

Critical Incident Management Policy

Ardcoil Rath Iomgháin, Rathangan, Co. Kildare



Date of Adoption by BOM: 1-12-20

Date for Next Review:

Introduction:

Ardscoil Rath Iomgháin aims to protect the wellbeing of its students and staff by providing a safe, supportive and caring environment at all times. This Critical Incident Management Policy (CIMP) has been prepared in consultation with parents, students, staff and the Board of Management.

Mission Statement

This school, being a source of pride in the community aspires to the holistic development of its students, embracing the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual dimensions of their lives.

Students will be challenged and encouraged to achieve their full potential through the recognition and reward of their efforts and responsibilities, allowing them to feel confident in their ability to take their place as valued members of our society. Cultural differences will be respected.

The good name and reputation of the school as an institution must be nurtured and protected for the benefits of all pupils. Each of the partners, teachers, parents and students has roles and responsibilities which must be fulfilled if successful educational outcomes are to be achieved.

A ACHIEVE

R RESPECT

D DEVELOP

Definition of “Critical Incident”

As per DES/NEPS guidelines Ardscoil Rath Iomgháin recognises a critical incident to be “*an accident or sequence of events that overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school and disrupts the running of the school*”. Critical incidents may involve one or more students, staff members, the school or members of the local community. Types of incidents might include but are not limited to:

- the death of a member of the school community through accident, violence, suicide or suspected suicide or other unexpected death
- serious injury sustained by a member of the school community as a result of violence on or off the school grounds
- outbreak of a disease or major illness in the school or community
- a threatening or violent intrusion into the school and/or school grounds
- an accident/tragedy involving a member of the school community
- the disappearance of a member of the school community

- serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism etc

(Responding to Critical Incidents: NEPS Guidelines and Resource Materials for Schools)

Aim

The aim of this Critical Incident Management Policy and accompanying plan is to enable school management and staff to react quickly and effectively in the event of an incident and in its aftermath to maintain a sense of control and to ensure appropriate support is offered to both staff and students both during the incident and again in the aftermath. Having an effective plan in place should help us to achieve a return to normality as soon as possible and ensure that the effects on the students, staff and school community will be minimised.

Creation of a Coping, Supportive and Caring Ethos in the school

Systems have been put in place to help build resilience in both staff and students thus preparing them to cope with a range of life events. Ardscoil Rath Iomgháin has also put systems in place to help lessen the occurrence of an incidence. These include measures to address their physical and psychological safety in school.

Physical safety:

- Health and Safety Policy
- Regular fire drills
- Fire extinguishers, fire exits and blankets are regularly checked
- Evacuation plan formulated
- Fully functional and regularly serviced alarm system
- Supervision in the school before and after school and during breaks.
- Trained First Aid providers.
- A fully functionally and serviced defibrillator, stored in the staffroom
- Printing of the Code of Behaviour in all homework diaries.
- All subject areas have their own rules which students are taught at the beginning of the academic year. This minimises the risk to the students.
- All teachers are made aware of students with medical conditions.
- All essential medication is stored appropriately in the staff room.
- All students are expected to behave appropriately while using the outdoor gym equipment. The rule is one student per machine at any one time.

Psychological safety:

Ardcoil Rath Iomgháin aims 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.

Some of the measures taken by the school to ensure the psychological wellbeing of the students include:

- Staff are familiar with the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures and how to proceed with suspicions and disclosures.
- 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
- The school has developed links with a range of external agencies including:
 - ❖ Kildare and Wicklow Education and Training Board
 - ❖ National Education Psychological Services
 - ❖ Child and Family Mental Health Services
 - ❖ National Education Welfare Board
 - ❖ Patrick Devanney Education Psychologist Services
 - ❖ National Council for Special Education
 - ❖ TUSLA
 - ❖ HSE
 - ❖ School Completion Programme
 - ❖ DEIS
 - ❖ Professional Development Service for Teachers.
- Staff is informed in the area of suicide awareness and interventions for suicidal students.
- Some of the staff have received formal training in suicide prevention through the ASIST training programme.
- The school has a clear policy on bullying and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy.
- IT Policy
- There is a care system in place in the school involving tutors and year heads. Year heads meet regularly with the Principal /Deputies to discuss their year groups among other issues.
- The school has a Pastoral Care Team that meet regularly, identify students of concern and decide on the appropriate level of action and support required.
- The school has a counsellor and access to one in the community for any student requiring help.
- The Student Council meets with the liaison teacher thus providing a platform for students to address any issues of concern for them as a student body.
- Relevant guest speakers are invited into the school to enhance the social, personal and psychological development of our students. These speakers enhance the SPHE/RSE programmes in line with 0023/2010.

Pastoral Care Committee

The school has a Pastoral Care committee in the school. This group comprises Principal, Deputy Principal, Co-ordinator, Guidance teacher, School Chaplain, School Counsellor, SPHE Co-ordinator, AEN coordinator and Home School Liaison Officer.

This group meets regularly to review provision of pastoral care and to address specific cases. Concerns regarding students identified as being at risk are discussed and the appropriate level of assistance and support is provided. Parents may be informed and where appropriate a referral is made to an outside agency. Notes are taken at all meetings.

Staff is informed on a need to know basis. Staff is also informed about how to access support for themselves when required.

Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)

A CIMT has been established in line with best practice. A critical incident management team is defined as;

“A group of individuals from the staff of the school who know the community, the students and each other well enough to make necessary decisions called for when an incident occurs.”

The members of the team were selected on a voluntary basis and will retain their roles for at least one school year.

Each member of the team will be familiar with the critical incident policy.

The Critical Incident Management Team for Ardscoil Rath Iomgháin includes:

- 1) Principal
- 2) Deputy Principals
- 3) Staff Member (all Year Heads/in the event of a critical incident the Year Head pertaining to the critical incident assumes this role)
- 4) School Counsellor
- 5) Guidance Teacher
- 6) Home School Liaison Officer
- 7) Pastoral Care Coordinator

This team will

- 1) meet annually to review the plan and after any critical incident.
- 2) keep records of any phone calls, meetings etc
- 3) maintain an up to date list of contact numbers for staff, parents/guardians, and the emergency services.
- 4) Establish a system of communication among staff so that information can be conveyed should a critical incident happen outside of school hours.

Critical Incident Rooms

In the event of a critical incident the following rooms will be used for the following activities:

Principal's Office – meeting with individual parents, students, media and all relevant visitors

Staffroom – meeting with staff

Canteen and classrooms – meeting with students/ parents

Counsellors room – meeting individual students

Reading Rooms- the quiet room for time out for students/ teachers

Year Head Offices - meeting individual students

Confidentiality

The school is conscious of its responsibilities 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 Principal will make all public announcements.

TRAUMA RESPONSE PLAN

If a member of the Critical Incident team or member of staff is feeling very distressed and would like to talk in confidence to someone, he/she can access support through the Employee Assistance Service (EAS). The Department of Education and Skills has contracted an agency to provide this service for teachers. It is staffed by a network of trained counsellors and therapists. A number of sessions may be availed of and it is confidential. You make the contact yourself. The freephone number for the EAS is 1800 411057.

If the psychologist is offering an end-of-day support meeting, staff will be notified where it will take place and at what time.

<u>Short term actions – Day 1</u>	
<u>Task</u>	<u>Name</u>
<u>Gather accurate information</u> It is crucial that the school has the correct information regarding the critical incident. Therefore, it is important that involved staff gather to establish the facts - this may involve contacting others such as hospitals, Gardaí, parents/guardians. The reliability of the information will be accessed and recorded.	
<u>Who, what, when, where?</u>	
<u>Convene a CIMT meeting – specify time and place clearly</u>	Principal
<u>Contact external agencies</u>	Guidance Counsellors Deputy Principal and Pastoral Care Team
<u>Arrange supervision for students</u>	Deputy Principals, Year Heads
<u>Hold staff meeting</u>	Principal, Deputy Principals
<u>Agree schedule for the day</u>	CIMT
<u>Assign tasks within the CIMT</u>	CIMT

<p><u>Inform students – (close friends and vulnerable students may need to be told separately)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The statement should seek to: ● Be communicated in a sensitive manner ● Give the facts as they are known ● Highlight the support that will be available ● Indicate the actions that are planned 	Principal Year Heads Counsellor
<p><u>Compile a list of known vulnerable students</u></p>	Counsellors, Additional Education Needs (AEN) team, Year Heads
<p><u>Prepare and agree media statement and deal with media</u> In preparing a press statement thought should be given to the following suggestions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Priority to be given to the sensitivities and needs of ● those affected directly by the critical incident ● The non-release of names, addresses and phone numbers ● Rely on facts and avoid speculation ● Consider likely questions and a response to them ● Agree with the press a time for briefings if this is necessary in an ongoing situation ● Nominate a specific location for press briefings <p>It is recommended that this Press Statement be simple and brief. If appropriate, it should express the sorrow of the entire school community at the sudden death or illness of one of their members and it should extend sympathy to the bereaved family. This statement should be adhered to, and not elaborated on, in all communications with the media and it should be familiar to every member of the school staff.</p>	Principal/ Deputies
<p><u>Inform parents/guardians</u></p>	Principal, Deputy Principals
<p><u>Contact Chairperson of the Board of Management</u> You may want to consider informing the Chairperson and other members of the Board and call an emergency board meeting.</p>	Principal
<p><u>Hold end of day staff briefing</u></p>	Principal

Medium term actions - (Day 2 and following days)

Task	Name
Convene a CIMT meeting to review the events of day 1	Principal
Meet relevant external agencies	Guidance Counsellors. Deputy Principal and Pastoral Care Team
Meet whole staff	CIMT
<p>Arrange support for students, staff, parents</p> <p>The students may wish to organise some service or ritual within the confines of the school. They should be consulted as to the nature of such a service. Such an event may be of great benefit to staff and parents/guardians.</p> <p>Focus on the friends of a bereaved student, as they can be the best source of support. Often the bereaved student may not wish to speak to an adult and may rely heavily on friends. These close friends may need support as they attempt to find ways to be of help.</p>	Principal Chaplain Guidance Counsellors Year Heads Deputy Principals
Visit the injured	Principal and designated staff
<p>Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements</p> <p>The involvement of students in any funeral or other services needs to be discussed. This requires invitation, planning and review. The families involved need to be consulted, the students invited to take part, time given to prepare for this participation and, finally, a debriefing of those concerned.</p> <p>While it would be appropriate for the deceased student's classmates to attend the funeral, it may be inappropriate for large numbers of students to be present. The presence of large numbers of young people at such highly charged events could prove to be inappropriate as well as being upsetting for individual students and for the parents of the deceased student. At all times the rights of the deceased family to privacy must be respected.</p>	Principal Year Head Tutor Counsellor
<p>Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decide what form of representation is appropriate. It is essential where possible, to consult the family concerned. Do not presume that the bereaved family will want a very public presence by the school. Prepare students ahead of the funeral. For some this may be the first occasion they have been exposed to 	Principal to delegate to CIMT members and relevant outside agencies

<p>a major grief.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● For those students who wish, encourage and assist them to write a personal message of sympathy. Consider also a common expression from students and/or staff. ● Check out, perhaps with the funeral directors, the arrangements concerning floral tributes. Any accompanying messages should be hand written. ● If possible, representatives of the school should visit the home of the bereaved. If students request to visit the home, phone ahead to check that this is appropriate. ● Visiting the bereaved may be distressing- support those involved. 	
<p>Make decisions about school closure</p> <p>The Principal, management and KWETB following consultation with the school staff. If the decision is to close the school, it is advisable to do so ONLY after informing the bereaved family and of the routine which the school will follow over the coming days. Parents should be formally notified of the school closure.</p>	<p>KWETB, Board of Management</p>
Follow Up beyond 72 Hours	
<p>Monitor students for signs of continuing distress</p>	<p>Class Teachers, tutors and year head and management</p>
<p>Liaise with agencies regarding referrals</p>	<p>Guidance counsellors, Deputy Principal and Pastoral Care Team</p>
<p>Plan for return of bereaved student(s)</p>	<p>Principal, Deputy Principals, Pastoral Care Team guidance counsellors</p>
<p>Plan for giving of 'memory box' to bereaved family (optional)</p>	<p>Pastoral care team</p>
<p>Decide on memorials and anniversaries</p>	<p>BOM/Management, Staff</p>
<p>Review response to incident and amend plan</p>	<p>Management, Staff/BOM</p>

7. Review:

It is vital to regularly review all these procedures in the light of experience. It is most helpful to take time to evaluate the effectiveness of policies and procedures subsequent to their application.

8. Conclusion:

It is hoped that the above policy will be of support in the event of a tragedy occurring in our school community. It is important to note, however, that these guidelines cannot replace the most vital qualities needed in dealing with such personal issues as suicide, bereavement and loss - the sensitivity, care and compassion we offer to one another and our students on a daily basis.

APPENDIX 1

EMERGENCY CONTACT LIST

AGENCY	CONTACT NUMBERS
GARDA	Rathangan 045 524252 Kildare 045 521222
HOSPITAL	Naas 045 897221 Portlaoise 057 8621364
FIRE BRIGADE	999/112
LOCAL GPS	B.Boland 045528088
PARISH PRIEST RECTOR	Fr.Kemmy 045 524316/0872566382 Rev. Linda Peelo 0469731585
NEPS PSYCHOLOGIST	
<i>HSE/Community Care Child and Family Centre/ CAMHS</i>	01 882400
DES	0906 442700
TUI	014922588

STATE EXAMS COMMISSION	0906442741
EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE SERVICE	1800411057

APPENDIX 11

PRINCIPAL'S CHECKLIST/ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION IN THE EVENT OF A TRAGEDY

The following is a checklist of things to consider on the morning of a tragedy. They are not written in order of priority. It is important for a Principal to take time to plan what he/she must do and what is appropriate to say to all concerned.

- Take time to let the news sink in.
- Call a meeting of the Critical Incident Management Team, include Year Head and Tutor of deceased student (see notes on same).
- Involve the Pastoral Care team as necessary.
- Put together as much factual information as possible.
- Inform staff what has happened and of the common statement.
- Discuss school routine for the first day with the staff.
- Identify particular students who may need to be told individually e.g. close friends, relatives etc.
- Inform the pupils that a student has tragically died and explain that this is something everyone will find difficult to cope with. Explain school routine for the day and support and back up for students.
- Contact the HSE.
- Make contact with the bereaved family.
- Meet with key staff which can offer student support and decide on the format for this.
- Decide on any other arrangements which need to be made on the first day e.g. prayers for the student and his/her family.
- Check in with staff in the staff room during the day and keep abreast of what is happening in the school.
- Be aware of any particular teachers who may be particularly distressed e.g. teachers who are recently bereaved themselves or who have had prior experience of similar incidents in their family

- Encourage staff to come to you during the day and let you know how things are going.
- Find out details of the funeral etc. and communicate this to staff and students.
- At the end of the first day review events with staff and make plans for the following day.
- Make staff aware of students who are particularly vulnerable and what support will be available to them.
- If there is a likelihood of interest from the media discuss a strategy to deal with any such requests.
- Review events of the day with staff.

APPENDIX 111

Useful Addresses & Relevant References

THE SAMARITANS

Consult local telephone directory for local service. Head Office: 112 Marlborough St., Dublin 1. Tel 1850609090

Aware.ie

SpunOut.ie

Websites include:

A Lust for Life

Reach Out

See Change

Mental Health First Aid

If any additional help is required please contact the school.

Appendix 1V

Sample Announcements

After a known fatality ...

We are taking this time to think about Year who died last night in a road traffic accident. was travelling with her family to

We do not know any details about the accident at this time except that the rest of the family is grieving and no one else is injured seriously.

..... 's funeral is being held at on

.....

A funeral is a special time to remember a person who has died. The school will let your families know about the specific time and address of the funeral in a written note which will be sent home tomorrow.

Let's take a moment of silence to think of , to remember all the good things about her, and to say goodbye. In our silence we will express our loving thoughts.

After a suspected suicide

A tragedy has happened , a " pupil, has died suddenly.

Details of 's premature death will not be released to protect the privacy of family members. You will be given information about funeral arrangements as soon as possible.

This kind of tragic news is hard to accept. You may experience many feelings within the next few days. Everyone deals with loss differently. It is important to respect the way others grieve. Counsellors are available in Feel free to arrange to go and talk to the counsellors. They want to listen to your feelings and concerns.

5.

Sample Press Release 1 Date

School grieves sudden death of pupil

As reported by the Gardai, a pupil atdied tragically on The circumstances of 's death are not known at this time and an investigation is currently ongoing.

This is a tragic loss to•..... 's family. and to our school community. To assist in supporting our staff and pupils through this time of grief, additional trained staff from the Critical Incident Response Team have been assigned to the school to provide support. A letter has been sent by the school to parents, informing them of this incident and providing information on the support services available through the school.

A special assembly to remember has been arranged for

Contact: Principal at

PRO FORMA LETTER (for parents/guardians)

With great regret, we have learnt of the death/deaths of

.....

and we extend our deepest sympathy to the family circle.

PREPARED STATEMENT FOR MEDIA

We are sorry to learn of the tragic

.....of.....

We hope the school will be given the privacy needed to support our students at this time, etc.

NB: If the Principal wishes to comment about the student, they may want to gain permission from the family to include:

Sporting achievements

Musical talents

Academic success

Personal attributes

SAMPLE LETTERS TO PARENTS/GUARDIANS

Date:

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/daughter may have some feelings that he/she may like to discuss with you. You can help your child by taking the time to listen to him/her and encouraging them to express their feelings. It is important to give truthful information that is appropriate to his/her age. If you would like any advice or support you may contact the following people at school (*details*)

Principal

6.

5th May 2020

Dear Parents/Guardians,

You will be aware of the sad death of
weekend.

last

The school has been doing all it can to support students during this week. We have been encouraging students to understand that being quite upset is a completely normal reaction to a very sad event and that, with time, they will feel better.

At the same time, we know that many parents may have concerns and might value a chance to discuss them. We are organizing a drop-in session on from in the school. The centre will be staffed with qualified psychologists and counsellors and you will be able to meet someone on a one-to-one basis or as a couple. If any young person wishes to have a chat with one of the team, they are also very welcome.

May we also take the opportunity to advise you again that young people will need a good deal of support and understanding over the coming weeks. Those who have experienced a loss or bereavement or have other personal difficulties may need some extra support. If you are worried, we hope you will take up the opportunity to come in on Monday and discuss your concerns.

Yours sincerely,

Principal.

Date:

Dear Parents/Guardians,

The school has experienced the sudden death of .

We are deeply saddened by his/her death

Our thoughts and heartfelt sympathy are with the

at this time.

We are putting supports in place to help our pupils at this difficult time. Teachers and counsellors will be available.

It is possible that your son/daughter 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 son/daughter by taking time to listen and by encouraging them to express their feelings. All young people are different and will express their feelings in different ways. It is not uncommon to have difficulty concentrating or to be fearful, anxious, or irritable. You may see a change in sleeping or eating patterns; these are generally short term reactions. Over the course of the days to come, please keep an eye on your son/daughter and allow him/her to express their feelings without criticism.

Although classes will continue as usual, the next few days may be difficult for some of our pupils.

We have enclosed some information which you may find useful in helping them through this difficult time. In addition to this we would advise that you keep a close eye on your son/daughter and encourage them to meet in safe places such as your home.

If you would like advice you may contact the following people at the school.

Principal _____

Deputy Principal _____

Guidance Counsellor _____

Chaplain _____

