



St. Michael's College Critical Incidents Policy

The aim of this policy is to lessen the effect of a critical incident on the staff, students and parents at St. Michael's College. It is anticipated that by adopting the procedures outlined in this policy it will be possible to provide a more secure environment for everyone associated with the School.

What is a critical incident?

A critical incident is one which arises suddenly. Critical incidents may occur in school or outside of school, but both types will have a major impact on staff and students. An incident might be designated as critical where the result is likely to be serious disruption to the running of the School, or where there is likely to be significant public and/or media attention on the School.

Where the crisis is related to people, such as in the event of a death or serious injury, the assumption is that the School is likely to take the lead, with the support of NEPS as necessary.

Examples of in-school critical incidents

- A serious accident to a child or adult
- The death of a student or member of staff.
- A traffic accident involving a student or staff member
- Violence or assault within school
- A school fire or explosion
- Destruction of part of the school building

- Abduction of a student
- A student or students absconding
- A serious illness contagious within the school or the local community

Examples of out-of-school critical incidents

- An accident to a student or staff while out of school or out of school on school business.
- Death or injuries on a school journey on school business.
- Tragedies involving children from many schools.
- Civil disturbances

Support Agencies and Personnel

A list of significant contacts and telephone numbers are available on our school website: www.stmc.ie.

Practice within School

Individual class teachers and Year Heads and Year Tutors have an important role to play in managing critical incidents and may well be the best people to deal with the students in their classes.

The main role of specialist agencies such as NEPS (National Education Psychological Service) is one of support, empowerment and to support students who cannot be helped by the teachers within the School alone. In times of crises, teachers must react as they feel is appropriate and there can be no easy formula for dealing with critical incidents. However, by ensuring good communication within the School, a crisis may be managed more effectively.

By outlining the appropriate actions to be taken in the event of a critical incident, the School aims to reduce the effect.

Critical Incidents Team

A central component of this policy is the identification of the composition, roles and responsibilities of the Critical Incidents Team. The role of the team is to review and direct the handling of the incident and the response and recovery process in order to:

- ensure the safety and security of students, staff, other users of the premises and visitors;
- minimise the loss to the School in physical, human and financial terms;
- manage an incident to minimize disruption to regular operations;
- liaise with appropriate agencies, including the Media.

The Critical Incidents Team will comprise the following personnel:

- Principal
- Deputy Principal
- Chaplin
- Guidance Counselor
- Year Head
- Chairman of the Board of Management
- Health & Safety Representative
- The School's designated Child Protection Officer
- School Premises Manager in the event of damage to the plant

The Critical Incidents Team will, dependent upon the nature of the incident itself, be concerned with any of the following issues:

- adequate assessment of hazards and situations which may require emergency action;
- analysis of requirements to address these hazards; establishment of liaison with all relevant emergency services; development of an effective management plan;
- dissemination of planned procedures;
- organisation of practice drills to test the plan;
- regular review of this plan;

- arrangement of staff development activities, where necessary.

Procedures during an incident

1. The Principal or Deputy Principal must be informed of any critical incident as soon as possible.
2. As soon as an incident is confirmed, the Critical Incidents Team will meet to decide strategies.
3. The rest of the staff will be informed as soon as possible, preferably at a specially convened staff meeting or through email and text message.
4. All staff should share the same information.
5. Students will be told information simply and sensitively, without fabrication, preferably in smaller group situations.
6. The School will try, as far as possible, to keep to the normal routine.

Action Plan

Major incidents require the following procedures:-

1. Set up a communication network.
2. Convene the Critical Incidents Team.
3. Inform immediately the Chairman of the Board of Management and other appropriate Officers.
4. Collect, record and convey as much accurate information as possible.
5. Identify two telephonists to staff:
 - a) school phone for incoming calls
 - b) mobile phone for outgoing information/staff use.
6. Office area to be used for enquiries
7. Use the up to date list of students' next of kin (record files) and contact parents of affected children
8. Record all actions

9. Principal, alone, to act as 'press officer'

10. Refusal of access to press/television on school premises

Action Plan Timing

| Action | Timescale |
|---|--------------------------|
| Obtain factual information at the start | Within hours |
| Senior staff meeting with support personnel | Within hours |
| Convene the Critical Incidents Team | Within hours |
| Contact families | Immediately |
| Call a staff meeting to give information | Same day if possible |
| Inform students in small groups | Same day if possible |
| Arrange a debriefing meeting for staff involved | Same day if possible |
| Arrange debriefing for students directly involved | Same day if possible |
| Identify high risk students and staff | Following day |
| Promote discussion in classes | Following days and weeks |
| Identify the need for group or individual treatment | Over days and weeks |
| Organise counselling | As required |
| Mark anniversary (discreetly) | Annually |