



St. Anne's National School,  
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## Critical Incident Policy

St. Anne's N.S. aims to protect the well-being of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. The Board of Management, through the Principal and staff, has drawn up a critical incident management plan as one element of the school's policies and plans.

The staff and management of St. Anne's N.S. 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

### Aim

The aim of the CIMP is to help school management and staff 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

The school has put the following measures in place:

- Evacuation plan formulated: each class has their own designated exit and assembly point.
- Fire drills occur at least once a term
- Fire exits and extinguishers are checked regularly - as indicated on each piece of equipment

- A memo has been issued to parents to remind about pre - opening supervision in the school yards
- External School doors should be locked during class time. These doors may be opened from the inside during emergencies allowing people to leave the building.
- Rules for the playgrounds have been drawn up.

### **Psychological safety**

The management and staff of St. Anne's N.S. aim to use available (and appropriate) 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 (within classroom or other appropriate settings). E.g.

- 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 provisions
- 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
- The school has developed links with a range of external agencies, including Lucena Clinic, NEPS, Enable Ireland, Carmona Services, psychologists, HSE, local health clinics.
- 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. These include Accord, PMCA, Gardaí, Fire brigade.
- The school has a clear policy on bullying and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy.
- The BOM has established a pastoral care system, with the Principal, Chairperson and community representative as members of the council.
- Students who are identified as being at risk are referred to the Principal. Parents are informed and where appropriate, a referral is made to an appropriate agency. Child Protection Guidelines are adhered to at all times.
- 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 will retain their roles for at least one school year and will meet annually to review and update the policy and plan. Each team member has a dedicated critical incident folder, which contains a copy of the policy and plan and materials particular to their role, to be used in the event of an incident.

\*\* (Roles are dependent on availability of team leader - e.g. if team leader is absent for whatever reason -Deputy Principal Deputises).

**Team leader: John Fingleton**

- Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting
- Co-ordinates the tasks of the team
- Liases with the BOM; DES; NEPS; SEC
- Liases with the bereaved family
- Liases with the Gardaí
- Ensures that information about deaths or other developments is checked out for accuracy before being shared
- Keeps record of all interactions with parents / family & related CIMT personnel - can be delegated
- In the absence of the team leader, the Deputy Principal will deputise.

**Staff liaison (John Fingleton)**

- Leads briefing meetings for staff on the facts as known, gives staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and asks questions, outlines the routine for the day
- Advises staff on the procedures for identification of vulnerable students
- Provides materials for staff (from 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 (Paula Kelly) - 2 way position: also gathers information from staff on vulnerable kids**

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

**Community / agency liaison (Phil Fortune and Maria Moore)**

- Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of key parents, (members of BOM / Parents' Association), emergency support services and other external contacts and resources - but all CIMT people should have own copy of personnel list
- Liases 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 - team leader in most serious cases - in conjunction with parent liaison person**

- 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 school system and ready for adaptation

**Media liaison: John Fingleton**

- In advance of an incident, the media leader will consider issues that may arise and how they might be responded to.
- In the event of an incident, the media liaison person will work with the SEC and relevant INTO personnel
- They will draw up a press statement, giving media briefings and interviews.
- **ONLY** this person will address the media

**Administrator (in conjunction with the school secretary)**

- Maintenance of up to date telephone numbers of
  - Parents / guardians
  - Teachers
  - Emergency numbers
- Takes phone 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 faxes
- Photocopies materials needed
- Maintains records of the CIMT

**Confidentiality and good name considerations**

The management and staff of St. Anne's N.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.

**Critical incident rooms**

In event of a critical incident, the following rooms may be designated:

- The staff room will be the main room used to meet staff,
- The hall used for meetings with students,
- Room 8 for parents, and the administering of sacraments including the anointing of the sick,
- Library for individual sessions with students / other visitors.
- Other closer available rooms may also be used.

**Consultation and communication regarding the plan**

The staff was consulted and their views canvassed in the preparation of this policy and plan. Our school's policy and plan in relation to responding to critical incidents has been presented to all staff. All new and temporary staff will be informed of the details of the plan by St. Anne's N.S. by the **principal**.

**Review**

The plan will be updated annually in October.

**Ratification**

This policy was ratified by the BOM.

OCTOBER 2016