

St. Paul’s Primary School,
 Dooradoyle,
 Co Limerick



Scoil Phóil Naofa,
 Túr an Daill,
 Co. Luimní

POLICY NO	POLICY TITLE
27	CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY

DOCUMENT CONTROL

This Policy Document has been prepared by the Board of Management (BOM) in consultation with the Parents' Association and Staff of St Paul's Primary School and taking into account all relevant legislation/circulars and in particular the NEPS Guidelines for Schools on responding to Critical Incidents Link: <https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/National-Educational-Psychological-Service-NEPS-/Responding%20to%20Critical%20Incidents.pdf>

REVISION HISTORY

REVISION NO	DESCRIPTION	APPROVED BY	DATE
REV 1	FIRST ISSUE	BOM	June 2021

NEXT REVIEW NO LATER THAN	Ongoing
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1. Preamble:

St Paul's NS aims to protect the wellbeing of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times in keeping with the school's Mission Statement. The Board of Management, through Mr. John Tuohy, school Principal, has drawn up a critical incident management plan as one element of the school's policies and plans. Our aim is to establish a Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) to steer the development and implementation of the Critical Incident Management Plan (CIMP).

2. Aim

The aim of the CIMP 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 students and staff. Having a good plan should also help ensure that the impact on students and staff will be limited. It should enable us to effect a return to normality as soon as possible.

3. Definition of a Critical Incident:

Our staff and management recognise 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 students or staff members, or members of our local community.

Examples of a critical incident would include:

- The death of a member of the school community through accident, terminal illness, violence, suicide or suspected suicide or other unexpected death.
- A physical attack on a member of the school community or an intrusion into the school.
- An accident involving members of the school community.
- The disappearance of a member of the school community.
- A major accident/tragedy in the wider community
- Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism, etc.
- A major accident/tragedy in the wider community.

4. 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 a critical incident and 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 the school community:

4.1 Physical Safety:

- Adherence to the Health and Safety Policy.
- Evacuation Plan Formulated with Fire Drills each term.
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked.
- Adherence to the Code of Behaviour.

4.2 Psychological Safety:

An open and encouraging environment in the school where students can talk about their difficulties and seek help for them.

- Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is integrated into the work of the school. 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 in the SPHE curriculum. Promotion of mental health is an integral part of this provision.

- Staff have access to training for their role in SPHE.
- Staff are familiar with the Child Protection Procedures and the name of the Designated Liaison Person.
- The school has a clear anti-bullying policy and deals with incidents of bullying in accordance with this policy.
- The school has developed links with a range of external agencies.
- Staff are informed of difficulties affecting individual students, therefore aware and vigilant to their needs.
- Staff are informed about how to access support for themselves.

5. Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT):

St Paul's NS has set up a Critical Incident team in line with best practice and will meet once a year to review and update the plan. The members of the Critical Incident Team are

- John Tuohy, Principal, Designated Liaison Person, CIMT Leader, Garda liaison and Media Liaison
- Mary Dalton, Deputy Principal and Deputy Designated Liaison Person
- John Coady, Chairperson of the Board of Management
- Health and Safety Representative
- Representative from the Parent Association
- Representative from the Board of Management
- School Secretary
- School Caretaker
- Parent and Community Liaison

6. Responsibilities of the CIMT:

The following list, while not exhaustive, outlines the key responsibilities of the CIMT Leader and the CIMT:

- 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; ETB.
- Liaises with the bereaved family.
- Liaises with the Gardaí.
- Ensures that information about deaths or other developments is checked out for accuracy before being shared.
- 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.
- Keeps staff updated as the day progresses.
- Is alert to vulnerable staff members and makes contact with them individually.
- Advises staff of the availability of the EAS and gives them the contact number.
- 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.

- Visits the bereaved family.
- Set up room for meetings with parents and facilitate such meetings, and manage 'questions and answers' sessions.
- Meets with individual parents and maintains a record of parents seen.
- In advance of an incident, will consider Media issues that may arise and how they might be responded to (e.g. students being interviewed, photographers on the premises, etc.).
- Will draw up a press statement; give media briefings and interviews (as agreed by school management).
- Will insure that up to date telephone numbers of • Parents/guardians • Teachers • Emergency services

The CIMT Leader will not be able to deal with every responsibility and will delegate tasks to other members of the CIMT as required

7. 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, material used etc. The school secretary (name) will have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters, photocopying materials etc

8. Confidentiality and good name considerations

The Management and staff of St Paul's NS 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 confirmed 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.

9. Media and Social Media

In the event of a critical incident, only the Principal, as the CIMT Leader should make a statement to the Media. This is in keeping with the principles outlined in Section 8 above.

10. Critical Incident Rooms:

In the event of a critical incident, the Hall will be the main room used to meet the staff, students, parents and visitors involved

11. Actions in the event of a critical incident :

11.1 Short Term Actions – Day 1

- Ensure the safety of students, staff and visitors.
- Convene a meeting of the Critical Incident Management Team and delegate responsibilities.
- Gather Accurate Information (Incident Report Form).
- Identify high risk students.
- Contact appropriate agencies to organise support.
- Contact DES the BOM, NEPS and the Parent's Association.
- Arrange the supervision of students.

- Inform students and parents.
- Make contact with the affected/bereaved family.
- Organise reunion of students with their parents.
- Respond to the media (Principal and Deputy Principal only).
- Arrange visit to affected/bereaved family.
- Report to the Health and Safety Authority, if necessary.

As far as possible maintain normal school routine.

11.2 Medium Term Actions Day 2 and following days

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

11.3 Longer Term Actions

- Monitor students for signs of continuing distress.
- Liaise with agencies regarding referrals.
- Plan for return of bereaved student(s).
- Decide on memorials and anniversaries.
- Review response to incident and amend plan.

12. Monitoring, Review and Evaluation of the Critical Incident Policy

THE CIMT will review the policy after every critical incident to determine how effective it was as a resource and to make any changes to improve the policy.

Where no critical incident occurs, the policy will be reviewed on an ongoing basis to take into account changes in circumstances, legislation and best practice.

13. All new school staff should be made aware of this policy and all school policies and asked to familiarise themselves with same.