

ST. PATRICK'S CLASSICAL SCHOOL



CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY

1.0. CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY

The Board of Management of St. Patrick's Classical School is committed to the development of Procedures designed to ensure the physical and psychological safety of staff and students in the event of a Critical Incident.

A critical incident is defined as *'any incident or sequence of events that overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school and disrupts the normal running of the school'*.

Critical Incidents may include:

- The sudden death of a member of the school community due to an accident
- A terminal illness; suicide (See Appendix 2)
- A physical attack or threat to staff members or students as a result of an intrusion into the school
- An accident/tragedy in the wider school community
- Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism or Act of God
- The disappearance of a member of the school community or an accident involving members of the school community.

This list is not exhaustive.

1.1. AIM OF POLICY

The Board of Management, through the Principal/Deputy Principal, will develop and manage Critical Incident Procedures as a means of helping staff to react quickly and effectively and maintain a sense of control thereby ensuring a return to normality as soon as possible after an incident and also ensuring that the effects on students and staff will be kept to a minimum. In keeping with best practice a Critical Incident Management Team will be set up, the members of which will be appointed on a voluntary basis and meet at least once a year.

Aims of the Critical Incident Management Team

- That the school community responds appropriately to any critical incident
- To set clear procedures for responding to and managing these incidents
- That all persons affected by any critical incident receive appropriate support
- That appropriate steps are taken to care for any injured parties and others are removed from the scene
- That a Critical Incident Management Team (CIT) be formed
- That this team and all staff would meet and be aware of their individual roles and responsibilities
- That all staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities

In the event of a Critical Incident, each member of the Critical Incident Management Team will be responsible for keeping detailed records of phone-calls made and received, text messages sent and received, emails sent and received, meetings held, persons met, interventions used and materials distributed.

1.2 Critical Incident Management Team

CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM

ROLE	NAME/TITLE	PHONE NO.	ROOM
Team Leader	Principal – Harry Mc Garry	046-9023772	Office
Emergency Services Liaison	Dep. Principal – Sinéad Bannon	On shared drive	DP Office
	Dep. Principal – John Kenny	On shared drive	DP Office
	Dep. Principal – Fergal Monaghan	On shared drive	DP Office
Garda Liaison	Garda Frank Scully	On shared Drive	Office
Student Liaison	Lay School Chaplain - Mark Donnelly	046-9023772	Office
	School Chaplain -Fr. Robert Badau	On shared drive	Office
	Rainbows – Jane Costello/Cathal O Reilly	046-9023772	
	Dep. Principals- Sinead Bannon/John Kenny/Fergal Monaghan	On shared drive	
Staff Liaison	Dep. Principal- Sinead Bannon	046-9023772	Office
Student Support Team	Mary O’ Brien	046-9023772	
	Niamh Fallon	On shared drive	
Parents Liaison	Harry Mc Garry	046-9023772	Office
Media Liaison	Harry Mc Garry	046-9023772	Office
Administration	Lorraine Finegan	046-9023772	Office
Information Line	Lorraine Finegan	046-9023772	Office
Record Keeping	Harry McGarry	046-9023772	Office
Caretakers	John Morgan, Anthony Mc Entee ,	On shared drive	Office

1.3 DUTIES OF THE ROLE HOLDERS

Team Leader – Harry Mc Garry

- to alert team members to a Critical Incident and convene a Critical Incident Team Meeting
- to co-ordinate the tasks of the individual team members
- to co-ordinate with the Board of Management and Department of Education and Skills
- to liaise with families affected by the Critical Incident
- to liaise with the Emergency Services
- to ensure that information is checked out for accuracy, thereby helping to counter the kind of misinformation which can contribute to an atmosphere of hysteria among students
- to decide if the school remains open
- to make arrangements for school participation in funeral/memorial services or other such events

Student Liaison - Mark Donnelly- School Chaplain, Rainbows- Jane Costello, Cathal O Reilly , DP's JK ,SB & FM

- to give the known facts and avoid speculation thereby dispelling rumours and unnecessary stress
- *to allow students to ask questions, tell their own stories and express their own feelings*
- *to liaise with other Critical Incident Management Team members to keep them updated with information and student progress*
- *to alert the Staff Liaison to vulnerable students*
- *to provide students with reading material or Helpline details*

Staff Liaison – Sinead Bannon, Niamh Fallon, Mary O Brien

- *to meet and brief the staff as a group on verifiable facts*
- *to outline the school routine for that or subsequent days*
- *to give members of staff an opportunity to express their feelings and share their grief*
- *to advise staff on vulnerable students*

- *to meet individually with vulnerable staff members*
- *to provide staff with relevant materials*

Parents Liaison – Mr Harry Mc Garry

- *to meet groups of parents*
- *to facilitate 'questions and answers' meetings*
- *to manage the emotional reactions of groups of parents*
- *to provide parents with relevant materials/reading matter/contact details*
- *to meet with individual parents*
- *to visit the affected family/families in the company of the Team Leader*

Media Liaison – Harry Mc Garry

- *to prepare, in conjunction with the Team Leader, a statement detailing the facts about the incident, expressing the school's sympathy to those affected, outlining what has already been done, what is going to be done and if appropriate making positive comment on those injured or dead*
- *to establish contact with the various media outlets, newspapers (local, national, international), television (national, international), radio (local, national, international) and the Internet*
- *to check the credentials of journalists/photo-journalists before they gain access to the school premises*
- *to restrict media access to designated areas of the school*
- *to protect students/staff from unwanted media intrusions*
- *to liaise where necessary with the Communications Section of the Department of Education and Skills*
- *to prepare regular statements for the media*

Administration – School Secretary – Lorraine Finegan

- *to keep an up to date list of Contact Numbers for the Emergency Services, Support Services, HSE, NEPS etc.*
- *to maintain up to date lists of Contact Numbers for parents and guardians*
- *to maintain up to date lists of Contact Numbers for members of staff and their next of kin*
- *to respond to telephone calls, send text messages and photocopy materials requested by members of the Critical Incident team*

Record Keeping - Harry Mc Garry

- to staff the Main Office receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters, photocopying materials etc.
- to act as a central control for the members of the Critical Incident Management Team

Confidentiality

St. Patrick's Classical School has a responsibility to protect the privacy and the good name of the people involved in any incident and so it is imperative that only designated members of staff make public statements relating to the Incident. Members of the school staff are requested to bear this in mind and to remind students to be equally cautious about the views they express in public.

Media, Social Media and Confidentiality:

In the event of a critical incident, all members of staff are required to maintain strict confidentiality and should not make any comment or statement to representatives of the media or respond to requests for information concerning the incident. The Principal, in the role of Media Liaison, is the designated spokesperson for St. Patrick's Classical School and all media enquiries should be referred directly to the Principal. Staff should similarly refrain from commenting on, responding to, sharing or otherwise engaging with social media posts or online discussions relating to the incident. This includes liking, reacting to, endorsing or expressing disagreement with comments or posts made by others, as such activity may subsequently be interpreted or reported as representing the views of the individual staff member or of the school. Staff should be particularly mindful that online comments and reactions can be copied, shared or attributed to them at a later stage. As a general principle, staff should make no public comment and should allow all official communication regarding the incident to come through the designated school channels. This does not preclude a staff member, acting in a purely personal capacity, from posting an appropriate and respectful message of condolence on an official funeral notice such as RIP.ie, where appropriate. At all times, the privacy, dignity and wishes of the individual or family affected must be respected.

1.4 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:
Conference Room	Critical Incident Room
Staff Room/R39	Main room for meeting staff
Room 39/Oratory	Meetings with students
Room 39/Oratory	Meetings with parents
Room 49	Meetings with media
Guidance Counsellors offices	Individual sessions with students
Oratory	Meet with students/Quiet Room/Meet with Chaplain

1.5 Important Contact Numbers

The following is a list of contact numbers for use during a critical incident:

Garda	046-9079930
Ambulance	999/112
Regional Control Centre:	9023333
Fire Brigade	999
Hospital	046-9021210
Clinic/Child and Family Centre	046 -9021595
Chairperson of the B.O.M. See Team Leader	
School Inspector	01 8896553
State Examinations Commission	090 6483862
Dept. of Ed. Regional Office	046 9067415
NEPS Psychologist	(049) 4325430 (Cavan) (041) 9876940 (0761) 108635(Navan)
ASTI	01 6040160
NEPS ADVISORY LINE	01 865 0401

2.0 CRITICAL INCIDENT PROCEDURES

The Critical Incident Management Team based in the main Critical Incident Room will be responsible for overseeing the implementation of Critical Incident Procedures. The Procedures have been divided up into three broad time-frames but as all Critical Incidents are unique neither the time-frames nor the listed running order for responses involved should be viewed as by any means prescriptive. Details of the Critical Incident Management Team and the Duties assigned to each member of the team are included in Appendix 1.

2.1. INITIAL RESPONSE (First 24 hours)

- (i) Gather Accurate Information
- (ii) Contact Appropriate Agencies
- (iii) Convene a Meeting of the Critical Incident Management Team
- (iv) Contact Parents of Students Directly Involved in the Incident
- (v) Contact Parents of Students Not Directly Involved
- (vi) Hold a Staff Meeting
- (vii) Inform Students

(i) Gather Accurate Information

- What happened? Where? When?
- Have there been casualties?
- If so, what is the location of the injured and/or dead?
- What is the location of those not injured?
- How many are involved and what are their names?
- Is the incident at an end or is there a risk of further casualties?
- What, if any, Emergency Services have been contacted already?

(ii) Contact Appropriate Agencies

Contact numbers for the emergency services will be available in the Office.

- An Garda Síochána, the Ambulance Service, the Fire Brigade (999)
- Our Lady's Hospital, Navan
- HSE
- NEPS
- Board of Management
- Department of Education and Skills

(iii) Convene a Meeting of the Critical Incident Management Team

- to agree a statement of the facts for staff, students, parents/guardians, the media, the school website and school text messaging service. It may not be appropriate at this stage to release the names of students/staff involved
- to ensure all members of the Critical Incident Management Team are fully aware of their responsibilities
- to organise the timetable/routine for that or subsequent days bearing in mind that maintaining the normal school routine in as far as possible is very important
- to arrange for the supervision of classes
- to organise a staff meeting or two separate meetings if constant staff supervision of some students is required
- to decide if an outside professional is needed to address the staff at that time
- to ensure that a designated phone line (mobile if necessary) is available to receive enquiries

(iv) Contact Parents of Students Directly Involved in the Incident (By Phone/In Person)

- to ensure that the parents are made aware in a sensitive manner of the factual situation specifically relating to their son who may have been a casualty or been directly involved in the Incident
- to invite them to the school to be met on arrival by a fully briefed member of staff and brought to an appropriate room set aside for parents to meet with their son(s)
- in the event of their son being a casualty, to inform them of his whereabouts and what Emergency Services they should contact for further information

(v) Contact Parents of Students Not Directly Involved in the Incident (By selective text message)

- to state the facts and assure them that while their son is unharmed he may have been distressed by the Incident
- to ask them not to phone or visit the school unless requested
- to alert them to the fact that their son may be better served by being with other students in the coming hours rather than being immediately removed from the support services which the school is putting in place

(vi) Hold a Staff Meeting (including ancillary staff)

- to give a factual rather than an anecdotal account of the Incident
- to impress upon staff the need for absolute discretion and confidentiality in their dealings with outside individuals or outside bodies
- to allow staff to discuss what has happened and share their feelings
- to decide how the facts should be shared with the students
- to outline/organise a timetable/routine for the day ahead
- to inform staff of contacts with outside agencies
- to alert staff to the support mechanisms to be put in place for students and staff
- to outline procedures for identifying vulnerable students
- to distribute material relating to the Critical Incident Management Team and their various roles
- to arrange a visit by two staff representatives to the home(s) of the injured if appropriate
- to make staff aware of the different religious traditions or faiths involved

(vii) Inform Students

- to dispel misinformation and rumour
- to ensure they are made aware (in class groupings) of the factual situation by someone they trust (Subject Teacher/Class Tutor)
- to assure them they are safe and that their parents are aware of the Incident
- to find out what they are feeling
- to answer their questions
- to identify vulnerable students

- to give them an idea of what the school routine is likely to be in the day(s) ahead

2.2. MEDIUM TERM RESPONSE (24-72 hours)

- (i) Hold Critical Incident Management Team Meeting(s)
- (ii) Arrange Support for Individual Students, Groups of Students or Parents
- (iii) Liaise with the Family (ies) re Funeral Arrangements or Memorial Services

(i) Hold Critical Incident Management Team Meeting(s) (8am)

- to Review the Events of the First 24 Hours
- to ascertain how Critical Incident Team Members are coping
- to ascertain how other members of staff including ancillary staff are coping
- to decide on arrangements for Support Meetings for students/staff/parents
- to receive feedback on vulnerable students
- to update staff on any new developments
- to establish contact with previously or currently absent staff and/or students
- to plan visits to the injured or the homes of the injured
- to discuss the day's school routine including a possible school closure
- to prepare a statement for the media

(ii) Arrange Support for Individual Students, Groups of Students or Parents

- to provide information for students/parents to clarify what has happened
- to offer advice and reassurance
- to inform them of the available Support Services
- to provide appropriate reading material
- to arrange in consultation with outside agencies, individual or group debriefings (with parental agreement)

(iii) Liaise with the Family(Families) Re Funeral Arrangements or Memorial Services

- to extend the sympathy of the school community
- to clarify the family(ies) wishes regarding the school's involvement in the Funeral or Memorial Services

2.3. LONG TERM RESPONSE (72 Hours +)

- (i) Monitor Students for Signs of Continuing Stress
- (ii) Decide on Appropriate Ways to Deal with Anniversaries
- (iii) Evaluate the School's Response to the Critical Incident
- (iv) Provide Information on Critical Incidents to New Staff (where appropriate)

(i) Monitor Students for Signs of Continuing Stress

- to note signs of uncharacteristic behaviour
- to be alert to a sudden deterioration in academic achievement
- to pick up on changes of a physical nature: weight loss; weight gain; lack of attention to appearance; tiredness; restlessness
- to monitor inappropriate emotional reactions
- to check for increased absenteeism

Where some or all of the above symptoms become apparent, a referral to Support Services may be appropriate following consultation with the parents involved.

(ii) Decide on Appropriate Ways to Deal with Anniversaries

- to acknowledge the anniversary (Months Mind etc.)
- to liaise with the family on any proposed commemoration
- to be sensitive to the needs of the family and the students closely involved
- to monitor students/staff for signs of emotional responses

(iii) Evaluate the School's Response to the Critical Incident

- to gauge what went well or what went badly
- to make changes if required to the Critical Incident Procedures

(iv) Provide Information on Critical Incidents to New Staff (where appropriate)

- to ensure that new staff are aware of which students were affected in any recent Incident and in what way
- to ensure that new staff are aware of the School Policy and Procedures relating to Critical Incidents

3.0 Consultation and communication regarding the plan

The school Care Team committee were consulted and their views canvassed in the preparation of this policy and plan. 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 (Part of Induction). The plan will be updated annually every August.

REVIEW OF POLICY

The Critical Incident Procedures will be reviewed regularly by The Board of Management, the Parents' Council, Principal/Deputy Principal and all staff and the Procedures must be instantly accessible to everyone who has a key role in putting the procedures into action.

This Policy was first approved and adopted by the Board of Management on 22/11/2018 and is reviewed and re-ratified annually.

The Board of Management approved and ratified the School Policy on the 10-02-2025.
This policy will be reviewed annually.

Signed:



Signed:



Fr. Gerry Stuart

Chairperson of Board of Management
Management

Mr. Harry Mc Garry

Principal/Secretary to the Board of

Date: 21-09-2026.

Date: 21-09-2026.

