



● Critical Incident Policy

Mission Statement:

St Augustine's School endeavours to promote excellence in teaching and learning where every child is valued and encouraged to reach his/her full potential. As a school community we seek to work in partnership to create a positive, safe environment where a spirit of justice and compassion, enriched by an awareness of its Catholic tradition prevails. St Augustine's School strives to promote an acceptance of all cultural backgrounds and to acknowledge individual beliefs and traditions.

To this end St Augustine's school aims to protect the well-being of its students by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times.

St Augustine's School has taken a number of measures to create a coping, supportive and caring ethos in the school. 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 students, both in ordinary time and in the event of a critical incident.



What is a Critical Incident?

As per DES / NEPS guidelines, St Augustine'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 a serious illness or disease in the 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 student from school.

Aim:

Recognising that the key to managing critical incidents is planning, St Augustine's School has developed this Critical Incident Management Policy and accompanying plan. Our hope is that, in the event of an incident, these will help staff to react quickly and effectively and to maintain a sense of control. They should also help us to achieve a return to normality as soon as possible and ensure that the effects on the students and staff will be limited.

Creation of a coping supportive and caring ethos in the school

We have put systems in place to reduce the probability of the occurrence of an incident. These include measures to address both the physical and psychological safety of both staff and students.



Physical safety:

The following policies and strategies have been put in place in order to maintain the physical safety of all members of the school community.

- Health & Safety Statement.
- Evacuation plan formulated.
- Regular fire drills occur.
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked.
- The fire alarm is serviced regularly, at least once a year.
- Pupils leaving early will only be released by a member of teaching staff when an authorised adult arrives to accompany the child from the premises or parental permission is granted telephonically and recorded in line with the school's internal recording system.
- Pupils are not released into the care of persons unknown to school staff without checking with a parent/ guardian (or prior consent given).
- Pupils are reminded of school rules by staff at regular intervals in the context of our School Code of Behaviour.
- Pupils are adequately supervised at all times especially during physical activity and breaks.
- First Aid box supplies are kept in the canteen area.

Psychological Safety:

St Augustine's School aims to create an open and encouraging environment in the school where students can talk about their difficulties and seek help.

The following strategies aim to support and ensure the psychological well-being of our pupils:

- SPHE is an integral part of the school curriculum and addresses issues such as grief and loss, communication skills, stress and anger management, conflict management, problem solving, help-seeking, decision making, and alcohol and drug prevention.
- The Stay Safe programme is taught throughout the school.



- School Anti-Bullying Policy; staff are fully aware of Mental Health Guidelines
- Substance/Alcohol Misuse Policy.
- Child Protection Policy; Child Safeguarding Statement
- Staff have completed 'Introduction to Children First' programme and 'Child Protection Procedures for all School Personnel'
- Staff are informed of difficulties affecting individual students and are aware of and vigilant in identifying their needs.
 - Staff are always updated and encouraged to attend relevant training in support of our students and staff such as vicarious trauma training etc.
- Staff have access to books and resources on difficulties affecting the primary school child.
- The school has developed links with outside agencies, which may be contacted in the event of an emergency and for onward referral of students. These include: NEPS, Túsla Child and Family Agency, CAMHS, Local Garda Station, Child and Family Centre, Family Resource Centre.

Critical Incident Management Team

St Augustine's has set up CI Management Team in line with best practice and will maintain this team in future. The members of the team were selected on a voluntary basis and will retain their roles for at least one school year. The members of the team will meet once a year to review and update the plan. Each member of the team has a Ready-to-Go pack with relevant materials to be used in the event of an incident.

In the event of an out of hours critical incident it is imperative that the Principal of the school is the first person to be made aware of this or contacted.



Roles

Key roles have been identified and assigned as follows:

- Team Leader: Maeve Lynch, School Principal.
- Staff Liaison: Angela Flanagan, School Deputy Principal
- Student Liaison: Aoife O'Dwyer
- Parent Liaison: Paul O'Shea
- Community Liaison: Paul O'Shea
- Media Liaison: Paul O' Shea
- Administration Tasks: Brid Rush, School Secretary
- Pastoral Care: Fr. Flor O'Callaghan, Prior, Augustinian Community, Limerick

In the event of a critical incident the responsibilities of each role-holder will be as follows.

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 and Department of Education and Skills, I.N.T.O., NEPS / relevant agencies.
- ▶ Liaises with the bereaved family.

Staff Liaison

- ▶ Leads meetings to brief staff on the facts as known, gives staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and outlines the routine for the day.
- ▶ Advises staff on the identification of vulnerable/affected students.
- ▶ Is alert to vulnerable staff members and makes contact with them individually.
- ▶ Provides relevant materials to staff e.g. Responding to Critical Incidents document.



Student Liaison

- ▶ Liaises with other team members to keep staff, student up-dated with information and progress.
- ▶ Alerts staff to vulnerable students.
- ▶ Provide materials for students where necessary.

Community Liaison

- ▶ Liaises with agencies in the community for support and onward referral.
- ▶ Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies.
- ▶ Co-ordinates the involvement of these agencies.
- ▶ Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of Emergency support services and other external contacts and resources.

Parent Liaison

- ▶ Facilitates 'questions and answers' meetings.
- ▶ Meets with individual parents.
- ▶ Provides materials for parents where necessary.
- ▶ Visits the bereaved family with the team leader.

Media Liaison

- ▶ In preparing for the role, we will consider issues that may arise during an incident and how they might be responded to (e.g. students being interviewed, photographers on the premises, etc.).
- ▶ In the event of an incident, will liaise where necessary with the Communications Section in the DES.

Administrative Tasks

- Maintenance of up to date lists of contact numbers of Parents or guardians & Teachers
- Emergency support services
- ▶ Telephone calls needing to be responded to, letters sent and materials photocopied.



Record Keeping

In the event of an incident each member of the team will keep detailed records of phone calls made and received, letters sent and received, meetings held, persons met, interventions used, material used etc. The school secretary will have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters, photocopying materials, etc.

Letter to Parents

The Principal will prepare a brief, written statement to include:

- ▶ The sympathy of the school community for the affected/bereaved family
- ▶ Positive information or comments about the deceased/injured person(s)
- ▶ The facts of the incident
- ▶ What has been done
- ▶ What is going to be done

Confidentiality and good name considerations

The school has 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 ensure that pupils do so also. *[For instance, 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 a result of suicide. The phrases 'tragic death' or 'sudden death' may be used instead.]*



Critical Incident Room

In the event of a critical incident, the Staff Room will serve as the main space for meeting with staff, students, parents, and visitors involved. If a second space is required, the **Purple Room/Wellbeing Space** will be used. Should a larger space be needed, the school canteen will be made available.

Development and communication of this policy and plan

All staff members were consulted and asked for their comments. Our school's final policy and procedures in relation to responding to critical incidents has been presented to all staff.

Each member of the critical incident team has a personal copy.

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

Critical Incident Policy to be ratified by Board of Management and reviewed regularly and up-dated as required.

Ratification and Review

This policy has been ratified by the Board of Management and will be reviewed every two years.

Signed: _____

Chairperson Board of Management

Date: _____