

Student Support & Critical Incident Policy



St. Michael's College
Listowel, Co. Kerry

Reviewed	Ratified by the Board of Management	Review Date

Aims of this policy

St. Michael's College aims to protect the wellbeing 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 established a student support team (SST) which is responsible for the prevention, intervention and post-incident support in relation to students whose welfare is deemed to be 'at risk' and in the event of a critical incident. A critical incident management plan is in place.

The ethos the College is to provide each student with an education in a safe and nurturing environment. This is achieved through our dedicated Staff and strong positive leadership from the Principal and Senior Management and the valued involvement and support from parents/guardians. The aims and values of our school are generated from a good atmosphere and a positive spirit. As a result of this we have high and consistent expectations of all students.

A clear and continuing focus on learning exists St. Michael's College; this is aided by our well-developed procedures of assessing students' progress along with the shared responsibility for learning by students themselves. Our extracurricular activities broaden our students' interests and experiences, expand their opportunities to succeed and help build good relationships within the college.

At St. Michael's College our priority is our students, preparing them for their next step in life by providing each one of them with a well-balanced education. The College 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 practices to be followed with a view to ensuring the

physical and psychological safety of both students and staff during the normal course of the school day and in the event of a critical incident.

Such policies and practices include:

- ⌘ Student support/critical incident policy and plan
- ⌘ Fire, Health and Safety Policy
- ⌘ Anti-Bullying Policy
- ⌘ Code of Positive Behaviour
- ⌘ Guidance and Counselling Plan
- ⌘ S.P.H.E Programme
- ⌘ Restorative practice.
- ⌘ Child Safety Policy and Procedures
- ⌘ Substance Misuse Policy

Underpinning Principles and Goals to promote student wellbeing

- ⌘ Personal attention to the value and development of every student.
- ⌘ Acknowledgement of, and support for each person's role in the school community.
- ⌘ Promoting an environment which meets student's physical, social and emotional needs.
- ⌘ Priority given to the nurturing of teaching and learning relationships.
- ⌘ Recognition of the talents and abilities of students.
- ⌘ Clear values that promote a student-centred ethos.
- ⌘ Support for an engaging curriculum.
- ⌘ On-going monitoring of progress for the student.

In relation to responding to crisis, St. Michael's College will seek to:

- ⌘ Provide a range of supports for members of the school community to call upon in a time of crisis and in the longer term.
- ⌘ Have in place a policy for dealing with critical incidents in the context of the school.
- ⌘ Regularly review the structures of support and referral available in the school.

Creation of a coping supportive and caring ethos in the College

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 college 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 school. This plan is brought to the attention of all staff and students during the school year.
- ⌘ Fire drills are held at least twice a year.
- ⌘ Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly inspected.
- ⌘ Expectations of general student behaviour, as laid out in the Code of Positive Behaviour which encourage positive relations and promote the wellbeing of the whole school community and prohibit bullying in any form.

Psychological safety

The management and staff of 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. This includes: -

- ⌘ Wellbeing and Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is integrated into the work of the college. 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 for the teaching of SPHE and SPHE is timetabled for all Junior Cycle Students.
- ⌘ Staff receive annual training on the Child Safeguarding Procedures. The Designated Liaison Person (DLP) is Mr. John Mulvihill and the Deputy Designated Liaison Person (DDL) is Mr. Liam Hassett.
- ⌘ Students who are identified as being at risk are referred to the Designated Liaison Person and or the co-ordinator of the student support team where 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.
- ⌘ The school has a clear policy on bullying and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy. • Staff members accept their role in the pastoral care of pupils and colleagues.

Definition of a Support Team

A Support Team is a team of staff member who work to:

- ⌘ Develop a school structure to work in a preventative way with students experiencing intense stress.
- ⌘ Lead the response of the school to a critical incident e.g. attempted suicide, sudden death, major event, fire, crash etc.

The Support Team is comprised of members with prior expertise and interest in student wellbeing and welfare. Each member of the team has a dedicated role and is responsible for the provision of support for our students.

The purpose, role and responsibility of the Support Team:

- a. To provide support to all students at the College.
- b. To act as a referral system in student support matters.
- c. To conduct evidence based planned observations and risk assessments on critical student support issues.
- d. To design, implement and review a plan of intervention to direct work with students in difficulty.
- e. To recommend interventions and see that they are carried out. This may include partnership with students, parents, the college community and external support agencies.
- f. To maintain records of all interventions which have clear indicators and outcome data.
- g. To liaise with in college management on an ongoing basis.
- h. To engage in team supervision once a term as a means of tracking plans and providing support to the team on its work.

Role of the Support Team Co-ordinator

The Deputy Principal, Mr. L. Hassett will oversee the remit of the team.

Function of the Co-ordinator:-

- ⌘ Liaises with the Principal on the outcome of each meeting and on an ongoing basis to review the critical incident plan, in the absence of the Principal from the meeting.
- ⌘ Liaises with the Principal to ensure that all students and staff profiles are up to date e.g. current telephone numbers, next of kin, parent/guardians contact details etc. on an annual basis.
- ⌘ Responsible for the organisation of the Support Team meeting.
- ⌘ Agrees the agenda and ensures all minutes of team meetings are recorded.
- ⌘ Follow up with team members to support any actions
- ⌘ Liaises at an interagency level with other agencies as required.
- ⌘ Facilitates annual induction and review of the Support Team and the Critical Incident Management Plan.
- ⌘ Prepares annual report for the Board of Management.

Function of Student Liaison

- ⌘ Liaise with Coordinator/Principal/Year Head to ensure student records up to date annually, mobile numbers, addresses etc.
- ⌘ Maintain link between staff and students (take updates from Year heads on vulnerable students)
- ⌘ Observes vulnerable students.
- ⌘ Alerts other staff to vulnerable students observing confidentiality boundaries.
- ⌘ Recommend referrals to Guidance Counsellor as appropriate.
- ⌘ Have Student handouts ready.
- ⌘ Provides material as appropriate to colleagues.
- ⌘ Liaise with Principal.

Function of Staff Liaison in General

- ⌘ Ensure staff records up to date annually, mobile numbers, addresses etc.
- ⌘ Have staff handouts ready on handling a classroom session and common reactions after an incident
- ⌘ Prepare a sample statement for Administrative staff for use when answering phone calls.
- ⌘ Advises staff on the procedures for identifying high-risk students and outline what supports are available
- ⌘ Outline relevant contacts/supports available to staff, including details of Employee Assistance Programme

Function of Parent Liaison in General

- ⌘ Identifies him/her self as the named contact for parents (groups)
- ⌘ Is available to meet with parents (groups)
- ⌘ Ensures that sample letters are typed up on the college system and ready to for adaptation.
- ⌘ Have literature on potential reactions, coping with loss etc.
- ⌘ Compile support information, contacts etc. to parents.
- ⌘ Have room designated for meeting parents in a critical incident.
- ⌘ Meets with individual parents as required.
- ⌘ Keeps a record of parents seen.

Function of Media/Community Liaison

- ⌘ Sets up annual meeting and maintains an up-to-date list of contacts including (NEPS, Garda Síochána, emergency services, See Emergency contacts list, ETB, Duty Social Worker, CAMHS, local GPs)
- ⌘ Makes contacts list readily available to staff, SST, administrative staff, parents.
- ⌘ Maintains an up-to-date list of Parents' Council members.
- ⌘ Prepares a sample press statement on system.
- ⌘ Updates SST and staff on external agencies.

The Critical Incident Management Plan (CIMP):

Aim:

The aim of the CIMP is to help St. Michael's College 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 effects on the students and staff will be limited. It should enable us to effect a return to normality as soon as possible.

Definition of a Critical Incident

The staff and management of St. Michael's College 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 college.' 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 accident involving members of the school community.
- ⌘ An accident/tragedy in the wider community.
- ⌘ A physical attack on a staff member, student or other member of the school community.
- ⌘ Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism, etc.
- ⌘ The disappearance of a member of the school community.

Critical Incident (CI) Procedures Immediate Response:

Short Term up to 12 hours

Summary Checklist for Principal/Deputy Principal and Coordinator

- ⌘ The Principal has overall responsibility and will facilitate all communication structures.
- ⌘ Gather the facts – what has happened? When? Where? How? Who is injured or dead?
- ⌘ Consult appropriate agencies (external: e.g. NEPS, Garda Síochána, emergency services, See Emergency contacts list, DES, SEC)
- ⌘ Gather together the SST.
- ⌘ Organise the supervision of students.
- ⌘ Have administrative staff photocopy appropriate documents.
- ⌘ Convene a staff meeting and inform of immediate plan.
- ⌘ Identify high-risk students and staff.
- ⌘ Appoint someone to deal with phone queries.
- ⌘ Organise timetable for the day.
- ⌘ Maintain the normal college routine when at all possible.
- ⌘ Inform students.
- ⌘ Inform parents/guardians.

- ⌘ Make contact with bereaved family, including a visit to the family.
- ⌘ Withdraw siblings.
- ⌘ Organise support.
- ⌘ Prepare a statement/respond to the media.
- ⌘ Draft a letter for parents.
- ⌘ Meet with SST to review the day.

Guidelines for Funeral Arrangements/Procedure

- ⌘ In consultation with the family inform family of the school procedures in relation to arrangements.
- ⌘ In the event of the death of a staff member, the school Management may decide to close the school for the funeral.
- ⌘ In the event of a death of a student it is recommended St. Michael's College remains open.
- ⌘ However, school management may decide to take the base class to the funeral.
- ⌘ Other students who wish to attend may attend accompanied by their parents/guardians.
- ⌘ The parents/guardians should accompany the student to and from the funeral.
- ⌘ The parents/guardians will have to sign the student in and out according to school rules.
- ⌘ In the event of the school taking the base class to the funeral the school will brief students in advance about the funeral plan and the appropriate etiquette required.
- ⌘ In some instances, students and parents/guardians may be invited to come back to the school after the funeral to debrief if necessary.

Role of Principal/Coordinator in a CI

Agenda for the first meeting with the SST, chaired by Principal and facilitated on an ongoing basis by the Coordinator

- ⌘ Agree a statement of facts for staff, students, parents and the media.
- ⌘ Delegation of responsibilities of the SST.
- ⌘ Discussion of what support services to contact.
- ⌘ Preparation (possibly written) of what to say to staff.
- ⌘ Preparation (possibly written) of what to say to students.
- ⌘ Preparation (possibly written) of what to say to media.
- ⌘ Make a decision about school closure.
- ⌘ Organise the schedule/timetable for the day.
- ⌘ Ensure that a phone line remains open for the day and available for enquiries.
- ⌘ Appoint someone to handle phone enquiries and deal with the media.
- ⌘ Organise a staff meeting.
- ⌘ Organise the supervision of students during any staff meetings.
- ⌘ Preparation of a letter for parents/guardians.
- ⌘ Copying and printing of letters for parents/guardians.
- ⌘ Deciding which external agencies should be involved.

Medium Term Actions 24-72 hours

- ⌘ Review events of first 24 hours.
- ⌘ Arrange support for individual students/learner, groups of students/learners parents/guardians etc.
- ⌘ Plan for the reintegration of students/learners and staff.
- ⌘ Liaise with family regarding arrangements.

- ⌘ In consultation with parents/guardians arrange attendance and participation at service.
- ⌘ Decide on school closure.

Longer Term Actions

- ⌘ Monitor students/learners, remove the deceased students name from the St. Michael's College systems including Compass and text messaging.
- ⌘ Evaluate response to incident and amend plan appropriately.
- ⌘ Formalise the critical incident plan for the future.
- ⌘ Keep new staff, students, parents informed about SST policy.
- ⌘ Decide appropriate way to deal with anniversaries.
- ⌘ To ensure that the SST meet to review the response to the CI and to process this response accordingly.

Role of Student Liaison in a CI

- ⌘ Arrange access to student records.
- ⌘ Maintain link between staff and students (take updates from Year heads on vulnerable students)
- ⌘ Observes vulnerable students.
- ⌘ Alerts other staff to vulnerable students.
- ⌘ Advise and recommends counselling as required.
- ⌘ Provides material as appropriate to students.
- ⌘ Provides material as appropriate to colleagues.
- ⌘ Set up a 'quiet room' to share reactions and feelings.
- ⌘ Advise students on possible reactions.
- ⌘ Keep a record of students seen internally and referrals made to external agencies.

- ⌘ Liaise with Principal on an on-going basis.

Role of Staff Liaison in a CI

- ⌘ Leads briefing of staff on the facts as they are known. Take questions from staff and outline the routine for the day.
- ⌘ Help teachers to prepare for questions from students. Outline possible reactions and distribute handouts on handling a class post a CI.
- ⌘ Prepare a statement of facts to be read out to all students.
- ⌘ Advises staff on the procedures for identifying high-risk students and outline what supports are available.
- ⌘ Distribute appropriate material for staff.
- ⌘ Ensure a quiet place be made available for staff and students.
- ⌘ Meet staff again later in the day to update information, to offer support and to further identify high risk students.
- ⌘ Ensure quiet locations are made available in the College.
- ⌘ Identify support services within the school.
- ⌘ Establish the need for outside services and provide contacts
- ⌘ Make contact with all staff including those who are absent on maternity or sick leave etc.
- ⌘ Be aware of vulnerable staff members and advise them re: counselling and support as appropriate.

Role of Parent Liaison in CI

- ⌘ Visit bereaved family with Principal/Deputy Principal.
- ⌘ Identifies him/herself as the named contact for parents (groups).

- ⌘ Is available to support the Principal/Deputy to meet with parents (groups) and or take phone calls.
- ⌘ Facilitates meetings with parents and manages 'questions and answers'
- ⌘ Get letters typed and organise volunteers to help envelope and post.
- ⌘ Distributes literature on potential reactions, coping with loss etc.
- ⌘ Distributes support information, contacts etc. to parents.
- ⌘ Sets up room for meeting parents.
- ⌘ Meets with individual parents or coordinates support for parents who arrive at Presentation Secondary School Tralee unannounced.
- ⌘ Keeps a record of parents seen.

Role of Media/Community Liaison in a CI

- ⌘ Have up-to-date list of contacts ready including (NEPS, Garda Síochana, Emergency services, See Emergency contacts list, Duty Social Worker, CAMHS, local GPs)
- ⌘ Assists Principal in contacting relevant agencies.
- ⌘ Makes contacts list readily available to staff, SST, administrative staff, parents.
- ⌘ Prepares a draft press statement for delivery by Principal.
- ⌘ Delivers press statement with Principal.
- ⌘ Support Principal in all enquiries from the media and identify a room to contain media if they arrive on campus.
- ⌘ Supports Principal in contact with Communication section of the DES.
- ⌘ Liaises with community agencies for support and onward referral.
- ⌘ Updates SST and staff on external agencies.

Administrative Staff

- ⌘ Maintains up-to-date telephone records of parents, teachers, emergency services
- ⌘ With coordinator of SST has prepared statement ready for telephone calls from parents and takes telephone calls recording any significant interaction.
- ⌘ Ensures that templates of letters etc are on the college system in advance and ready for adaptation
- ⌘ Organises photocopying of materials needed
- ⌘ Prepares and sends out letters, texts, e-mails and faxes with support from staff. Be careful not to send text to bereaved family.

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

Confidentiality

The management and staff at St. Michael's College 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 and will seek to ensure that students do so also. For instance, the term 'suicide' will not be used as in the absence of an autopsy and without the consent of the parents/carers. 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.

Policy on Confidentiality

St. Michael's College will treat in confidence all information about students including: name, address, biographical details and other descriptions of the student's life and circumstance which might result in identification of the student except as outlined hereunder where such matters should be discussed with the Principal:

- ⌘ to protect the interests of the student.
- ⌘ to protect the interests of society.
- ⌘ to safeguard the welfare of another student or individual.

1. A staff member should always respect the nature of a relationship occasioned by the sharing with him/her by a student of personal information.
2. Consent of the student and/or parent to disclose personal information should usually be sought where possible.
3. The personal circumstance of any student will be discussed among St. Michael's College personnel on a 'need-to-know' basis.
4. Access to personal information will be available to designated St. Michael's College personnel only.
5. Staff, therefore, need to know in what circumstances and with whom to discuss their concerns i.e. the reporting procedures for their school.
6. Staff should make it clear to the students that they cannot promise to keep information confidential. Students need to know that any information they share with staff regarding anything illegal will be passed on in a sensitive way to the appropriate person(s). If a staff member suspects that a child is at risk, this information will be passed on to the designated liaison person. If the student/trainee is over 18 and discloses abuse identifying an alleged abuser this must be reported as it becomes a child protection issue. If they do not reveal a name then

the member of staff who receives the disclosure should encourage them to identify this person, especially if the alleged abuser has access to children.

7. The legal principle that the welfare of the child is paramount means that considerations of confidentiality should not be allowed to override the rights of the children to be protected from harm. In other words, protection of the child is more important than confidentiality. Information should therefore be shared on any concerns about a child's or an adult's behaviour.

8. Personal details about the lives of students/trainee that either they themselves or their families have confided in a staff member will not be discussed among staff or shared with others unless to promote the safety of the person concerned. In this instance this will occur after the student/trainee has been informed of the reasons for doing so. However, it is essential that this information is only shared on a need-to-know basis. The test is whether or not the person to whom the information is being passed on has any legitimate involvement or role in dealing with the issue. This does not include conferring with or reporting to a superior nor to dissemination to a colleague, on a need-to-know basis, of information relating to the personal circumstance of a student, in the interest of that student.

9. It should be clearly understood that information which is gathered for one purpose, must not be used for another without consulting the person who provided the information.