

St. Ailbe's School



Critical Incident Policy



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland



Có-mhainithe ag an
Aontas Eorpach
Co-funded by the
European Union

Policy Area	Schools
Policy Reference number	ST.AIL/CRIT/013/10
Version	1
Policy Drafted by	St. Ailbe's School
Date previous version Adopted by BOM Noted by TETB Committee	 20 August 2025 9 December 2025
Date Reviewed/Amended by School	June 2026
Date Reviewed/Ratified by BOM	19-8-2026
Date Noted/to be Noted by TETB	September 2026
Policy Review Date	Annually
Date of Withdrawal of Obsolete Policy	<date to be inserted> Policy Ref. No. ST.AIL/CRIT/013/9 Version No. 1

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Critical Incident Policy for St Ailbe's 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. 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 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.

Critical Incident Definition

A critical incident is any incident or sequence of events which overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of the school.

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.

Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)

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

The Team includes Principal/Deputies (staff liaison), Guidance teachers (student liaison), HSCL (parent liaison), SCP, Year heads, school chaplain and school secretary.

- 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).

Procedure: Short-term (1 Day) Medium term (Days 2-3) Follow up (72hours)

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.)	Principal/Deputies	
Contact appropriate supports/agencies e.g., NEPS	Guidance and SCP	
Organise a C.I.M.T. meeting	Principal/Deputies	
Organise student supervision	Student liaison and Year heads	
Prepare and carry out a full staff meeting	Principal/Deputies	
Plan procedures for the remainder of the day	Principal/Deputies & Year heads	
Make contact with family and close friends of affected party if applicable and appropriate	Principal/Deputies parent liaison	
Inform students	Year heads/Class teacher	See note 4
Inform parents	Principal/Deputies parent liaison	
Deal with media (prepare and agree on statement)	Principal/Deputies	
Arrange a quiet reflection area for use by students who may need time out to process the incident if appropriate	Guidance	
Organise staff briefing at the end of the day	Principal/Deputies	

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	Principal/Deputies	
Meet whole staff	Principal/Deputies	
Meet external agencies if applicable and appropriate	Principal/Deputies, Guidance & SCP	
Arrange support for students, staff and parents	SCP, NEPS, Guidance, HSCL, Year heads	
Plan the re-integration of staff and students	Guidance, Year heads (student), Principal/Deputies (staff)	
Visit any injured parties	Principal/Deputies, HSCL	
Liaise with affected family regarding funeral/ritual arrangements if applicable and appropriate	Principal/Deputies, HSCL	
Agree on attendance at funeral/ritual	Principal/Deputies	
Make decision about school closure/suspension of classes	Principal	
Develop a plan for monitoring vulnerable students over the next few weeks	Guidance, SCP, HSCL, NEPs, SCP, 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	Guidance SCP	
Liaise with agencies regarding referrals	Principal/Deputies, Guidance, HSCL & SCP	

Meet whole staff if necessary	Principal/Deputies	
Plan for return of affected students/staff	HSCL	
Return personal items to family	Principal/Deputies, HSCL	
Decide on memorials and anniversaries	Principal	
Review response to incident. Update plan if necessary	C.I.T.	

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.
- 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.

Emergency Services for St Ailbe's School

Service	Contact Number
Fire Station	999 or 112
Clonmel Hospital	052 6177196
Limerick Hospital	061 301111
Gardaí	062 80670
Water	062 80700
Electricity	+353 21 2382410
Gas	1850205050
Priest	062 52727 or 087 6833883
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 – E34 H596

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, PE hall, Practical rooms and the Science room. There is also a first aid kit for outings/trips; these kits will be brought, and the relevant staff member will have a copy of the Emergency Contact list.

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.

All new and temporary staff will be informed of the details of the plan by Ruadh  Devitt.

The plan will be updated annually at the beginning of each academic year.

Appendix 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 _____

Appendix 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.

Appendix 3

Sample Statement for the Media

It is with profound sadness that the Management, staff and students of St Ailbe's 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.

Appendix 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 allow 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.