

Critical Incident Policy for St Ailbes school

Short term, medium term and long term plan.

Most other schools don't include sections on Suicide - include it in our plan? DES Guidelines discuss Suicide and Traffic Accidents

Objectives:

1. Defining a Critical Incident
2. Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)
3. Procedure: Short-term (Day 1) Medium term (Days 2-3) Follow up (72hours)
4. Suicide
5. Emergency contact list
6. Defibrillators/First Aid

Appendices

1. Letter to parents (Sample letter requesting consent for involvement of outside professionals)
2. Letter to parents (Sample letter informing parents of critical incident)
3. Sample Statement for the Media
4. Guidelines for breaking news to students

Aims: We, at St Ailbe's, aim to protect the well-being of our students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. This policy aims to facilitate the implementation of a plan of action should the school management be notified of a Critical Incident within or affecting the school community.

Review: We at St Ailbe's view this policy as a living policy, thus it will be reviewed periodically in consultation with all relevant partners after each critical incident.

Media: When necessary, the Principal or deputed staff member will handle all media queries.

1. A critical incident is any incident or sequence of events which overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of the school. (taken directly from guidelines)

Examples of crises affecting schools (this is not an exhaustive list):

The death of a member of the school community through sudden death, accident, terminal illness or suicide.

An accident involving pupils or staff on or off the school premises.

Serious damage to the school e.g. fire, flood, explosion, vandalism etc.

The disappearance of a member of the school community

An accident/ tragedy in the wider community that will impact on the school community

2. The role of the Critical Incident Team (C.I.T)

The Team includes Ruaidhri Devitt, Kieran O Dwyer (staff liaison) Noreen Ryan (student Liaison), Deirdre Clifford (parent Liaison) and Niamh O Shaughnessy, Alanna O' Donovan and Christoir McGrath, Fr Tom and Clodagh Goode.

1) Roles and responsibility for tasks are discussed and allocated

2) Emergency information and contact numbers are updated and filed.

3) Team members identify a response to a Critical Incident. (The procedure that will be followed)

Short Term Response (24 hours directly after incident)

It is important to maintain a normal routine when at all possible and it is recommended that the school timetable runs as normal. This will provide a sense of safety and structure which is comforting for many students. Teachers should give students the opportunity to talk about what has happened if appropriate and temporarily defer academic activities if necessary.

SHORT TERM CHECKLIST

| Task | Assigned to | Completed by |
|--|--------------------------|--------------|
| Gather accurate information relating to incident and establish the facts (who, where, when etc.) | RD KOD | |
| Contact appropriate supports/agencies eg NEPS | NR, AD | |
| Organise a C.I.M.T. meeting | RD KOD | |
| Organise student supervision | KOD, Clodagh | |
| Prepare and carry out a full staff meeting | RD&KOD | |
| Plan procedures for the remainder of the day | RD&KOD | |
| Make contact with family and close friends of affected party if applicable and appropriate | RD&NR | |
| Inform students | Year head/ Class teacher | See note 4 |
| Inform parents | RD KOD | |
| Deal with media (prepare and agree on statement) | RD&CM | |
| Arrange a quiet reflection area for use of students who may need time out to process the incident if appropriate | NR, AH, Fr Tom | |
| Organise staff briefing at the end of the day | RD&KOD | |

Medium Term Response (24-72 hours)

It is sometimes the case that the first day following an incident is quite calm as people may be in shock. Day 2 may be a day when more support is needed as the news begins to sink in. It is advisable that the CIMT continues to meet each day until the school returns to normal functioning.

MEDIUM TERM CHECKLIST

| Task | Assigned to | Completed by |
|--|---|--------------|
| Hold a C.I.M.T. meeting to review what has been done to date and plan for the following days | RD&KOD | |
| Meet whole staff | RD&KOD | |
| Meet external agencies if applicable and appropriate | NR AD | |
| Arrange support for students, staff and parents | SCP, NEPS, <u>NR</u> , MR, Fr. Tom | |
| Plan the re-integration of staff and students | NR (student) RD (staff) | |

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| Ring State Exams | AH | |
| Visit any injured parties | RD, NR, AH | |
| Liaise with affected family regarding funeral/ritual arrangements if applicable and appropriate | Fr Tom, AH, RD | |
| Agree on attendance at funeral/ritual | RD KOD | |
| Make decision about school closure/suspension of classes | RD KOD | |
| Develop a plan for monitoring vulnerable students over the next few weeks | NR, SCP, MR, NEPs, AD. Year heads and C.I.T. | |

Follow up (Beyond 72 hours)

Follow-up is the work carried out in the weeks, months and years following a critical incident. The goal of follow-up is to help the school community cope with the impact of the event in the longer term and to monitor those individuals with ongoing difficulties. The school may also decide to review the critical incident policy and plan memorials.

FOLLOW UP CHECKLIST

| Task | Assigned to | Completed by |
|---|-------------|--------------|
| Monitor students/staff for ongoing distress | NR AD | |
| Liaise with agencies regarding referrals | NR&RD&MR AD | |
| Meet whole staff if necessary | RD | |
| Plan for return of affected students/staff | MR&NR | |
| Return personal items to family | RD&NR AD | |
| Decide on memorials and anniversaries | RD KOD | |
| Review response to incident. Update plan if necessary | C.I.T | |

4. Suicide

Suicide.(Based on Critical Incidents Guidelines)

Firstly, great care will be taken in the use of the term 'suicide'. A staff member should contact the family to establish the exact facts and the family's wishes about how the death should be described. The phrases 'tragic death' or 'sudden death' may be used instead.

Issues that may arise when a student dies by suspected suicide:

Family

- Sympathise with them and acknowledge their grief and loss
- Organise a home visit by two staff members (checking first that the family would welcome such a visit)
- Consult with the family regarding the appropriate support from the school e.g. at the funeral service

Students

- Give the facts as agreed with the bereaved family
- Inform close friends and relatives separately
- Create safe and supportive spaces for the students where they can share their reactions and feelings
- Advise them on their possible reactions over the next few days, (see R11)
- Avoid glorifying the victim and sensationalising the suicide. Carry out the same rituals or memorial services as you would for other student deaths such as those due to road traffic accidents
- Advise the students of the support that is available to them. Tell them that talking is positive and helpful
- Take any talk of suicide seriously. Follow school protocols for dealing with this. Provide support, inform parents immediately and discuss onward referral options
- Students may wish to seek support from each other rather than adults. Facilitate this if appropriate and if it is possible. However, information should be provided about how to get further help if they, or their friends, should need it.

It is important following the funeral of a student who has died by suicide that students and parents are encouraged to come back to the school for support.

5. Emergency Services for St Ailbe's School :

| Service | Contact Number |
|--------------------|-------------------------|
| Fire Station | 999 or 112 |
| Clonmel Hospital | 052 6177196 |
| Limerick Hospital | 061301111 |
| Gardaí | 06280670 |
| Water | 06280700 |
| Electricity | |
| Gas | 1850205050 |
| Priest | 062 52727 or 0876833883 |
| Emergency Services | 112 / 999 |
| | |
| Doctors: | |
| | |

The school's exact location – Rosanna road, Tipperary Town, County Tipperary.
Latitude - 52.47874701

Longitude – -8.15595254

Eircode E34H596

6. Defibrillators/First Aid.

There is an AED (Automated External Defibrillator) Device located in the school's reception. Some staff members have received Emergency First Aid training and are trained to use this device.

[Retraining will continue on an regular basis.](#)

In addition, there are first aid kits located in the reception and the Science room. For school outings/trips, this kit will be brought and the relevant staff member will have a copy of the Emergency Contact list.

Checklist for reviewing the policy/plan:

Has serious consideration been given to the school's approach to prevention?

- Has the school defined a critical incident and given examples?
- Have key roles been clearly identified and the tasks clearly outlined?
- Have staff members been nominated to each of the roles/tasks?
- Are the personnel suitable?
- Has each member of the team compiled their emergency pack (photocopies of relevant handouts)?
- Has contact been made with external agencies?
- Is the Emergency Contact List (R22) appropriate and complete?
- Are letters and press releases readily available on school headed paper, for adaptation to suit the particular circumstances?
- Are telephone numbers on contact lists up-to-date?
- Has all the staff been consulted about the plan/policy?
- Has a date been set for a review of the plan?
- Who will be given copies of the plan?
- Where will copies of the plan be kept?

Appendices

1. Letter to parents (Sample letter requesting consent for involvement of outside professionals)
2. Letter to parents (Sample letter informing parents of critical incident)
3. Sample Statement for the Media
4. Guidelines for breaking news to students

1. Letter to parents (Sample letter requesting consent for involvement of outside professionals)

Dear Parents,

Following the recent (tragedy, death of X) we have arranged professional support for students in school who need particular help. (X...) is available to help us with this work. This support will usually consist of talking and listening to students, either in small groups or on a one-to-one basis and offering reassurance and advice as appropriate.

If you would like your son/daughter to receive this support, please sign the attached permission slip and return it to the school by _____. If you would like further information on the above, please indicate this on the slip or telephone the school.

Yours Sincerely, _____

I/ We consent to having our son/ daughter avail of the support provided by the Department of Education and Skills. I/ We understand that my son/ daughter may avail of the support being offered in an individual or group session depending on the arrangements which are thought to be most appropriate.

Name of student: _____

Class/ Year: _____

Date of Birth: _____

I would like my son/ daughter _____ to avail of the support being offered.

Signed

2. Letter to parents (Sample letter informing parents of critical incident)

Dear Parents/ Guardians,

The school has experienced (the sudden death, accidental injury, etc) of (Name of student(s)).

We are deeply saddened by the death/ event. (Brief details of the incident, and in the event of a death, perhaps some positive remembrance of the person lost). Our thoughts are with (family name).

We have support structures in place to help your child cope with this tragedy. (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. Although classes will continue as usual, I anticipate that the next few days will be difficult for everyone.

We have enclosed some information which you may find useful in helping your child through this difficult time. If you would like advice you may contact the Critical Incident Team at the school. (Details).

Principal's Signature.

3. Sample Statement for the Media

It is with profound sadness that the Management, staff and students of St Ailbes school have learned of the tragic death of _____.

Our sincerest sympathy is extended to the family of _____.

On hearing the news the Critical Incident Policy was put into immediate operation. The Critical Incident Team (C.I.T) convened a meeting to ensure that students affected by this loss were 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, parents and staff affected by this tragedy.

Prayer services have been held with classes in the school. Students will attend and participate in the funeral service, in conjunction with the wishes of the family. Our support and prayers are with everyone affected by this tragedy.

4. Guidelines for breaking news to students

1. The class of the student who has been involved in the accident/ death should be told first with the **Counsellor, and Year Head** present. Only tell the facts as you have them. Class teachers of the other classes should inform them, again only with the facts.

2. Acknowledge to the class the news is upsetting and that they may feel shock, anger or be traumatised. Acknowledge their feelings and allow them to share their feelings amongst one another.

3. Be attentive to identify those who are not coping well.

4. Identify who else is available to support them especially the names of the C.I.T. and where they will be located.

5. Allow students to talk to and support one another, keeping them in the classroom. Do not leave anyone leave the classroom in a distressed state.

6. Some may have to go home but only allow this if parents or guardians come to collect them

Mr Ruaidhri Devitt
Principal

Ms. Anna Tuohy Halligan
Chairperson BOM

9-3-2016