

CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT POLICY



St Aidan's Community College aims to protect the well-being of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. *'Bíodh bhur solas ag taitneamh'*. The Board of Management, through the Principal, has drawn up a Critical Incident Management Plan (CIMP) as one element of the school's policies and plans.

Review and Research

The CIMT (Critical Incident Management Team) have consulted resource documents available to schools on www.education.ie and www.nosp.ie including:

- Responding to Critical Incidents Guidelines and Resources for Schools (NEPS 2016)
- Suicide Prevention in Schools: Best Practice Guidelines (IAS, National Suicide Review Group (2002)
- Suicide Prevention in the Community - A Practical Guide (HSE 2011)
- Well-Being in Post-Primary Schools Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention (DES, DOH, HSE 2013)
- Well-Being in Primary Schools - Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion (DES, DOH, HSE 2015)

Definition of 'critical incident'

The staff and management of St Aidan's Community 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*
- *A serious 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*

Aim

The aim of the CIMP is to help school 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.

Creation of a coping supportive and caring ethos in the school

We have put systems in place to help to build resilience in both staff and students, thus preparing them to cope with a range of life events. These include measures to address both the physical and psychological safety of the school community.

Physical safety

- Evacuation plan formulated
- Regular fire drills occur
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
- Supervision at breaks & lunches
- Visitors required to report to the office
- Log of visitors maintained

Psychological safety

The management and staff of St Aidan's Community 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.

- 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 are familiar with the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures
- Books and resources on difficulties affecting the primary/post primary school student are available
- Information is provided on mental health in general and such specific areas as signs and symptoms of depression and anxiety
- Staff are informed in the area of suicide awareness and some are trained in interventions for suicidal students
- The school has developed links with a range of external 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. See DES Circulars 0023/2010 (Post-Primary)
- The school has a clear policy on bullying and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy
- There is a care system in place in the school using the "Continuum of Support" approach which is outlined in the NEPS documents published 2010 for post primary schools. See also Student Support Teams in Post Primary Schools (2014). These documents are available on www.education.ie
- Students who are identified as being at risk are referred to the designated staff member (e.g. guidance counsellor or support teacher), 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.
- Staff are informed about how to access support for themselves.

Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)

A CIMT has been established in line with best practice. 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.

Team leader: Sheila Curley (Principal)

Role

- Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting
- Coordinates the tasks of the team
- Liaises with the ETB; DES; NEPS; SEC (if relevant)
- Liaises with the bereaved family
- Liaises with the Gardaí
- Ensures that information about deaths or other developments is checked out for accuracy before being shared

Staff liaison: Margaret Quane (Deputy Principal)

Role

- Leads briefing meetings for staff on the facts as known, gives staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions, outlines the routine for the day
- Advises staff on the procedures for identification of vulnerable students
- Provides materials for staff (from their critical incident folder)
- Keeps staff updated as the day progresses
- Is alert to vulnerable staff members and makes contact with them individually
- Advises them of the availability of the EAS and gives them the contact number.

Student liaison: Paul Mc Grath (Chaplain)

Role

- At post-primary level, may co-ordinate information from tutors and year heads about students they are concerned about
- Alerts other staff to vulnerable students (appropriately)
- Provides materials for students (from their critical incident folder)
- Maintains student contact records (R1).
- Looks after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room where agreed

Community/agency liaison: Mike Forde

Role

- 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
- Liaises with agencies in the community for support and onward referral
- Is alert to the need to check credentials of individuals offering support
- Coordinates the involvement of these agencies
- Reminds agency staff to wear name badges
- Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies

Parent liaison: Kay Kelleher (HSCL)

Role

- Visits the bereaved family with the team leader
- 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)

Media liaison: Sheila Curley – through Cork ETB

Role

- 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 draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews (as agreed by school management)

Administrator: Maeve Flavin Murphy/Anne Brew

Role

- Maintenance of up to date telephone numbers of
 - Parents or guardians
 - Teachers
 - Emergency services
- Takes telephone calls and notes those that need to be responded to
- Ensures that templates are on the schools system in advance and ready for adaptation
- Prepares and sends out letters, emails and texts
- Photocopies materials needed
- Maintains records

Record keeping

In the event of an incident each member of the team will keep records of phone calls made and received, letters sent and received, meetings held, persons met, interventions used, material used etc.

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

Confidentiality and good name considerations

Management and staff of St Aidan's Community College have a responsibility to protect the privacy and good name of people involved in any incident and will be sensitive to the consequences of public statements. Members of school staff will bear this in mind, and seek to ensure that students do so also, e.g. 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.

Critical Incident Rooms

In the event of a critical incident, the following rooms are designated for the indicated purposes

Room Name:	Designated Purpose:
<i>Staff Room</i>	Main room for meeting staff
<i>Demo Room</i>	Meetings with students
<i>Parents Room</i>	Meetings with parents
<i>Lavitt's Quay</i>	Meetings with media
<i>Chaplain/Guidance Counsellor office</i>	Individual sessions with students
<i>Parents Room</i>	Meetings with other visitors

Consultation and communication regarding the plan

All staff were consulted and their views canvassed in the preparation of this policy and plan. Students and parent/guardian representatives were also consulted and asked for their comments.

Our school's final policy and plan in relation to responding to critical incidents has been presented to all staff. 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 Principal/Deputy Principal

Role	Name
Team leader:	<i>Sheila Curley</i>
Garda liaison	<i>Sheila Curley</i>
Staff liaison	<i>Margaret Quane</i>
Student liaison	<i>Paul Mc Grath</i>
Community liaison	<i>Mike Forde</i>
Parent liaison	<i>Kay Kelleher</i>
Media liaison	<i>Sheila Curley through Cork ETB</i>
Administrator	<i>Maeve Flavin Murphy/Anne Brew</i>

Short term actions – Day 1

Task	Name
Gather accurate information Who, what, when, where?	Sheila Curley
Convene a CIMT meeting – specify time and place clearly	Sheila Curley
Contact external agencies	Mike Forde
Arrange supervision for students	Margaret Quane
Hold staff meeting	All staff
Agree schedule for the day	CIMT
Inform students – (close friends and students with learning difficulties may need to be told separately)	Teachers with CIMT support
Compile a list of vulnerable students	CIMT
Prepare and agree media statement and deal with media	Sheila Curley with Cork ETB
Inform parents	Kay Kelleher
Hold end of day staff briefing	Margaret Quane

Medium term actions - (Day 2 and following days)

Task	Name
Convene a CIMT meeting to review the events of day 1	Team leader
Meet external agencies	Mike Forde
Meet whole staff	Margaret Quane
Arrange support for students, staff, parents	CIMT
Visit the injured	Paul Mc Grath
Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements	Paul Mc Grath
Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service	CIMT
Make decisions about school closure	Cork ETB

Follow-up – beyond 72 hours

Task	Name
Monitor students for signs of continuing distress	Class teachers
Liaise with agencies regarding referrals	Mike Forde/Paul Mc Grath
Plan for return of bereaved student(s)	Paul Mc Grath
Plan for giving of 'memory box' to bereaved family	Paul Mc Grath
Decide on memorials and anniversaries	BOM/Staff, parents and students
Review response to incident and amend plan	Staff/BOM

EMERGENCY CONTACT LIST

AGENCY	CONTACT NUMBERS
Garda	Watercourse Road (021)4558260 Mayfield (021)4558510
Hospital	CUH (021)4922000 Emergency Dept (021)4920200
Fire Brigade	(021)4966333
Local GPs	Meadow Park Surgery (021)4502185
HSE	1850 241 850
Child and Family Mental Health Service (CAMHS)	North Lee (021) 4659730
NEPS Psychologist Caitriona Hogan	(0761) 108469 (Direct) (0761)108450
Clergy Fr John O'Donovan	(087)9144927
State Exams Commission	(090) 6442700
Employee Assistance Service	1800 411 057

Ratified by BOM 17th November 2021

Signed: _____ E. Breen _____

Chairperson BOM