



St. Paul's College

Critical Incident Policy

Document Ownership: Board of Management, Planning Group, Principal

Date of Board Approval:

Next Scheduled Review:

Rationale for Policy

At St. Paul's College we recognise that it is important to manage a critical incident as effectively as possible. Our policy seeks to provide awareness of the implications of a crisis for individuals, as well as guide guidelines for action that meets the needs of many individuals in the school community. It also seeks to reduce the risk of adverse repercussions such as contagion in the case of suicide, as well as outline guidelines for dealing with the media.

In applying our policy we recognize that every crisis is unique and requirements may vary but we have outlined a number of general guidelines applicable with minor adjustments to most situations.

What is a Critical Incident

A "Critical Incident" is one that overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school and disrupts the running of the school. It may involve one or more pupils, staff, the school or the local community. As a general guide we believe that students are best catered for within the school environment, following a traumatic incident – it is therefore normally our policy to keep students in the school as far as possible.

Events that may constitute such a crisis include:

- The death of a student or a member of staff.
- A physical attack on staff member(s) or student(s)
- Injuries or death on a school journey.
- An act of violence.
- A serious school fire, flood or accident.
- The disappearance of a member of the school community.
- An accident or tragedy in the wider school community.
- This is not an exhaustive list.

The term "suicide" will not be used without the consent of the family involved or until it has been established categorically that the person's death was the result of suicide. The phrase "tragic death" or "sudden death" may be used instead.

Critical Incident Management Team

A "Critical Incident Management Team" is essential to prepare for a critical incident that may arise in the school community. This critical incident management team should comprise of the following personnel.

- Principal
- Deputy Principal
- Counsellors
- Head of Pastoral Care
- Chairperson of the Board of Management
- Other persons such as relevant year heads or representatives of the Parent's Association may be drafted into this team as required.

The critical incident response team will meet once a year to review the performance of the school policy on responding to critical incidents. Each member of the team has a Critical Incident Folder with relevant materials to be used in the event of an incident.

Key Roles and Tasks in the Critical Incident Management Process

There are certain key roles which need to be covered in the event of a critical incident, these roles are as follows:

- Team Leader – Principal who alerts the team member of the crisis and convenes a meeting. He/she will coordinate the tasks of the team.
- Staff Liaison - Deputy Principal
- Student Liaison – Counsellors.
- Family Liaison – Head of Pastoral Care
- Media Liaison – Chairperson of the Board

The Critical Incident Folder will be put in place by the designated leader

This pack should contain materials and guidelines that may be used in the event of a critical incident.

The handling of the Critical Incident as well as the duties of the Management team are outlined in Appendix 1

Appendix 1

Management Team

	Name	Role	Contact Details
Principal	Michael Behan	Team Leader	
Deputy Principal	Brian O' Mordha	Staff Liaison	086 0533513
Counsellors	Michael O' Neill	Student Liaison	086 1713170
Head of Pastoral Care	Celine Mc Guinness	Family Liaison	087 8196031
Chairperson (Board of Management)	Fr. Eugen Curran CM	Media	

Roles and Responsibilities

Principal.

- Confirms that the incident has happened. Ascertain the facts as they are available at present
- Convene and lead a meeting of the Incident Management Team
- Assign specific tasks to members of the Management Team

Incident Management Team

Immediate

- Meet and plan strategy
- Ascertain the facts.
- Make contact with family/families to express sympathy

- Contact with emergency services, local Garda, local doctor, local clergy, Vincentian Community, NEPS, DES, media as appropriate.
- Prepare statements for staff, students, parents and wider community as appropriate
- Outline plan for the next 2/3 days.
- Stay in contact during the day to monitor the unfolding situation

Medium

- Review day 1 and adjust plans for the following days.

Long Term

- Lessons to be learned; what went well? What are the gaps?
- Effect on the interaction of staff and students
- Acknowledgement of any culpability by the College if it exists
- Appropriate memorials
- Long term counselling needs of individuals
- Long term effect on the educational process

Action Plan

Day 1

- Immediate contact with family. Visit to home by 2 staff.
- Consult with family re appropriate support from school e.g. at funeral service
- Inform staff (present or absent) and students
- Inform parents of all students?

Breaking the News to Students – Guidelines for Teachers

- Only if incident is confirmed by the family, can it be relayed as such to the students.
- The Class of the student who has died should be the first to be told with the Year Head, Counsellor, Tutor and Chaplain (if available) present.
- Other classes to be told by their Tutors
- Not every class is going to be traumatised as some students may not even know the deceased. But it is important to acknowledge the loss for the whole school community.
- Tell the class you have sad news and it is difficult for you to do this.
- Let them know the name of the person the news is about.
- Let them know the facts – rumours should be prevented as far as possible.
- Encourage questions
- Let the class know of common reactions tragic news
- The common reaction is shock.
- Expect outbursts and tears
- Don't allow a student to leave the class in a distressed state unless they have supervision somewhere else in the building.
- Let them know that you support them
- Let them know who else is available to support them
- Don't be afraid to let them know that you are also upset by the news
- Allow them time to mingle and talk to one another in groups.

- Explain how they can support one another
- Be attentive to identifying those who are not coping well with the news.
- A short prayer or time of reflection for the deceased may be appropriate.
- If the students appear ready, A Year Group Assembly may be held later in the day.
- Some students may be able to continue and go to class, and may want to.
- Encourage students to stay in school to support their friends.
- Some may need to go home – only if parents can collect them
- Those who go to class may not be able to concentrate on the work of the class.
- Subject Teachers will need to make allowances for them to talk in groups.

Day 2/3

- Incident Management Team meet to review Day 1 and assign duties for Days 2/3.
- Visit to family if this has not happened on day 1.
- Prepare students who will be attending funeral service
- Note students who may be absent. Are they friends of the deceased?
- Plan for re integration of absent students and monitoring of same by Counsellors, Head of Pastoral care.

Longer term actions

Monitor students for signs of continuing upset. Signs may be

- Deterioration in academic performance
- Uncharacteristic behaviour
- Unexpected emotional response
- Increased absenteeism
- Physical symptoms

Rooms

The Year Head Council room will be the location for the meetings.

If a room is required for distressed persons, the room to be used for this purpose will be oratory.

Contact Details:

Agency	Individual's name (if known)	Contact details
Local Doctor	Dr. Frank O' Driscoll	8331426
Garda	Clontarf	6664800
Garda	Raheny	6664300
Emergency services		999
NEPS	Judith Leslie	8892700
Chaplain (Part time)	Fr. John Gallagher CM	086 8243992
Vincentian	Community	8318113
Vincentian Provincial	Fr. Eamon Devlin CM	8510840
Local clergy PP	Mons. Alex Stenson	8333793
Local clergy curate	Fr. Michael O' Grady	8533466