



# **Critical Incident Management Policy**

St. Nathy's College  
Ballaghaderreen  
Co. Roscommon

Roll Number 68067P

## **St Nathy's College Mission Statement**

St. Nathy's College was established by the Diocese of Achonry to act as a centre of learning. We strive to cultivate learning within a Christian environment which provides for the personal, physical, intellectual, moral and faith development of each student. All of our school endeavours and activities are towards these objectives.

### **Introductory Statement**

This policy has been formulated and drafted by the Board of Management of St. Nathy's College following the publication of *Responding to Critical Incidents in Schools* which requires all schools to have a Critical Incident Management Policy in place.

In accordance with the Mission Statement, St. Nathy's College aims to protect the well-being of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times.

St. Nathy's College has taken a number of measures to create a coping, supportive and caring ethos. We have 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 times and in the event of a critical incident.

The Board of Management, through Fr. Martin Henry, has drawn up a Critical Incident Management Plan as one element of the College's policies and plans.

### **Review and Research**

The Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) have consulted resource documents available to schools on [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie) and [www.nosp.ie](http://www.nosp.ie) including:

- Responding to Critical Incidents during School Closures and Public Health Restrictions arising from COVID-19 *Information Booklet for Schools* (NEPS 2020)
- Responding to Critical Incidents Guidelines and Resources for Schools (NEPS 2016)
- Suicide Prevention in Schools: Best Practice Guidelines IAS, National Suicide Review Group (2002)
- Suicide Prevention in the Community - A Practical Guide (HSE 2011)
- Wellbeing in Post-Primary Schools Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention (DES, DOH, HSE 2013)

## **Critical Incident**

The Staff and Management of St. Nathy's College 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 sudden death, accident, terminal illness or suicide
- An accident involving student(s) or staff on or off the school premises
- A physical attack on a staff member(s)
- A physical attack on a student(s)
- An intrusion into the school
- Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism etc.
- The disappearance of a member of the school community
- An accident/tragedy in the wider community

## **Aim**

The aim of the Critical Incident Management Policy is to help school management and staff to 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**

Systems have been established 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**

Our school carries out the following to ensure the physical safety of all school members on the school premises

- Only staff vehicles are permitted to enter the school grounds between 8:30am and 9:10am and between 3:30pm and 4:05pm
- A CCTV security system operates throughout the school
- During the school day, entry to the school is via the main entrance only

- The entrance gates are locked and the school is alarmed when vacant
- Staff or students shall not open fire exits to allow parents and or/students or others to enter the building
- During the school day, parents, students and visitors must report to the Main Office
- Late arrivals and early collection is recorded. It is necessary for parents/guardians to submit a message using the iClass app.
- Parents are not to block the entrance gates while waiting for the dismissal of students
- Fire Drills are conducted regularly. Evacuation procedures are clearly displayed in all classrooms and general purpose areas
- All Fire Extinguishers are checked on yearly basis
- Supervision is provided before class commences and during break times

### **Psychological Safety**

St. Nathy's College aims to create an open and encouraging environment in the school where students can talk about their difficulties and seek help for the same. The management and staff of St. Nathy's College aim to use available programmes and resources to address the personal and social development of students, to enhance a sense of safety and security in the College and to provide opportunities for reflection and discussion.

- Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is integrated into the work of the College. 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
  - prevention of alcohol and drug misuse
  - personal safety

Promotion of mental health is integral to the development of a supportive and caring ethos in the College.

- Staff have access to training for their role in SPHE
- Staff are familiar with the Children First 2015 and *Children First National Guidance for Protection and Welfare of Children 2017* and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures
- Books and resources on difficulties affecting the post primary student are available
- Information is provided on mental health in general and such specific areas as signs and symptoms of depression and anxiety
- Staff are informed in the area of suicide awareness and some are trained in interventions for suicidal students
- The school has developed links with a range of external agencies:
  - NEPS
  - CAMHS
  - Tusla
  - Educational Welfare Service
  - Jigsaw
  - Gardai Siochana
  - Health Service Executive (HSE)
- 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, in accordance with DES Circular 0023/2010
- The College has an anti-bullying policy
- There is a Pastoral Care system in place in the College using the 'Continuum of Support' approach which is outlined in the NEPS documents available on [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie)
- Students who are identified as being at risk are referred to the appropriate personnel where concerns are explored and the appropriate support provided

- When required a referral is made to an external agency
- 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 include the Pastoral Care Team and others who were selected on a voluntary basis and will retain their roles for at least one school year. The members of the team will meet annually to review and update the policy and plan. Each member of the team has a dedicated 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.

#### **Team leader: Fr. Martin Henry**

##### **Role**

- Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting
- Coordinates the tasks of the team
- Liaises with the Board of Management; DES; NEPS; SEC
- Liaises with the bereaved family

*(Note - The Deputy Principal Ms. Geraldine Gildea will act as Team Leader in the absence of the Principal)*

#### **Garda liaison Fr. Martin Henry**

##### **Role**

- Liaises with the Gardaí
- Ensures that information about deaths or other developments is checked out for accuracy before being shared

#### **Staff liaison Fr. Martin Henry**

##### **Role**

- Leads briefing meetings for staff on the facts as known, gives staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions, outlines the routine for the day
- Advises staff on the procedures for identification of vulnerable students
- Provides materials for staff (from their 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 ([www.spectrum.life.ie](http://www.spectrum.life.ie))

**Student liaison Ms. Alison Beirne****Role**

- At post-primary level, may co-ordinate information from tutors and Year Heads about students they are concerned about
- Alert other staff to vulnerable students
- Provide materials for students (from their critical incident folder)
- Maintain student contact records (R1)
- Prepare the College Chapel as necessary

**Community/agency liaison Ms. Karen Healy****Role**

- Maintain up to date lists of contact numbers of emergency support services and other external contacts and resources
- Liaise with external agencies for support and referral
- Check credentials of individuals offering support
- Co-ordinates the involvement of these external agencies
- Remind external support personnel to wear name badges
- Update CIMT on the involvement of external personnel

**Parent liaison Ms. Geraldine Gildea****Role**

- Visit the bereaved family with the CIMT leader
- Ensures that sample letters are available
- Prepare room for meetings
- Meet with individual parents
- Provide appropriate materials for parents from their critical incident folder

**Media liaison Fr. Martin Henry****Role**

- Will consider issues that may arise and how they might be responded to
- In the event of an incident, will liaise where necessary with the SEC
- Will draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews as agreed

**Administrator College Secretarial Staff****Role**

- Maintenance of up to date telephone numbers of
  - Parents or guardians
  - Teachers
  - Emergency Services
- Answers telephone calls and notes those that need to be responded to
- Ensure that templates are on VShare and ready for adaptation

- Prepare and send letters, emails and texts
- Photocopy materials required
- Maintain records

### **Record keeping: Ms Bernie Jordan**

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, material used etc.

The College Secretarial Staff will have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters, photocopying materials, etc.

### **Confidentiality and good name considerations**

The Management and staff of St. Nathy's College have a responsibility to protect the privacy and good name of people involved in any incident and will be sensitive to the consequences of public statements. Members of school staff will bear this in mind, and seek to ensure that students do so also, e.g. the term 'suicide' will not be used unless there is solid information that death was due to suicide, *and* that the family involved consents to its use. The phrases 'tragic death' or 'sudden death' may be used instead. Similarly, the word 'murder' should not be used until it is legally established that a murder was committed. The term 'violent death' may be used instead.

#### **Critical Incident Rooms**

In the event of a critical incident, the following rooms are designated for the indicated purposes

<b>Room Name:</b>	<b>Designated Purpose:</b>
<i>Staffroom</i>	Main room for meeting staff
<i>Classroom/Hall</i>	Meetings with students
<i>Classroom</i>	Meetings with parents
<i>To be agreed</i>	Meetings with media
<i>Chaplain's Room/ Guidance Counsellor's Office</i>	Individual sessions with students
<i>Refectory</i>	Meetings with other visitors



### **Consultation and communication regarding the plan**

St. Nathy's College Critical Incident Management Policy has been communicated to all staff. Each member of the Critical Incident Team has a personal copy of the policy.

All new and temporary staff will be informed of the details of the plan.

The plan will be updated annually.

Signature: 

Date: 10 February 2022

Chairperson Board of Management

**Review Date: February 2023**