

# CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT POLICY



*Coláiste Éamonn Rís* aims to protect the well-being of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. *Coláiste Éamonn Rís* This Policy has been developed in line with our Mission “to develop responsible individuals who will participate fully in a changing society and to carry out this task in a Christian environment”. Our school community strives to nurture faith, Christian spirituality and Gospel based values, to promote partnership, to excel in teaching and learning, to create a caring community and to provide inspiring transformational leadership in keeping with the Edmund Rice Schools Trust Charter.

The Board of Management, through Michael McMahon (Principal), has drawn up a Critical Incident Management Plan as one element of the school’s policies and plans.

## Review and Research

The CIMT have consulted resource documents available to schools on [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie) and [www.nosp.ie](http://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)

## **Critical Incident**

The staff and management of *Coláiste Éamonn Rís* 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*

## **Aim**

The aim of the Critical Incident Management Policy 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**

- Pre-opening supervision in the school yard
- Student supervision during morning break, lunchtime and after school
- Evacuation plan formulated
- Regular fire drills occur
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
- Front school doors locked during class time
- Road safety module for all Transition Year students

### **Psychological safety**

The management and staff of *Coláiste Éamonn Rís* 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; helpseeking; bullying; decision making and prevention of alcohol and drug misuse. Promotion of mental health is an integral part of this provision
- Staff have access to training for their role in SPHE
- 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 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 – NEPS, TUSLA, Wexford Rape Crisis Centre (Manuela Consent Programme)
- 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 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 in 2010 for post primary schools. The school has a Student Support Team in place.
- Students who are identified as being at risk are referred to the designated staff member (e.g. guidance counsellors 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 (Employment Assist Scheme EAS)

### **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.

**Team leader:** *Michael McMahon* (**Deputy Team Leader:** *John Hegarty*)

#### **Role**

- Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting
- Coordinates the tasks of the team
- Liaises with the Board of Management; DES; NEPS; SEC
- Liaises with the bereaved family

**Garda liaison: John Hegarty (Deputy Garda liaison: John Nolan) Role**

- Liaises with the Gardaí
- Ensures that information about deaths or other developments is checked out for accuracy before being shared

**Staff liaison: Marie Connell (Deputy Staff liaison; Christine Martin) 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: Leanne Goff (Deputy student liaison; Christine Martin)**

**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)
- Takes feedback from staff in relation to students they have concerns about arising from the critical incident
- Contacts other Guidance Counsellor(s) for assistance
- Follows protocols as outlined in R23 Responding to Critical Incidents • Provides materials for students (from their critical incident folder)
- Maintains student contact records (R1).
- Looks after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room-school library

**Community/agency liaison: John Hegarty (Deputy community/agency liaison: John Nolan)**

**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:** John Nolan (**Deputy Parent liaison:** John Hegarty)

#### **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:** Michael McMahon (**Deputy Media liaison:** John Hegarty)

#### **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:** Bernadette Stafford (**Deputy Administrator liaison:** Edel Dodd)

#### **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.

*Bernadette Stafford and/or Edel Dodd* 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 *Coláiste Éamonn Rís* 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>G.P. Room</i>	Meetings with students
<i>Board Room</i>	Meetings with parents
<i>Board Room</i>	Meetings with media
<i>Guidance Office</i>	Individual sessions with students
<i>Office B</i>	Meetings with other visitors
<i>Microsoft Teams</i>	Meetings with staff/media/others

#### 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 John Nolan. The plan will be updated annually.

### Critical Incident Management Team

Role	Name	Phone
<b>Team leader:</b>	<i>Michael McMahon/John Hegarty</i>	0862377995 0872971304
<b>Garda liaison</b>	<i>John Hegarty</i>	0872971304
<b>Staff liaison</b>	<i>Marie Connell/Christine Martin</i>	0866028800 0868929087
<b>Student liaison</b>	<i>Leanne Goff</i>	0868527152
<b>Community liaison</b>	<i>John Hegarty</i>	0872971304

<b>Parent liaison</b>	<i>John Nolan</i>	0879831990
<b>Media liaison</b>	<i>Michael McMahon</i>	0862377995
<b>Administrator</b>	<i>Bernadette Stafford/Edel Dodd</i>	0864186504 0863231666
<b>Chaplain</b>	<i>Fr. Paddy Browne</i>	0879500027

## Short term actions – Day 1

<b>Task</b>	<b>Name</b>
<b>Gather accurate information</b>	Michael McMahon
<b>Who, what, when, where?</b>	
<b>Convene a CIMT meeting – specify time and place clearly</b>	Board Room
<b>Contact external agencies</b>	John Hegarty
<b>Arrange supervision for students</b>	John Nolan
<b>Hold staff meeting</b>	All staff-Staff Room
<b>Agree schedule for the day</b>	CIMT
<b>Inform students – (close friends and students with learning difficulties may need to be told separately)</b>	Leanne Goff CIMT/Staff
<b>Compile a list of vulnerable students</b>	CIMT
<b>Prepare and agree media statement and deal with media</b>	CIMT
<b>Inform parents</b>	John Hegarty/John Nolan
<b>Inform BOM</b>	Michael McMahon
<b>Hold staff briefing sessions during the day</b>	Michael McMahon

<b>Hold end of day staff briefing</b>	Marie Connell/Michael McMahon
<b>Arrange for all digital meetings</b>	John Nolan

### 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	
Meet whole staff	
Arrange support for students, staff, parents	
Visit the injured	
Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements	
Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service	
Make decisions about school closure	BOM

### Follow-up – beyond 72 hours

Task	Name
Monitor students for signs of continuing distress	Class teachers
Liaise with agencies regarding referrals	
Plan for return of bereaved student(s)	
Plan for giving of 'memory box' to bereaved family	
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	Wexford Garda Station (053) 9165 Emergency 999 or 112
Hospital	Wexford General Hospital (053)9153000
Fire Brigade	999 OR (053)9196585
Local GPs	Sunnyside Medical Centre (053)9122524 Dr Curran (053)9165984 Dr Pinaqui (053)9142355 Dr McCormack (053)9122581 Dr Leech (053)9142459 Dr Olivia Barry (053)9159728 Dr Kavanagh (053) 9160070
HSE	(053)9123522
Community Care Team	(053)9123522 (053)9114200
Child and Family Centre	TUSLA –(053)9198134
Child and Family Mental Health Service (CAMHS)	(053)9243220
DES School Inspectorate	(01)8896553
NEPS Psychologist	Anna Marie Cullen 0877651475

NEPS Head Office	(01) 8892492
DES	(090)6483600 (Athlone) (01) 8896400 (Dublin) (057)9324300 (Tullamore)
ASTI	(01)6040160
Clergy	Fr Paddy Browne (087)9500027 Presbytery (053)9122055
State Exams Commission	(090)6442700
Employee Assistance Service	1800 411 057
HSE Suicide Prevention Officer	<a href="mailto:Sarah.Hearne@hse.ie">Sarah.Hearne@hse.ie</a> (087) 9271041

Reviewed by Board of Management on the 14<sup>th</sup> October 2024

Next Review Date: September 2025