St. Anne's National School

Chapel Road, Tangeragee,
Bailieborough,
Co. Cavan.
A82 DR53

School Roll Number: 18059J

Critical Incidents Policy

Version	Review	Consultation	Ratified by BoM	Next Review Date
1	New Policy Formulation	ISLT, Parents, Whole Staff, Board of Management	May 2018	May 2021
2	Policy Review	Yes - as above	May 2021	May 2024
3	Update formatting and all procedures/personnel	CIMT, ISLT and Whole Staff	June 2026	January 2029

This policy was formulated by St. Anne's National School following a consultation process and in accordance with the relevant acts, policy and legislation as set out by the Department of Education and Youth. It was ratified by the Board of Management.

St. Anne's N.S.
Scoil Naomh Áine

Critical Incidents Policy

1. Introduction

St. Anne's National School cherishes each child and, in partnership with the parents, 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 N.S. aims to protect the well-being of its students by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times.

St. Anne's N.S. 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.

The Board of Management (BoM) through the Principal, the Staff and Parents have drawn up a Critical Incident Management Plan. The BoM has also established a Critical Incidents Management Team (CIMT) to steer the development and implementation of the plan.

2. Rationale

The purpose of this policy is to outline the rationale and process of managing a critical incident. This policy has been formulated by St. Anne's N.S. and is guided by *Responding to Critical Incidents Guidelines and Resources for Schools* (NEPS, 2016) to inform teachers, SNAs and parents/guardians of our Critical Incident Policy.

3. Aims

Recognising that the key to managing critical incidents is planning, St. Anne's N.S. has developed this Critical Incident Management Policy and accompanying plan. Our aim is

- To outline the definition of a critical incident.
- 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.
- To help limit the effects of a critical incident on students and staff.
- To enable us to effect a return to normality as soon as possible.

4. Definition of Critical Incident

As per Department of Education and Youth (DEY) / National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) guidelines, St. Anne's N.S. 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" (NEPS, p.12, 2016). 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.
- Civil unrest, war (traumatised events)
- 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 student(s) from school.

5. Creation of a Coping, Supportive and Caring Ethos in a School

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

5.1. 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.

Fire and Emergency Exit Procedures	• Evacuation plan formulated and implemented. • Fire drills (two each academic year, planned and unplanned). • Fire exits and extinguishers are clearly labelled and regularly checked. • The Fire Alarm is serviced regularly (at least once a year). • Health and Safety Statement.
General Safety Procedures	• Designated entry and exit routes and specified doors. • School is fully fenced and all gates are locked during the school day. • Access to school during school hours is by the main entrance and all visitors must report to the office first. • Pupils leaving early will only be released by a member of school staff when an authorised adult arrives to accompany the child from the premises and signs them out via the school office. • Pupils are not released into the care of persons unknown to school staff without checking with a parent/guardian. All adults must be over 18 years. • First Aid boxes maintained and kept in: a) First Aid Station (Storeroom & Junior Corridor) b) In all classrooms • Stay Safe Programme is taught on a yearly basis as part of SPHE curriculum. • A defibrillator is installed and regularly serviced in foyer.
Supervision	• Pre-opening supervision in the school yard. Officially, St. Anne's National School commences at 8.50am. However, supervision is available on the premises from 8.40am. • There is supervision at home time to ensure that all pupils have exited the school grounds safely and that those travelling by car or bus have been collected • Pupils are reminded of playground rules by staff at regular intervals in the context of our School's Code of Behaviour. Yards are zoned and class bubbles do not integrate with each other.

5.2. Psychological Safety

The management and staff of St. Anne's N.S. 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.

Some examples include:
St. Anne's N.S. aims to create an open and encouraging environment in the school where students can talk about their difficulties and seek help for same.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. Promotion of mental health is an integral part of this provision.
- The Stay Safe programme is taught in its entirety throughout the school on an annual basis.
- The school has a clear policy on *Bí Cineálta - Measures to Address and Prevent Bullying in School* and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy
- Staff members are familiar with the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures. At the first staff meeting of the year, there will be a recap of procedures for all staff with regular reminders throughout the school year. Staff are reminded of the name of our Designated Liaison Person (DLP) - Principal George McAdam, and the Deputy Designated Liaison Person (DDLP) - Deputy Principal Orla Walsh.
- The school has developed links with a range of external agencies e.g. NEPS, Barnardos, Túsla and NCSE etc.
- Friends for Life programme (5th Classes). Three members of staff have been trained in the use of the programme.
- Substance Use Policy is in place.
- Staff members completed the '*Introduction to Children First*' programme and '*Child Protection Procedures for all School Personnel*' PDST (March 2018). All staff will complete a refresher course every 2 years (odd year).
- New members of staff on appointment must update their training and provide evidence of such to the school office.
- Staff members are informed of difficulties affecting individual students and are aware of and vigilant in identifying their needs.
- There is a care system in place in the school using the *Continuum of Support* approach which is outlined in the relevant DEY, NEPS and NCSE documents.
- Students who are identified as being at risk are referred to the designated staff member (e.g. support teacher), 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 each year at the initial Staff Meeting.

6. Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)

St. Anne's N.S. has set up a CIMT 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 train their roles for at least one school year.

The members of the team will meet once yearly 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 (See Figure 1).

CIMT Role	Name	Position
Team Leader	George McAdam	Principal
Staff & Media Liaison Role	Orla Walsh	Deputy Principal
Student Liaison	Oonagh S/Therese M	Nurture Teachers

Parent Liaison	Ms Katie Stafford TBC	Katie Stafford Chairperson of PA
Chaplaincy Role & Pastoral Care	Fr. John Cooney Ms Katie Stafford	Parish Priest and Member of Board of Management HSCL & Assistant Principal
NEPS Role	Philip Clarke	
Community Liaison	AP1 (tbc) Lisa Stephens	Assistant Principal Community Garda, Bailieborough Station
Administration Role	Orla Walsh Aisleen Tierney	Deputy Principal Secretary
Caretaker Role	Charlie Clarke	Caretaker

(Figure 1)

6.2. What Type of Response is Required

Response Level 1	The death of a student or staff member who was terminally ill; the death of a parent/sibling; a fire in school not resulting in serious injury; serious damage to school property.
Response Level 2	The sudden death of a student or staff member.
Response Level 3	An accident/event involving a number of students; a violent death; an incident with a high media profile or involving a number of schools.

6.3. CIMT Roles and Responsibilities

In the event of a critical incident, the responsibilities of each role holder will be as follows:

Team Leader	George McAdam	Postvention
• Confirm the event and alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting. • Co-ordinates the tasks of the team. • Liaise with the Gardaí/Emergency services • Liaises with the Board of Management and DEY, NEPS, INTO and other relevant agencies • Liaises with the bereaved family. • 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 • Decide how news will be communicated to different groups (staff, pupils, outside school)		Ensure provision of ongoing support to staff and students Facilitate any appropriate memorial events Review Plan
Staff & Media Liaison Role	**Orla Walsh**	**Postvention**
• 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 students. • Is alert to vulnerable staff members and makes contact with them individually. • Provides materials to staff from the Ready to Go Pack. • Keeps staff updated as the day progresses. • Advises them of the availability of the Employee Assistance Service and gives them the contact number. • In preparing for the role, the CIMT 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 DEY. • Will draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews as agreed by school management.		Review and evaluate effectiveness of communication response Provide ongoing support to bereaved family Involve, as appropriate, family in school liturgies/memorial services Offer to link family with community support groups Review and Evaluate Plan
Student Liaison	**Nurture Teachers**	**Postvention**
• Liaises with other team members to keep staff and students up-dated with information and progress. • Alerts staff to vulnerable students. • Provide materials for students from the Ready-to-Go-Pack. • Maintains student contact records. • Looks after location and supervision of "incident room" in line with policy.		Ongoing support to vulnerable students Monitor class most affected Refer on, as appropriate Review and Evaluate Plan

Community Liaison	AP1 & Lisa Stephens	Postvention

• 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.
• Co-ordinates the involvement of external agencies and updates team members accordingly.
• Is alert to the need to check credentials of individuals offering support.
• Reminds agency staff to wear name badges.		

Family Liaison	**Katie Stafford & Chairperson of Parents Together Group**	**Postvention**
• Co-ordinate contact with families (following first contact by Principal) • 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. • Set up a room for meetings with parents. • Meets with individual parents • Maintains a record of parents seen. • Provides appropriate materials for parents Ready-to-Go-Pack.		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
Chaplaincy Role & Pastoral Care	**Fr. John Cooney & Katie Stafford**	**Postvention**
• Visit home(s), if appropriate • Assist with prayer services • Make contact with other local clergy • Be available as personal and spiritual support to staff		Provide follow-up support to families in conjunction with Home School Community Liaison Work in partnership with Critical Incident team Review and Evaluate Plan

Administration	Orla Walsh & Aisleen Tierney	Postvention

• Maintenance of up to date lists of contact numbers of
  ○ Parents / guardians
  ○ Teachers
  ○ Emergency support services
• Telephone calls needing to be responded to, letters sent and materials photocopied.
• Ensures that templates are on the school's system in advance and ready for adaptation.
• Prepares and sends out letters, emails and texts.
• Photocopies materials needed
• Maintains records.		

6.4. Critical Incident Action Plan

Short Term Actions	

First 24 hours (*See Appendix A Checklist*)	Day 1:
	• Immediate contact with family/families
	• Consult with the family regarding appropriate support from the school, e.g. funeral service
	• Rooms will be made available as follows:
	  ○ Prayer room
	  ○ Individual Meetings
	  ○ Parents Room
	• Alert BoM
	• Alert DEY School Inspector
	
	Media Briefing (if appropriate)
	• Convene a meeting with CIMT
	• 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
	• Contact appropriate agencies
	  ○ Emergency services
	  ○ Medical services
	  ○ H.S.E. Psychology Departments/Community Care Services
	  ○ NEPS
	
	Convene a meeting with Key Staff/CIMT:
	• Organise a staff meeting, if appropriate
	• Organize timetable/routine for the day (adhering to the normal school routine is important, if this is possible)
	• 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 students
	
	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 students/staff attending funeral • Involvement of students/staff in liturgy if agreed by bereaved family • Facilitation of student/staff responses, e.g. Sympathy cards, flowers, Book of Condolences, etc. • Ritual within the school • Review the events of the first 24 hours

	○ Reconvene CIMT meeting ○ Decide arrangements for support meetings for parents/students/staff ○ Decide on mechanism for feedback from teachers on vulnerable students ○ Have review of CIMT meeting ○ Establish contact with absent staff and pupils Arrange support for individual students, groups of students, 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 debriefing or support meetings with parental permission. Permission slips to be included in enrolment forms. Plan for the re-integration of students and staff e.g. absentees, injured, siblings, close relatives etc.) ○ Student liaison person to liaise with above on their return to school ○ Plan visits to injured ○ Family Liaison person, Class Teacher and Principal to visit home/hospital ○ Attendance and participation at funeral/memorial service (to be decided in accordance with parents' wishes.
Longer Term Actions	
72 hours +	Monitor students for signs of continuing distress. If, over a prolonged period of time, a student continues to display the following he/she may need assistance from the HSE/NEPS: • 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 1) What went well? 2) Where were the gaps? 3) What was most/least helpful? 4) Have all necessary onward referrals to support services been made? 5) Is there any unfinished business? Formalize the Critical Incident Plan for the future • Consult with NEPS psychologist Inform new staff/new school pupils affected by Critical Incidents where appropriate • Ensure that new staff is 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, it would be useful to brief the Principal of the

	new school. Decide on appropriate ways to deal with anniversaries (be sensitive to special days and events) • Anniversaries may trigger emotional responses in students/staff • Pupils may need additional support at this time • Acknowledge the anniversary with the family • Be sensitive to significant days like Birthdays, Christmas, Mother's Day and Father's Day • Plan a school memorial service • Care of deceased person/s possessions. What are the parent/s wishes? • Update and amend school record

6.5. Critical Incident Rooms

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

Room Name	Designated Purpose
Hall	Main room for meeting staff
Hall & Classrooms	Meetings with students
Hall, Principal's Office and HSCL Room	Meetings with parents
Hall	Meeting with Media
An Nead	Individual Sessions with Pupils
Principal & DP's Office	Meetings with other relevant personnel

7. 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.

8. Letter to Parents/Guardians

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

9. 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.]

10. 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.

11. Ratification and Review

The Critical Incident Policy was ratified by the Board of Management and implemented in 2018 and most recently reviewed in June 2026. The plan will be updated every 3 years or in the aftermath of any critical incident that the school has to deal with.

Debbie Clarke
Chairperson of BoM

George McAdam
Principal

Appendix A
Summary Checklist for Principals (Day 1)

1	Gather the facts - what has happened, when, how, where, and who is injured or dead
2	Consult Responding to Critical Incidents: Guidelines and Resource Materials for Schools (avaliable on the DES website www.education.ie)
3	Is it an incident requiring a NEPS Response at Level 1, 2 or 3?
4	Who do I need to call (see Emergency Contact List - R2.1)?
5	Meet with the other Critical Incident Management Team
6	Meet with other agencies, if involved, to agree roles and procedures
7	Have administration staff photocopy appropriate literature
8	Arrange for the supervision of students
9	Agree content of communication for school social media site, if appropriate
10	Address the staff meeting
11	Identify vulnerable students
12	Draft a media statement (R4)
13	Prepare for a media interview, (see Section 9)
14	Draft a letter to parents (R2, R3)
15	Meet with the CIMT to review the day and arrange an early morning meeting for the following day
16	Meet with the staff group
17	Make contact with the affected family/families.

MAINTAIN THE NORMAL ROUTINE IF AT ALL POSSIBLE

Appendix B
Emergency Contact List

Agency	Relevant Details
Gardaí	Bailieborough Garda Station Barrack Street, Bailieborough (042) 969 4570
Hospital	Cavan General Hospital (049) 437 6000
Fire Brigade	Call: 999 Call: 112
Local Minor Injuries Unit	Monaghan Injuries Unit (047) 388 35
HSE Community Care Team	Bailieborough Health Centre (042) 967 5540
TUSLA	TUSLA Cavan +353 49 436 9801
Child & Family Mental Health Service (CAMHS)	CAMHS Cavan (049) 437 8920
School Inspector	Yvonne Ní Mhurchú inspectorate@education.gov.ie
NEPS Psychologist	NEPS Cavan (049) 432 5430
DEY	https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-education/
INTO	Telephone: +353 1 804 7700 LoCall: 1850 708 708
Clergy	Fr. John Cooney (PP) (042) 966 5117
Employee Assistance Service	1800 411 047

Appendix B
Emergency Contact List

Agency	Relevant Details
Gardaí	Bailieborough Garda Station Barrack Street, Bailieborough (042) 969 4570
Hospital	Cavan General Hospital (049) 437 6000
Fire Brigade	Call: 999 Call: 112
Local Minor Injuries Unit	Monaghan Injuries Unit (047) 388 35
HSE Community Care Team	Bailieborough Health Centre (042) 967 5540
TUSLA	TUSLA Cavan +353 49 436 9801
Child & Family Mental Health Service (CAMHS)	CAMHS Cavan (049) 437 8920
School Inspector	Yvonne Ní Mhurchú inspectorate@education.gov.ie
NEPS Psychologist	NEPS Cavan (049) 432 5430
DEY	https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-education/
INTO	Telephone: +353 1 804 7700 LoCall: 1850 708 708
Clergy	Fr. John Cooney (PP) (042) 966 5117
Employee Assistance Service	1800 411 047