

CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT POLICY & PLAN

Coláiste Éamonn Rís • 2026/2027



A practical framework for prevention, preparedness, immediate response, communication, support and recovery following a critical incident.

1. Policy Statement:

Coláiste Éamonn Rís is committed to protecting the wellbeing, safety, dignity and good name of students, staff and the wider school community. Some events may overwhelm normal coping mechanisms and require a coordinated response. This plan provides a clear framework for responding quickly, sensitively and effectively while supporting recovery and a return to normal school functioning.

It retains the core structure of the existing school plan, which identifies the purpose of the CIMT as enabling rapid, effective action, maintaining a sense of control and ensuring appropriate support for students and staff.

2. Purpose and Scope:

- Provide a clear response framework for critical incidents affecting the school community.
- Clarify leadership, communication and support responsibilities.
- Protect students and staff from further harm and unnecessary exposure.
- Ensure accurate, timely and appropriately limited communication.
- Identify students and staff who may require additional support or referral.
- Coordinate with parents/guardians, the Board of Management, NEPS, Gardaí, HSE/Tusla and other agencies as appropriate.
- Support recovery, remembrance and a gradual return to normality.
- Provide a framework for recording, reviewing and learning from the response.

3. Definition of a Critical Incident:

The school adopts the NEPS definition used in its existing plan: an incident or sequence of events that overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school. Existing examples include sudden or unexpected death, suicide or suspected suicide, intrusion, serious accident, tragedy in the wider community, serious damage to the school and disappearance of a school community member.

Other incidents may be designated critical where, in the judgement of school management and the CIMT, the impact on the school community is sufficiently significant to require activation.

4. Guiding Principles:

- Safety first: immediate physical and psychological safety takes priority.
- Accuracy: only verified information should be communicated.
- Need-to-know: information is shared only with those who require it for their role.
- Dignity and respect: protect the privacy and good name of those affected.
- Child-centered practice: listen to students and respond to individual needs.
- Consistency: use agreed messages and avoid speculation or contradictory information.
- Normalisation: maintain familiar routines where safe and appropriate.
- Partnership: work with families, staff, students and relevant professional agencies.
- Professional boundaries: school-based support does not replace emergency, medical or specialist mental-health care.
- Review: learn from each response and update the plan.

5. Key Guidance and Resource Documents:

The Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) has consulted relevant national guidance, procedures and resource materials issued by the Department of Education and Youth, the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), the Health Service Executive (HSE) and other relevant national agencies.

Key resources informing this Critical Incident Management Policy and Plan include:

Primary/current framework:

1. NEPS Critical Incident Guidelines (2016)
2. Department of Education – Guidance in Post-Primary Schools, Circular 0001/2025
3. Child Protection Procedures for Schools 2025
4. Bí Cineálta Procedures
5. Current NEPS critical-incident resources
6. Current HSE/NOSP resources

Supporting/foundational guidance:

7. Well-Being in Post-Primary Schools (2013)
8. Suicide Prevention in the Community (HSE/NOSP)
9. Suicide Prevention in Schools (IAS/NSRG, 2002)
10. Student Support Teams in Post-Primary Schools (2014)

School-specific documents:

11. WSG Plan 2026/27
12. Student Support Team procedures
13. Child Safeguarding Statement/Risk Assessment
14. Bí Cineálta Policy
15. Relevant Health & Safety/Emergency Procedures

“Other relevant national wellbeing resources may also be consulted where appropriate.”

7. Prevention, Preparedness and Resilience

The existing plan recognises physical and psychological safety, including supervision, evacuation procedures, fire drills, SPHE, resilience, help-seeking, bullying prevention, Student Support Team structures and links with external agencies.

- Maintain a caring, inclusive and supportive school climate.
- Promote help-seeking, resilience, wellbeing and positive relationships.
- Ensure staff know how to raise safeguarding, wellbeing and student-support concerns.
- Maintain current CIMT folders containing this plan, role-specific checklists, communication templates and key contact information.
- Provide induction for new and temporary staff.
- Review emergency contact details and role allocations annually.
- Ensure staff know where students can access immediate support following an incident.

8. Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT):

The existing plan establishes a role-based CIMT and states that members should retain their roles for at least one school year, meet annually to review the plan and maintain role-specific critical incident folders.

Role	Named person(s) – verify before approval	Core responsibility
Team Leader / Deputy	John Hegarty/John Nolan	Activate CIMT; coordinate response; liaise with Board, family and agencies.
Garda Liaison/ Deputy	John Nolan/ Linda Scallan	Liaise with Gardaí; verify information before dissemination.
Staff Liaison/ Deputy	Laura Argue/Christine Martin	Brief staff; identify staff needs; coordinate staff support.
Student Liaison/ Deputy	Leanne Goff/Christine Martin	Coordinate student information/support; identify vulnerable students; maintain appropriate records.
Community/Agency Liaison/ Deputy	Linda Scallan/John Nolan	Coordinate external agencies and maintain contact information.
Parent Liaison/ Deputy	John Nolan/ Linda Scallan	Coordinate parent communication and meetings.
Media Liaison/ Deputy	John Hegarty/John Nolan	Manage media contact and approved public statements.
Administrator/ Deputy	Bernie Stafford/Edel Dodd	Manage calls, messages, contact lists, records and communications.
Chaplain/Pastoral Support	Fr. Paddy Browne	Provide pastoral/spiritual support where appropriate.

9. Activation of the Plan:

1. Ensure immediate safety and contact emergency services where necessary.
2. Inform the Principal/designated team leader.
3. Decide whether the incident meets the threshold for CIMT activation.
4. Activate the CIMT and establish a secure meeting point.
5. Identify what is known, what is unverified and what remains unknown.

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To develop responsible individuals who will participate fully in a changing society and to carry out this task in a Christian environment.

6. Assign immediate responsibilities and establish a communication lead.
7. Contact NEPS/local supports and other agencies as appropriate.
8. Protect directly affected students/staff from unnecessary exposure.
9. Agree the initial message for staff, students and parents/guardians.
10. Begin an incident log and continue recording decisions and actions.

10. First 30 Minutes – Immediate Action Checklist

Action	Lead
Ensure immediate physical safety / emergency services	Principal / emergency services
Establish verified facts	Team Leader / Garda Liaison
Activate CIMT	Team Leader
Identify directly affected students/staff	Student & Staff Liaison
Contact family where appropriate	Team Leader / Parent Liaison
Contact NEPS / relevant professional supports	Team Leader / Agency Liaison
Agree communication lead and holding message	Team Leader / Media Liaison
Secure a quiet/safe support space	Student Liaison
Arrange supervision and timetable adjustments	Management
Start incident log	Administrator

11. Day 1 Response:

The existing plan already identifies gathering accurate information, convening the CIMT, contacting external agencies, arranging supervision, holding a staff meeting, agreeing the day's schedule, informing students, identifying vulnerable students, communicating with parents, informing the Board and holding staff briefings.

- Brief staff using only confirmed information and explain what can/cannot be shared.
- Provide students with age-appropriate, factual information and avoid unnecessary detail.
- Consider separate arrangements for close friends, witnesses, siblings and students requiring additional support.
- Identify vulnerable students and staff and establish a monitoring/support plan.
- Maintain supervision and predictable routines wherever safe.
- Provide a designated quiet/support space
- Ensure parents/guardians receive a consistent school message.
- Monitor attendance, student movement and requests to leave school.
- Keep media away from students and direct all media enquiries to the designated spokesperson.
- Hold an end-of-day CIMT review and plan for Day 2.

12. Day 2–3 and Medium-Term Response:

- Review the wellbeing and safety of affected students and staff.
- Follow up referrals and communication with external agencies.
- Maintain contact with the family as appropriate and agreed.
- Consider funeral attendance, memorials and practical arrangements sensitively.
- Monitor vulnerable students and staff rather than assuming distress will be immediate.

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- Restore routines gradually while allowing appropriate flexibility.
- Review whether additional communication is required.
- Maintain a clear record of decisions and interventions.

13. Longer-Term Recovery:

- Plan return-to-school arrangements with affected students/families.
- Continue appropriate monitoring and referral.
- Review academic, attendance and social impacts.
- Prepare sensitively for anniversaries or significant dates.
- Agree memorial activity with the school community and family where appropriate.
- Provide staff debriefing and access to staff support.
- Complete a formal post-incident review and amend the plan where necessary.

14. Communication with Staff

- Use one agreed source of verified information.
- Brief staff before communicating with students where practicable.
- Tell staff what they need to know to support students safely.
- Allow space for staff questions and emotional responses.
- Remind staff not to speculate, post online or share confidential information.
- Provide clear referral routes for concerns about students.
- Offer staff access to appropriate professional support/EAS.

15. Communication with Students

- Use clear, factual and age-appropriate language.
- Do not provide graphic or unnecessary details.
- Do not speculate about cause, responsibility or circumstances.
- Give students opportunities to ask questions and identify support needs.
- Explain how students can access Guidance, Student Support Team or other designated supports.
- Monitor students who are absent or who may receive information outside school.
- Use additional supports for students with AEN, EAL or communication needs.

16. Communication with Parents/Guardians

- Use agreed school channels and a consistent message.
- Where appropriate, inform the family of proposed wording before wider communication.
- Provide practical information about school arrangements and support.
- Do not disclose confidential information about other students or families.
- Direct individual concerns to the appropriate school contact.

17. Media, Digital Communication and Social Media:

The existing plan assigns responsibility for media liaison and requires media statements/interviews to be agreed by school management.

- Only the designated spokesperson should communicate with media on behalf of the school.

- Staff should not give interviews, comments or photographs to media unless authorised.
- Students should not be approached by media on school property; management should intervene and, where necessary, contact Gardaí.
- Do not post incident information, photographs, speculation or identifying information on personal or school social-media accounts unless authorised.
- Monitor emerging misinformation and correct it through the agreed school communication channel where necessary.
- Do not forward screenshots, rumours or distressing content.
- Preserve relevant digital information where required for safeguarding, Garda or official processes, in accordance with applicable procedures.

18. Suicide, Suspected Suicide and Serious Self-Harm:

Any suspected suicide, confirmed suicide or serious self-harm incident requires a coordinated response involving school management and relevant professional services. NEPS confirms that it assists schools experiencing critical incidents, including death by suicide or accident, physical assault and serious damage to school property.

- Do not speculate about cause or circumstances.
- Use factual, sensitive language and avoid unnecessary detail.
- Coordinate closely with the family and relevant professional agencies.
- Identify close friends, siblings, witnesses and other students/staff who may be particularly affected.
- Monitor for distress, suicidal thoughts, self-harm concerns and changes in functioning.
- Escalate immediate safety concerns through emergency/safeguarding pathways.
- Do not conduct informal investigations or ask students to recount traumatic details unnecessarily.
- Consider misinformation, online discussion and contagion effects.
- Maintain a clear distinction between school support and specialist clinical care.
- Seek NEPS support and follow current professional guidance.

19. Safeguarding and Child Protection:

Critical incidents may reveal or create safeguarding concerns. Any child-protection concern must be dealt with under the school's current Child Protection Procedures for Schools and Child Safeguarding Statement/Risk Assessment. The Department states that the 2025 procedures replace the previous procedures and that schools must adopt them no later than 31 December 2026.

- Report safeguarding concerns immediately through the school's designated safeguarding structure.
- Do not delay a child-protection response because the school is managing a wider critical incident.
- Do not promise confidentiality where a safeguarding concern exists.
- Record concerns accurately and factually.
- Follow current DLP/DDLP and reporting procedures.

20. Bí Cineálta and Bullying:

The current Bí Cineálta Procedures replaced the 2013 anti-bullying procedures and came into effect from 1 September 2025. They address contemporary forms including cyberbullying, gender identity-based bullying, racist bullying, sexist bullying and sexual harassment.

- Where a critical incident involves bullying behaviour, cyberbullying, harassment or related online activity, follow the school's Bí Cineálta policy and procedures.

- Do not assume that a critical incident replaces the school's normal safeguarding/bullying procedures.
- Coordinate wellbeing support with the formal response to the underlying behaviour.

21. Guidance & Counselling/Student Support Team:

The existing plan identifies the Guidance Department and Student Support Team as part of its support system and provides for referral of students identified as at risk.

- Coordinate with the Student Support Team to identify students requiring monitoring or additional support.
- Use established school referral pathways wherever possible.
- Provide short-term school-based emotional support within professional competence.
- Maintain appropriate student contact records.
- Communicate relevant information to staff on a need-to-know basis.
- Refer to parents/guardians and external services as appropriate.
- Escalate immediate risk through emergency/safeguarding pathways.
- Do not undertake specialist clinical assessment beyond professional role or competence.

22. Supporting Vulnerable Students and Staff

- Close friends, partners and family members.
- Students/staff who witnessed the incident or were directly involved.
- Students with previous bereavement or trauma.
- Students with existing wellbeing or mental-health difficulties.
- Students with AEN, EAL or communication needs.
- Students absent from school or receiving information through social media.
- Staff who had a particularly close relationship with the person affected.

23. Confidentiality, Data Protection and Record Keeping

The existing plan requires CIMT members to record calls, correspondence, meetings, people met, interventions and materials used, and recognises the importance of protecting privacy and good name.

- Record facts, decisions, actions and referrals accurately.
- Keep records securely and restrict access appropriately.
- Share personal information only where there is a lawful and appropriate basis and where necessary for safety or the operation of the response.
- Do not use personal messaging/social-media accounts for confidential incident records.
- Follow current school data-protection, record-retention and child-protection requirements.
- Where safeguarding records are created, follow the relevant safeguarding procedures.

24. Critical Incident Rooms:

Location	Proposed use
Staff Room	Staff briefing/debrief
G.P. Room / designated room	Student support meetings
Board Room	Parent meetings / family liaison
Guidance Office	Individual student support
Office B	External visitors'/agency meetings

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25. Staff Quick Reference – DO/DO NOT:

DO	DO NOT
Stay calm and use verified information.	Speculate or repeat rumours.
Listen and acknowledge distress.	Promise absolute confidentiality.
Refer concerns to the designated team.	Investigate the incident yourself.
Maintain routines where safe.	Give graphic or unnecessary details.
Protect privacy and dignity.	Post incident information online.
Report safeguarding concerns immediately.	Delay safeguarding action.
Use the agreed communication route.	Speak to media unless authorised.

26. Emergency and External Contacts

The existing plan contains a detailed emergency contact list including emergency services, Gardaí, Wexford General Hospital, fire services, Tusla, CAMHS, NEPS, HSE, SEC and EAS. These details should be treated as a verification schedule rather than assumed current contacts.

Service	Contact
Emergency Services	999 / 112
Wexford Gardaí	053) 9165 / 999 or 112
Wexford General Hospital	053) 9153000
Wexford Fire Brigade	053) 9196585 / 999 or 112
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
NEPS Head Office	(01)8892492
Tusla/Child and family care	053) 9198134
HSE	053) 9123522
Community Care Team	(053)9123522 (053)9114200
DES School Inspectorate	(01)8896553
HSE Suicide Prevention Officer for the South East	Sarah Hearne 087 1091307, 051 874013 sarah.hearne@hse.ie
CAMHS	053) 92433220
Employee Assistance Service	1800 411057
State Examinations Commission	090) 6442700
Clergy	Fr Paddy Browne 087) 9500027 Presbytery (053)9122055
Principal / CIMT Lead	John Hegarty 087)2971304

01) Post-Incident Review

- Hold a CIMT review when the immediate response has stabilised.
- Record what worked well and what should change.
- Seek appropriate feedback from staff and, where suitable, students and parents/guardians.
- Review referrals, communication, supervision and record keeping.
- Identify training/resource needs.
- Update the plan and role-specific checklists.
- Report relevant findings through governance/SSE structures.

29. Training and Annual Review

- Review CIMT membership and role allocation annually.
- Check emergency contact details annually and whenever personnel/services change.
- Induct new and temporary staff.
- Provide appropriate training in critical incident response, safeguarding, suicide awareness and student support.
- Review the plan following activation or significant policy change.
- Record Board of Management approval and review dates.

30. Policy and Guidance Alignment

This plan should be read alongside the school's Whole School Guidance Plan 2026/27, Student Support Team procedures, Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment, Bí Cineálta policy, relevant health and safety/emergency procedures and data-protection arrangements.

Current Department information confirms Whole School Guidance as the appropriate model for post-primary guidance. Current Department information also states that schools must adopt the Child Protection Procedures for Schools 2025 no later than 31 December 2026.

31. Approval and Review Record

Item	Date / details
Draft prepared/updated	September 2026
Consultation with staff	
Consultation with student/parent representatives, where appropriate	
CIMT review	
Board of Management approval	
Effective date	
Next scheduled review	September 2027
Interim review	Following a critical incident or relevant policy change

Appendix 1 – CIMT Activation Checklist

- ☐ Immediate danger addressed
- ☐ Emergency services contacted if required
- ☐ Principal/designated lead informed
- ☐ CIMT activated
- ☐ Facts verified
- ☐ Family contacted where appropriate
- ☐ NEPS/relevant agency contacted
- ☐ Staff communication agreed
- ☐ Student communication agreed
- ☐ Parent communication agreed
- ☐ Vulnerable students/staff identified
- ☐ Quiet/support space established
- ☐ Supervision arranged
- ☐ Media spokesperson confirmed
- ☐ Digital/social-media response considered
- ☐ Incident log started
- ☐ End-of-day review scheduled

Appendix 2 -Incident Log

Time	Action / decision	Responsible person	Information shared	Follow-up

Appendix 3 – Student Support Monitoring Record

Student	Reason for concern	Immediate support	Parent/guardian contact	Referral	Review date

Appendix 4 – Communication Template Principles

- State only confirmed facts.
- Explain what the school is doing.
- Provide practical information.
- Identify where support is available.
- Respect privacy and the family's wishes.
- Do not speculate about cause.
- Do not identify other students or disclose confidential information.
- Direct media enquiries to the designated spokesperson.

Appendix 5 – Key References

- Department of Education and Youth, Circular 0001/2025: Guidance in Post-Primary Schools.
- Department of Education and Youth, Bí Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools.
- Department of Education and Youth, Child Protection Procedures for Schools 2025.
- NEPS, Responding to Critical Incidents: Guidelines and Resource Materials for Schools.
- Children First guidance and current school safeguarding procedures.
- Coláiste Éamonn Rís existing Critical Incident Management Policy and current Whole School Guidance Plan.

Note for BOM

The attached policy was reviewed by the Board on in September 2026 and listed September 2027 as its next review date. This draft is intended as a substantive 2026/27 update rather than a simple date change.

Reviewed by BOM on 14-9-26

Next Review Date :_ Sept. 2027