



St. Paul's SNS Critical Incident Policy

Signed: A. Gally Principal
Signed: Rvr. John Cohen Chairperson of BoM
Date: 9/06/2026.

1. Policy Statement

St. Paul's Senior National School is committed to promoting and protecting the wellbeing, safety and dignity of all members of the school community. The Board of Management recognises its responsibility to ensure that appropriate structures and procedures are in place to respond effectively to critical incidents that may affect students, staff, parents/guardians and the wider school community.

This policy provides a framework for preventing, preparing for, responding to and recovering from critical incidents in a manner that is supportive, compassionate, coordinated and compliant with current legislation and Department of Education guidance.

2. Rationale

A critical incident may have a significant impact on the emotional, psychological and physical wellbeing of members of the school community. Effective planning and preparation can reduce distress, facilitate appropriate support and enable the school to return to normal functioning as quickly as possible.

This policy has been developed in accordance with:

- Education Act 1998
- Children First Act 2015
- Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005
- General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)
- Department of Education guidance
- National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) Critical Incident Guidelines
- Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice (2018–2025)

3. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All pupils enrolled in St. Paul's SNS
- All members of staff
- Members of the Board of Management
- Parents and guardians
- Visitors and volunteers where relevant

4. Definition of a Critical Incident

A critical incident is defined as:

"An incident or sequence of events that overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of the school and disrupts the running of the school."

Critical incidents may include, but are not limited to:

- The death of a student, staff member or member of the school community
- Serious accidents or injuries
- Suicide or suspected suicide
- Serious illness or infectious disease outbreak

- Violence, assault or threats involving members of the school community
- Missing persons or unauthorised removal of a pupil
- Fire, flood or significant damage to school property
- Major community tragedies affecting the school population
- Any event deemed by the Principal and Board of Management to constitute a critical incident

5. Objectives

The objectives of this policy are to:

- Protect the wellbeing of students and staff.
- Provide a coordinated response to critical incidents.
- Minimise disruption to teaching and learning.
- Support those affected.
- Ensure clear and accurate communication.
- Promote recovery and return to normal school routines.
- Review and learn from each incident.

6. Prevention and Preparedness

St. Paul's SNS promotes resilience, wellbeing and safety through:

Physical Safety Measures

- Health and Safety Statement
- Fire Safety Procedures
- Regular evacuation drills
- Supervision Policy
- Risk Assessments
- Visitor Management Procedures
- Child Safeguarding Statement
- Emergency Closure Procedures

Wellbeing and Psychological Safety Measures

The school promotes positive mental health through:

- SPHE curriculum
- Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)
- Stay Safe Programme
- Wellbeing initiatives
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Bí Cineálta procedures
- Student support structures
- Early identification and support of vulnerable pupils
- Referral pathways to external agencies where appropriate

Staff members are encouraged to access professional supports, including the Employee Assistance Service (EAS), where required.

7. Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)

The school shall maintain a Critical Incident Management Team.

The team shall normally include:

- Principal (Team Leader)
- Deputy Principal
- Designated Liaison Person (DLP)
- Deputy Designated Liaison Person (DDLDP)
- Administrative Representative
- Parent Liaison Representative (HSCL)
- Board of Management Representative

The membership of the team shall be reviewed annually.

A confidential Critical Incident Management Folder containing emergency contacts, templates and operational procedures shall be maintained and updated annually.

8. Roles and Responsibilities

Team Leader

The Principal shall:

- Activate the Critical Incident Management Team.
- Convene meetings.
- Coordinate the overall response.
- Liaise with the Board of Management.
- Liaise with external agencies.
- Ensure communication procedures are implemented.

Staff Liaison

The designated staff liaison shall:

- Brief staff.
- Provide information and resources.
- Identify staff requiring additional support.
- Facilitate access to support services.

Student Support Coordinator

The designated coordinator shall:

- Identify vulnerable pupils.
- Coordinate supports.
- Liaise with external professionals where necessary.
- Maintain appropriate records.

Parent Liaison

The designated liaison shall:

- Communicate with families.
- Organise parent information meetings where appropriate.

- Provide information on available supports.

Administrative Liaison

The administrative representative shall:

- Maintain records.
- Assist with communications.
- Coordinate documentation and correspondence.

9. Response Procedures

Initial Response

The Principal shall:

1. Gather verified information.
2. Assess the level of response required.
3. Activate the Critical Incident Management Team.
4. Contact relevant emergency services where necessary.
5. Inform the Chairperson of the Board of Management.
6. Arrange appropriate supervision and support.

Only verified information shall be communicated.

Communication Procedures

Clear, factual and sensitive communication is essential.

Communication may occur through:

- Staff meetings
- School email systems
- Aladdin Connect
- School website
- Parent meetings
- Written correspondence

Media Communications

The Principal or a nominated representative authorised by the Board of Management shall act as the sole spokesperson.

Staff, pupils and parents shall be requested not to engage with media representatives on behalf of the school.

Social Media

The school recognises the potential impact of social media during critical incidents.

The school will:

- Monitor misinformation where appropriate.

- Provide accurate information through official channels.
- Encourage respectful online behaviour.
- Remind members of the school community of privacy and safeguarding responsibilities.

10. Student and Staff Support

Following a critical incident, the school shall:

- Maintain normal routines where possible.
- Provide opportunities for discussion and support.
- Facilitate access to NEPS and other professional supports.
- Support vulnerable students and staff.
- Monitor wellbeing over time.

Referral pathways may include:

- NEPS
- HSE services
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)
- Tusla
- Local support agencies

11. Death by Suicide or Suspected Suicide

The school shall follow current NEPS and HSE guidance regarding suicide postvention.

Particular care shall be taken regarding:

- Language used in communications
- Privacy and confidentiality
- Social media activity
- Memorial activities
- Anniversary reactions
- Support for vulnerable individuals

The school will avoid actions that may unintentionally contribute to suicide contagion.

12. Record Keeping

Accurate records shall be maintained throughout and following a critical incident.

Records may include:

- Meetings held
- Decisions made
- Communications issued
- Supports provided
- Referrals made

Records shall be stored securely in accordance with the school's Data Protection Policy and GDPR obligations.

13. Confidentiality and Data Protection

All members of the school community involved in the management of a critical incident shall respect confidentiality.

Information shall be shared only on a need-to-know basis and in accordance with:

- GDPR
- Data Protection Acts
- Child safeguarding requirements
- Department of Education guidance

The privacy, dignity and good name of all individuals involved shall be protected at all times.

14. Recovery and Review

Following a critical incident, the Critical Incident Management Team shall:

- Evaluate the effectiveness of the response.
- Identify lessons learned.
- Update procedures where necessary.
- Report to the Board of Management.
- Plan for anniversaries and significant dates where appropriate.

15. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed:

- Bi-annually by the Board of Management
- As needed to reflect legislative or organisational changes

