

Coláiste Bríde Presentation Secondary School

Critical Incident Management Policy (CIMP)



Coláiste Bríde Presentation Secondary School (called Coláiste Bríde hereafter) 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, through the Principal has drawn up a Critical Incident Management Plan as one element of the school's policies and plans.

Define what you mean by the term 'critical incident'

The staff and management of Coláiste Bríde 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*

This list is not exhaustive.

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 managed as far as practicable. 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

Coláiste Bríde has 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 and documented
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
- Pre-opening supervision, during small break, lunch break and immediately after normal school hours.
- Health, Safety and Welfare policy and statement in force and reviewed regularly
- The “Book of Job” (a hard back copy) in the staffroom to inform caretakers of any health and safety defects or other items that need addressing.
- Students are reminded of health and safety matters by their teachers and also in their journal.

Psychological safety

The management and staff of Coláiste Bríde 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, such as;

- 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 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 student are available from the guidance counsellors.
- 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 – Child & Adolescent Mental Health (CAMHS), Jigsaw, Beacon of Light, Pieta House, Gardaí, Túsla, National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), Teen Counselling.
- Additional supports to students from external agencies/speakers are carefully considered in the light of criteria about student safety, the appropriateness of the content, and their expertise.
- 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 on 2007 for primary schools and 2010 for post primary schools.
- Students who are identified as being at risk are referred to the designated staff member (e.g. guidance counsellor or support person), 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 (appendix 2).

Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)

A CIMT has been established in line with best practice. A critical incident management team is defined as;

“A group of individuals from the staff of the school who know the community, the students and each other well enough to make necessary decisions called for when an incident occurs.”

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: Marie-Therese Kilmartin (Principal)

Role

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

(Note – In the event of the Principal being unavailable one of the three Deputy Principals will take the lead.)

Garda liaison; Garda JJ Walsh (Community Liaison Officer)

Role

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

Staff liaison; Marie-Therese Kilmartin (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; Louise Fallon/Clodagh Deane (Guidance Counsellors)

Role

- May co-ordinate information from tutors and year heads about students they are concerned about
- Alerts other staff to vulnerable students (appropriately).
- Alerts management to vulnerable staff members.
- 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; Clodagh Deane (Guidance Counsellor)

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
- If the incident involves a student, to ascertain whether she has siblings in other schools.
- 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; Marie-Therese Kilmartin (Principal)

Role

- Visits the bereaved family
- 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 (appendices 3 & 4).
- 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 Marie-Therese Kilmartin (Principal)

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 State Exams Commission (SEC); relevant teacher unions etc.
- Will draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews.

Administrator; Reception Staff

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 school's system in advance and ready for adaptation
- Prepares and sends out letters, emails and texts
- Photocopies materials needed
- Maintains records

Record keeping; All members of the CIMT

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.

The reception staff 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 Bríde 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:
Staff room	Main room for meeting staff
Sacred Space/classroom	Meetings with students
Parent's room	Meetings with parents
TBA	Meetings with media
Counsellors' offices	Individual sessions with students
TBA	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 the teacher responsible for the induction of new staff.

Critical incidents during holidays

In the event of a critical incident taking place during the school holidays it is anticipated that this plan will operate but in a limited capacity.

Critical Incident Management Team		
Role	Name	Phone
Team leader:	<i>Marie-Therese Kilmartin (Principal) Louise Ronan (Deputy Principal) Niamh O'Brien (Deputy Principal) Steve Mc Entegart (Deputy Principal)</i>	
Garda liaison	<i>JJ Walsh</i>	
Staff liaison	<i>Marie-Therese Kilmartin (Principal)</i>	
Student liaison	<i>Louise Fallon Clodagh Deane</i>	
School Chaplain	<i>Michelle Dooley</i>	
Community liaison	<i>Louise Fallon/Clodagh Deane</i>	
Parent liaison	<i>Marie-Therese Kilmartin (Principal)</i>	
Media liaison	<i>Marie-Therese Kilmartin (Principal)</i>	
Administrator	<i>Reception Staff</i>	

Short term actions – Day 1

Task	Name
Gather accurate information It is crucial that the school has the correct information regarding the crisis. Therefore, it is important that involved staff gather to establish the facts- this may involve contacting others such as hospitals, Gardaí, parents.	
Who, what, when, where?	
Convene a CIMT meeting – specify time and place clearly	Principal
Contact external agencies	Guidance Counsellors
Arrange supervision for students	Deputy Principals, Year Heads

Hold staff meeting	Principal, Deputy Principals
Agree schedule for the day	CIMT
<p>Inform students – (close friends and vulnerable students may need to be told separately)</p> <p>The statement should seek to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Be communicated in a sensitive manner ▪ Give the facts as they are known ▪ Highlight the support that will be available ▪ Indicate the actions that are planned 	Principal Year Heads Counsellor
Compile a list of known vulnerable students	Counsellors, Special Education Needs (SEN) team
<p>Prepare and agree media statement and deal with media</p> <p>In preparing a press statement thought should be given to the following suggestions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Priority to be given to the sensitivities and needs of those affected directly by the crisis ▪ The non-release of names, addresses and phone numbers ▪ Rely on facts and avoid speculation ▪ Consider likely questions and a response to them ▪ Agree with the press a time for briefings if this is necessary in an ongoing situation ▪ Nominate a specific location for press briefings <p>It is recommended that this Press Statement be simple and brief. If appropriate, it should express the sorrow of the entire school community at the sudden death or illness of one of their members and it should extend sympathy to the bereaved family. This statement should be adhered to, and not elaborated on, in all communications with the media and it should be familiar to every member of the school staff.</p>	
Inform parents	Principal, Deputy Principals
<p>Contact Chairperson of the Board of Management</p> <p>You may want to consider informing the Chairperson and other members of the Board and call an emergency board meeting.</p>	Principal
Hold end of day staff briefing	Principal

Medium term actions - (Day 2 and following days)

Task	Name
<i>Convene a CIMT meeting to review the events of day 1</i>	Principal
<i>Meet external agencies</i>	Guidance counsellors
<i>Meet whole staff</i>	CIMT
<p><i>Arrange support for students, staff, parents</i></p> <p>The students may wish to organise some service or ritual within the confines of the school. They should be consulted as to the nature of such a service. Such an event may be of great benefit to staff and parents.</p> <p>Focus on the friends of a bereaved student, as they can be the best source of support. Often the bereaved student may not wish to speak to an adult and may rely heavily on friends. These close friends may need support as they attempt to find ways to be of help.</p>	Principal Chaplain Guidance Counsellors Year Heads Deputy Principals
<i>Visit the injured</i>	Principal and others
<p><i>Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements</i></p> <p>The involvement of students in any funeral or other services needs to be discussed. This requires invitation, planning and review. The families involved need to be consulted, the students invited to take part, time given to prepare for this participation and, finally, a debriefing of those concerned. While it would be appropriate for the deceased student's classmates to attend the funeral, it may be inappropriate for large numbers of students to be present. The presence of large numbers of young people at such highly charged events could prove to be inappropriate as well as being upsetting for individual students and for the parents of the deceased student. At all times the rights of the deceased family to privacy must be respected.</p>	Principal Year Head Tutor Counsellor
<p><i>Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decide what form of representation is appropriate. It is essential where possible, to consult the family concerned. Do not presume that the bereaved family will want a very public presence by the school. Prepare students ahead of the funeral. For some this may be the first occasion they have been exposed to a major grief. 	Principal to delegate to CIMT members

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For those students who wish, encourage and assist them to write a personal message of sympathy. Consider also a common expression from students and/or staff. • Check out, perhaps with the funeral directors, the arrangements concerning floral tributes. Any accompanying messages should be hand written. • If possible, representatives of the school should visit the home of the bereaved. If students request to visit the home, phone ahead to check that this is appropriate. Visiting the bereaved may be distressing- support those involved. 	
<p><i>Make decisions about school closure</i></p> <p>Whether the school will remain open or will close as a mark of respect to the bereaved family will depend on the judgement of the Principal, management and the Department of Education and Skills following consultation with the school staff. If the decision is to close the school, it is advisable to do so ONLY after informing the bereaved family and of the routine which the school will follow over the coming days. Parents should be formally notified of the school closure.</p>	Board of Management

Follow-up – beyond 72 hours

Task	Name
Monitor students for signs of continuing distress	Class teachers
Liaise with agencies regarding referrals	Guidance counsellors
Plan for return of bereaved student(s)	Principal, Deputy Principals, guidance counsellors
Plan for giving of 'memory box' to bereaved family (optional)	Chaplain
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	112/999 or 01 666 7600 (Clondalkin office)
Hospital	112 / 999
Fire Brigade	112 / 999
HSE	1850 241850 / 041 6850300
Child and Family Centre (Túsla)	076 6955749
Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)	Main number 01 879 6800 Clondalkin 076 6956350 Tallaght 01 463 5200
NEPS Psychologist	01 461 4824 01 889 2700
DES	01 889 6400 090 648 3600
Teacher unions ASTI TUI	01 604 0160 / 1850 418400 01 492 2588
Parish priest	01 459 3520
State Exams Commission	0906 442700
Employee Assistance Service	1800 411 057

This policy is due to be reviewed annually by 31 May.

Appendices

Appendix 1 Principal's checklist for consideration

The following is a checklist of things to consider on the morning of a tragedy. They are not written in order of what must come first etc. It is important for a Principal to take time to plan what he/she must do and what is appropriate to say to all concerned.

- ✓ Take time to let the news sink in
- ✓ Call a meeting of the CIMT, include Year Head and Tutor.
- ✓ Put together as much factual information as possible
- ✓ Inform staff what has happened
- ✓ Discuss school routine for the first day with the staff
- ✓ Identify particular students who may need to be told individually, e.g. close friends, relatives etc.
- ✓ Inform the pupils of the event and explain that this is something that everyone will find difficult to cope with. Explain school routine for the day and support and back-up for the students.
- ✓ Contact NEPS, CAMHS, chairperson of the board of management and CEIST.
- ✓ Make contact with the family.
- ✓ Meet with key staff who can offer student support and decide on the format for this.
- ✓ Decide on any other arrangements which need to be made on the first day, e.g. a short religious service.
- ✓ Check in with staff in the staff room during the day and keep abreast of what is happening in the school.
- ✓ Be aware of members of staff who may be particularly distressed, e.g. staff who are recently bereaved themselves or have had prior experience of a similar tragedy.
- ✓ Encourage staff to come to you during the day and let you know how things are going
- ✓ Find out details of the funeral etc. and communicate this to staff and students.
- ✓ At the end of the first day review events with staff and make plans for the following day
- ✓ Make staff aware of students who are particularly vulnerable and what supports will be available to them.
- ✓ If there is a likelihood of interest from the media discuss a strategy to deal with any such requests.
- ✓ Liaise with other principals if the incident involves one of our students who has siblings in another schools.

Appendix 2 Staff support

From 01 October 2016, the Employee Assistance and Wellbeing Programme for Teachers and Special Needs Assistants will be provided by **EAP Consultants/Carecall**. The service is accessible through the **Freephone Helpline** at **1800 411 057** and is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

In addition to telephone counselling, other health and wellbeing services include:

- Face-to-face counselling where required
- Family Life advice
- Specialist information Services
- Manager Support

The [Teachers and Special Needs Assistant's Employee Assistance & Wellbeing Programme Website](#) is full of useful articles & information to support you in the daily issues of life and work.

Website: <https://www.inspirewellbeing.org/workplaces>

Appendix 3 The role of the Principal

