

CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT POLICY.

1. Introduction

Coláiste Chríost Rí Secondary School aims to protect the wellbeing of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. As stated in the school ethos *Coláiste Chríost Rí embraces all aspects of students' development – physical, spiritual, social, emotional, intellectual, moral, aesthetic and vocational – and contributes with other agencies towards their growth into integrated, wholesome people.*

Coláiste Chríost Rí has taken a number of measures to create a coping, supportive and caring environment. The school has also formulated a number of policies and procedures to be followed with a view to ensuring the physical and psychological safety of both staff and students during the normal course of the school day and in the event of a critical incident.

Coláiste Chríost Rí is continuously developing and updating its policies to ensure student potential and development is nurtured. The Board of Management, through the Principal Mr. Padraig Mac An Rí, has drawn up a critical incident management plan (CIMP) as one element of the school's policies and plans.

2. Aims

The aim of the Critical Incident Management Policy is that in the event of such an incident as outlined below, the plan will help staff and management react quickly and effectively and to maintain control of the situation. The CIMP will help 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.

The plan will also help the school return to normality as soon as possible and limit the effects of the incident on students and staff.

A Critical Incident Management Policy is necessary to put a set of procedures in place so that we can respond as a school community in a respectful, safe, caring and supportive way; so that all those involved will emerge from any critical incident relating to the school knowing that there are structures in place that will support and continue to help them. To ensure best practice, this policy is underpinned by the NEPS 'Responding to Critical Incidents Guidelines & Resource Materials for Schools (2016)' guidelines.

As each Critical Incident will require the school to respond in a manner appropriate to that particular incident at that time, this C.I.M.P. is intended to serve as a general outline of procedures to be followed in the event of a critical incident occurring

3. Definition of Critical Incident:

The staff and management of Coláiste Chríost Rí recognise a critical incident to be “an incident or sequence of events that overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of the school, and disrupts the normal running of the school”. This policy refers to the response taken by this school should a critical incident occur.

Critical incidents may involve students, staff, the school or the local community. Examples of a critical incident may include:

- The death of a member of the school community, through sudden death, accident, suicide or terminal illness
- A serious accident or tragedy in the school community
- Serious damage to the school through fire, flooding vandalism etc.
- A traumatic event involving the school

4. Critical Incident Management (CIM) Team:

Coláiste Chríost Rí has set up a Critical Incident Management Team consisting of the following personnel: *(See Appendix 1)*

The Principal

The Deputy Principal

The School Guidance Counsellors

The School Chaplain [Teacher with Chaplaincy duties]

Year Heads

The Critical Incident Management Team may co-opt other members of staff to assist them, should they deem it necessary. The Chairperson of the Board of Management will be notified of any critical incidents immediately.

5. Management responsibilities

The Principal will act as Team Leader or in his absence the Deputy Principal.

Role of team Leader:

- Confirm the incident has occurred. Get accurate information.
- If tragedy occurs over a weekend / holidays a system of informing staff needs to be in place.
- If it is the death of a colleague the Principal or Deputy Principal should contact all members of staff.
- If it is the death of a student, the Critical Incident Team and Chairperson of the Board need to be informed immediately by the Principal/ Deputy Principal.
- The team leader alerts team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting of the team, in person or perhaps online.
- In case of bereavement, liaises with the bereaved family. Consult with family on school involvement with funeral in case of death. (Family wishes to be respected)
- Prepare an announcement for staff / students. Plan a staff meeting if required.
- Liase with The Board of Management and the Department of Education and Science. Co-ordinates/delegates tasks of the other team members. (See Appendix 1i)

Other areas of responsibilities, which may be delegated by the team Leader to other members of the team would include:

- Contacting Emergency support services
- Deal with telephone enquiries from anxious Parents. Staff will work from a prepared statement. Discouraging any student or staff from dealing with the media.
- Organising the supervision of students in the school
- Keeping staff updated on information/developments /progress
- Meeting students to brief them on the situation
- Taking care of “Vulnerable students/vulnerable teachers”
- Liasing with external agencies for support or referrals

- Liasing with school organizations such as Parents' Council
- Meeting with individual parents or groups of parents.
- Visiting bereaved families or families closely associated with the incident
- Preparing a Press release and liasing with the media. (See Appendix 2)
- Preparation of an "Incident Room"
- The CIM Team will maintain an up-to-date list of contact numbers for:
 - Staff
 - Parents/guardians of students
 - Emergency support services
- Copies will be kept in the Principal's office. These lists will be updated when necessary by administrative staff.

6. School's internal response to student's needs

- i. Set up Critical Incident room in the school.
- ii. Outline services available to affected students during the first hours (access to counselling and pastoral support). Where it is considered necessary, additional counselling resources may be requested from the Guidance Counsellors / NEPS.
- iii. Deputy Principal to assist Class teacher of the class affected in breaking the news. *(Please see Appendix 3)*
- iv. Have guidelines for Staff in dealing with students in distress: i.e. information on grief responses, identifying those in need of counselling and support. *(Please see Appendix 4)*
- v. Office staff to contact Parents where some students request to go home.
- vi. Class teachers encourage those who feel able to return to class.
- vii. Principal/ Deputy Principal to meet and support any distressed parents and staff.
- viii. Principal to liaise with Chairperson of the Board during the day regarding student and staff welfare

7. On hearing of an incident

Step by Step

- i. The Principal, having confirmed the incident, makes contact with the family.
- ii. Decide on location of Critical Incident Room
- iii. CIM Team meets as early as possible to plan strategy, keeping in mind the guidelines above.
- iv. Key tasks are distributed as per management and pastoral responsibilities.
- v. Have all guidelines for teachers ready. *(Please see Appendix 3)*
- vi. Have all written and oral statements ready for communication within the school; Staff Notice, Student Notice, text to be sent to parents, telephone enquiry response.
- vii. Have a notice at entrances to the school for staff to report to the staff room at a designated time
- viii. Meet staff (Bring staff roll to meeting and note any absences or late arrivals to ensure that all members of staff hear the news)
- ix. CIM Team outlines to staff the plan for the day and the support available.
- x. Deputy Principal to make sure that Guidance Counsellors and members of CIM Team are freed from classes.
- xi. Class Teachers break news to classes as per written guidelines. *(Please see Appendix 3)*
- xii. Plan another update staff meeting later.
- xiii. Clarify funeral arrangements for staff where appropriate and if available.
- xiv. CIM Team meets to plan procedures for school involvement in removal and funeral where appropriate and in accordance with the wishes of the family.

8. CIM – Media Arrangements

- i. Principal will take the role of media liaison.
- ii. With the assistance of the CIM Team the Principal will prepare a short statement to address the following –
 - The facts as known at that time. Reference to sorrow of staff and students. Schools sympathy for the bereaved family. Outline the supports that are in place for students.
- iii. The above statement should be held by the secretary and emailed to press on request; if a media briefing has been scheduled, they may also send details of when and where this will be held.
- iv. In the event of a media briefing, staff and students should be made aware of the following –
 - Only the Principal (acting as the Media Liaison) will be interviewed.
 - The interview will consist of the prepared statement and any pre-agreed questions only; quotes by others will not be responded to.
 - Staff and students will be asked to respect the privacy of the bereaved family by not engaging with the press or referencing the situation on social media or by any other public means.

9. 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, materials used etc.

The school Secretary's will have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters, photocopying materials, etc.

10. Confidentiality:

Coláiste Chríost Rí is conscious of its responsibility to protect the privacy and good name of people involved in any incident and will be sensitive to the consequences of any public statements.

The members of the school staff will bear this in mind, and will seek to ensure that students do so also. For instance, 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.

11. Critical Incident Management Aftercare

The aim of the school community should be to return to normality and routine as soon as possible.

There should be on- going counselling and support for those who need it.

Members of the school community should be given a safe space to express their feelings of loss, anger, confusion etc.

The guidance counsellors and pastoral team will continue to support those deeply affected.

12. Review of Procedures

- All staff were consulted and their views canvassed in the preparation of this policy and plan.
- Parent 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 Deputy Principal or Principal
- Critical Incident Team meets to assess the Critical Incident Plan and check if adjustments need to be made.
- Staff feedback and observations will be requested from every member of staff.
- Principal to prepare document on the event for the Board of Management.
- Policy to be reviewed annually and ratified by the Board of Management.

Appendices

Appendix 1:

Members of CIM Team

School Principal: Mr P Mac An Rí

School Deputy Principal: Mr Liam Shorten

School Chaplain: Appointed each year

School Guidance Counsellors: Mrs. C Cryan, Ms L O' Shea, Mr S Hayes

Year Heads: 1st - Mr M de Faoite

2nd - Mr E O' Riordan

3rd – Mr John Herlihy

4th - Mr F Duggan

5th - Mr B O' Callaghan

6th - Ms C Smith

The Critical Incident Management Team may co-opt other members of staff to assist them, should they deem it necessary.

Appendix 1i

KEYROLES ASSIGNED BY TEAM LEADER

SCHOOL PRINCIPAL: _____

DEPUTY PRINCIPAL: _____

YEAR HEAD: _____

CHAPLAIN: _____

GUIDANCE COUNSELLOR: _____

Appendix 2:

Sample Media Statement and letter to parents

It is with profound sadness that the Board of Management, staff and students of Coláiste Chríost Rí Secondary School, have learned of the tragic death of

Our sincerest sympathy is extended to the family of

On hearing the tragic news, the Critical Incident Plan was put into immediate operation. The Critical Incident team convened a meeting to ensure that students affected by this loss are cared for adequately. Procedures are in place to ensure that all in the school community affected by this loss are given all the help they need to cope at this time.

The School is offering Counselling and support for students and parents affected by this tragedy. Prayer services have been held with each class in the school.

Our prayers and support are with everyone affected by this tragedy.

Appendix 3:

Teacher Support Material

*Please read the prepared student notice at this time. This document was prepared by the Principal, Deputy Principal and members of the Critical Incident Team. We wish for all students to receive the same factual information, and for parents to receive the same factual information from siblings. **PLEASE DO NOT ALTER THIS DOCUMENT.***

The Class of the student involved in the incident:

(Only if incident is confirmed by the family, can it be relayed as such to the students.)

The Class of the student who has died should be the first to be told with the Deputy Principal, Guidance Counsellor and Class teacher present.

Student Notice:

On the _____ (date) an event occurred that affected a member of our school community. _____ (Name of the person) was involved.

The details are:

_____.

Action Taken:

After reading the student notice...

Encourage questions, but make them aware that you don't know all the answers at this time. Refuse to be drawn into speculation as what you say may be taken out of context or misrepresented and may be very hurtful to people already suffering.

Expect tears and outbursts.

Let them know that the school will support them.

Let them know who else is available to support them

If a student insists on leaving the room he should be accompanied and supervised.

Don't be afraid to let them know that you are also upset by the news.

Allow them time to mingle and talk.

Explain how they can support one another.

Be attentive to identifying those that are not coping well with the news.

You may have to remind students again who is there to help, as little information is assimilated once in shock.

Let them know where the Critical Incident Team will be.

A short prayer for the deceased may be said by the Principal.

If the students appear ready, a Year group assembly may be held later in the day. The Year Head will organise and administer the assembly.

Some students may be able to continue to go to class.

Some will need to stay with the Critical Incident Team for the morning. Encourage students to stay in school to support their friends.

Some may need to go home (only if parents come and collect them)

Those that go to class may not be able to concentrate on the work of the class.

Subject teachers will need to make allowances for distress and lack of concentration.

Appendix 4

Common Reactions on hearing Traumatic News

Shock	Fear	Uncertainty	Confusion
Tears	Panic	Denial	Anxiety
Depression	Anger	Nausea	Fainting
Pain	Dizziness	Grief	Overwhelmed
Weakness	Palpitations	Breathing Difficulties	Guilt
Blame	Poor Concentration	Disorientation	Withdrawn
Restlessness	Let Down	Emotional Outbursts	

How to help someone who has suffered loss.

Show genuine care and concern.

Allow them express their feelings.

Encourage talking as much as they want to.

Talk about the person they have lost.

Reassure them that there was nothing they could have done.

Appendix 5:

Emergency Contact List

Principal: Padraig Mac An Rí 0214274904

Emergency Services: 999

Gardai: (021) 45 22 000

Hospital: CUH - (021) 49 22 000

Mercy - (021) 42 71 971

Local Clergy:

NEPS: (076) 11 08 561

Childline 1850 60 90 90

Parentline 1890 92 72 77

Department of Education and Skills: (090) 64 83 600

State Examinations Committee: (090) 64 42 700

Appendix 6:

SAMPLE LETTER TO PARENTS/GUARDIANS

Dear Parents/Guardians

The school has experienced (the sudden death/injury) to one of our students/staff. We are deeply saddened by this death/injury.

(Brief details of the incident, and in the case of death, perhaps some positive remembrances of persons lost)

We have support structures in place to help your child cope with this tragedy. (Elaborate)

It is possible that your son may have some feelings that he may like to discuss with you. You can help your son by taking time to listen to him and encouraging him to express his feelings. It is important to give truthful information that is appropriate to his age.

If you would like any advice or support you may contact the following people at school (Details)

Principal

Appendix 7:

Factual Verification Report

Date of Incident: _____

Time of Incident: _____

Location of Incident: _____

Detailed Description of the Incident:

Person(s) Involved:

Action Taken:

Report received from: _____

Report compiled by: _____

Family/Parents/Guardians contacted: Yes _____ No _____

***If No, then no information will be given by any member of the school
community.***

Appendix 8:

CIMP – Critical Incidents During State Exams

In the event of the death of someone close to a student sitting state exams, the following procedures should be put into action:

- i. Ring SEC to alert the Exam Manager for your school.
- ii. In the event of the death of a parent/family member, staff may visit the student's family to determine if it is appropriate for the student to be encouraged to finish their exams (LC only).
- iii. If desired by the affected student, a separate exam centre should be assigned with staff to manage it. With the agreement of the Exam Manager, a student may be given extra time during their exams.
- iv. If the student would prefer to return to the main exam centre, the students should be informed of her return and given support and advice on how best to support their classmate.
- v. In the event of the death of a student before or during their state exams, normal procedures should be put in place regarding response to a death during term time.
- vi. If it is deemed necessary, a separate exam centre can be set up to accommodate students who have been particularly affected by the loss of a close friend.
- vii. Students who are particularly affected by any of the above may be spoken to separately after exams (with the agreement of parents); remaining students could be addressed in a group after the exams.

Appendix 9:

Date and ratification by the Board of Management.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management in 2021

This policy will replace earlier Critical Incident Management Policies from this date.

Signed: Maria Walk

Date: 2021

(Chairperson of the Board of Management)

Signed: Pdraig Mac An Rí

Date: 2021

(Principal)

Date of next review: 2022

