



Scoil Aireagail

Critical Incident Policy

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Scoil Aireagail strives to maintain a safe and caring environment for all its students and staff at all times. Our critical incident policy is designed to:

- Respond quickly and effectively to serious incidents that may affect the wellbeing of students and staff.
- Minimise the potentially traumatic effects of the incident on students and staff.
- Help the school community to return to normality as soon as possible after the incident.

Policy Content

The Critical Incident Policy includes:

1. Definition of a critical incident, and its levels
2. Critical incident Management Team
3. School Response
4. List of relevant agencies
5. Information & Recommendations
6. Appendix

Section 1: Definition of a Critical Incident

A critical incident is any incident or sequence of events which that overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of the school. The incident can have such an impact on members of the school community that normal school life can be disrupted, in the short term at least.

Incident Levels

Level 1:

The incident affects a specific number of students and/or staff. This can include, but is not limited to the following:

- The death of a student/staff member who was terminally ill
- The death of a parent/carer/sibling
- Serious damage to school property, such as a fire, which has not resulted in serious injury

Level 2:

The incident affects a significant number of students and/or staff. It may attract a media interest and/or involve the local community. This can include, but is not limited to the following:

- The sudden death of a student/staff member

Level 3:

A major incident that has the potential to affect a high proportion of students/staff. It may happen on the school premises, during an off-premises school activity or in the locality. It may involve a wider emergency response at regional or national level. It may attract local or national media interest. This can include, but is not limited to the following:

- The violent death of a student/staff member
- An accident involving a number of students
- An accident with a high media profile or involving a number of schools

Section 2: Critical Incident Management Team

Name/Title	Role
Helen McTighe Team Leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform emergency responders • Convene/chair C.I.M.T. meeting • Establish facts • Contact bereaved parents/guardians • Liaise with NEPS • Respond to media – prepared statement • Record all communications – phonecalls, meetings, texts, letters etc.. and submit all records to Administrator after the incident
Shane Fallon Deputy Team Leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist with above tasks if necessary • Act as Team Leader, in absence of Team Leader • Inform CE or EO of KCETB • Chair emergency staff meeting if necessary, for all staff members, in staffroom. Keep staff informed. Listen to views/concerns/thoughts of staff • Arrange student supervision • Record all communications – phonecalls, meetings, texts, letters etc.. and submit all records to Administrator after the incident
Valerie O' Callaghan Administrator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure all contact details relevant to policy are kept up-to-date • Collect all records of communications from team members after the incident – as above. Store same in a secure location
Counsellor or Team Leader & Deputy Team leader & Administrator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaise with student(s) most affected by incident • Liaise with staff • Visit bereaved family with team leader • Record all communications – phonecalls, meetings, texts, letters etc.. and submit all records to Administrator after the incident

Section 3: School Response

Short Term Action – Day 1	
ACTION	TEAM MEMBER
Inform emergency responders – if not already done by others	Team leader
Convene CIMT meeting	Team leader
Establish facts. Who? What? When? Where?	Team leader
Contact bereaved parents/guardians	Team leader
Contact NEPS and identify response needed	Team leader
Contact external agencies	Deputy team leader
Arrange supervision for students	Deputy team leader

Hold all-staff meeting	Deputy team leader
Agree schedule for the day	Team leader
Identify close friends/vulnerable students. Inform same	Counsellor / team leader
Inform wider student community	Deputy team leader
Inform parents	Team leader
Set a room for families to meet with distressed students (Room 12)	Deputy team leader
Set a private room if necessary for family to meet with student (Room 1A)	Deputy team leader
Prepare media statement	Team leader

Medium Term Action – Days 2 -3	
ACTION	TEAM MEMBER
Convene a CIMT meeting to review events of Day 1	Team leader
Organise NEPS meetings with students as necessary	Team leader
Keep whole staff informed	Deputy team leader
Visit the injured	Team leader and counsellor
Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements. Agree on attendance at funeral service	Team leader
Make decisions about school closure	Team leader
Send a letter to parents outlining facts/details of incident. It may not be appropriate at this stage to disclose names of those involved	Team leader
Inform wider student community. Done so separately according to year group due to differences in age from 1 st Year to 6 th Year. Deputy team leader to appoint teacher who is best known to individual year groups, such as Class Teacher, to deliver this information	Deputy team leader

Longer Term Action – Beyond 72 hours	
ACTION	TEAM MEMBER
Monitor students for signs of continuing stress	Teachers
Gather records of event, including post-event activities	Administrator
Plan for return of bereaved student(s)	Team leader/deputy team leader
Remove deceased student's name from school registration book and/or VShare	School secretary and/or deputy team leader
Review overall response to critical incident, and amend as needed	CIMT

Above actions (short/medium, long) are not exhaustive. They may be amended, other actions taken, or actions undertaken by members other than indicated above. Such decisions will be taken by the CIMT. The deputy team leader will act as team leader in absence of team leader.

Section 4: List of Relevant Agencies

Agency	Contact Details
NEPS	056 7760200
Emergency (Gardai/ambulance/fire)	999 or 112 Thomastown Gardai 056 7754150
Local GPs Health Centre Ballyhale	056 7768608
Tusla Duty Social Worker (located in Tipperary)	052 6177302
Department of Education	090 6483600
State Examination Commission	090 6442700
Chaplin	
Chairperson of Board of Management Deirdre Cullen	087 3456502
Kilkenny/Carlow ETB	Kilkenny Offices 056 7770966 Carlow Offices 059 9138560
CIMT members have each other's contact details	

Section 5: Information & Recommendations

A. Checklist for Principal/Designate

1. Establish the facts
2. Contact appropriate agencies i.e. KCETB /NEPS/BOM
3. Convene the Critical Incident Management Team
4. Organise for the supervision of students
5. Inform staff
6. Agree on a statement for the media or no comment as appropriate (Family may prefer to respond)
7. Identify high risk students
8. Appoint someone to deal with phone enquiries
9. Organise timetable for the day – Maintain the normal school routine as far as possible
10. Inform parents/guardians
11. Inform students
12. Make contact with bereaved family
13. Organise support
14. Respond to the media

B. Identify High Risk Students

1. Close friends and relatives of the deceased
2. Students with a history of suicide attempts/self-harm

3. Students who experienced a recent loss, death of a friend or relative, family divorce or separation, break-up with a boyfriend/girlfriend
4. Students who have been bereaved by a suicide in the past
5. Students with psychiatric history
6. Students with a history of substance abuse
7. Students with a history of sexual abuse
8. Non-communicative Students who have difficulty talking about their feelings
9. Students experiencing serious family difficulties, including serious mental or physical illness
10. Less able students
11. School should be vigilant around the time of the inquest and the anniversary of the student's death

C. Monitoring students for signs of continuing distress

1. Uncharacteristic behaviour
2. Discipline issues
3. Unexpected deterioration in academic performance
4. Increased absenteeism
5. Suicidal ideation
6. Inappropriate emotional responses
7. Physical symptoms eg. Weight loss, loss of appetite, lack of attention to physical appearance, restlessness
8. Loss of interest/motivation generally

D. Anniversaries

Anniversaries may trigger emotional responses in students/staff and they may need additional support at this time

Acknowledge the anniversary with the family and liaise on any proposed commemoration

Be sensitive of significant days like Birthdays, Christmas, Mother's Day, Father's Day

E. Aftermath of suicide/suspected suicide

The term 'suicide' should be avoided until it has been established that the death of the student/staff member/parent was definitely as a result of a suicide. The terms 'sudden death' or 'tragic death' may be used until the truth has been established. The bereaved family should also be consulted on the preferred terminology to be used.

Family

1. The principal should contact the family to express sympathy on behalf of the school community
2. The principal should contact the family to establish the facts, and to enquire on how the family prefers the death to be described
3. Organise, with the agreement of the family, a home visit by two staff members (preferably the principal and a staff member who is trained in the area of bereavement/loss)

4. Consult with the family regarding appropriate school representation at the funeral

Staff (teaching and non-teaching staff)

1. Organise a staff meeting to brief all staff on the facts
2. Decide on whether an outside agency/professional should be contacted to attend staff meeting and/or meet with staff individually
3. Facilitate staff in expressing their views/feelings
4. Inform staff of the importance of identifying vulnerable/high risk students. This can be the shared responsibility of all staff. A copy of the list above of '**B. Identify High Risk Students**' may be distributed to staff

F. Informing Students

Careful consideration is needed prior to informing students of a critical incident. Students age and group/class size are also relevant. It is best practice for such information to be delivered by a staff member who is best known/familiar to the student group, such as the Class Teacher or Year Head. An outside agency such as NEPS is available to give advice on the best approach

Key points in informing students include:

1. Share established facts only
2. Encourage students to ask questions – answering with facts only
3. Allow students to express their thoughts and feelings
4. Reassure students that upsetting and overwhelming emotions are natural, and to be expected following a critical incident
5. Encourage students to support each other during this difficult time, by talking to and listening to each other

G. Dealing with the Media

1. Only engage with the media if you have the facts established. If you are not satisfied that this is the case, or if you are not yet prepared to give a statement, simply inform them that you will 'issue a statement in due course' or 'no comment at this time'
2. In a prepared statement include:
 - Facts about the incident
 - What actions have already been undertaken
 - What actions are going to be undertaken
 - Reference(s) to the school's 'critical incident' policy/plan
 - Positive information or comments on the deceased
3. Take time to prepare for a statement or interview
4. Keep statement simple, factual and brief

Ratification:

BOM Meeting: _____

Signed by BOM Chairperson: _____ Date: _____

Signed by Principal: _____ Date: _____