



# **Critical Incident Policy**

**St. Anne's School**

**2025 2026**

**Introduction:**

Our school cherishes each child and, in partnership with the parents/guardians, aims to provide a safe and happy environment which promotes esteem for oneself, for other people and the value of life-long learning. To this end, St. Anne's School aims to protect the well-being of its pupils by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times.

St. Anne's School has taken a number of measures to create a coping, supportive and caring ethos in the school. The BoM through the Principal and the Staff has drawn up a critical incident management plan. They have established a Critical Incidents Management Team to steer the development and implementation of the plan. The school has also formulated a number of policies and procedures to be followed with a view to ensuring the physical and psychological safety of staff and pupils, both in ordinary time and in the event of a critical incident.

**What is a Critical Incident?**

As per DE / NEPS guidelines, St. Anne's School recognises a critical incident to be "an incident or sequence of events that overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school and disrupts the running of the school". Critical incidents may involve one or more pupils, staff, the school, or our local community.

Types of incidents might include:

- The death of a member of the school community through sudden death, accident, terminal illness or suicide.
- Outbreak of disease or major illness in school or community.
- Serious injury sustained by a member of the school community as a result of violence on or off school grounds.
- A threatening or violent intrusion into the school.
- An accident / tragedy in the school or wider community.
- Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism, etc.
- The disappearance of a member of the school community.
- Unauthorised removal of a pupil from school

**Critical Incidents Management Team:**

Leadership Role: Rose-Marie Flanagan (Principal)/ Fiona Haugh (Deputy Principal)

Communication Role: Beth Hickey, Chairperson/Rose-Marie Flanagan (Principal)

Student Liaison/ Counselling Role: Fiona Haugh (Deputy Principal), Michelle O' Halloran (Assistant Principal I-Wellbeing)

Chaplaincy Role: Fr. David Carroll/Ennis parish priest

Family Liaison Role: Fiona Haugh, Rose-Marie Flanagan

B.O.M. Representation Role: Beth Hickey, Deirdre Flynn

The first-named person has the responsibility as defined.

The second-named person assists and only assumes responsibility in the absence of the first-named.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

#### **1. Leadership Role:**

##### **Intervention**

- Confirm the event
- Activate the Critical Incident response team
- Liaise with the Gardai/Emergency services/NEPS
- Lead briefing meetings for staff on the facts as known, give staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions, outlines the routine for the day
- Express sympathy to family
- Clarify facts surrounding event
- Make contact with other relevant agencies
- Decide how news will be communicated to different groups (staff, pupils, outside school)

##### **Post-intervention**

- Ensure provision of ongoing support to staff and pupils
- Facilitate any appropriate memorial events
- Review Plan

#### **2. Communication Role:**

##### **Intervention**

- With Team, prepare a public statement
- Organise a designated room to address media promptly
- Ensure telephone lines are free for outgoing and important incoming calls
- Designate mobile numbers for contact
- Liaise with relevant outside support agencies

##### **Post-intervention**

- Review and evaluate effectiveness of communication response

#### **3. Pupil Liaison/ Counselling Role:**

##### **Intervention**

- Advise the staff on the procedures for identification of vulnerable pupils
- Alert staff to vulnerable pupils
- Outline specific services available in the school (NEPS)
- Put in place clear referral procedures
- Address immediate needs of staff
- Provide materials for staff (from critical incident folder) (Care Call)
- Provide information
- Provide counselling - advise on 'Inspire Wellbeing' counselling service for staff and families

**Post-intervention**

- Provide ongoing support to vulnerable pupils
- Monitor class most affected
- Refer as appropriate
- Review and evaluate plan

**4. Chaplaincy Role:****Intervention**

- Visit home(s), if appropriate
- Assist with prayer services
- Make contact with other local clergy
- Be available as personal and spiritual support to staff

**Post-intervention**

- Provide follow-up support to families in conjunction with Home School Community Liaison
- Work in partnership with Critical Incident team
- Review and Evaluate Plan

**5. Family Liaison Role:****Intervention**

- Co-ordinate contact with families (following first contact by Principal)
- Consult with family around involvement of school in e.g. funeral service
- Assist with all communication dealing with parents of any pupil affected by critical incident

**Post-intervention**

- Provide ongoing support to families affected by the incident
- Involve as appropriate the family in school liturgies/memorial services
- Offer to link family with community support groups
- Review and evaluate plan

**Action plan****SHORT-TERM ACTIONS (Day 1)**

- Immediate contact with family/families
- Consult with the family regarding appropriate support from the school, e.g. funeral service
- Ensure that a quiet place can be made for pupils/staff

### **Media Briefing (if appropriate)**

- Designate a spokesperson (Leader)
- Gather accurate information
- Prepare a brief statement (Team)
- Protect the family's privacy
- It is important to obtain accurate information about the incident
  1. What happened, where and when?
  2. What is the extent of the injuries?
  3. How many are involved and what are their names?
  4. Is there a risk of further injury?
  5. What agencies have been contacted already?
- Contact appropriate agencies
  1. Emergency services
  2. Medical services
  3. H.S.E. Psychology Departments/Community Care Services
  4. NEPS
- Convene a meeting with Key Staff/Critical Management Team
- Organise a staff meeting, if appropriate
- Ensure any absent staff members are kept informed
- Organise timetable/routine for the day (Adhering to the normal school routine is important, if this is possible)
- Class teachers to take note of any absentees who might need to be contacted, list of friends etc., or any other relevant information. This is to be given to the Student Liaison person
- Arrange supervision of pupils
- Liaise with the family regarding funeral arrangements/memorial service
- The Chaplain/Principal will liaise with the family, to extend sympathy and clarify the family's wishes regarding the school's involvement in funeral/memorial service
- Arrange a home visit by two staff representatives within 24 hours, if appropriate. (Student Liaison person + Class teacher)
- Have regard for different religious traditions and faiths

### **MEDIUM-TERM ACTIONS (24-72 HOURS)**

- Preparation of pupils/staff attending funeral
- Involvement of pupils/staff in liturgy if agreed by bereaved family
- Facilitation of pupil/staff responses, e.g. Sympathy cards, flowers, Book of Condolences, etc.
- Ritual within the school
- Review the events of the first 24 hours
- Reconvene Key Staff/Critical Incident Management Team
- Decide arrangements for support meetings for parents/students/staff
- Decide on mechanism for feedback from teachers on vulnerable students
- Have review of Critical Incident Management Team meeting
- Establish contact with absent staff and pupils
- Arrange support for individual pupils, groups of pupils, and parents, if necessary

- Hold support/information meeting for parents/students, if necessary, in order to clarify what has happened
- Give any teacher who feels uncomfortable with involvement in support meetings the choice of opting out
- Arrange, in consultation, with outside agencies, individual or group debriefings or support meetings with parental permission
- Plan for the re-integration of pupils and staff e.g. absentees, bereaved, injured, siblings, close relatives etc.)
- Pupil Liaison person to liaise with above on their return to school.
- Plan visits to injured
  - Family Liaison person + Class Teacher + Principal to visit home/hospital
  - Attendance and participation at funeral/memorial service (To be decided)
  - Decide this in accordance with parent/guardian's wishes, school management decisions and in consultation with close school friends
- School closure (if appropriate)
- Request a decision on this from school management

#### **LONGER TERM ACTIONS**

Monitor pupils for signs of continuing distress

If over a prolonged period of time, a pupil continues to display the following, he/she may need assistance from the HSE. Constant communication with family is essential.

- Uncharacteristic behaviour
- Deterioration in academic performance
- Physical symptoms — e.g. weight loss/gain, lack of attention to appearance, tiredness, restlessness
- Inappropriate emotional reactions
- Increased absenteeism

Evaluate response to incident and amend Critical Incident Management Plan appropriately

- What went well?
- Where were the gaps?
- What was most/least 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- Dr. Claire Brennan
- Inform new staff/new school pupils affected by Critical Incidents where appropriate
- Ensure that new staffs are aware of the school policy and procedures in this area
- Ensure they are aware of which pupils were 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, the Principal should brief the Principal of the new school

Decide on appropriate ways to deal with anniversaries (Be sensitive to special days and events)

*The first-named person has the responsibility as defined.*

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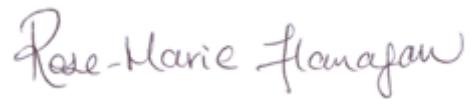
- Anniversaries may trigger emotional responses in pupils/staff and they may need additional support at this time
- Acknowledge the anniversary with the family
- Need to be sensitive to significant days like Birthdays, Christmas, Mother's Day, and Father's Day
- Plan a school memorial service
- Care for the deceased person's possessions. What are the parent/guardian's wishes?
- Update and amend school records

Drawn up by the Board of Management of St. Anne's School and ratified on 8th October 2025.



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Chairperson, BOM



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Secretary, BOM

## **Critical Incident Management Team/Roles**

| Role                               | Name  |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Leadership Role:                   | Rose-Marie Flanagan (Principal)/<br>Fiona Haugh (Deputy Principal)              |
| Communication Role:                | Beth Hickey (Chairperson)/<br>Rose-Marie Flanagan (Principal)                   |
| Student Liaison/ Counselling Role: | Fiona Haugh (Deputy Principal)/<br>Michelle O' Halloran (Assistant Principal I) |
| Chaplaincy Role:                   | Fr. David Carroll/Ennis parish priest   |
| Family Liaison Role:               | Fiona D'Arcy,<br>Rose-Marie Flanagan  |
| B.O.M. Rep:                        | Beth Hickey (Chairperson) / Deirdre Flynn                                       |
| Staff Liaison Role                 | Fiona Haugh (Deputy Principal)/<br>Michelle O' Halloran (Assistant Principal I) |
| Administrator                      | Louise Haugh, School Secretary  |