



CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY

San Carlo Senior N.S. aims to protect the well-being of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. The Board of Management, through the Principal and teaching staff has drawn up a Critical Incident Management Policy as one element of the school's policies and plans.

Our aim is to maintain a Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) to steer the development and implementation of the plan.

In reviewing the policy, the CIMT has consulted resource documents available on www.education.ie such as 'Responding to Critical Incidents; Guidelines and Resources for schools' (NEPS 2016) and 'Wellbeing in Primary Schools- Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion' (DES, DOH, HSE 2015)

Definition of a Critical Incident:

The staff and management of San Carlo consider a critical incident to be – 'An incident or sequence of events which overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school and disrupts the running of the school.'

Critical incidents may involve one or more students or staff members, or members of our local community.

For example:

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 acute/tragic accident involving members of the school community

An acute 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

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:

Measures to address the physical safety of the school community include the following:

An Evacuation Plan has been formulated and is displayed in the entrance foyer and in every classroom. This plan is brought to the attention of all staff and students throughout the school year.

Fire drills are held at least once a term.

Fire exits and extinguishers are routinely inspected.

Parents are informed of the arrangements for entry to and exit from school.

Rules of the playground and expectations of general pupil behaviour, as laid out in the school

Behaviour Policy, encourage gentleness and positive relations and prohibit bullying in any form.

Psychological Safety:

The management and staff of San Carlo 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.

For example:

Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) 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 and decision making. Promotion of mental health is an integral part of this provision.

Staff have received training or have access to training for the teaching of SPHE.

Staff are familiar with the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures. The Designated Liaison Person (DLP) is Clare Mac Hugh and the Deputy Designated Liaison Person (DDL) is Rhona Sarr.

There is a care system in place in the school using the NEPS "Continuum of Support" approach.

Students who are identified as being at risk are referred to the Designated Liaison Person (Clare Mac Hugh). Concerns are explored and the appropriate level of assistance and support is provided to the best of our ability. Parents are informed and where appropriate, a referral is made to an appropriate agency.

The school has a clear policy on bullying (School Anti-Bullying Policy) and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy.

Staff members accept their role in the pastoral care of pupils and colleagues.

Staff members are informed about how to access support for themselves and contact numbers are displayed in the staffroom.

There is also an Emergency Contact list on the noticeboard in the Secretaries' Office.

Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)

A CIMT has been established in line with best practice. The team is composed of members of the ISM team, the BOM and school community. They fulfil their roles on a voluntary basis, and they will retain their roles for at least one school year. The members of the team will meet annually (in September) 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.

Preparation of CIMP (Critical Incident Management Plan)

The Team has been put in place, with key responsibilities as follows:

| Roles | Members | Key responsibilities |
|-----------------------------|------------------|--|
| Team Leader & Garda Liaison | Principal | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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;• 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 <p>[In the absence of the Team Leader, Clare Mac Hugh this role will be taken by DP Niall Sherlock]</p> |
| Staff Liaison | Principal | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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 makes contact with them individually• Advises them of the availability of the EAS and gives them the contact number |
| Student Liaison | ISL team | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Alerts other staff to vulnerable students (appropriately)• Provides materials for students (from their critical incident folder)• Keeps records of students seen by external agency staff• Looks after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room where agreed |
| Parent Liaison | Deputy Principal | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Visits the bereaved family with the team leader• Arranges parent meetings, if held• May facilitate such meetings, and manage 'questions and answers' |

| | | |
|----------------------------|------------------------|---|
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manages the 'consent' issues in accordance with agreed school policy • 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 CI folder) |
| Community / Agency Liaison | Chairperson of the BOM | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 |
| Media Liaison | Chairperson of the BOM | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 relevant teacher unions etc. • Will draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews (as agreed by school management) |
| Administrator | School Secretaries | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of - Key parents, such as members of the Parents Association, Teachers, Emergency support services and other external contacts and resources • 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 faxes • Photocopies materials 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 sent and received, meetings held, persons met, interventions used, material used etc.

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

Parental Consent

When completing the school Enrolment form, parents are asked to read the Consent Form and complete as they see fit. It is considered appropriate to assume parents will wish to avail of the advice and support of NEPS for their child in school. Therefore parents who do not wish to avail of NEPS involvement with their child at any stage during their time in the school must indicate their wishes on the form and return it.

Confidentiality and Good Name Considerations

The management and staff of San Carlo 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 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' will 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 room allocation will be in place:


| | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Staff Room | Meetings with Staff |
| PE Hall or in each separate classroom | Meetings with Pupils |
| PE Hall | Meetings with Parents |
| PE Hall/ School grounds | Media |
| Room 6A | Individual sessions with pupils |
| Room 6A | Other visitors |

Consultation and communication regarding the policy

All staff members were consulted and their views canvassed in the preparation of this policy. Parent representatives were also consulted and asked for their comments. 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 school principal. The plan will be reviewed and updated annually at the beginning of the school year.

Next review due: Sept/Oct 2024

This Critical Incident Plan has been ratified by the Board of Management, San Carlo S.N.S.

Signed:  Date: 10/10/23
Chairperson BOM