

St. Michael's School

CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT POLICY



St. Michael's School aims to protect the well-being of its pupils and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. In line with our Mission Statement, we provide a secure, healthy and caring environment which values the uniqueness of each person.

As a team:-

- We recognise the needs and talents of each pupil and provide an appropriate broad curriculum.
- We foster self-esteem, empowering each pupil to reach his/her full potential.
- We believe in an active partnership between home and school.

It is our wish that pupils leave us with enhanced self-confidence and with life-skills and attitudes which will enable them to lead lives satisfying to themselves and lives that will contribute to the betterment of society. The Board of Management, through the School Principal has drawn up a Critical Incident Management Plan as one element of the school's policies and plans.

Review and Research

The Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) are aware of resource documents available to schools on www.education.ie and www.nosp.ie including:

- Responding to Critical Incidents Guidelines and Resources for Schools (National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) 2016)
- Suicide Prevention in Schools: Best Practice Guidelines (IAS, National Suicide Review Group (2002)
- Suicide Prevention in the Community - A Practical Guide (Health Service Executive, (HSE) 2011)
- Well-Being in Post-Primary Schools Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention (Department of Education and Youth (DEY), Department of Health (DH) & HSE 2013)
- Well-Being in Primary Schools - Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion (DEY, DH, HSE 2015)

Define what you mean by the term 'critical incident'

The staff and management of St. Michael's School 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. Types of incidents might include:

- The death of a member of the school community through sudden death, accident, terminal illness or suicide.
- An accident involving pupils or staff on or off school premises.
- Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism etc.
- The disappearance of a member of the school community.
- An accident/tragedy in the wider community.
- Unauthorised removal of pupil from school or home.
- Reports of threats to the School Community, e.g. bomb threat.
- An intrusion into the school.
- A physical attack on staff member(s) or pupil(s) by an intruder(s).

Aim

The aim of the Critical Incident Management Policy (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 effects on the students and staff will be limited. It should enable us to effect a return to normality as soon as possible.

Creation of a coping supportive and caring ethos in the school

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 the school community.

Physical safety

- Evacuation plan formulated
- Regular fire drills occur
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
- Supervision of pupils at arrival and dispersal times
- Front door locked during school hours
- Rules of the playground – include details
- Playground supervision – Staff must ensure that pupils do not:
 - Congregate on steps leading into the yard.
 - Congregate on steps leading from the fire exit door of Woodwork Room
 - Enter Basketball Court unless they intend playing basketball
 - Congregate in the Astro Turf Pitch unless they are involved in playing football or doing laps
 - Lie on the grass

Pupils are asked to:

- Only play football within the Astro Turf Pitch – being mindful of other pupils.
- Not to kick the football with force, the area for playing football is not big enough for big, hard, long kicks.
- Make sure they check with the teacher or SNA on duty before they retrieve a ball that has gone out of the Astro Turf Pitch, over the green fence.
- Wear suitable footwear, i.e. runners.

- Collect the football from the goal post and leave the football at the goal post when the bell rings.
- Similarly, the basketballs will be found in the Basketball Court and must be left there when the bell rings.
- Do not kick the basketballs, only bounce, pass or take shots with the basketball.
- There is no eating or drinking in the Basketball Court or in the Astro Turf Pitch.
- Pupils are not allowed to stand on the side-lines in the Astro Turf Pitch or in the Basketball Court to watch.
- Report any accidents or injuries to staff on duty.
- Avoid body contact at all times, avoid rough play.
- Listen to staff at all times.
- Play fair and make sure all players have a chance at the ball.
- There is no football on Fridays.

Psychological safety

The management and staff of St. Michael's School aim to 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 (SPHE) is integrated into the work of the school. It is addressed in the curriculum by addressing 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
- Staff are familiar with the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures
- Books and resources on difficulties affecting the primary/post primary school student are available
- Information is available online on mental health in general and such specific areas as signs and symptoms of depression and anxiety
- The school has developed links with a range of external agencies – NEPS, Educational Welfare Board (EWB), Tusla, Child and Adolescents Mental Health Service (CAMHS)
- 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 DEY Circulars 0022/2010 (Primary) or 0023/2010 (Post-Primary)
- The school has a clear policy on bullying and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy
- There is a care system in place in the school using the "Continuum of Support" approach which is outlined in the NEPS documents published on 2007 for primary schools and 2010 for post primary schools. These documents are available on www.education.ie
- Students who are identified as being at risk are referred to the Principal, 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. (Please refer to 'Responding to Critical Incidents', NEPS Guidelines and Resource Materials for School, R23, page 92).
- Staff are informed about how to access support for themselves.

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 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: Mrs. Sharon Gorevan

Role

- Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting
- Coordinates the tasks of the team
- Liaises with the Board of Management; Department of Education and Youth; NEPS; SEC
- Liaises with the bereaved family

(Note - in the absence of the team leader Ms. Muldoon will assume this role)

Garda liaison – Mrs. Sharon Gorevan

Role

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

Staff liaison – Mr. Gareth Jones & Joan Ryan

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.

Pupil liaison – Ms. Ciara Wilkinson & Joan Ryan

Role

- Alerts other staff to vulnerable pupils (appropriately)
- Provides materials for pupils (from their critical incident folder)
- Maintains pupil contact records (R1).
- Looks after setting up and supervision of ‘quiet’ room where agreed

Community/agency liaison – Ms. Karen Quinn

Role

- Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of

- 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 – Ms. Patricia Muldoon & Joan Ryan

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 – Ms. Karen Quinn / Mrs. Sharon Gorevan

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)

Administrator – School Secretary, Ms Ellen McAllorum

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 schools system in advance and ready for adaptation
- Prepares and sends out letters, emails and texts
- Photocopies materials needed
- Maintains records

All remaining members of the In-School Management Team who have not been assigned a post may be asked to assume any of the above roles in the absence of the designated staff member.

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. The school secretary 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 St. Michael's School have 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. Members of school staff will bear this in mind, and seek to ensure that pupils do so also, e.g. 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	
In the event of a critical incident, the following rooms are designated for the indicated purposes	
Room Name:	Designated Purpose:
<i>Assembly Hall</i>	Main room for meeting staff
<i>Assembly Hall</i>	Meetings with students
<i>Assembly Hall</i>	Meetings with parents
<i>Assembly Hall</i>	Meetings with media
<i>Phoenix Room</i>	Individual sessions with students
<i>Assembly Hall</i>	Meetings with other visitors
<i>Prayer Room</i>	Quiet Room for pupils/ staff

Consultation and communication regarding the plan

All staff were consulted and their views canvassed in the preparation of this policy and plan. Pupils 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 a personal copy of the plan.

All new and temporary staff will be informed of the details of the plan by the school Principal

The plan will be updated regularly.

Critical Incident Management Team		
Role	Name	Phone
Team leader:	<i>Sharon Gorevan</i>	018201859
Garda liaison	<i>Sharon Gorevan</i>	018201859
Staff liaison	<i>Gareth Jones & Joan Ryan</i>	018201859
Student liaison	<i>Ciara Wilkinson & Joan Ryan</i>	018201859
Community liaison	<i>Karen Quinn</i>	018201859

Parent liaison	<i>Patricia Muldoon & Joan Ryan</i>	018201859
Media liaison	<i>Karen Quinn/Sharon Gorevan</i>	018201859
Administrator	<i>Ellen McAllorum</i>	018201859

Short term actions – Day 1

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

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	Community Liaison
Meet whole staff	Staff Liaison
Arrange support for students, staff, parents	Relevant CIMT member
Visit the injured	Relevant CIMT member
Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements	Parent Liaison
Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service	Parent Liaison
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	Community Liaison
Plan for return of bereaved student(s)	Student Liaison
Plan for giving of ‘memory box’ to bereaved family	Parent Liaison
Decide on memorials and anniversaries	BOM/Staff, parents and students
Review response to incident and amend plan	Staff/BOM

Signed: *Sr. Bernadette Carron*

Date: 18.06.2025

Chairperson, Board of Management

EMERGENCY CONTACT LIST

AGENCY	CONTACT NUMBERS
Garda	Ballyfermot Station 01-6667200
Hospital	Blanchardstown 01-6465000 Temple Street 01-8784200 Crumlin 01-4096100 Tallaght 01-4142000 St. James 01-4166600
Fire Brigade	999
Local GPs	Dr. John O'Brien 01-8217548
HSE	Rathdown Road 01-8825000 Cherry Orchard 01-6206300
Community Care Team	Corduff 076-6956700 Blanchardstown 01-8297233
Child and Family Centre	www.tusla.ie
Child and Family Mental Health Service (CAMHS)	Ballyfermot 01-7782085 Clondalkin 01-7782050 Castleknock 01-7782122 Lucan 01-7782080
School Inspector	Ms. Lisa Walsh Lisa_walsh@education.gov.ie
NEPS Psychologist	Daragh O'Brien daragh_obrien@education.gov.ie 0761108789 or 0761108673
DES	0906-483600
INTO	01-8722533
Clergy	Fr. Sean Mundow Fr. Cornelius
State Exams Commission	0906-422700
Employee Assistance Service	1800 411 057
Resource Officer for Suicide Prevention-HSE West Dublin, Dublin South City, Dublin South West	0879010541