CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT POLICY

St Paul's School aims to protect the well-being of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times.

The BoM through the Principal and the Staff has drawn up a Critical Incident Management Plan as one element of the school's policies and plans. They have established a Critical Incidents Management Team (CIMT) to steer the development and implementation of the plan.

Review and Research

The CIMT have consulted resource documents available to schools on www.education.ie and www.nosp.ie including:

- Responding to Critical Incidents Guidelines and Resources for Schools. (NEPS 2016)
- Suicide Prevention in Schools: Best Practice Guidelines (IAS, National Suicide Review Group.(2002)
- Suicide Prevention in the Community - A Practical Guide (HSE 2023)
- Well-Being in Primary Schools - Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion. (DES, DOH, HSE 2015)
- Mindful Matters SPHE Programme.

Define what you mean by the term 'critical incident'.

The staff and management of *St Paul'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 accident, violence, suicide or suspected suicide or other unexpected death*
- *An intrusion into the school*
- *An accident involving members of the school community*
- *An accident/tragedy in the wider community*
- Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism, etc
- The disappearance of a member of the school community
- Civil Unrest, war.
- Unauthorised removal of a student from school or home.

Critical Incident Management Team		
Role	**Name**	**Phone**
Team Leader:	Principal Eileen McCaughey / Deputy Principal Martin Griffin	0469028754
Garda Liaison	Garda Fiona Kerr	0469036122 0858567685
Chaplaincy Liaison	Father Robert Budau	046 90 27518
Staff Liaison	DP Martin Griffin / (SPHE Co-ordinator) Louise O'Donoghue	0876552737
Student Liaison	Kathryn Lenaghan / Ann-Marie O'Byrne / Sean Enright	046 9028754
Community Liaison / BOM Rep	PJ Finn (Chairperson) Cecily Gibbons	0469028754
Parent Liaison	Anne Hannon and Siobhán Farrelly (Chairperson)	
Media Liaison	Eileen McCaughey / Cecily Gibbons	046 9028754
Administrators	Principal /SPHE Co-ordinator/School Secretaries (Liz Lorton / Frances O'Regan / Linda Smith)	046 9028754
N.E.P.S:	Pól Bond	018650635
Resource Officer for Suicide Prevention – Louth Meath	Rosaleen Dolan	0416859259 Email: rosaleen.dolan@hse.ie

The first named person has the responsibility as defined. The second named person only assumes the responsibility on the absence of the first named.

Aim

The aim of the CIMT 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 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 (once per term).
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked.

- Pre-opening supervision in the school yard from 8.25am.
- Front gate is not closed during school hours on a normal day but could be should anything happen. Back gate is locked at 9.00am and re-opened at 1.25pm for Junior & Senior Infants going home.
- All school exit doors are on fob access controls during class time.

Rules of the Playground:

- Line up when you hear the bell and enter the school building quietly.
- Always seek permission from the teacher on yard duty if you want to re-enter the building.
- Show respect to the teacher on duty and to the other pupils during playtime.
- Keep the school environment free from litter.
- Keep within your permitted boundaries.
- Report all accidents and serious incidents to the teacher on duty.

Psychological Safety:

The management and staff of *St Paul'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. As an essential part of the curriculum, our programme addresses issues such as grief and loss; communication & co-operation skills; personal responsibility; the importance of healthy living, including healthy eatingand physical activity; stress and anger management; resilience; conflict management; problem solving; help-seeking; anti-bullying; decision making and prevention of alcohol and drug misuse. Promotion of mental health and well-being is an integral part of this provision.
- Staff have access to CPD training for their role in SPHE.
- Currently staff are familiar with the 2023 Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures (and will be trained with the newly updated 2025 procedures in term 1 of 2026) and familiar with how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures [Circular 0036/2023] and [Circular 0041/2025]
- Information is provided on mental health in general and specific areas such as signs and symptoms of depression, anxiety withdrawal.
- Staff are informed in the area of suicide awareness. (Resource Officer for Suicide Prevention – Louth Meath Rosaleen Dolan)
- The school has developed links with a range of external agencies.
- 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 Circulars 0022/2010 and 0042/2018 (Primary)
- The school has a clear policy on bullying under the Bí Cinealta Framework and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy
- There is a care system in place in the school using the "Special Educational Needs, A Continuum of Support" approach which is outlined in the NEPS documents published in 2019 for primary schools. These documents are available on www.education.ie
- Students who are identified as being at risk are referred to the designated staff member / Pastoral Care Team (and NEPS / CAMHS/ other services if required). 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.
- Staff are informed about how to access support for themselves (Spectrum Life).

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.

Leadership Role/Team Leaders: Principal Eileen McCaughey / DP Martin Griffin

Intervention:
- Confirm the event.
- Activate the critical incident response team.
- Express sympathy to the family.
- Clarify facts surrounding the event.
- Make contact with other relevant agencies.
- Decide how news will be communicated to different groups (staff, pupils, outside school)

Postvention:
- Ensure provision of ongoing support to staff and students.
- Facilitate any appropriate memorial events.
- Review Plan.

Garda Liaison: Garda Fiona Kerr
Role
- Liaises with team members.
- Liaises with the Gardaí
- Ensures that information about deaths or other developments is checked out for accuracy before being shared

Chaplaincy Role: Fr. Robert Budau / on call priest
Intervention:

- Visit home if appropriate.
- Assist with prayer services.
- Make contact with local clergy.
- Be available as personal and spiritual support to staff.

Postvention:

- Provide follow up support to family in conjunction with Home School Community Liaison.
- Work in partnership with the school religious education team under the leadership of Seán Enright.
- Review and Evaluate Plan.

Staff Liaison: DP Martin Griffin / Louise O'Donoghue, SPHE Co-ordinator
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.

Student Liaison / Counselling: Kathryn Lenaghan / Ann-Marie O'Byrne / Sean Enright
Role
Intervention:
- Outline specific services available in the school like our Rainbows Programme.
- Put in place clear referral procedures.
- Address immediate needs of students.
- Information.
- Counselling.

Postvention:
- Ongoing support to vulnerable students.
- Monitor class most affected.
- Refer on, as appropriate.
- Review and evaluate plan.
- Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies.

Community Liaison / BOM Rep: PJ Finn / Cecily Gibbons
Role
Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of:
- Key parents, such as 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

Someone with good contacts with agencies and relevant individuals in the community

Parent Liaison: Parents' Association: Anne Hannon / Siobhán Farrelly (Chairpersons) along with Principal
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: Principal Eileen McCaughey / AP1 Cecily Gibbons

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: Principal Eileen McCaughey / SPHE Coordinator (Louise O'Donoghue) / School Secretaries (Liz Lorton / Frances O'Regan / Linda Smith)

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

Record Keeping Team: Liz Lorton / Frances O'Regan / Linda Smith

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.

Liz Lorton / Frances O'Regan / Linda Smith 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 Paul'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 students 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:**
Staff Room	Main room for meeting staff.
Multi Purpose Rooms 1 & 2	Meetings with students & **I**ndividual sessions with students..
Multi Purpose Rooms 1 & 2	Meetings with parents.
Principal's Office	Meetings with media.
Principal's Office	Meetings with other visitors.

Consultation and communication regarding the plan

- All staff were consulted and their views canvassed in the preparation of this policy and plan.
- 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 Martin Griffin.
- The plan will be updated annually.

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	**All staff**
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	Principal / DP
Plan for return of bereaved student(s)	Principal / DP / Class teachers
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

Longer Term Actions (More detailed)

Task	**Name**
Monitor students for signs of continuing distress. If over a prolonged period of time, a student continues to display the following he/ she may need assistance from the Health Board. - Uncharacteristic behaviour. - Deterioration in academic performance. Physical symptoms-e.g. weight loss/gain, lack of attention to appearance, tiredness, restlessness. - Inappropriate emotional reactions.	School Teaching Staff

- Increased absenteeism. Evaluate response to incident and amend Critical Incident Management Plan appropriately. - What went well? - Where were the gaps? - What was least/most helpful? - Have all necessary onward referrals to support services been made? - Is there any unfinished business? Formalise the Critical Incident Plan for the future. - Consult with NEPS Psychologist: Pól Bond Inform new staff/ new school pupils affected by Critical Incidents where appropriate. - Ensure that new staff are aware of the school policy & procedures in this area. - Ensure that they are aware of which pupils are 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, it would be useful to brief the principal of the new school. Decide on appropriate ways to deal with anniversaries (Be sensitive to special days and events) - Anniversaries may trigger emotional responses in students/ staff and they may need additional support at this time. - Acknowledge the anniversary with the family. - Be sensitive to significant days like Birthdays, Christmas, Mother's Day and Father's Day. Plan a school memorial service/November: Month of the Holy Souls. Care of deceased person's possessions: What are the parent's wishes? Update and amend school records	

EMERGENCY CONTACT LIST

AGENCY	CONTACT NUMBERS
Garda Fiona Kerr	999/046-9079930/ 0469036122 0858567685
Navan Hospital	046 90 78500
Fire Brigade	999/0469051068
Local GPs	Abbey Medical Centre 046-9051500
HSE	046-9098800
Community Care Team	0469021595
Child and Family Centre	0469098816
Child and Family Mental Health Service (CAMHS) , Hazel House, Navan.	046 9079350
School Inspector	Heidi Collins
NEPS Psychologist	Pól Bond 076 11008657 /076 1108635
DEY, Communications Unit Marlborough Street.	01-8896400
INTO	1850 708708
Clergy	Fr Robert Badau 046-9027518
Employee Assistance Service m- Spectrum Life	1800411 057 01 518 0356

Sample Letters

Date

Dear Parents,

The school has experienced (the sudden death, accidental injury) of one of our students. We are deeply saddened by the death/ events.

(brief details of the incident and in the event of a death, perhaps some positive remembrances of the person lost)

We have support structures in place to help your child cope with this tragedy. (Elaborate)

It is possible that your child may have some feelings that he /she may like to discuss with you. You can help your child by taking time to listen and encouraging them to express their feelings. It is important to give them truthful information that is appropriate to their age.

If you would like advice or assistance you may contact the following people at the school. (Details)

Yours sincerely

Eileen McCaughey

Date

Dear Parents

Following the recent (tragedy, death of X) we have arranged professional support for students in school who need particular help. (X) is available to help with this work. This support will usually consist of talking to children, either in small groups or on a one-to-one basis and offering reassurance and advice as appropriate.

We feel that _____ may benefit from meeting with the psychologist. If you would like your child to receive this support please sign the attached permission slip and return it to the school by_____

If you would like further information on the above or to talk to _____, School Counsellor, please indicate this on the slip or telephone the school.

Yours sincerely,

Eileen McCaughey

I/We consent to having our daughter/son met by _____ employed by the Minister for Education & Youth.

I/We understand that my daughter/ son may meet the counsellor in an individual or group session depending on the arrangements which are thought to be most appropriate.

Name of student: _____

Class / Year: _____ Room No: _____

Date of Birth: _____

I would like my daughter/ son _____ to avail of the support being offered by the Counsellor.

Signed: _____ Parent/ Guardian