



St. Mary's Secondary School

CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT PLAN



St. Mary's Secondary School aims to protect the well-being of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times.

Mission Statement:

St. Mary's is a Mercy school, which is concerned with developing the whole person within a Christian atmosphere. By providing a balance of educational activities, we foster growth in self-esteem and respect for others.

We take pride in encouraging high standards of teaching and learning.

The Board of Management, through the Principal, has drawn up a Critical Incident Management Plan as one element of the school's policies and plans.

Definition of a Critical Incident

The staff and management of St. Mary's Secondary School 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 suspected suicide or other unexpected death*
- *An intrusion into the school*
- *An accident involving members of the school community*
- *An accident/tragedy in the wider community*
- *Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism, etc*
- *The disappearance of a member of the school community*

Aim

The aim of the Critical Incident management Plan (CIMP) 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 return to normality as soon as possible.

Creation of a coping supportive and caring ethos in the school

We have put systems in place 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

- The school operates a programme of supervision before, during and after school
- Appropriate signage directs visitors to the Main Reception
- Students are not allowed leave the school grounds during the school day without parental permission
- School conducts an annual review of the Child Safeguarding Statement
- A Health & Safety Policy and Statement is in place
- An Attendance & Punctuality Policy is in place



- An Evacuation plan formulated
- Regular fire drills occur
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
- Incident /Accident report forms are created for any incidents that occur

Psychological safety

The management and staff of St. Mary's Secondary School 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 school and to provide opportunities for reflection and discussion.

- Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE), Wellbeing & Religious Education is integrated into the work of the school. 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 and prevention of alcohol and drug misuse. Promotion of mental health is an integral part of this provision
- Staff have access to training for their role in SPHE
- Staff are familiar with the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures
- Resources on difficulties affecting the post primary school students 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 –these include:
 - National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)
 - Health Service Executive (HSE)
 - Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)
 - Department of Education (DoE)
 - State Examination Commission (SEC)
 - Mindspace
 - North Mayo Youth Project / Involve / Foróige
 - Mayo Mental Health Association
 - Family Resource Centre Ballina
 - St. Vincent de Paul
 - Local Clergy/Parish
- 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
- The school has a clear policy on bullying and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy
- There is a care system in place in the school using the "Continuum of Support" approach
- Students who are identified as being at risk are referred to the Student Support Team, where concerns are explored and the appropriate level of assistance and support is provided. Parents are informed, and where appropriate, a referral is made to an appropriate agency.
- Staff are informed about how to access support for themselves.



Links with other policies

The Critical Incident management Policy should be read in conjunction with all other school policies, with particular reference to the school Bereavement Policy.

Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)

A CIMT has been established in line with best practice. 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 annually to review and update the policy and plan. Each member of the team has access dedicated critical incident folder on Microsoft Teams. This contains a copy of the policy and plan and materials particular to their role, to be used in the event of an incident.

Critical Incident Management Team	
Role	Name
Team leader:	<i>Mr. Robert O'Reilly</i>
Deputy Team Leader:	<i>Ms. Fiona Bourke</i>
Garda liaison	<i>Mr. Robert O'Reilly</i>
Staff liaison	<i>Team Leader / Ms. Pauline Carney</i>
Student liaison	<i>Team Leader / Relevant Year Head</i>
Community liaison	<i>Team Leader / Ms. Leanne Ginty</i>
Parent liaison	<i>Team Leader / Ms. Denise Kilgallon</i>
Media liaison	<i>Team leader / Deputy Leader</i>
Administrator	<i>Maria McMyler/Gabrielle Moyles</i>
Guidance Counsellor	<i>Ms. Pauline Carney</i>
Chaplain	<i>Ms. Joanne Cullen</i>

**Team leader:**

Role may include but is not limited to:

- Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting
- Coordinates the tasks of the team and may delegate tasks as necessary
- Liaises with the Board of Management; DoE; NEPS; SEC
- Liaises with the bereaved family
- Liaises with the Gardaí
- Ensures that information about deaths or other developments is checked out for accuracy before being shared

Staff liaison

Role may include but is not limited to assisting the Team Leader with the following:

- 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 contacts them individually
- Advises them of the availability of the EAS and gives them the contact number.

Student liaison

Role may include but is not limited to assisting the Team Leader with the following:

- Co-ordinate information from tutors and year heads about students they are concerned about
- Alerts other staff to vulnerable students (appropriately)
- Provides materials for students (from their critical incident folder)
- Maintains student contact records (R1).
- Looks after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room where agreed

Community/agency liaison

Role may include but is not limited to assisting the Team Leader with the following:

- Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of
 - Key parents, such as members of the Parents Council
 - Emergency support services and other external contacts and resources
- Liaises with agencies in the community for support and onward referral
- Is alert to the need to check credentials of individuals offering support
- Coordinates the involvement of these agencies
- Reminds agency staff to wear name badges
- Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies

Parent liaison

Role may include but is not limited to assisting the Team Leader with the following:

- Visits the bereaved family with the team leader
- Arranges parent meetings, if held
- May facilitate such meetings, and manage 'questions and answers'
- Ensures that sample letters are typed up, on the school's system and ready for adaptation
- Sets up room for meetings with parents
- Maintains a record of parents seen



- Meets with individual parents
- Provides appropriate materials for parents (from their critical incident folder)

Media liaison

Role may include but is not limited to assisting the Team Leader with the following:

- In advance of an incident, will consider issues that may arise 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 SEC; relevant teacher unions etc.
- Will draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews (as agreed by school management)

Administrator

Role may include but is not limited to assisting the Team Leader with the following:

- Maintenance of up to date telephone numbers of
 - Parents or guardians
 - Teachers
 - Emergency services
- Takes telephone calls and notes those that need to be responded to
- Ensures that templates are on the schools system in advance and ready for adaptation
- Prepares and sends out letters, emails and texts
- Photocopies materials needed
- Maintains records

Guidance Counsellor

Role may include but is not limited to assisting the Team Leader with the following:

- Offer support to teachers/staff and be present when communicating with students.
- To provide counselling/emotional support to students affected by the incident.
- Support teachers in implementing a response in the classroom
- Provide resources/guidelines on talking and listening to students
- Helping teachers to identify the needs of students in relation to one-to-one support
- Provide a space and time for one-to-one support or group support
- Access and facilitate support from relevant outside agencies when necessary
- Communicate or meet with parents/guardians when necessary
- Feedback to CIM team
- Monitor and support affected students in the following weeks
- Liaise with Chaplain and with CIM team

Chaplain

Role may include but is not limited to assisting the Team Leader with the following:

- Visit homes of the bereaved/injured family with Team Leader.
- Liaise with bereaved family regarding religious supports
- Co-ordinate the school's involvement with funeral arrangements
- Meet with identified vulnerable/distressed students
- Prepare a sacred space
- Organise a short prayer service for school community/year group
- Remain available and flexible to support members of the school community



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, material used etc.

The School Secretary will have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters, photocopying materials, etc.

Confidentiality and good name considerations

Management and staff of St. Mary's Secondary School 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	
Room Name:	Designated Purpose:
Library	Main room for meeting staff
Library	Meetings with student groups
Library HSCL Office Meeting Room	Meetings with parents
Meeting Room	Meetings with media
Guidance office Chaplains office Prayer Room	Individual sessions with students
Meeting Room	Meetings with other visitors

Consultation and communication regarding the plan

All staff were consulted and their views canvassed in the preparation of this policy and plan. Students and parent/guardian representatives were also consulted and asked for their comments.

Our school's final policy and plan in relation to responding to critical incidents has been presented to all staff. Each member of the critical incident team has a personal copy of the plan.

All new and temporary staff will be informed of the details of the plan by Staff Liaison person.

The plan will be reviewed annually by the Pastoral Care Team.



Short term actions – Day 1

Task	Name
Gather accurate information i.e Who, what, when, where?	CIMT
Convene a CIMT meeting – specify time and place clearly	Team Leader
Contact external agencies	Community liaison Person
Arrange supervision for students	Deputy Team Leader Year Head
Hold staff meeting	All staff
Agree schedule for the day	CIMT
Inform students – (close friends and students with learning difficulties may need to be told separately)	Student Liaison Person Guidance Counsellor Chaplain
Compile a list of vulnerable students	Student Liaison Person Guidance Counsellor Chaplain
Prepare and agree media statement and deal with media	Team Leader
Inform parents	Team Leader Parent Liaison Person
Hold end of day staff briefing	CIMT



Medium term actions - (Day 2 and following days)

Task	Name
Convene a CIMT meeting to review the events of day 1	Team leader
Meet external agencies	Community liaison Person
Meet whole staff	All Staff
Arrange support for students, staff, parents	CIMT
Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements	Team Leader Parent Liaison Person
Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service	CIMT (refer to School Bereavement Policy)
Make decisions about school closure	BOM

Follow-up – beyond 72 hours

Task	Name
Monitor students for signs of continuing distress	Class teachers
Liaise with agencies regarding referrals	Community liaison Person Guidance Counsellor Chaplain
Plan for return of bereaved student(s)	Student Liaison Person
Plan for giving of 'memory box' to bereaved family	Student Liaison Person
Decide on memorials and anniversaries	BOM/Staff, parents and students
Review response to incident and amend plan	Staff/BOM



EMERGENCY CONTACT LIST

AGENCY	CONTACT NUMBERS
Garda	Ballina (096) 20550
Hospital	Ballina (096) 21166 Castlebar (094) 902 1733
Fire Brigade	112 or 999
Local GPs	Ballina Medical Centre (096) 22868 Moy View Family Practice (096) 22933 Atlantic Medical Centre (096) 93706 Westdoc Ballina (1850) 365 000
HSE	Ballina (096) 21511
Ballina Family Resource Centre	(096) 75573
Child and Family Mental Health Service (CAMHS)	Ballina (096) 20399 / 43399
School Inspectorate (Dublin)	(01) 889 6553
NEPS Psychologist	Seamus Cunniffe (087) 9495013
DES	Athlone (090) 648 3600 Dublin (01) 889 6400
ASTI/TUI	ASTI (01) 6040160 TUI (01) 492 2588
Clergy	(096) 70555
State Exams Commission	Athlone (090) 6442700
Employee Assistance Service	(1800) 411 057



Ratification

The Critical Incident Management Plan will be reviewed annually.

The Anti Bullying Policy was ratified by the Board of Management on:

Signed: Fionnuala Ky
Chairperson of Board of Management

Signed: Robert S. Kelly
Principal/Secretary to the Board of Management

Date: 18th March 2025