



Salesian Secondary College, Pallaskenry, Co. Limerick.

Critical Incident Plan

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1. Introduction and Policy Statement

Mission Statement:

The mission of the Salesian Secondary College, Pallaskenry, is to provide the best possible education based on Christian/Catholic values in partnership with parents and within a caring community. This school incorporates the characteristics of Salesian Education as practised by St. John Bosco in his “Preventive System”.

In order to achieve this we aim to provide opportunities for students to:

1. gain skills, knowledge and understanding that will be of lasting value throughout their lives;
2. develop each individual’s talents to the level of his/her personal potential for the benefit of Community and Society;
3. develop the characteristics appropriate to a member of a Christian community, including those of mutual respect and concern for others, irrespective of race, colour, gender or creed;
4. promote the physical and emotional well-being of students by developing self-esteem, personal responsibility and the ability to live and work with others;
5. work with staff committed to these ideals.

The references to “skills”, “respect and concern”, “physical and emotional well-being”, “self esteem and personal responsibility” have particular resonance in this policy on the Administration of Medications and Provision of First Aid to Students.

Preamble:

Salesian Secondary College 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 reviewed the Critical Incident Management Plan in 2018.

A Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) steers the development and implementation of the plan.

Rationale:

The staff and management of Salesian Secondary College recognise a critical incident to be “an incident or sequence of events that overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school”. Critical incidents may involve one or more students or staff members, or members of our local community. Types of incidents might include:

- 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
- Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism, etc
- The disappearance of a member of the school community

Note: Circumstances may dictate that an incident, however troubling, may not be a “critical incident”, insofar as it is considered that it will not disrupt the normal running of the school. In these cases, elements of this policy may apply.

Aim:

The aim of the CIMP is to help school management and staff to react effectively and in a timely way 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 affect a return to normality as soon as possible.

Creation of a coping supportive and caring ethos in Salesian Secondary College:

The work of Salesian Secondary College is underpinned by its pastoral care structure, which seeks 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. (See Appendix 1)

Physical safety:

- The school has a Health and Safety Policy Statement, which is constantly being updated. the roles in which are clearly defined
- An evacuation plan is formulated
- Regular fire drills occur
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
- Designated Liaison Person and Deputy Designated Liaison Person for Child Protection purposes are clearly identified
- Clear statements re collection of students / records re guardians exist
- There is supervision provided on corridors and in public spaces where staffing allows. The school has ratified a Substitution and Supervision Policy
- There is a Health and Safety Officer in place
- Out of bounds areas are clearly identified
- The Main Office has a role in managing the arrival and departure of visitors and students
- There are defibrillators available for staff use and key staff are trained in their use
- Medical information is requested of all parents / guardians and this information is provided discretely for all staff. Responsibility for providing updated and accurate information rests with parents
- The school has a designated SNA team

- SPHE, RSE, Guidance, PE, RE and CSPE classes are used to provide information about personal safety. The Guidance Department delivers seminars and one on one counselling around personal safety also
- The school makes application to DES and SEC in relation to supports for students with SEN and with Health and Safety needs
- The school has 2 caretakers who can respond to concerns raised re health and safety

Psychological safety

The management and staff of Salesian Secondary College 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.

- The school has a Child Safeguarding Statement and other policies which underpin the physical, emotional security of the students e.g. Management of External Persons Policy, Medications and First Aid Policy etc.
- The school has ratified Guidance, Pastoral Care and RSE policies, all of which relate to pastoral support from students.
- The Wellbeing Policy and Wellbeing Programme are in place.
- It has a recognised and well documented Pastoral Care Structure.
- The school has a ratified SPHE Policy. 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; decision making and prevention of alcohol and drug misuse. Promotion of mental health is an integral part of this provision.
- Staff has access to training for their role in SPHE
- Staff is familiar with the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures and details of how to proceed with concerns, observations or disclosures
- The Board reviews CP guidelines and procedures annually and Board members and management receive periodic CP training
- Books and resources on difficulties affecting the post primary school student are available through the Guidance Department
- Information is provided through the Pastoral Care Structure on emotional and mental health in general and such specific areas as signs and symptoms of depression and anxiety. Periodic "Positive Mental Health" events occur through the Wellbeing, Guidance and other Departments
- The school has developed links with a range of external agencies –Gardai, Tusla, CAMHS, NEPS, local GPs and support agencies
- Inputs to students by external providers are carefully considered in the light of criteria about student safety, the appropriateness of the content, and the expertise of the providers.
- The school has a ratified Anti Bullying Policy.
- The school has a ratified Code of Behaviour for Students.
- Students who are identified as being at risk are referred to the designated staff member (e.g. pastoral care team member, guidance counsellor or support teacher, Tutor etc), 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. (See Appendix 2.)

- Staff are informed about how to access support for themselves.

2. Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)

A CIMT has been established in line with best practice. The members of the team were selected on a voluntary basis and will retain their roles for at least one school year. The members of the team will meet annually 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.

While the composition of the CIMT may be planned here in advance of an incident, this policy recognises that individuals may have a key role as a situation develops: The Principal, Deputy Principals, Pastoral Care Team, Chaplain and Guidance Counsellor. Administrative and Caretaking Staff also work with the CIMT, as necessity demands.

CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM -

Role	Name	Email address	Telephone Number
Team Leader	Keith O’Rahilly	keith.orahilly@salesiancollege.ie	0863119036
Garda Liaison	Keith O’Rahilly	keith.orahilly@salesiancollege.ie	061393105
Staff Liaison	Mike Lavan David Ryan	mikelavan@salesiancollege.ie davidryan@salesiancollege.ie	061393105
Student Liaisons	Pastoral Care Team Guidance Department	rachelmeehan@salesiancollege.ie theresehogan@salesiancollege.ie guidance@salesiancollege.ie (Joanne) neilbarry@salesiancollege.ie eilislavan@salesiancollege.ie grainnekeane@salesiancollege.ie	061393105
Parent Liaison	Mike Lavan David Ryan Year Head & Tutor	mikelavan@salesiancollege.ie davidryan@salesiancollege.ie Armellemangan@salesiancollege.ie	061393105
Community/Agency Liaison	Keith O’Rahilly	keith.orahilly@salesiancollege.ie	061393105
Media Liaison	Keith O’Rahilly	keith.orahilly@salesiancollege.ie	061393105
Administrator	Karen Shanahan	secretary@salesiancollege.ie	061393105

3. Responding to a Critical Incident.

The immediate response is to refer to this policy and to follow steps outlined here.

- Convene a meeting with key staff/Critical Incident Management Team. Depending on the incident it is advisable to arrange an evening or early morning meeting to ensure that the team is well prepared and has a plan in place for the school day ahead.

Establish the appropriate level of response (see below).

- Contact appropriate agencies (see school's Emergency Contact List
 - Emergency services
 - Medical services
 - Board of Management
 - National Educational Psychological Service
 - Health Service Executive
 - Teacher Unions
 - State Examinations Commission
 - Parish Priest/Clergy

Response Level

A classification of response levels is proposed, which is linked to a number of factors impacting on the situation. This classification in no way diminishes the seriousness of any particular event. It is intended to help the school and psychologists assess what level of intervention is needed, including the additional supports a psychologist may need to request from colleagues and other agencies.

Step 1: What type of response is needed?

Response Level 1:

- the death of a student or staff member who was terminally ill
- the death of parent/sibling
- a fire in school not resulting in serious injury/serious damage to school property.

Response Level 2:

- the sudden death of a student or staff member

Response Level 3:

- an accident/event involving a number of students
- a violent death
- an incident with a high media profile or involving a number of schools

Step 2: Should a psychologist be involved?

Consider the nature of the event and how the school is coping. What support do we need from NEPS and/or other agencies?

Step 3: How do we assess the needs of the school?

Is there a feeling of being overwhelmed by this event?

Has there been a previous incident? How recent, what kind of incident? If more than one, how many? (If the school has experienced a recent incident or a number of incidents, staff may be exhausted or distressed. On the other hand, they may feel more experienced and better able to deal with the situation). What precedent is there in terms of response? What have we learned from the past incident(s)?

Is there significant media interest in the incident?

Are other agencies already involved?

Step 4: What action do I take?

For an incident requiring a Level 1 response it may be sufficient to talk to the psychologist on the phone. Follow “Responding to Critical Incidents: Guidelines for Schools” and the accompanying Resource Materials for schools.

It is also available on

www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/National-Educational-Psychological-Service-NEPS-/neps_critical_incidents_guidelines_schools.pdf

In the case of an incident requiring a Level 2 and Level 3 Response, make contact with NEPS.

Exchange mobile numbers with the psychologist so that immediate contact will be possible at all times.

Sample letters to parents can be found in Appendices 7 and 8.

4. EMERGENCY CONTACT LIST

(To be displayed in staff-room, school office and Principal's office etc.)

AGENCY	CONTACT NUMBERS
GARDA (Roxboro)	061 214340
HOSPITAL (UHL)	061 301111
FIRE BRIGADE (Musgrave Street)	061 407100
LOCAL GPs	??????
HSE/Primary Care Team / Primary Care Centre / CAMHS / Resource Officer for Suicide Prevention	061 483388 (CAMHS) 061 484444 (PIETA House)
SCHOOL INSPECTORATE	01 8896553
NEPS PSYCHOLOGIST Ivana Kolic	01 865056
ASTI / TUI	01-6040160 (ASTI) 01-4922588 (TUI)
PARISH PRIEST / CLERGY Fr John	Salesian House 086 8439430
STATE EXAMS COMMISSION	090-6442700 090-6442782 (Reasonable Acc) 090-6442791, 6442792, 6442793 (Superintendents and Centres)
EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE SERVICE	1800 411 057

5. SHORT TERM ACTIONS – DAY 1

Task	Name
Gather accurate information Who, what, when, where?	Keith O Rahilly
Convene a CIMT meeting – specify time and place clearly	Keith O Rahilly
Contact external agencies	Keith O Rahilly
Arrange supervision for students	Mike/David
Hold staff meeting	Keith/Mike/David
Agree schedule for the day	Keith/Mike/David
Inform students – (close friends and students with additional needs may need to be told separately)	Pastoral Care Team/Yearhead
Compile a list of vulnerable students	Pastoral Care Team/Yearhead
Contact/visit the bereaved family	Keith/Mike/David
Prepare and agree media statement and deal with the media	Keith O Rahilly
Inform parents/guardians	Keith O Rahilly
Hold end of day staff briefing	Mike Lavan David Ryan

MEDIUM TERM ACTIONS - (DAY 2 AND FOLLOWING DAYS)

Task	Name
Convene a CIMT meeting to review the events of day 1	Keith o Rahilly
Meet external agencies	Keith o Rahilly
Meet whole staff	Keith o Rahilly
Arrange support for students, staff, parents/guardians	Senior Management Year Heads
Visit the injured	Keith O Rahilly & CIMT members designated by Senior Management
Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements	Keith o Rahilly
Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service	Keith o Rahilly

FOLLOW-UP BEYOND 72 HOURS

Task	Name
Monitor students for signs of continuing distress	Whole Staff
Liaise with agencies regarding referrals	CIMT
Plan for return of bereaved student(s)	CIMT
Decide on memorials and anniversaries	CIMT

6. The Critical Incident Team : Role of Individual Members

Role of the Team leader: The Principal

Determine whether it is necessary to activate the Critical Incident Plan.

Gather accurate information.

- What happened?
- Where?
- When?
- Extent of injuries
- How many involved?
- What agencies have been contacted already?

Convene and chair a meeting of the Critical Incident Team (CIT).

Contact and inform BOM.

Contact outside agencies as required.

Brief staff on a need to know basis at the earliest opportunity and keep them informed of developments as appropriate.

Make contact with the bereaved family (respect wishes of family).

Agree a specific time and location for media briefings (if required). Critical Incident Team Leader will deliver all statements to the news & media

Ensure that the school runs as normally as possible.

Access relevant training for the CIT on an ongoing basis.

Allow time for the CIT to review & update the Plan.

In the absence of The Team Leader, The Deputy Team Leader carries out the role of The Team Leader. The Deputy Team Leaders' role is delegated to the Deputy Principal Team.

Carry out regular Critical Incident Drills & Evacuation Drills.

Ensure staff are aware of EAS services.

Role of the Deputy Team Leader: Deputy Principals

See that the school is running as normally as possible.

Make rooms available for counselors, Pastoral care team members, chaplains, parents, public & others.

Free up teachers who are:

- Members of the Critical Incident Team (CIT)
- Assisting with the work of the CIT
- Directly affected by the situation

Know what is happening. Know where it is happening.

Follow a normal school routine as much as possible.

Link with Student Contact and Staff/Parent Administrator.

Organise for supervision of students.

Assign rooms / areas for counselling, chaplain, parents and students.

Assign a room for the media.

Assist in carrying out regular Critical Incident Drills & Evacuation Drills.

In the absence of The Deputy Team Leader, a Senior Staff Member carries out the role of the Deputy Team Leader.

Is alert to vulnerable staff members and makes contact with them individually (shared with Guidance member).

Coordinates information from tutors and year heads about students they are concerned about.

Alerts other staff to vulnerable students (appropriately).

Role of Student liaison: A member of the Pastoral Care Team

Provides materials for students (from their critical incident folder).

Keeps records of students seen by external agency staff (formal referrals are confidential and are held securely in the DLP's office).

Looks after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room where agreed.

Is alert to the need to check credentials of individuals offering support.

Visits the bereaved family with the team leader.

Role of Community / agency liaison: A member of the Pastoral Care Team

Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of key parents, such as members of the Parents Council and Emergency support services and other external contacts and maintains up to date resources.

Liaises with agencies in the community for support and onward referral.

Coordinates the involvement of these agencies.

Reminds agency staff to wear name badges.

Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies.

Role of Parent liaison, in collaboration with the Principal and Deputy Principal: A seconded staff member

Arranges parent meetings, if held.

May facilitate such meetings, and manage 'questions and answers'.

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 their critical incident folder).

Role of Media liaison (in collaboration with the Principal and Deputy Principal): A seconded staff member

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 SEC; relevant teacher unions etc.

Will assist in drawing up a press statement and in giving media briefings and interviews (as agreed by school management).

Role of Administrator (Member of the Admin staff)

Maintenance of up to date telephone numbers of Parents or guardians, Teachers and Emergency services.

Arranges for the accurate recording of telephone calls and 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 as requires.

Photocopies materials needed.

Maintains records (health, contact details etc).

Liaises with DP and P with regard to the arrival of visitors to the school.

Role of Caretaker

Have access to an inventory of all hazardous materials in the school & where they are stored.

Establish procedures for isolating hazardous areas.

In an emergency, survey damage and structural stability of the building and utilities and report to the Principal.

Work with members of the CIT, opening and locking rooms as required.

Be aware of all utility lines in or near the school.

Assist in carrying out drills and evacuation procedures.

Turn off utility mains if necessary.

Role of Board of Management Member:

If a Critical Incident occurs out of term time and the Principal is unavailable the Board of Management Representative will:

Contact the family of student(s) concerned to find out facts of incident.

Inform the Principal of the incident.

Offer condolences to the family on behalf of the school.

Prepare a statement for the media if required. (See appendices).

Attend the funeral services on behalf of the school.

Liaise with the Principal to determine if the school needs to take additional action.

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.

Salesian Secondary College administration staff will have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters, photocopying materials, etc.

All records will be filed centrally in a secure file in the Principal's / DLP's office.

Confidentiality, Good Name Considerations and the Control of Information

The management and staff of Salesian Secondary 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 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' should not be used until it is legally established that a murder was committed. The term 'violent death' may be used instead.

Every effort will be made to ensure that language used, both within the school and outside, is discrete and respectful of the circumstances and people involved.

Information will not be shared unless verified for authenticity. It may be prudent to advise key stakeholders of speculation, but every care will be taken to control unverified information.

7. Critical incident rooms

The choice of location for meetings following a critical incident will be made according to the nature of the incident and the size of the group gathering together.

In the event of a critical incident, the following rooms may be allocated for use:

The staff room will be the main room used to meet the staff.

Designated meeting rooms, the Guidance or Management offices or RE Rooms may be used for meetings with students.

Designated meeting rooms, the Principal or DP offices, the Guidance offices, Teachers' Workroom or RE Room will be used for parents.

The Principal and Deputy Principals' offices or other suitable locations will be used for media.

Offices belonging to key pastoral care staff will be used for individual sessions with students.

Suitable rooms will be made available for other visitors: The Year Head Room, the main office etc

8. Expressions of Faith

Salesian Secondary College is a Catholic school and thus acknowledges that faith expression through prayer or religious ceremony and ritual have an important place in the management of a Critical Incident. The CIMT will assess at what moments during the management of a critical incident prayer, reflection, para liturgy and liturgy, which are inclusive of all members of the school community concerned, have a role.

In the case of religious services off site e.g. funerals, the Principal and CIMT will assess how the school will be represented. Students will not be permitted to attend religious services (or other gatherings connected to the critical incident) off site without written permission from parents / guardians.

In the case of attendance at gatherings off site, the care of attending students at critical moments of heightened emotion is paramount. Thus, the degree to which students may observe or participate in ceremonies or other gatherings is to be decided by the supervising teachers, in consultation with the Principal and CIMT. Decisions will be made based on the age of the students, the circumstances at play at the gathering and the perceived impact on the students' ongoing well-being. This relates to, for example, Books of Condolence, Guards of Honour, visiting graveside or funeral home and other rituals which may be associated with a critical incident.

In all cases, the wishes of family members of the focus of the incident will be respected.

9. AGENDA FOR MEETING WITH CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM /KEY STAFF

- o Share full details of the event
- o Agree on the facts. These will need to be relayed in a clear, appropriate and consistent manner by all staff to the students
- o Discuss what agencies have been contacted and whether there are additional ones that should be informed
- o Managing communication needs careful attention. Use of social media is a good medium for facilitating factual and appropriate communication
- o When a number of external agencies are involved in a response, coordination will be needed and procedures will need to be agreed. An agency such as NEPS may take on this role
- o Plan procedures for the day
- o Discuss issues relating to school routine, including school closure. Remember it is important to maintain a normal routine when at all possible. It is recommended that the school timetable runs as normal. This will provide a sense of safety and structure which is comforting for many students. Teachers should give students the opportunity to talk about what has happened and temporarily shelve all academic activities if necessary
- o You may wish to consult students about what to do if there is an event scheduled such as a trip, concert, match, etc. This should reduce the likelihood of students being angry later on as a result of any school action or in-action
- o Discuss how to break the news to relatives and close friends and who should do this (remember that they must always be told separately)
- o Discuss how to break the news to the rest of the students. It is often best to do this with class groups, rather than large assemblies
- o Discuss how to identify vulnerable students
- o If there are students of various nationalities and religions in the school, this needs to be taken into consideration in organising prayer services, attendance at the funeral etc
- o Parents of different religious or national groups may need to be consulted
- o Plan a whole staff briefing (including ancillary staff). This may need to be done in two groups depending on the arrangements for the supervision of students

- o Agree the text of a letter to be sent to parents
- o Discuss how to deal with the media. Prepare a media statement and place it on the school's website, if appropriate. This can be emailed to media representatives who make contact with the school. It may also be used if an interview is requested
- o Delegate responsibilities to the appropriate critical incident team member or key personnel
- o Discuss which room(s) will be available to external agencies
- o Decide whether a quiet room should be made available for students. This is a place that students can go if they are having difficulty remaining composed in the classroom. It should have tissues, a few stuffed toys, cushions, drawing and writing materials and information leaflets from the Resource Materials section appropriate to the age of the students. It is generally recommended that this is available for the week following the incident and that its use is then reviewed. Students should sign out of their regular class and sign into the quiet room for a certain time. The room should be supervised to ensure student safety. A very distressed student may need individual support. This might be offered by the guidance counsellor, chaplain or other staff member. A similar room could be set up for staff
- o A record should be kept of all students seen by school staff and agencies external to the schools. One person should be appointed to collate the lists regularly
- o Agree the next meeting time for the Critical Management Team/ key staff
- o Agree a time for a follow up staff meeting at the end of the day. This gives an opportunity for the principal to update staff on any developments. It also allows time for preparation for the following day. Lastly, it gives staff a chance to share their experience and to wind down after the day.

NOTE In the case of a major incident, meetings may be held in a location away from the school involving key personnel from schools and other agencies. Care should be taken that staff with appropriate experience and authority remain in place in the school to facilitate an effective response. The principal might consider delegating someone to go to such meetings as, if they decide to go themselves, they may not be available for critical decisions in their own school.

10. MEETING WITH A STAFF GROUP

The purpose of this meeting is to relay facts to staff and to plan the schedule for the day. It is generally the principal who leads this meeting. On occasion, this duty may be delegated to another member of the team. It is crucial that the teachers have accurate facts and are kept updated. This will help to dispel rumours which may begin to circulate. It may be useful for NEPS to give a brief input.

REMINDER: The staff may need to be seen in two separate groups in order to facilitate supervision of students.

SAMPLE SCRIPT FOR PRINCIPAL

You may have already heard that two of our students were involved in a car accident last night (give details of where). (Name of students) who were driving together, both died as a result of their injuries. As more information becomes available, including funeral arrangements, I will speak to you again. This is a terrible tragedy for the school and community and our thoughts are with the families.

It is important to make every effort to maintain regular classroom routines in accordance with the timetable. However, for many of the students this will be difficult. I understand that this may be a very difficult time for you also and we need to be here for each other. The psychologist is now going to talk to you about how we can support each other and the students in the coming days and weeks.

REMEMBER

Students need to be with people they know and trust so, if at all possible, it is better that teachers and other school staff provide support for the students. The external “expert” should be primarily used to advise and support school staff.

(The following is optional)

I can see that a number of people are very upset and would like to give you a few moments to say a few words or to ask questions if you would like.

Why routine is so important:

Routine is very important at a time of tragedy. It provides a sense of security, especially for younger students. It helps students to see that, despite these awful events, the world remains largely unchanged and that life goes on. They will learn this over the next hours, days, weeks. They learn this through seeing you cope with this event and seeing that the routine of life is continuing. It is important to maintain the normal routine as much as possible. So, after this meeting, it would be best if you could go to your classes and be with the students.

It is ok to be upset:

Remember this is an upsetting time for you as well as the students and it is ok that the students know and see that you are upset. In fact it may be reassuring for them.

How to share the facts with students:

It is important that close friends of the deceased are told first and separately. Some of you may feel uncomfortable about relaying this information to the students. It is important to remember that the students know you and trust you and that it is better if they hear this tragic news from someone they know and that this happens in a safe and familiar environment. Remember also that you are here for the longer term. You will be the ones to whom the students will look for guidance and support in the next hours, days, weeks and months.

It is important to stick to known facts and to be alert to rumour. Rumours can proliferate at these times and be very upsetting for students.

For teachers who feel unable to meet with classes:

If a teacher is particularly upset or feels unable to cope, (which could be for any number of reasons), make sure that s/he is offered support and that their class is covered. If any of you feel unable to address the students please stay behind at the end of the meeting. We will help you prepare what to say or it may be possible to make alternative arrangements.

Provide literature:

I am going to distribute some handouts that you may find useful over the next few days.

11. A CLASSROOM SESSION FOLLOWING NEWS OF A CRITICAL INCIDENT

Normally, the class teacher, class tutor or other teacher who knows the students should be the person to inform them of the events and lead the classroom session. Students generally feel safe and secure with someone they know. If the teacher feels uncomfortable with this role another staff member may share the task. Teachers should have the opportunity to opt out of this work if they feel unable to handle it and other arrangements should be made for that class group.

The aim of the session is to break the news to give the students an opportunity to discuss what has happened and to express their thoughts and feelings in a secure environment. The teacher needs to listen and be empathic.

The session needs to be tailored to the age and developmental level of the class group.

The outline of the session is as follows:

STEP 1 Giving the facts and dispelling rumours

STEP 2 Sharing stories and allowing and encouraging the sharing of thoughts and the expression of feelings

STEP 3 Normalising the reactions

STEP 4 Worries (for younger children)

STEP 5 Advising about social media usage

STEP 6 Empowerment

STEP 7 Closure

STEP 8 Free Time

STEP 9 Recovery

Step 1 Tell the students in a calm, low key and factual voice

- What has happened
- Who was involved
- When it happened
- The plan of the day

Step 2

Take some time for discussion. Students may wish to tell their story of the event. As a result they will feel less alone because of their common shared experiences. Assisting them to verbalise their experiences helps their recovery. For those students who find it difficult to verbalise their

experiences, or for students with learning difficulties, it may be helpful to allow them to express their feelings and recount their experiences in other ways. Writing stories or using art can be particularly helpful, especially for younger students.

Step 3

Tell the children that they will all react differently to what has happened and that there is no right or wrong way. List some possible feelings and reactions. Explain that their reactions are normal responses to abnormal circumstances. Let the students know that the reactions or symptoms will go away in time.

Step 4

You may be worried that the same thing could happen to you or someone in your family. What happened to (name of deceased) doesn't happen very often.

Step 6

Help the students to identify strategies that they might use to help manage their reaction, for example, talking to family and friends, getting enough sleep, taking plenty of exercise and appropriate use of social media - may all help. If appropriate, students can share strategies that worked for them in other stressful situations or brainstorm ideas as to what might help. Overall, it is important to help the students regain a sense of control.

Step 7

End the session by focusing on the future. Depending on the nature of the incident, help the class/group decide what they would like to do about various issues, e.g., what to do about the person's empty chair, about writing cards or letters. Reiterate the message that their reactions are normal responses to abnormal circumstances.

Step 8

After the discussion the teacher may want to allow the student's some play time in the playground or free time in the classroom or an agreed area, depending on the age.

Step 9

If the classmate has been ill, you could say. He was very sick and the chances of this happening to someone else you know are low.

Step 5

Discussions may begin with an outline of the various social media currently being used by members of the group. The value of these as a way of keeping in contact with and supporting friends should be acknowledged. Students may be asked for experiences of ways in which such communication has helped them as well as examples of ways in which it has gone wrong. Media involving live communication such as Skype or Viber are generally more conducive to support and less open to misunderstanding than text-based means. Students will be encouraged to consider how much social media usage is too much, particularly late into the night.

Normal routines should generally be returned to as soon as possible.

- Students should be encouraged to resume sports and other extracurricular activities
- It is appropriate that the class curriculum is adjusted or adapted. For example, teachers should avoid presenting new learning material for a while following an incident as concentration may be impaired
- Use opportunities which arise within ordinary class work, where coping and support can be reinforced
- Students could be encouraged to discuss how to avoid future crisis and lessons learnt from their experiences. There will also be opportunities for structured discussion within the school's social, personal, and health education programmes. Social Personal & Health Education (SPHE)/Life skills curriculum time is an ideal context in which to offer support.

12. USEFUL WEBSITES AND HELPLINES FOR ACCESSING RESOURCES

TRAINING - www.nosp.ie

ASIST Training: ASIST (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training) is a two-day interactive workshop in suicide first-aid. It is suitable for all kinds of caregivers - health workers, teachers, community workers, Gardaí, youth workers, volunteers, people responding to family, friends and co-workers. It is free of charge. If you'd like to make a difference in your community, you may wish to access ASIST training and learn how to help. Information can be obtained on the website of the National Office for Suicide Prevention.

SafeTALK: SafeTALK 'suicide alertness for everyone' is a half day training programme that prepares participants to identify persons with thoughts of suicide and connect them to suicide first aid resources. These specific skills are called suicide alertness and are taught with the expectation that the person learning them will use them to help reduce suicide risk in their communities. Participants learn how to provide practical help to persons with thoughts of suicide in only a few hours. Following a SafeTALK workshop you will be more willing and able to perform an important helping role for persons with thoughts of suicide.

WEBSITES

- Barnardos provide resources and advice on www.barnardos.ie/resources, www.barnardos.ie/teenhelp
- The Childhood Bereavement Network (CBN) is a multi-professional federation of organisations and individuals working with bereaved children and young people. www.irishchildhoodbereavementnetwork.ie
- Cruse Bereavement Care exists to promote the wellbeing of bereaved people and to enable anyone bereaved by death to understand their grief and cope with their loss. www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk
- The Professional Development for Teachers (PDST) Health and Wellbeing Team provide support for teachers at primary and post-primary level in physical education (PE), social personal and health education (SPHE) which includes anti-bullying, child protection, mental health and wellbeing, relationships and sexuality education (RSE) and other SPHE related areas. Supports offered to schools include in-service for principals, co-ordinators, teachers of SPHE, whole staff groups; programme planning; school policy development; schools visits. www.pdst.ie.
- The former SPHE Support Service has been integrated into the Health and Wellbeing team of the PDST. Visit www.sphe.ie for further information and to book post-primary SPHE courses.
- The National Office for Suicide Prevention (NOSP) was established to oversee the implementation of 'Reach Out' the National Strategy for Action on Suicide Prevention, and to co-ordinate suicide prevention efforts around the country. The NOSP works closely with the HSE Suicide Prevention Officers. Up-to-date contact details for suicide prevention officers can be found on the NOSP website www.nosp.ie
- Children's Grief Centre www.childrensgriefcentre.ie – support service for school aged children and young people affected by loss through death, separation or divorce.
- www.pieta.ie

- The Irish Association for Suicidology (IAS) sets out to be a forum for all individuals and voluntary groups involved in any aspect of suicidology for the exchange of knowledge gained from differing perspectives and experiences www.ias.ie
- Irish Hospice Foundation - www.hospicefoundation.ie
- Lifelines supports all people who are affected in anyway by self-injury within the United Kingdom and beyond. It supports people who self-injure, and their family and friends. www.selfharm.org
- Winstonswish Foundation, help for grieving children and their families. www.winstonswish.org.uk
- Resources and support for those dealing with suicide, depression or emotional distress, particularly teenagers and young adults. www.papyrus-uk.org
- A national charity committed to improving the mental health of all children and young people. www.youngminds.org.uk
- An Irish website covering all aspects of health, lifestyle, culture and craic. It's an online youth information centre, a magazine, a health clinic, a contact directory, a youth media forum a take action initiative, a community building place and lots more. www.spunout.ie
- A site that focuses on issues relating to youth in Ireland today. www.youth.ie
- An Australian site that helps young people through tough times. www.reachout.com.au
- Mental Health Ireland aims to promote positive mental health and to actively support persons with a mental illness, their families and carers by identifying their needs and advocating their rights. The pro teen matters web magazine, which is created by young people for young people, has information about physical and mental health, frequently asked questions, competitions, jokes and stories. www.mentalhelathireland.ie
- Non-judgemental information and support. www.gayswitchboard.ie

HELPLINES

Remind students that if they need someone to talk to, at any time of the day or night, they can ring either:

Childline: 1800 666 666 (free calls)

The Samaritans: 1850 60 90 90 (Local call cost)

13. CHILDREN'S UNDERSTANDING AND REACTION TO DEATH ACCORDING TO AGE

(This may be used with various groups and individuals)

Children's understanding and reaction to death will depend on their age and their developmental stage. The following are guides only as children will differ in their reactions and grasp of events for a range of reasons other than age alone.

AGES 0 – 2 YEARS

- Infants do not understand the meaning of death
- They may display anxiety when separated from a loved one
- They may appear upset, subdued and uninterested in their surroundings.

AGES 2 – 5 YEARS

- No understanding of the permanency of death
- May search for the missing person from a loved one
- May feel responsible for the death in some way
- May become apathetic and depressed
- May regress to an earlier stage of development e.g. thumb sucking, bedwetting, tantrums or may become clingy
- May develop fears of going to sleep
- May worry that other loved ones may die.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

- Continuity of normal routine e.g. mealtimes and bedtime
- Offer physical comfort
- Explain the death in clear, simple language, using words like "dead" and "died" - Do not use terms like "gone to sleep" or "passed away"
- You may need to repeat the same information again and again
- Permit them to ask questions and be consistent in your answers
- Reassure them that they had nothing to do with the death and of the wellbeing of other family members.

AGES 5 – 9 YEARS

- Beginning to realise the permanency of death, but their idea of life after death is still vague May
- have concerns about how the deceased is feeling or what he/she is thinking in the grave
- May have a lot of questions about aspects of the death e.g. how the person died, what they looked like, the funeral, heaven, coffins
- The reaction of their peers is important, they may feel 'different' to them
- Their peers may be awkward about the death and avoid contact
- They may become the target of bullying.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

- Encourage the child to talk and cry about the deceased if they wish to, otherwise respect their silence
- Answer questions and provide as much factual information about the death as possible
- Reassure them that thinking and feeling ceases after death
- Be vigilant in relation to bullying.

AGES 9 – 12 YEARS

- Understand the finality and universality of death
- Awareness of their own mortality and may worry about their own death
- May display psychosomatic symptoms i.e. physical complaints like tummy aches
- May wish to stay at home close to parents
- May display anger.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

- Dispel fears about their own health or the health of other loved ones by offering reassurance
- Encourage them to go to school
- Allow them to express their anger, offering appropriate ways to do so.

ADOLESCENTS

Fully understand the finality, universality and inevitability of death.

Their

- experience of death is similar to adults
- May have a range of feelings: guilt, regret, anger, loneliness etc.
- Death adds to the already confused array of emotions experienced by adolescents
- May appear to not care about the death
- May seek support outside of the family.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

- Offer them time to listen
- Allow them to express their grief in their own way
- Be prepared for mood swings
- Don't feel left out if they seem to value their friends more than their parents
- Children's use of social media should be monitored and supported by parents.

If parents are grieving themselves, they may be emotionally unable to support their other children. In this instance, another supportive adult in the child's life, e.g. other family members, friends, neighbours may need to offer emotional support.

It should be remembered that for children with special educational needs, their understanding of what has happened will be in line with their developmental age. Also, children with special educational needs may react differently emotionally than that of their peers.

14 . STAGES OF GRIEF

(This may be used with various groups and individuals)

Grief is a normal, healthy and predictable response to loss. Although there are distinct phases in the grieving process, people go through these stages in different sequences and at different paces. Generally the grieving process in adults is thought to take about two years, while with children and adolescents it may be over a more extended time-frame with different issues arising as they go through developmental milestones.

Denial, numbness, shock (up to 6 weeks)

- Death of the person may be denied
- Emerging feelings may be suppressed
- Refusal to talk about the death
- Bereaved keeps very busy to avoid thinking about the death
- Bereaved may show signs of confusion and forget everyday routines
- Children in shock may display either silent withdrawal or outbursts of crying.

Acute grief/searching and longing for deceased (6 weeks to 4 months)

- Acute sadness – crying
- Physical pangs of pain including loss of appetite and disturbed sleep
- Emotional pain accompanied by dejection, hopelessness, lack of concentration
- Fears of life after death, nightmares, ghosts
- Disorganisation
- Strong guilt feelings and questioning of self and others, particularly in the case of a sudden death
- Feelings of anger at the departed for leaving them
- Bereaved may reject offers to comfort them.

Adaptation to life without the deceased (6 months to 18 months)

- People begin to adjust to their lives without the person who is gone
- Sense of isolation
- Fearful of forgetting the deceased
- Less crying and irritability
- Exacerbation of existing personality problems. Children with low self-esteem may be at a greater risk of emotional/behavioural difficulties.

Normalisation of life

- Getting on with life
- Returned sense of humour and play
- Able to participate emotionally in new relationships
- Changed relationship with the deceased – able to think of the deceased without pain
- Reduction in physical/emotional symptoms and less guilt

15. HOW TO COPE WHEN SOMETHING TERRIBLE HAPPENS

- Reach out – people do care
 - Talk to your friends, family and teachers - talking is the most healing medicine
 - Remember you are normal and having normal reactions – don't label yourself as crazy or mad
 - It is acceptable to cry
 - It is acceptable to smile
 - If your feelings and reactions seem different from those of your friends, remember everyone reacts differently
 - When the stress level is high there is a temptation to try to numb the feelings perhaps with alcohol and drugs, this complicates matters rather than bringing relief
 - Some people find that writing or drawing is helpful. What about writing a note or letter to the family of the person who died or the person themselves?
 - Spend time with people who have a positive influence on you
 - Make as many daily decisions as possible. This will give you a feeling of control over your life, e.g. if someone asks you what you want to eat – answer them, even if you're not sure
 - Recurring thoughts, dreams or flashbacks are normal – don't try to fight them – they'll decrease over time and become less painful
 - Make a special effort to take care of yourself during this time. Try to get some extra sleep, eat nutritious foods and get some exercise, even if it is just a walk
- Sticking to your “normal” routine helps.
- Structure your time – keep busy
 - Take time out – go for a cycle or kick a football
 - Provide some balance to the negative things that have gone on by doing something special or fun for yourself. Think about something that makes you feel good. Then make it happen – like going to the cinema, listening to music, calling a friend, etc. Laughter is good medicine. Watch a funny movie or play a silly game with younger children to lighten your spirits
- Use of social media can help but do not rely on it as your only source of support
- Useful websites: www.spunout.ie; www.youth.ie; www.reachout.com.au

Above all, realise that what you are experiencing is normal following a traumatic event. Be understanding of yourself and others.

16. GRIEF AFTER SUICIDE OR SUSPECTED SUICIDE

Remember there is no right or wrong way to react when someone you know dies. People will have many different reactions to what has happened.

- Know that you can survive, even if you feel you can't
- You may feel overwhelmed and frightened by your feelings. This is normal. You're not going crazy; you are grieving
- You may not feel a strong reaction to what has happened. This is normal
- You may experience feelings of guilt, confusion, forgetfulness and anger. Again these feelings are all normal
- You may feel angry at the person who has died, at yourself, at God, at everyone and everything. It is ok to express it
- You may feel guilty about what you did or did not do. Suicide is the act of an individual, for which we cannot take responsibility
- You may never have an answer as to "why" but it is ok to keep asking "why" until you no longer need to ask or you are satisfied with partial answers
- Sometimes people make decisions over which we have no control. It was not your choice
- Feeling low is temporary, suicide is permanent. Suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem. If you are feeling low or having a difficult time, ask for help
- Allow yourself to cry, this will help you to heal
- Healing takes time. Allow yourself the time you need to grieve
- Every person grieves differently and at a different pace
- Delay making any big decisions if possible
- This is the hardest thing you will ever do. Be patient and compassionate with yourself
- Spend time with people who are willing to listen when you need to talk and who also understand your need to be silent
- Seek professional help if you feel overwhelmed
- If you are thinking of trying to kill yourself, you must talk to a trusted adult
- Avoid people who try to tell you what to feel and how to feel it and, in particular, those who think you should "be over it by now"
- Ask in school about a support group for survivors that provides a safe place for you to express your feelings, or simply a place to go to be with other survivors who are experiencing some of the same things you're going through

Allow yourself to laugh with others and at yourself. This is healing

Useful websites: www.spunout.ie; www.youth.ie; www.reachout.com.au

17. TEACHERS HELPING STUDENTS IN TIME OF CRISIS OR EMERGENCY

1.LISTEN 2.PROTECT 3.CONNECT 4.MODEL & 5.TEACH

THINK ABOUT your students' "DIRECT EXPERIENCE" with the event i.e. FIRST-HAND EXPERIENCE of the event (physically experiencing or directly seeing it as it happens).

After the event, changes can happen in students' thoughts, feelings, and behaviours. Your students may worry about family members, classmates, friends, or pets they care about, and may worry that it will happen again. Common reactions to crises and emergencies include trouble sleeping, problems at school and with friends, trouble concentrating and listening, and not finishing work. Your students may become more irritable, sad, angry, or worried as they think about what has happened, and as they experience recovery efforts after the event.

When students share their experiences, thoughts and feelings about the event, LISTEN for RISK FACTORS for adverse reactions.

Risk factors that may indicate a need for counselling referral for students include:

- loss of a family member, schoolmate, or friend
- observing serious injury or the death of another person
- family members or friends missing after the event,
- past traumatic experiences or losses
- getting hurt or becoming sick due to the event
- home loss, family moves, changes in neighbourhoods/schools, and/or loss of belongings.

If a student has had any of these experiences, you may wish to consider referring her or him to the HSE services. Your NEPS psychologist will be available to provide support and advice. Now that you know what can affect your students after a disaster, school crisis, or emergency, you're ready to Listen, Protect, Connect, and Model & Teach

1.LISTEN, PROTECT, CONNECT, MODEL & TEACH

The first step after an event is to listen and pay attention to what they say and how they act. Your students may also show their feelings in non-verbal ways, like increased behavioural problems or increased withdrawal.

Let your students know you are willing to listen and talk about the event, or to make referrals to talk to an appropriate professional, if they prefer it. Use the following questions to talk with your students. You can listen for clues that indicate when students are having a hard time. Write down a few examples that may be helpful to note:

- What might be preventing a student from coming to or staying in school?
- What might be preventing a student from paying attention or doing homework?
- What might be preventing a student from returning to other school based activities?

Listen, observe, and note any changes in:

- Behaviour and/or mood
- School performance
- Interactions with schoolmates and teachers
- Participation in school-based activities
- Behaviours at home that parents/guardians discuss with you.

LISTEN 2. PROTECT, CONNECT, MODEL & TEACH

You can help make your students feel better by doing some or all of the following:

- Answer questions simply and honestly, clearing up any confusion students may have about what happened
- Let your students know that they are not alone in their reactions
- Provide opportunities for your students to talk, draw, and play, but don't force it
- Talk to your students about what is being done by the school and community to keep everyone safe from harm
- Watch for anything in the environment that could re-traumatize your students
- Keep your eyes and ears open for bullying behaviours
- Maintain daily routines, activities and structure with clear expectations and consistent rules
- Make adjustments to assignments to be sensitive to students' current level of functioning
- Limit access to live television and the Internet that show disturbing scenes of the event
- Remember, what is not upsetting to adults may upset and confuse students, and vice versa
- Encourage students to "take a break" from the crisis focus with activities unrelated to the event
- Find ways for your students to feel helpful to your classroom, the school, and the community
- List other things you do that help your students feel better. Sharing this list with other teachers may increase ideas to help your students.

LISTEN, PROTECT 3.CONNECT, MODEL & TEACH

Reaching out to people in your school and community will help your students after a school crisis or emergency. These connections will build strength for everyone. Consider ways to make some or all of the following connections:

- "Check in" with students on a regular basis
- Find resources that can be supportive to your students and staff
- Restore interactive school activities, including sports, club meetings, student projects, and student councils, coaches, etc.
- Encourage student activities with friends, including class projects and extracurricular activities

- Empathise with your students by allowing a little more time for them to learn new materials
- Build on your students' strengths by encouraging them to find ways to help them use what they have learned in the past to help them deal with the event
- Remind your students that major disasters, crises, and emergencies are rare
- Discuss feeling safe and times they have felt safe
- List programs and activities that connect you and your students with the community
- Share your list with other teachers to create a larger list of activities and resources.

LISTEN, PROTECT, CONNECT 4.MODEL & TEACH

As you help your students after a disaster, crisis, or emergency, your efforts may be more successful – and you may be less stressed – if you keep in mind:

- It is good to be aware of your own thoughts, feelings, and reactions; these can be seen and may affect your students
- How you cope and behave after an event will influence how your students cope and behave. Your students will be watching you for both verbal and non-verbal cues
- Monitor conversations that students may hear
- Acknowledge the difficulty of the situation, but demonstrate how people can come together to cope after such an event.

LISTEN, PROTECT, CONNECT, MODEL & 5.TEACH

Talk to your students about expected reactions after a crisis (emotional, behavioural, cognitive, and physiological). There are “normal” reactions to abnormal events.

- Different people may have very different reactions, even within the same family
- After the event, people may also have different amounts of time they need to cope and adjust
- Encourage your students to identify and use positive coping strategies to help them after the event
- Help your students problem-solve to get through each day successfully
- Help your students set small “doable” goals and share in these achievements as “wins” for the students and your classroom
- Remind students that with time and assistance, things generally get better. If they don't, they should let a parent or teacher know
- Over time, you, your students, their families, your classroom, can EXPECT RECOVERY.

Adapted by the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) for Irish schools from Psychological First Aid materials developed by the American Red Cross (2014 and FEMA, see www.ready.gov). We acknowledge with thanks.

18. CHECKLIST FOR REVIEWING THE POLICY AND PLAN

- o Has serious consideration been given to the school's approach to prevention?
- o Has the school defined a critical incident and given examples?
- o Have key roles been clearly identified and the assigned tasks outlined?
- o Have staff members been nominated to each of the assigned roles/tasks?
- o Are the personnel suitable?
- o Has each member of the team compiled their emergency pack (photocopies of relevant handouts)?
- o Has contact been made with external agencies?
- o Is the Emergency Contact List appropriate and complete?
- o Are letters and press releases readily available on school headed paper, for adaptation to suit the particular circumstances?
- o Are telephone numbers on contact lists up-to-date?
- o Have all the staff been consulted about the plan/policy?
- o Has a date been set for a review of the plan?
- o Who will be given copies of the plan?
- o Where will copies of the plan be kept?
- o Have parents been consulted about the plan?
- o Have the students been consulted about the plan?

Date of ratification:

**Consultation and communication
regarding this policy:**

This policy and plan is a Management updated version of a similar plan ratified in 2011.

Our school's final policy and plan in relation to responding to critical incidents was presented to all staff during the school year 2018, as part of the delivery of updated policies within the context of the completion of the Child Safeguarding Statement 2018.

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 Principal or Deputy Principal.

The plan will be reviewed periodically.

Evaluation.

School management will accept feedback from staff, students and parents made through the proper use of the appropriate channels ie staff meetings, student committees and PSAC. This feedback will inform periodic evaluation of the policy by management.

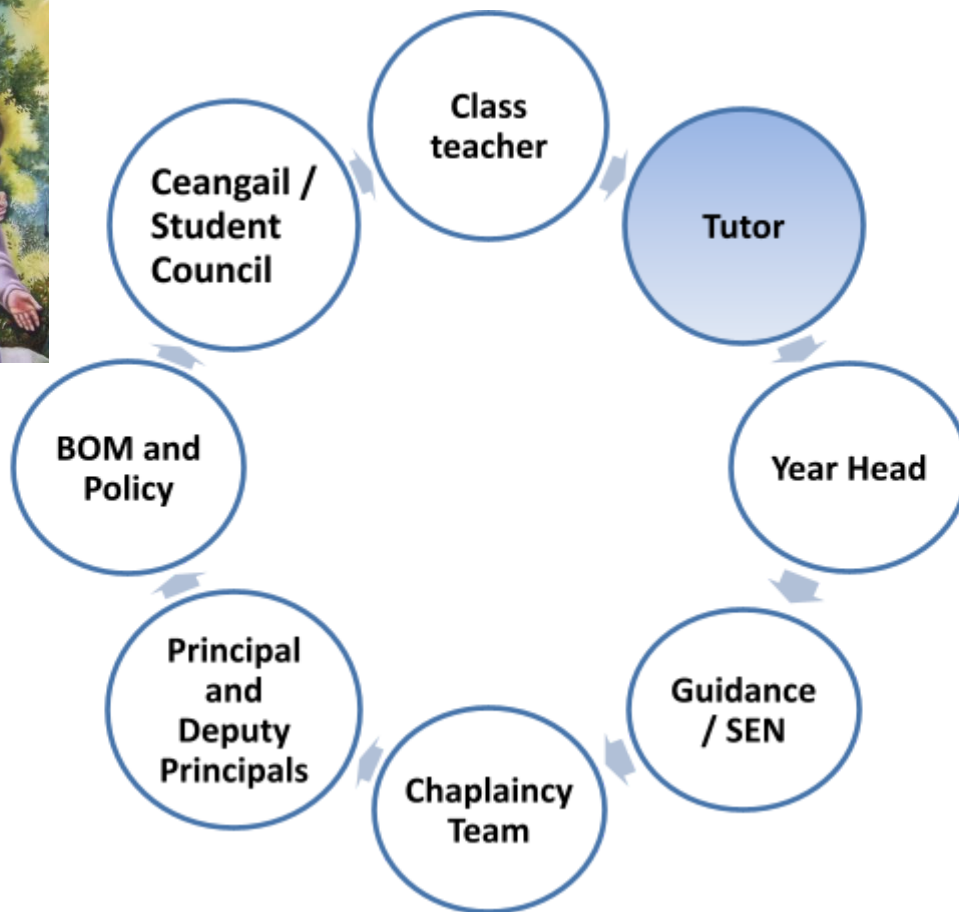
This policy is incorporated into the body of School Policy from the date of ratification.

Proposed date of review:

Appendix 1.

Pastoral care of the Salesian Secondary College's student:

Our Pastoral Care Structure is the bedrock of all we do in Salesian Secondary College....



Signed 

Michael Burke
Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed 

Keith O'Rahilly
Principal/Secretary to the Board of Management

Date: 23rd April 2024