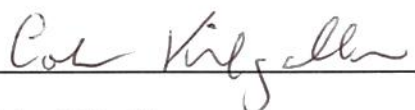


# **CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT PLAN (CIMP) 2023**

**Ardgillan College**

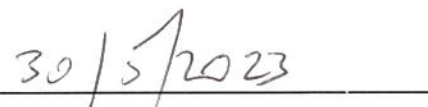
**Date for review: October 2024**



Colm Kilgallon

Chairperson

Board of Management



Date ratified by the Board of Management

---

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

Ardgillan Community College promotes a happy and caring community where students are encouraged and supported to reach their full potential. Teamwork, respect and the pursuit of excellence form cornerstones of the college philosophy. The ethos of the college is based on respect, tolerance and understanding while appreciating the diversity of our changing world. The college aims to provide a broad education for all students and to nurture their individual abilities and talents.

Ardgillan College's motto is 'Mol an Óige agus Tíocfaidh Sí' (Praise the young and they will flourish).

## **INTRODUCTION**

Ardgillan College delivers a six-year cycle from first year to sixth year. Ardgillan College aims to protect the well-being of its students by providing a safe, supportive and nurturing environment at all times. The school has taken a number of measures to create a coping, supportive and caring ethos. The board of management has drawn up a Critical Incident Management Plan (CIMP) as one element of the school's policies and plans.

## **REVIEW AND RESEARCH**

The Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) have consulted resource documents available to schools on [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie), [www.nosp.ie](http://www.nosp.ie) and NEPS 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)
- Wellbeing in Post-Primary Schools Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention (DE, DOH, HSE 2013)
- National Educational Psychological Services (NEPS) 'Responding to Critical Incidents in Schools' e-learning course. Included in Appendix 1
- Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice (DE 2018, revised 2019)

## **DEFINITION OF CRITICAL INCIDENT**

The staff and management of Ardgillan College recognise a critical incident (CI) to be

**“any incident or sequence of events that overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school” NEPS 2016**

Critical incidents may involve one or more students or staff members, or members of our local community. Examples of critical incidents include:

- The death of a member of the school community through accident, violence, serious illness, suicide or suspected suicide or other unexpected death
- Major accidents involving serious injury
- Serious damage to the school caused by fire, flood, vandalism, technology etc.
- The disappearance of a member of the school community
- Serious physical attack on a member of the school community
- An intrusion into the school
- An accident involving members of the school community
- A serious accident or tragedy in the wider community

## **AIMS OF PLAN**

This Critical Incident Management Plan aims to help school management, existing pastoral care systems 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 return the school 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 and promoting wellbeing (see Appendix 2).

In addition, the Department of Education provides an Employee Assistance and Wellbeing Programme, Spectrum Life, which is available to all school personnel, their partners and children over the age of 18 living at the family home (see contact details in Appendix 3).



---

## **PHYSICAL SAFETY**

- Evacuation plan formulated (including students in wheelchairs)
- Regular fire drills occur
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked

## **PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY**

The management and staff of Ardgillan College 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 (see Appendix 6).

- 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
- 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 the Career Guidance teacher is trained in interventions for suicidal students
- The school has developed links with a range of external agencies, including: Pieta House, Jigsaw, CAMHS, HSE, DDLETB Psychological Services, Balbriggan Family Centre, DDLETB PSS, NEPS
- 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 provider
- The school has a clear policy on bullying and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy
- There is a pastoral care system in place in the school
- Students who are identified as being at risk are referred to the designated staff member (e.g. guidance counsellor 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
- A referral system has been established and students have access to the Guidance Counsellor through a referral from their Year Head.
- Staff are informed about how to access support for themselves

---

## **CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM (CIMT)**

What is a Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)?

**“It is a group of individuals from the staff of a school who know the community, the students and each other well enough to make the necessary decisions called for when an incident occurs” - School Crisis Response Teams: Lessening the Aftermath – Mary Schoenfeldt**

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. There is a dedicated critical incident folder in the main office. This contains a copy of the policy and plan and materials particular to their role, to be used in the event of an incident.

The Principal will play a key leadership role in the management of the incident by organising the team to effectively deal with the incident and by communicating with the various parties involved in, or affected by the incident. In the absence of the Principal this role may be delegated to the Deputy Principals, Guidance Counsellors or Year Heads.

**Team leader:** Nuala Ní Mhurchú

### **Role**

- Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a CI meeting
- Coordinates the tasks of the team
- Liaises with the Board of Management, DDLETB PSS, NEPS, SEC
- Liaises with the bereaved family
- Confirms the event and clarifies the facts
- Convenes a meeting of the Critical Incident Management Team
- Activates the Critical Incident Plan
- Co-ordinates and delegates tasks
- Liaises with family, Board of Management, DDLETB and Support Agencies
- Provides follow-up support
- Reviews and evaluates the plan
- Keeps written records of phone calls, letters, meetings interventions etc.

---

**Garda liaison:** Nuala Ní Mhurchú

### **Role**

- Liaises with the Gardaí. It may also involve ongoing liaison depending on the nature of the incident.



- Linking in with Gardaí to verify the accuracy of the incident details before they are shared
- 

**Staff liaison:** Deputy Principals / Year Heads / Guidance Counsellors

**Role**

- Implement the Critical Incident Plan as outlined by the Principal.
  - Leads briefing meetings for staff on the facts as known, gives staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions, and outlines the routine for the day.
  - Meet with Year Head, Tutors, advises them of the Critical Incident Plan.
  - 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
  - Are alert to vulnerable staff members and makes contact with them individually
  - Advises them of the availability of the DDLETB Psychological Support Services and gives them the contact number (01 4598446) and DE Employee Assistance Service (Spectrum Life) (See Appendix 3)
  - Meet with tutor groups and limit the adverse effects of the incident. Support vulnerable students/teachers.
  - Tries to maintain normal school routine as far as possible.
  - Keeps written records of phone calls, letters, meetings interventions etc.
  - Identifies rooms which may be used for various purposes – individual and group support sessions; meeting parents; a quiet room; a waiting room etc.
- 

**Parent liaison:** Nuala Ní Mhurchú

**Role**

- Liaises with the bereaved family
  - May facilitate meetings with groups of parents
  - Ensure the sample letters for parents are prepared
  - Set up rooms for meetings with parents
  - Provide appropriate materials to parents from the CI guidelines
-

---

**Community liaison:** Nuala Ní Mhurchú

**Role**

- Liaises with agencies in the community for support and onward referral
  - Maintain up to date lists of contacts of key parents (e.g. members of Parents' Council) and emergency support services
  - Update CIMT members of the involvement of external agencies
- 

**Student liaison:** Deputy Principals / Year Heads / Guidance Counsellors / Claire Leonard

**Role**

- Providing materials to students from the CI guidelines
  - Alerting staff to vulnerable students
  - Maintaining student contact records
  - Setting up a 'quiet room' for vulnerable students
- 

**Media liaison:** DDLETB

**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)
- 

**Administrators:** School secretaries

**Role**

- Maintenance of up-to-date telephone numbers of
  - Parents or guardians
  - Staff members
  - Emergency services
  - Students
  - Emergency information for trips
- Takes telephone calls and notes those that need to be responded to.
- Ensure that telephone lines are free for outgoing and important incoming calls.

- 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 a plan of the layout of the building
- A plan of what room will be used for what purpose
- Maintains records
- Liaises with Principal
- Keeps written records of phone calls, letters, meetings interventions etc.

---

**Record keeping:** School secretaries

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 school secretaries will both have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters, photocopying materials, etc.

Guidance Counsellor will keep records of student meetings.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY AND GOOD NAME CONSIDERATIONS**

Management and staff of Ardgillan College 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.

| <b>Critical Incident Rooms</b>   |                             |
|--|-----------------------------|
| In the event of a critical incident, the following rooms are designated for the indicated purposes |                             |
| <b>Room Name:</b>  | <b>Designated Purpose:</b>  |
| 007/010  | Main room for meeting staff |
| 103  | Meetings with students      |
| Library  | Meetings with parents       |



|                           |                                   |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <i>N/A</i>                | Meetings with media               |
| <i>R151 &amp;/or R218</i> | Individual sessions with students |
| <i>Boardroom</i>          | 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.

New and temporary staff will be informed of the details of the plan.

| <b>Critical Incident Management Team</b> |   |              |
|--|---|--------------|
| <b>Role</b>                              | <b>Name</b>                                       | <b>Phone</b> |
| <b>Team leader</b>                       | <i>Nuala Ní Mhurchú</i>                           | 01 9680734/5 |
| <b>Garda liaison</b>                     | <i>Nuala Ní Mhurchú</i>                           | 01 9680734/5 |
| <b>Staff liaison</b>                     | <i>Caitriona Rooney</i><br><i>Robert Finnegan</i> | 01 9680734/5 |
| <b>Parent liaison</b>                    | <i>Nuala Ní Mhurchú</i>                           | 01 9680734/5 |
| <b>Media liaison</b>                     | <i>DDLETB</i>                                     | 01 4529600   |
| <b>Administrators</b>                    | <i>Jane Cullen and Claire Leonard</i>             | 01 9680734/5 |

## Short term actions – Day 1

### Maintain the Normal Routine if at all possible

| <b>Task</b>  | <b>Name</b>   |
|--|---|
| <b>Gather accurate information</b>   | <i>Nuala Ní Mhurchú</i>   |
| <b>Who, what, when, where, how?</b><br><b>Names of students/staff involved</b><br><b>Other schools involved?</b><br><b>Extent of injuries</b><br><b>Location of injuries</b>       | <i>Nuala Ní Mhurchú</i><br><i>Caitriona Rooney</i><br><i>Robert Finnegan</i>  |
| <b>Locate CIMP and convene a CIMT meeting (see Appendix 4 for sample agenda) – specify time and place clearly</b><br>Is the incident requiring a NEPS Response at Level 1, 2 or 3? | <i>Nuala Ní Mhurchú</i>   |
| <b>Make contact with the affected family/families</b>  | <i>Nuala Ní Mhurchú</i>   |
| <b>Contact external agencies</b>   | <i>Nuala Ní Mhurchú</i>   |
| <b>Arrange supervision for students</b>  | <i>Nuala Ní Mhurchú</i>   |
| <b>Hold staff meeting (see Appendix 5 for sample agenda)</b>   | <i>Nuala Ní Mhurchú</i>   |
| <b>Agree schedule for the day</b>  | <i>Nuala Ní Mhurchú</i>   |
| <b>Inform students – (close friends and students with learning difficulties may need to be told separately)</b>  | <i>Nuala Ní Mhurchú / Caitriona Rooney / Robert Finnegan / Year Head</i>      |
| <b>Compile a list of vulnerable students</b>   | <i>Appropriate Year Head</i><br><i>Guidance Councillor</i><br><i>SEN Team</i> |
| <b>Prepare and agree media statement and deal with media</b>   | <i>DDLETB / Nuala Ní Mhurchú</i>  |
| <b>Inform parents</b>  | <i>Nuala Ní Mhurchú</i>   |
| <b>Hold end of day staff briefing</b>  | <i>Nuala Ní Mhurchú</i>   |

## Medium term actions - (Day 2 and following days)

| Task   | Name  |
|--|---|
| Convene a CIMT meeting to review the events of day 1       | <i>Nuala Ní Mhurchú</i>   |
| Meet external agencies                                     | <i>Nuala Ní Mhurchú</i>   |
| Meet whole staff   | <i>Nuala Ní Mhurchú</i>   |
| Arrange support for students, staff, parents               | <i>Nuala Ní Mhurchú /<br/>Caitriona Rooney / Robert<br/>Finnegan / Guidance / Year<br/>Head</i> |
| Visit the injured  | <i>Nuala Ní Mhurchú /<br/>Caitriona Rooney / Robert<br/>Finnegan / Guidance / Year<br/>Head</i> |
| Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements | <i>Nuala Ní Mhurchú</i>   |
| Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service   | <i>Nuala Ní Mhurchú</i>   |
| Make decisions about school closure                        | <i>BOM</i>  |



## Follow-up – beyond 72 hours

| <b>Task</b>                                       | <b>Name</b>                                       |
|---|---|
| Monitor students for signs of continuing distress | <i>Year Head / Tutor / Class Teachers</i>         |
| Liaise with agencies regarding referrals          | <i>Nuala Ní Mhurchú<br/>Guidance Counsellors</i>  |
| Plan for return of bereaved student(s)            | <i>Nuala Ní Mhurchú<br/>Appropriate Year Head</i> |
| Decide on memorials and anniversaries             | <i>BOM / Staff, Parents &amp; students</i>        |
| Review response to incident and amend plan        | <i>Staff / BOM</i>                                |

## EMERGENCY CONTACT LIST

| AGENCY   | CONTACT NUMBERS   |
|--|---|
| Balbriggan Garda Station   | 01 8020510  |
| Child and Family Mental Health Service (CAMHS) Swords  | 018907152   |
| DDLETB Psychological Services  | 01 4598446  |
| Emergency Services   | 999   |
| Employee Assistance Service  | 1800 411057   |
| Fire Station Balbriggan  | 01 8412137  |
| Hospital (Our Lady of Lourdes, Drogheda)   | 041 9837601   |
| HSE  | 1890 252 919  |
| Jigsaw   | 01 9603020  |
| Local Health Centre  | 01 8834906  |
| National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)  | 01 8892700  |
| Parish Priest  | 01 8412116  |
| Primary Care Centre Balbriggan   | 01 8412138  |
| Resource Officer for Suicide Prevention Dublin North: Sara Maxwell                             | 0766958993<br>086 0214241   |
| State Exams Commission   | 090 644 2700  |
| Unions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• INTO</li> <li>• ASTI</li> <li>• TUI</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 01 8047700</li> <li>• 01 6040160</li> <li>• 01 492 2588</li> </ul> |

Dear Parents/Guardians

I need to inform you about a very sad event that has happened.

*(\*EDIT\*Give accurate information about the incident, but avoid using the word murder as this will not be established until the court case is completed).*

We have shared this information and had discussions with all of our students so that they know what has happened. School staff members have been available for students on an on-going basis today. Other support personnel (*\*EDIT\*including psychologists etc., according to actual arrangements*) are available to advise staff. This support will continue to be available to advise staff in their support of students (*\*EDIT\*if appropriate insert how long*).

The death of any young person is tragic, but a violent death is even more difficult. It is hard to have to teach our children about the violence in our world and to accept that sometimes we do not have the power to prevent it.

This death may cause a variety of reactions in your child. Some children/young people may be afraid for their own life and for the lives of those they love. Take time to listen to their fears and reassure them that what has happened is rare.

We have enclosed some additional information that may be useful during this time.

The media are in the vicinity of the school and may approach you or your children. You need not respond to their questions if you are approached. We will not allow the media to interview your child at school and our general advice is that you should not let your children be interviewed. They are not mature enough to judge what to say and may say something they will regret later.

Young people frequently turn to social media to see what others are saying, or to find out more. At these times it is important that you monitor their use and engage with them about what they read. We urge you to emphasise and reinforce the need to be extremely sensitive and careful about what they post. (If planned) A support meeting for parents is planned for (date, time and place). At that time we can talk further about how to help ourselves and our children.

Our thoughts are with (*\*EDIT\* family name*) and with each of you.

Sincerely

---



Dear Parents/Guardians

The school has experienced (*\*EDIT\* the sudden death, accidental injury, etc.*) of Name of student(s). We are deeply saddened by the deaths/events.

(*\*EDIT\* Brief details of the incident, and in the event of a death, perhaps some positive remembrances of the person lost*).

Our thoughts are with (*\*EDIT\* family name*).

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

It is possible that your child may have some feelings and questions that he/she may like to discuss with you. It is important to give factual information that is appropriate to their age.

You can help your child by taking time to listen and by encouraging them to express their feelings.

All children are different and will express their feelings in different ways. It is not uncommon for children to have difficulty concentrating or to be fearful, anxious, or irritable. They may become withdrawn, cry, complain of physical aches and pains, have difficulty sleeping or have nightmares. Some may not want to eat. These are generally short term reactions. Over the course of the days to come, please keep an eye on your child and allow him/her to express their feelings without criticism.

Although classes will continue as usual, I anticipate that the next few days will be difficult for everyone.

(*\*EDIT\* Optional*) An information night for parents is planned for (*\*EDIT\* date, time and place*). At that time, further information about how to help children in grief will be given.

We have enclosed some information which you may find useful in helping your child through this difficult time.

Young people frequently turn to social media to see what others are saying, or to find out more. At these times it is important that you monitor their use and engage with them about what they read. We urge you to emphasise and reinforce the need to be extremely sensitive and careful about what they post.

If you would like advice you may contact the following people at the school. (*\*EDIT\* Details*).  
Principal's signature

Sincerely

---

*This can be used as a template by schools to be emailed, posted on the school social media site or given to the media. It may help to decrease the number of media calls and callers to the school.*

*In some instances, it is not appropriate to provide names or information that might identify individuals.*

*This announcement will need to be changed based upon confidentiality issues, the wishes of the victim's family and the nature of the incident.*

My name is Nuala Nì Mhurchù and I am the Principal of Ardgillan College. We learned this morning of the death of (*\*EDIT\*one of our students or Name of student*). This is a terrible tragedy for the (*\*EDIT\* Family Name*) family(ies), our school and our community. We are deeply saddened by these events. Our sympathy and thoughts are with the (*\*EDIT\* Family Name*) family and friends.

(*\*EDIT\*Name*) was a (*\*EDIT\* e.g. 5th year boy*) and will be greatly missed by all who knew him/her.

We have been in contact with his/her parents and they have requested that we all understand their need for privacy at this difficult time.

Offers of support have been pouring in and are greatly appreciated. Our school have implemented our Critical Incident Management Plan.

Psychologists from the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) and (*\*EDIT\*insert other information if relevant*) have been with us all day supporting and advising teachers in their efforts to assist our students at this time.

The teachers have been helping students to deal with the tragic event.

The school has been open to parents, to support them and to offer them advice and guidance.

We would ask you to respect our privacy at this time.

Thank you.

# APPENDIX 1

## National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) e-learning course



Login



### Responding to Critical Incidents in Schools

Started 21 Feb 2022

[Enrol](#)



While we all hope that critical incidents will never occur, the sad reality is that they do. Our experience over many years, supported by extensive research, shows that well-prepared schools cope better in the event of a critical incident occurring.

This e-learning course has been developed by the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) section of the Department of Education

The course is based on our 2016 publication 'Responding to Critical Incidents: Guidelines and Resource Materials for Schools'. It is designed to support school staff to prepare for and respond effectively to a critical incident. It is aimed primarily at staff who have a lead or managerial role in the school, and/or those who would be centrally involved in responding to a critical incident. We suggest a minimum of 2 staff members complete the course in each school.

*Sign up for this course today.*

[Enrol](#)



## APPENDIX 2

The promotion of wellbeing of our students is guided by the Department of Education's 'Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice' document.

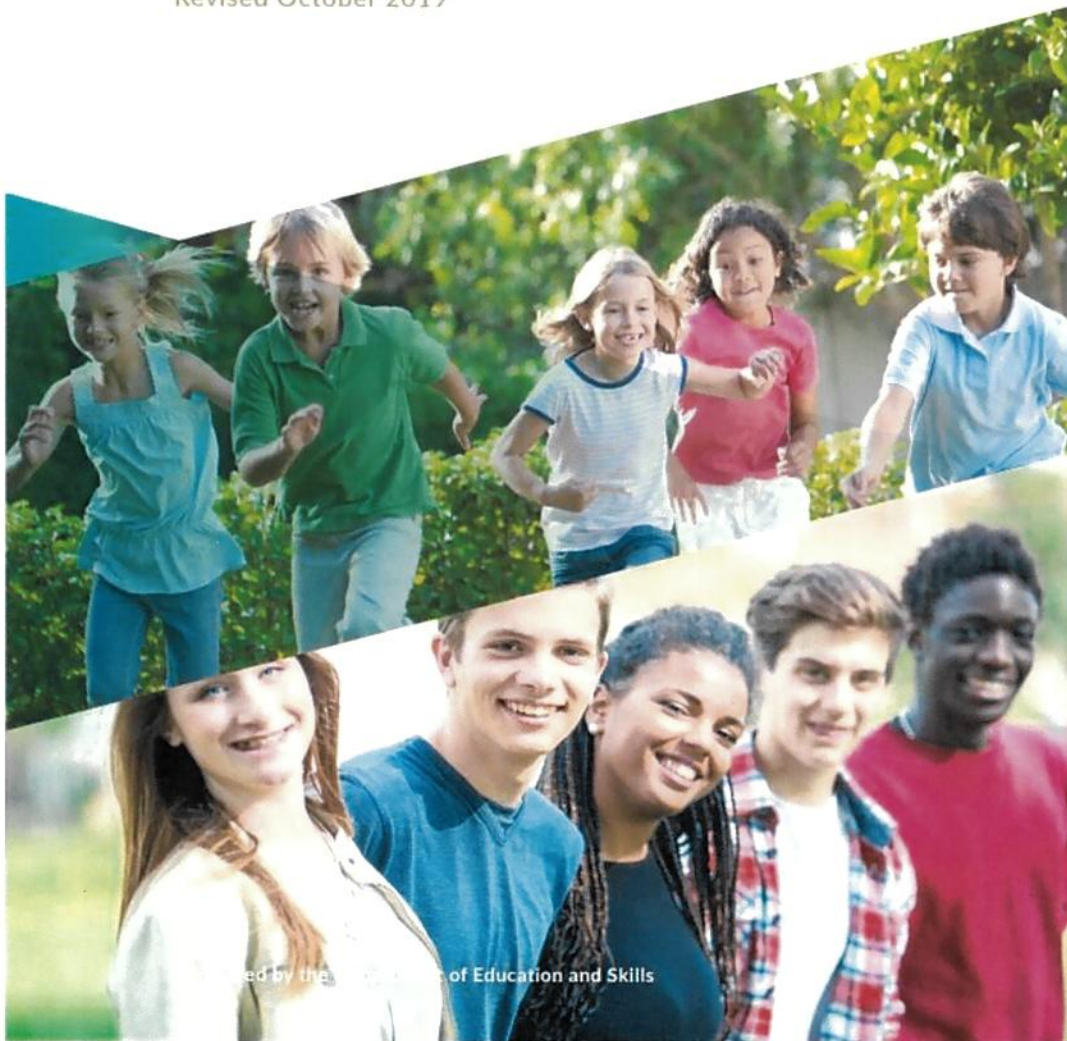


Riailas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland

# Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice

2018 - 2023

Revised October 2019



---

## APPENDIX 3

### Employee Assistance Service: Spectrum Life

- WhatsApp: Text “Hi” to 087 369 0010
- Freephone 1800 411 057
- Email: [eap@spectrum.life](mailto:eap@spectrum.life)

## APPENDIX 4

### Critical Incident Management Team Meeting Agenda

The agenda for the meeting of the Critical Incident Management Team should be as follows:

1. **Share the full details of the event.** Agree on what the facts are. These will need to be communicated in a clear, appropriate and consistent manner by all staff to the students.
2. **Discuss what agencies have been contacted and whether there are additional agencies that should be informed** (check the Emergency Contact List for Schools – page 88 of CI Guidelines).
3. During major incidents, phone lines may become busy. So agree which phone line is to be kept open for outgoing and incoming emergency calls. A script for admin staff should developed.
4. Discuss how to deal with the media. Prepare a media statement, if appropriate. We will discuss this further later in the training.
5. **Agree who will liaise with the family.**
6. **Communicate with the wider parent body** - The manner in which information about the critical incident is shared with parents and pupils is very important in terms of minimising the long-term impact of the event on everyone involved.
7. **Plan the procedure for the day** - It is very important to maintain a normal routine when at all possible. Therefore, it is recommended that the school timetable runs as normal. This will provide a sense of safety and structure, which will be comforting for many students.
8. **Decide on how to facilitate the whole staff meeting** - staff may need to be split into two groups to accommodate supervision.
9. **Delegate responsibilities** – review roles and duties on Critical Incident Management Team.





# APPENDIX 5

## Agenda for Staff Meeting

The next action is for the Principal to lead a meeting with the whole staff. The purpose of this meeting is to relay facts and to plan the schedule for the day. It is crucial that the staff have accurate facts and are kept updated. This will help to dispel rumours, which may begin to circulate. Consider including the NEPS psychologist(s) in this meeting.

The staff meeting should include the following key points:

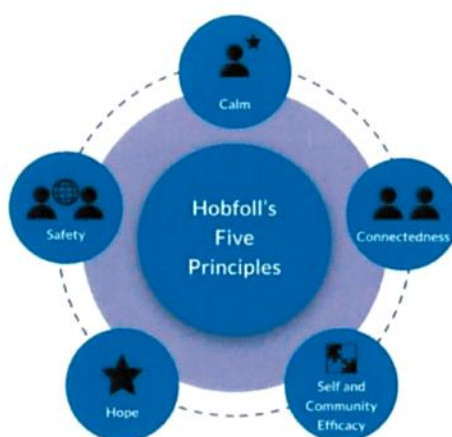
1. The **sharing of information** about the incident.
2. The need for **routine** to be maintained in order to provide a sense of security to students, especially younger students.
3. It is ok for staff to be upset, and it is ok that students know and see that they are upset. It may be reassuring for them.
4. **Agree how to share the facts with students** - it is important that close friends are told first and separately. It is not a good idea to break any news in an assembly setting.
5. **Provide literature and resource materials to the staff** from the Resources section in the Guidelines  
(We will discuss resources in more detail at a later stage in the training). This may include:
  - o R5 - A classroom session following a critical incident (page 57)
  - o R6 - Children's understanding and reaction to death according to age (page 60)
  - o R7 - Stages of grief (page 62)
  - o R8 - How to cope when something terrible happens (page 63)
  - o R9 - Reactions to a critical incident (page 64)
  - o R10 - Grief after suicide (page 65) (only when it is clear that the death was due to suicide and where parents have accepted this)
  - o R17 - Frequently Asked Questions for Teachers (page 76)
6. **Supporting students:** A lot of the students may be very upset and will want and need to talk about what has happened. For the majority of students this can be done in the classroom or group setting. It is usually helpful for students to hear others talking about how they are feeling. This normalises their reaction. If a student or group of students are particularly distressed, it is advised to give them opportunities to talk to someone who they know and who will be available over the next days and weeks, for example the student liaison from the critical incident management team. If you are particularly concerned about any individual pupil, please talk to your NEPS Psychologist about this.
7. Decide whether a **quiet room** or a space within the classroom should be made available for students. This is a place that students can go if they are having difficulty remaining composed in the classroom. It should have tissues, a few stuffed toys, cushions, drawing and writing materials and information leaflets from the Resource Materials section appropriate to the age of the students. A very distressed student may need individual support.
8. Students with **general learning difficulties** will be at a different developmental level to their peers - see resource '[Supporting students with special educational needs \(SEN\) and additional needs](#)' (for Accessible version [click here](#)). Their understanding of death will be in accordance with their developmental age. They should be told the news separately so that the information can be given according to their level of understanding.
9. If there are students of various in the school, this needs to be taken into consideration in organising prayer services, attendance at the funeral etc. Parents of different religious or national groups may need to be consulted.
10. Media room/Agency room - we will discuss this further later in the training
11. Provide information on the **support services available to school staff**.
12. Agree a time for a **follow-up staff meeting** at the end of the day to provide an update on any developments and prepare for the following day. NEPS Critical Incident Guidelines - End of day template of session with whole staff (page 27)

## APPENDIX 6

### Five Principles that can Guide Interventions in a School following a Critical Incident

Five principles, described by Hobfoll et al (2007), can be used to guide interventions that promote resilience and recovery in the school, following a traumatic critical incident.

*When combined together, the five principles can act as protective factors, supporting and nurturing well-being, and the return to a normal pattern of life, in the aftermath of an emergency situation.*



### Five Principles that can Guide Interventions

#### A SENSE OF SAFETY

Schools always try to promote a sense of safety by creating a physically safe environment - having regular fire-drills, ensuring that fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked, and enforcing public health recommendations. The environment also needs to be psychologically safe. Schools try to foster a safe, and caring culture and climate, ensuring positive relationships between teachers and students, a sense of belonging, and a whole-school ethos that accepts and values diversity.

#### A SENSE OF CALM

Schools can promote a sense of calm. The Pastoral Care systems in schools are vital in this work. In addition, SPHE and RSE are key elements of a school's prevention work. These compulsory and required elements of the curriculum support the development of skills in relation to coping, resilience, communication, conflict resolution, and problem solving.

#### A SENSE OF CONNECTEDNESS

Schools can promote a sense of connectedness through prioritising the development of relationships with children and young people in the school community and planning how to partner with parents and carers. This can also be done through the development of anti-bullying policies and peer support programmes. Schools can also develop clear referral procedures and interagency links.

#### A SENSE OF COMMUNITY EFFICACY

The student support team structure is a key element in promoting self & community efficacy. Schools can ensure the provision of appropriate staff training and resources on issues affecting children including: Signs and Symptoms of stress/anxiety/depression; Wellbeing and Mental Health Promotion, & Loss and Bereavement. Staff should also be familiar with the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures and the critical incidents documents.

#### A SENSE OF HOPE

Schools can promote a sense of hope by providing opportunities for the school community to feel safe, secure, and hopeful about the present and future.