St. Anthony's Special School
Humbert Way
Castlebar

Critical Incident Policy

Version	Revision Date	Reason	Approved by	Approved on
1	Jan '24	New Policy	BOM	29/4/24
2	Oct '26	Review	BOM	Nov ' 26

Introduction:
In St. Anthony's School we aim to protect the wellbeing of our pupils and staff by providing a safe, secure and well ordered environment as outlined in our school mission statement.
St Anthony's school has established a Critical Incidents Management Team to steer the development and implementation of the plan.
Critical Incident definition
The staff and management of St Anthony's Special 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.
Examples:

- 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
- A major accident/tragedy in the wider community
- Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism, etc
- A major accident/tragedy in the wider community

Aim
The aim of the Critical Incident Management Policy/plan
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 impact on 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
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 management and staff of St Anthony's Special School work hard to make sure the students and staff are in a physically safe environment, risk assessing and putting in place preemptive measures such as.

- Evacuation plan in case of a fire formulated
- Regular fire drills occur
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
- Intrusion evacuation plan
- Supervision in the school yard (Teachers within each bubble rotate duty)
- Yard gates locked during school hours
- Classes in need of an extra safety measure have high door handles.

- Rules of the playground
- Staff supervision rota during lunches
- Monitor and risk assess environment for vulnerable students

Psychological safety
The management and staff of St Anthony's Special 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. Examples:

- Staff are familiar with the Child Protection Procedures and the name of the Designated Liaison Person
- Staff have access to training for their role in SPHE
- Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is integrated into the work of the school. 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 are addressed in the SPHE curriculum, the Junior Cycle Personal care programme and Senior Cycle programme. Promotion of mental health is an integral part of this provision.
- Books and resources on difficulties affecting the primary/post primary school student are available
- The school has a clear anti-bullying policy and deals with incidents of bullying in accordance with this policy
- Staff are informed about how to access support for themselves
- Information is provided on mental health in general and such specific areas as signs and symptoms of depression and anxiety

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 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.

Roles:

Team Leader: Anna Sweeney and Helena Brady
Garda Liaison:Anna Sweeney, Helena Brady and Joe Staunton
Staff Liaison: Anna Sweeney and Helena Brady
Student Liaison: Noelle Murphy and Clare Fitzgerald
Parent/Guardian Liaison: Jenda Ann Mathew and Lucy Barrett
Administrator: Lucy Barrett
Support to Staff & Students(refreshments): Caroline Cresham & Belinda Masterson

Responsibilities

Team leader:

- Confirms the event
- 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,Patron,INTO, FORSA and Parish
- Liaises with the bereaved family

Garda Liaison:

- Liaises with the Gardaí
- Ensures that information is checked out for accuracy before being shared

Staff Liaison:

- Lead 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
- Keeps staff updated as the day progresses
- Advises them of the availability of the EAS(Employee Assistance Service) and gives them the contact number.
- Provides materials for staff (from their critical incident folder)
- Advises staff on the procedures for identification of vulnerable students
- Is alert to vulnerable staff members and makes contact with them individually

Student Liaison:

- Alerts other staff to vulnerable students (appropriately)
- Maintains student contact records
- Provides materials for students (from their critical incident folder)
- Looks after setting up and supervision of a 'quiet' room where agreed.

Community/Agency Liaison:

- Liaises with agencies in the community for support and onward referral
- 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
- Is alert to the need to check credentials of individuals offering support
- Coordinates the involvement of these agencies
- Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies.
- Reminds agency staff to wear name badges

Parent/Guardian Liaison:

- Visits the bereaved family with the team leader
- Arranges meetings, if held
- May facilitate such meetings, and manage 'questions and answers' sessions
- Provides appropriate materials for parents (from their critical incident folder).
- Ensures that sample letters are prepared and available on the school's IT system ready for adaptation
- Meets with individual parents

- Visits the bereaved family with the team leader
- Maintains a record of parents seen
- Manages the 'consent' issues in accordance with agreed school policy
- Sets up room for meetings with parents

Media Liaison:

- In the event of an incident, will liaise where necessary with the relevant unions etc.
- 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.)
- Will draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews

Administrator:

- Maintenance of up to date telephone numbers of
  • Parents/guardians • Teachers • Emergency services , Parish Priest
- Takes telephone calls and notes those that need a response
- Prepares and sends out letters, emails and texts
- Ensures that templates are available on the schools IT system and ready for adaptation
- Photocopies materials as needed
- Maintains records.

Record keeping

In the event of an incident each member of the team will keep records of phone calls made and received, letters,emails and texts sent and received, meetings held, persons met, interventions used, material used etc.

The administrator 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 Anthony's Special school have 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 seek to ensure that students do so also. For instance,the term 'suicide' will not be used unless there is confirmed 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 staffroom or the hall- will be the main room used to meet the staff

The classroom or the hall- for meetings with students

The Hall or Library - for parents

The Hall or outside school - for media

The classroom or the library - for individual sessions with students

The library - for other visitors

Consultation and communication regarding the plan
All staff were consulted and their views canvassed in the preparation of this policy and plan. 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
The plan will be updated annually in September/Oct.

This Plan was reviewed, updated and approved by The St.Anthony's Special School Board of Management

Teresa Ward ---------- 10/11/2026 ----------

Signature: Chairperson BOM Date

---------- 10/11/2026 ----------

Signature: Principal Date

Short Term Plan-Day 1

Task	Name
Gather accurate information	
Who, what, when, where?	
Convene a CIMT meeting - specify time and place clearly	
Contact external agencies	
Arrange supervision for students	
Hold staff meeting	
Agree schedule for the day	
Inform students - (close friends and students with learning difficulties may need to be told separately)	
Contact/visit the bereaved family	
Compile a list of vulnerable students	
Prepare and agree media statement and deal with the media	
Inform parents/guardians	
Hold end of day staff briefing	

Medium term actions

Task	Name
Convene a CIMT meeting to review day 1	
Meet external agencies	
Meet whole staff	
Arrange support for students, staff, parents/guardians	
Visit the injured	
Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements	
Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service	
Make decisions about school closure	
Monitor students for signs of continued distress	
Liaise with agencies regarding referrals	
Plan for return of bereaved students	
Plan for arranging of 'memory box'	
Decide on memorials	
Review response to incident and amend plan	