

## Critical Incident Policy for St Ailbes school

Objectives:

1. Define a Critical Incident
2. Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)
3. Procedure: Short-term (1 Day) Medium term (Days 2-3) Follow up (72hours)
4. Emergency contact list
5. 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 Statements for the Media and public
4. Guidelines for informing the 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 designated staff members 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 (the list below is not exhaustive):

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) Edel Merrigan (student Liaison), Mary Ryan (parent Liaison) and Helen Kennedy, Alanna O' Donovan and Christoir McGrath, Fr Beatty 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	EM, 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&MR&EM	
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	EM, Fr Beatty	
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	EM AD	
Arrange support for students, staff and parents	SCP, NEPS, <b>EM</b> , HSCL, Fr. Beatty	

Plan the re-integration of staff and students	EM (student) RD (staff)	
Visit any injured parties	RD, KOD, EM	
Liaise with affected family regarding funeral/ritual arrangements if applicable and appropriate	Fr Beatty, MR, 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	EM, 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	EM&AD	
Liaise with agencies regarding referrals	EM, RD, HSCL, AD	
Meet whole staff if necessary	RD&KOD	
Plan for return of affected students/staff	HSCL, EM, AD	
Return personal items to family	RD, MR, 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	0526177196
Limerick Hospital	061301111
Gardaí	06280670
Water	06280700
Electricity	+353 21 2382410
Gas	1850205050
Priest	062 52727 or 0876833883
Emergency Services	112 / 999
Doctors:	(062) 82 100

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 a regular basis. (First Aid training was completed in May 2019)

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

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Mr Ruaidhri Devitt  
Principal

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Cllr. Mary Hanna Hourigan  
Chairperson BOM

Date\_\_\_\_\_