Stokane National School
Enniscrone Co. Sligo F26C970
Roll No: 14051T Charity Reg No. 20205786
Phone: 096 36673/086 0695093
Principal: Linda McCormack
stokanens@gmail.com www.stokanens.ie

Critical Incident Policy for Stokane NS 2025

Mission Statement:

Stokane National School is a caring and inclusive Catholic primary school committed to the development of the whole child, handing on Christian values and a shared Irish culture to the next generation. While Stokane NS is a school with a Catholic ethos, it also gives due recognition to children of other religious beliefs and of none.

To this end Stokane NS aims to protect the well-being of its students by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times.

Stokane NS 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 procedures to be followed with a view to ensuring the physical and psychological safety of staff and students, both in ordinary time and in the event of a critical incident.

What is a Critical Incident?

As per DES / NEPS guidelines, Stokane NS recognises a critical incident to be "an

incident or sequence of events that overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school and disrupts the running of the school". Critical incidents may involve one or more pupils, staff, the school, or our local community. Types of incidents might include:

- The death of a member of the school community through sudden death, accident, terminal illness or suicide.
- Outbreak of disease or major illness in school or community.

- Serious injury sustained by a member of the school community as a result of violence on or off school grounds.
- A threatening or violent intrusion into the school.
- An accident / tragedy in the school or wider community.
- Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism, etc.
- The disappearance of a member of the school community.
- Unauthorised removal of a student from school.
- Sexual, physical or psychological abuse
- Fire, natural or technological disaster

Aim:

Recognising that the key to managing critical incidents is planning, Stokane NS has

developed this Critical Incident Management Policy and accompanying plan. Our hope is that, in the event of an incident, these will help staff to react quickly and effectively and to maintain a sense of control. They should also help us to achieve a return to normality as soon as possible and ensure that the effects on the students and staff will be limited.

Creation of a coping supportive and caring ethos in the school.

We have put systems in place to lessen the probability of the occurrence of an incident. These include measures to address both the physical and psychological safety of both staff and students.

- **Physical safety:**

The following policies and strategies have been put in place in order to maintain the physical safety of all members of the school community.

- Health & Safety Statement.
- Evacuation plan formulated.
- Regular fire drills occur.
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked.
- The Fire Alarm is serviced regularly, at least once a year.

- Pupils leaving early will only be released by a member of teaching staff when an authorised adult arrives to accompany the child from the premises.
- Pupils are not released into the care of persons unknown to school staff without checking with a parent/ guardian.
- Pupils are reminded of playground rules by staff at regular intervals in the context of our School Code of Behaviour.
- Pupils are adequately supervised at all times especially during physical activity and break times. Three members of the staff (one teacher and two SNAs) supervise the children during recess.
- First Aid box maintained and kept in the staffroom.
- Lust for Life Programme used as necessary.

➢ **Psychological Safety**

Stokane NS aims to create an open and encouraging environment in the school where students can talk about their difficulties and seek help for the same.
The following strategies aim to support and ensure the psychological well-being of our pupils:

- SPHE is an integral part of the school curriculum and addresses issues such as grief and loss, communication skills, stress and anger management, conflict management, problem solving, help-seeking, decision making, and alcohol and drug prevention.
- The Stay Safe programme is taught in all classes.
- School Anti-Bullying Policy.
- Substance / Alcohol Misuse Policy.
- Child Protection Policy.
- Staff are informed of difficulties affecting individual students and are aware of and vigilant in identifying their needs.
- The school has developed links with outside agencies, which may be contacted in the event of an emergency and for onward referral of students. These include: NEPS, TUSLA, Child and Family Agency; CAMHS.

Critical Incident Management Team

Stokane NS has set up CI Management Team in line with best practice and will

maintain this team in future.

- **Roles**

Key roles have been identified and assigned as follows:

- Team Leader: Linda McCormack, Principal.
- Staff Liaison: Mary O'Hora, Deputy Principal
- Student Liaison: Linda McCormack, Principal.
- Parent Liaison Anniesa Lynott, Chairperson of the Parents' Council 2023/24
- Community Liaison Roger Cawley, Chairperson of the BoM 2023/27
- Media Liaison: Linda McCormack, Principal
- Administration Tasks: Issie Somerville, School Secretary
- Pastoral Care: Patricia Newman; Fr Des Kelly

In the event of a critical incident the responsibilities of each role-holder will be as follows.

Team Leader:

- Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting.
- Co-ordinates the tasks of the team.
- Liaises with the Board of Management and Department of Education and Skills,
- I.N.T.O., NEPS / relevant agencies.
- Liaises with the bereaved family.

Staff Liaison:

- Leads meetings to brief staff on the facts as known, gives staff members an
- opportunity to express their feelings and outline the routine for the day.
- Advises staff on the identification of vulnerable students.
- Is alert to vulnerable staff members and makes contact with them individually.

Student Liaison

- Liaises with other team members to keep staff, student up-dated with information and progress.
- Alerts staff to vulnerable students.

Community Liaison

- Liaises with agencies in the community for support and onward referral.
- Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies.
- Co-ordinates the involvement of these agencies.
- 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.

Parent Liaison

- Facilitates 'questions and answers' meetings.
- Meets with individual parents.
- Visits the bereaved family with the team leader.

Media Liaison

- In preparing for the role, we will consider issues that may arise during an incident 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 Communications Section of the DES

Administrative Tasks

- Maintenance of up-to-date lists of contact numbers of
- Parents or guardians
- Teachers
- Emergency support services
- Telephone calls needing to be responded to, letters sent and materials photocopied.

Record Keeping

In the event of an incident each member of the team will keep detailed 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.

Letter to Parents

The Principal will prepare a brief, written statement to include:

- The sympathy of the school community for the affected/bereaved family
- Positive information or comments about the deceased/injured person(s)
- The facts of the incident
- What has been done
- What is going to be done

Confidentiality and good name considerations

The school has 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 ensure that pupils do so also. [For instance, the term 'suicide' will not be used without the consent of the family involved or until it has been established categorically that the person's death was a result of suicide. The phrases 'tragic death' or 'sudden death' may be used instead.

Critical incident room:

In the event of a critical incident:

- The staff room will be the main room used to meet the staff.
- Classrooms will be used for meetings with students
- Resource rooms and the Office will be used for meetings with parents, media, individual sessions with students and for meetings with other visitors.

Development and communication of this policy and plan

All staff members were consulted and asked for their comments. Our school's final policy and procedures in relation to responding to critical incidents has been presented to all staff. All new and temporary staff will be informed of the details of the plan by the Principal.

Policy Reviewed: 9th September, 2025 by Principal and Deputy Principal.

Policy discussed, amended and agreed: 10th September, 2025 by all staff

Ratified by BOM on: _____

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Principal / Secretary of the Board of Management

Action Plan

SHORT-TERM ACTIONS:

(Day 1)

- Gather accurate information- who, what, where, when?
- Convene a CIMT meeting
- Contact appropriate agencies:
    1. Emergency services
    2. Medical services
    3. H.S.E.
    4. Psychology Departments/Community Care Services NEPS
- Hold a staff meeting. Agree schedule for the day.
- Inform students (close friends and some students with additional needs may need to be told separately)
- Compile a list of vulnerable students
- Class teachers to take note of any absentees who might need to be contacted, list of friends etc, or any other relevant information. This is to be given to the Student Liaison person.
- Contact/visit the bereaved family
- Inform parents/guardians.
- Hold end of day staff briefing Media Briefing (if appropriate
- Designate a spokesperson (Leader)
- Prepare a brief statement (Team)
- Protect the family's privacy
- It is important to obtain accurate information about the incident
    1. What happened, where and when?
    2. What is the extent of the injuries?
    3. How many are involved and what are their names?
    4. Is there a risk of further injury?
    5. What agencies have been contacted already?
- <u>Social Media:</u>

  A message may be placed on the school website, transmitted via text messaging or placed on any other school social media account along the following lines: 'You may be aware of a recent event within the school community. We ask you to respect the family's privacy and sensitivities by considering if you should post any comments, especially on social media. We will inform you through the normal channels of any relevant developments.' The school may choose to use social media to provide up to

date information for all concerned throughout the various stages of the incident. This might include the provision of positive messages and appropriate advice for children and parents/guardians.

MEDIUM-TERM ACTIONS (24-72 HOURS)

- Preparation of students/staff attending funeral
- Have review of Critical Incident Management Team meeting
- Involvement of students/staff in liturgy if agreed by bereaved family
- Facilitation of students/staffs responses, e.g. Sympathy cards, flowers, Book of Condolences, etc.
- Decide arrangements for support meetings for parents/ students/ staff
- Establish contact with absent staff and pupils
- Arrange, in consultation, with outside agencies, individual or group debriefings or support meetings with parental permission
- Plan for the re-integration of students and staff e.g. absentees, injured, siblings, close relative etc. Student Liaison person to liaise with these pupils on their return to school.
- Plan visits to injured - family Liaison person + Class Teacher + Principal to visit home/hospital
- Agree on attendance and participation at funeral/memorial service. Decide this in accordance with parent's wishes, school management decisions and in consultation with close school friends
- School closure (if appropriate)- request a decision on this from school management

LONGER TERM ACTIONS

- Monitor students for signs of continuing distress. If over a prolonged period of time, a student continues to display the following, he/she may need assistance from the Health Board. Constant communication with family is essential. Watch out for signs such as;
    - Uncharacteristic behaviour
    - Deterioration in academic performance
    - Physical symptoms — e.g. weight loss/gain, lack of attention to appearance, tiredness, restlessness
    - Inappropriate emotional reactions
    - Increased absenteeism

- Evaluate response to incident and amend Critical Incident Management Plan appropriately
    1. What went well?
    2. Where were the gaps?
    3. What was most/least helpful?
    4. Have all necessary onward referrals to support services been made?
    5. Is there any unfinished business?
- Formalise the Critical Incident Plan for the future
- Consult with NEPS Psychologist
- Inform new staff/new school pupils affected by Critical Incidents where appropriate
- Ensure that new staffs are aware of the school policy and procedures in this area
- Ensure they are aware of which pupils were affected in any recent incident and in what way
- When individual pupils or a class of pupils affected by an incident are transferring to a new school, the Principal should brief the Principal of the new school
- Decide on appropriate ways to deal with anniversaries (Be sensitive to special days and events)
- Anniversaries may trigger emotional responses in students/staff and they may need additional support at this time
- Acknowledge the anniversary with the family
- Need to be sensitive to significant days like Birthdays, Christmas, Mother's Day, and Father's Day
- Plan a school memorial service
- Care for the deceased person's possessions.
    1. What are the parent's wishes?
    2. Update and amend school records

Emergency Contacts:	
Enniscrone Garda Station	096 36103
Sligo University Hospital	071 917 1111
Sligo Fire Station	071 911 1111
Enniscrone Primary Care Centre	096 36343
HSE Sligo	(071) 917 1111
CAMHs Sligo	071 9113960
School Inspector	
NEPs Psychologist	
DES	01 8896400
INTO	01 8041100
Parish Office (Enniscrone)	096 36164
Parish Office (Castleconnor)	096 36266
Employee Assistance Service	1800 411 057