
Staff Room	Main room for meeting staff
Principal 's Office	Meetings with students
Principal's Office	Meetings with parents
Principal 's Office	Meetings with media
S.E.T Rooms	Individual sessions with students
HSCCL Room	Meetings with other visitors

Consultation & Communication Regarding the Plan

All staff were consulted and regard was given to their views in the preparation of this policy and plan. Students and parent/guardian representatives were also consulted and asked for their comments.

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 Áine Carthy.

The plan will be updated annually in December.

Critical Incident Management Team Phone Numbers

Critical Incident Management Team		
Role	Name	Phone
Team Leader	Caroline Corey	086-3575988
Garda Liaison	Áine Carthy	087-6743179
Staff Liaison	Áine Carthy	087-6743179
Student Liaison	Áine Carthy	087-6743179
Parent Liaison	Audrey Johnson	087-6339755
Community Liaison	Audrey Johnson	087-6339755
Media Liaison	Fr. John Conlon	087-9762227
Administrator	Sally Kear	087-2743055

Short term actions - Day 1

Task	Name
Gather accurate information	
Who, what, when, where?	
Convene a CIMT meeting - specify time and place clearly	
Contact external agencies	
Arrange supervision for students	
Hold staff meeting	
Agree schedule for the day	
Inform students - (close friends and students with learning difficulties may need to be told separately)	
Compile a list of vulnerable students	
Prepare and agree media statement and deal with media	
Inform parents	
Hold end of day staff briefing	

Medium term actions - (Day 2 and following days)

Task	Name
Convene a CIMT meeting to review the events of day 1	Team leader
Meet external agencies	
Meet whole staff	
Arrange support for students, staff, parents	
Visit the injured	
Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements	
Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service	
Make decisions about school closure	BOM

Follow-up - beyond 72 hours

Task	Name
Monitor students for signs of continuing distress	Class teachers
Liaise with agencies regarding referrals	
Plan for return of bereaved student(s)	
Plan for giving of 'memory box' to bereaved family	
Decide on memorials and anniversaries	BOM/ Staff, parents and students
Review response to incident and amend plan	Staff/BOM

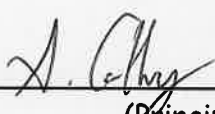
Emergency Contact List

Agency	Telephone
Garda	Anita O'Shea (Juvenile Officer): 041-9874200
Lourdes Hospital	041-9837601
Fire Brigade	041-9832222
Local GPs	Hilltop Medical 041-9838220
H.S.E.	Patrick Street: 041-9809500
Community Care Team	041-9838220
Child and Family Centre	Louth Child Care Services: 042-9385457
Child & Family Mental Health Service	041-9893348
School Inspector	Niamh Quinn: 087-7208370
NEPS Psychologist	087-9202588
DES	01-8896400
INTO/ ASTI/TUI	01-8047700
Clergy	Holy Family Church Office: 041- 9831991
State Exams Commission	090-6442700
Employee Assistance Service	1800-411057


Adoption by the Board

This policy has been reviewed and updated by the staff of our school and will be available on the school website. The Board of Management reserves the right to amend this policy as needs arise.

Reviewed by staff on: 28/11/23

Signed: 
(Principal)

Date: 5/12/23

Signed: 
(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Date: 5/12/23