

St Paul's National School,
Irishtown,
Mountmellick,
Co. Laois.
R32 FC 80
(057) 8624781
Roll No: 19369G
E-mail: stpauls1ns@gmail.com

Critical Incident Management Policy and Plan

Introduction

The Board of Management of St Paul's N.S. aim to protect the wellbeing of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. The Board of Management will fully implement the Department of Education / NEPS 'Responding to Critical Incidents' Guidelines and Resource Materials 2016.

Definition of a Critical Incident

The staff and management of St Paul'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 other unexpected death.
- An intrusion into the school.
- An accident involving members of the school community.

Aim

The aim of the Critical Incident Management Plan is to help school management and staff to react quickly and effectively in the event of an incident, to maintain a sense of control and to ensure that appropriate support is offered to students and staff. Having a good plan should also ensure that the effects on the students and staff will be limited. It should enable a return to normality as soon as possible.

Creation of a coping, supportive and caring ethos in the school

Systems have been put in place to help to build resilience in both staff and pupils, thus preparing them to cope with a range of life events. Teaching both skills and coping mechanisms with a view to prevention are integral to the ethos of our school. These include measures to address both the physical and psychological safety of the school community.

Physical Safety

- Evacuation Plan formulated
- Regular fire drills
- Fire extinguishers are regularly checked.
- Regular safety audits are conducted.

Psychological Safety

- The management and staff of St Paul's N.S. aim to use available programmes and resources to address the personal and social development of pupils, to enhance a sense of safety and security in the school and to provide opportunities for reflection and discussion.
- S.P.H.E. is integrated into the work of the school. It is addressed in the curriculum by covering issues such as grief and loss, communication skills, stress and anger management, resilience, conflict management, problem solving, bullying, decision making and prevention of alcohol and drug misuse.
- Teachers are familiar with the *Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures* and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures.
- Parents are informed in the case of any concerns relating to the psychological well-being of the child.
- Teachers have had *Walk Tall* training as well as having attended SPHE training in-service.
- The school has a clear anti-bullying policy and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy.
- An employee assistance service is available on **1800 411 057**
- All staff are aware of warning signs such as:
 - an unexpected reduction in academic performance
 - a change in mood and marked emotional instability, either more withdrawn, low energy or more boisterous, talkative, outgoing
 - withdrawal from relationships, separation from friends or break-up of a relationship, getting into trouble at school, discipline problems, suspension or expulsion, trouble with the law
 - loss of interest in usual pursuits, study, relationships
 - ideas and themes of depression, death or suicide
 - hopelessness and helplessness
 - giving away prized possessions
 - stressful life events, including significant grief
 - bullying or victimisation
 - a history of mental illness
 - alcohol / drug abuse
 - a history of suicidal behaviour or deliberate self-harm
 - family history of suicide / attempted suicide
 - expression of suicidal ideas on social media

Critical Incident Management Team

A critical incident management team has been established in line with best practice. The team consists of the two teachers and the Chairperson of the Board of Management. Each member of the team has a 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.

Roles of Critical Incident Management Team

Chairperson: Team Leader

- Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting.
- Co-ordinates the tasks of the team.
- Liaises with the Board of Management
- Liaises with the bereaved family/family involved.
- Liaises with the Gardaí.
- Ensures that information about deaths or other developments is checked out for accuracy before being shared.

Principal:

- Leads brief meeting for staff on facts known.
- Gives staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and outlines the routine for the day.
- Keeps staff updated
- Is alert to vulnerable staff members and makes contact with them individually.
- Advises them of the availability of Emergency Agencies and gives them contact numbers.

Teacher with Special Duties Post: Agency Liaison

- Is alert to the need to check credentials of individuals offering support.
- Updates team members of involvement of external agencies.

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 and materials used.

The school secretary will have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters and photocopying materials.

Confidentiality and Good Name Considerations

The Board of Management and staff of St Paul'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.

Monitoring and Review:

This policy, in accordance with the Education Act 1998, will be regularly reviewed by representatives of the Patron, the Board of Management, parents and teachers.

Modification Clause:

The Board of Management reserve the right to modify details of the Code of Behaviour at short notice. Such modification may be needed in an ever-changing environment and social context.

Policy Ratified on: _____

Signed by: _____

Dated: _____

Appendix:

- Consent form so pupils can avail of NEPS service if necessary

This policy has been written in accordance with the Department of Education and Science Guidelines and the National Educational Psychological Service Guidelines.

NEPS Contact for St Paul's N.S. is **Dermot Bergin 057 9325490/ 087 9472718**

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Dear Parents

You may already know that our teachers and staff have been providing support to our students following (*specific incidents*) _____

Additional support is also being provided to our school by psychologist/s from the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS).

The psychologist will be available, where necessary, to meet with individuals or with groups of students to help them during this difficult time.

The aim of such sessions will be to:

- Provide information about dealing with grief and loss in a healthy way.
- Allow students the opportunity to express their thoughts and feelings in a safe environment.
- Allow students time to comfort and support each other, under the guidance of experienced staff.
- Help students resume their normal routines as soon as possible.

If you would like for your child to participate in such a session and any follow-up meetings that might be scheduled, please give your consent by signing below.

You should return it to the school immediately.

If you have any questions, please contact the principal.

I give my consent for _____ to participate in a Group/Individual Session.

Parent or Legal Guardian

Date

Sincerely yours,

Principal.