

Critical Incident Management Policy

Ardcoil Rath Iomgháin, Rathangan, Co. Kildare



Introduction

Ardcoil 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 a “Critical Incident”

As per DES/NEPS guidelines Ardcoil 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

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 a critical incident, emergency or unexpected event. In addition, 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. This plan also aims to mitigate risks, ensure safety, and streamline responses.

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 incident. 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
 - Detailed evacuation maps and assembly points
 - 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
 - Aspects of the Code of Behaviour are printed in the homework journals
 - Specific subject areas have their own rules which students are taught at the beginning of the academic year. This minimises health and safety risk to the students
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- All teachers are made aware of students with medical conditions based on parents' communication.
 - All essential medication is stored appropriately

- Stock first aid kits
- Ensure accessibility of fire extinguishers, alarms, and emergency exits.

Psychological Safety:

Ardscoil 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
- 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 meets biweekly, identifying students of concern and deciding on the appropriate level of action and support required.
- The school has a counsellor for any student requiring help and support.
- 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/TY 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 Co-ordinator 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 are 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 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 is familiar with the critical incident policy.

Critical Incident Team Management (CIMT) Roles & Responsibilities

The Critical Incident Management Team for Ardscoil Rath Iomgháin includes:

Team Leader:

- Activate the Critical Incident Plan and inform the Critical Incident Management Team
- Alerts the team members to the critical incident & convenes a meeting
- Coordinates and assigns the tasks required as part of the response plan
- Facilitates communication with all relevant stakeholders, including parents, emergency services, and media.
- Manage information to prevent misinformation.
- Liaises with the BOM, Parents Council, DES, CAMHS, NEPS, HSE, TULSA etc.
- Liaises with the bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements/memorial services.
- Arranges a home visit with staff representatives within 24 hours if appropriate to extend sympathy and to clarify the family's wishes regarding the school's involvement in the funeral/memorial service
- Decides on the school's role in the funeral/memorial service following consultation with parents, school management and pupils close to the deceased (if appropriate).
- Make all public announcements if required
- Liaises with the management of other schools if the critical incident is not isolated to our own school alone
- Records all meetings & relevant information regarding the critical incident

Garda Liaison

- Liaises with the Gardai
- Ensures that information about deaths or other developments is assessed for accuracy before being shared

Staff Liaison

- Outlines the response plan for the specific critical incident
- Leads briefing meetings for staff on the facts/information known
- Gives staff members the opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions
- Advises staff on the identification of vulnerable students
- Keeps staff updated and informed as necessary
- Is alert to vulnerable staff members and provides details of support available

Parent/Guardian Liaison

- Visits the family (where appropriate) with the team leader or another nominated person member of the CIMT team
- Arrange meeting/s with individual parents if necessary
- Provides support and resources for parents
- Records all meetings/contact on VShare

Media Liaison

- Utilising the relevant guidelines and resource materials, draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews (as agreed by the school management)
- Manage information to prevent misinformation
- In response to the critical incident, they will consider potential issues that may arise and how they may be best addressed and responded to from a media perspective

Student Liaison

- Gathers & co-ordinates information from teachers about students who may be affected by the critical incident
- Assists in identification of vulnerable students who may need to be closely monitored
- Alerts Team Leader and senior deputies and staff to vulnerable students
- Refers students to the Pastoral Care Team
- Communicates information regarding students to the relevant deputy principal, year head and or AEN Co-ordinator.
- Oversees the organisation and supervision of the “Quiet Room” if required.
- Documents a record on VShare of meetings with affected students.

Community Liaison

- Maintains an up to date list of all contacts numbers of external contacts & resources
- Liaises with agencies in the community for support
- Coordinates the involvement of these agencies when establishing support networks within or externally with the school.
- Ensures agency staff wear visitor badges when visiting the school premises
- Oversees the organisation and supervision of the “Quiet Room” if required

Administrator

- Edits and updates contact information on the following:
 - I. Students
 - II. Parents\Guardians
 - III. Teachers
 - IV. Members of the Parents Council
 - V. Members of the Board of Management
 - VI. Emergency Services
- Receives and records telephone calls/emails from parents/community and relays the information relevant members of the CMIT
- Print and photocopies appropriate literature
- Oversees the sending of emails, letters, text alerts etc to parents/guardians

TEAM LEADER	Paul Murphy
GARDA LIAISON	Paul Murphy, Colm Quirke
STAFF LIAISON	Paul Murphy, Deirdre Doyle, Colm Quirke
STUDENT LIAISON	Paul Murphy, Deirdre Doyle, Colm Quirke Ms O'Neill (1st Year Head) Ms Butler (2nd Year Head/Pastoral Care) Ms Ashe (3rd Year Head) Mr Rice (TY Year Head) Mr Creegan (5th Year Head) Ms Commons (6th Year Head) Olive Keenan (Guidance Counsellor/Student Council) Valerie Fitzpatrick (Guidance Counsellor) Sarah McNally (AENCO) Nuala Connolly (HSCL) Patricia Kinsella (School Psychotherapist) Dee Higgins (SCP Project Worker)
PARENT / GUARDIAN LIAISON	Paul Murphy, Deirdre Doyle, Colm Quirke, HSCL
COMMUNITY LIAISON	Paul Murphy, Deirdre Doyle, Colm Quirke, HSCL
MEDIA LIAISON	Paul Murphy
ADMINISTRATOR	Colm Quirke, Deirdre Kelly & Deirdre Gormley

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
Deputies Office –	meeting with individual parents & students

Staffroom	meeting with staff
Canteen and classrooms	meeting with students/parents/guardians
Guidance Counsellors Office	meeting individual students
Reading Rooms	the “quiet room” for time out for students/ teachers
Year Head Office	meeting individual students
Schools Psychotherapists Office	meeting individual students

Confidentiality

In line with GDPR guidelines, the management and staff of Ardscoil Rath Iomgháin have a responsibility to protect the privacy of the people involved in any incident. 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 Team Leader will make all public announcements.

Critical Incident Response Plan

The following short, medium and long term actions have been identified as those most likely to be appropriate in the event of a critical incident. However, these actions are a guide and will be adapted to suit individual circumstances. 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 available 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.

Short Term Actions – Day 1	
Task	Name
<p>No action will be taken by any member of staff until the critical incident team meets, establishes the facts/information and an appropriate course of action.</p> <p>Gather Accurate Information It is crucial that the school has the correct information regarding the critical incident. Therefore, it is important that the CIMT meet to establish the facts. The reliability of the information will be accessed and recorded.</p>	CIMT
Convene a CIMT meeting – specify time and place clearly	Team Leader
Contact external agencies	Community Liaison Team
Arrange supervision for students	Deputy Principal
Hold staff meeting	Team Leader
Agree schedule for the day	CIMT
Assign tasks within the CIMT	Team Leader and CIMT
<p>Inform students – (close friends and vulnerable students may need to be told separately) The statement should seek to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Be communicated in a sensitive manner ● Give the facts as they are known 	Student Liaison Officers

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Highlight the support that will be available ● Indicate the actions that are planned 	
<p>Compile a list of known vulnerable students using the following Criteria established by NEPS:</p> <p>Students who need to be closely monitored as they may be more vulnerable than others are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Close friends and relatives of the deceased ● Students who experienced a recent loss, death of a friend or relative, family divorce or separation, break-up with a boyfriend/girlfriend ● Students with a history of mental health difficulties. ● Students with a history of substance abuse ● Students experiencing serious family difficulties, including serious mental or physical illness ● Students who have been bereaved by a suicide in the past ● Students with a history of sexual abuse ● Students with a history of suicide attempts/self-harm ● Non-communicative students who have difficulty talking about their feelings ● AEN students 	CIMT
<p>Prepare and agree media statement and communicate with the media</p> <p>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</p>	Media Liaison

all communications with the media and it should be familiar to every member of the school staff.	
Inform parents/guardians	Team Leader
Contact Chairperson of the Board of Management The BOM may hold an emergency board meeting if appropriate	Team Leader
Staff briefing	Team Leader
Medium term actions - (Day 2 and following days)	
<u>Task</u>	<u>Name</u>
Convene a CIMT meeting to review the events of Day 1	Team Leader
Meet relevant external agencies	Team Leader & members of the CIMT
Meet whole staff	CIMT
Arrange support for students, staff, parents & relevant stakeholders.	CIMT
Visit the injured	Team Leader, members of CMIT & Designated staff
Liaise with the bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements. 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. 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 right of the deceased family to privacy must be respected. The CMIT will decide on the appropriate response to the school's participation regarding funeral arrangements.	Team Leader & CMIT
Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service if appropriate. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decide what form of representation is appropriate. It is essential where possible, to consult the family 	Team Leader to delegate to CIMT members and relevant outside agencies

<p>concerned. Do not presume that the bereaved family will want a very public presence by the school.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare students ahead of the funeral. For some this may be the first occasion they have been exposed to a major grief. • 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. • If possible, representatives of the school should visit the home of the bereaved. Visiting the bereaved may be distressing- support those involved. 	
<p>Make decisions about school closure</p> <p>The Team Leader, 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 & Team Leader</p>
<p>Follow Up beyond 72 Hours</p>	
<p>Task</p>	<p>Name</p>
<p>Monitor students for signs of continuing distress</p>	<p>Class Teachers, tutors and year head and management CIMT</p>
<p>Liaise with agencies regarding referrals</p>	<p>CIMT</p>
<p>Plan for return of bereaved student(s)</p>	<p>CIMT</p>
<p>Review response to incident and amend plan</p>	<p>All Relevant Stakeholders</p>

7. Review:

It is vital to annually review this policy. 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 11

EMERGENCY CONTACT LIST

AGENCY	CONTACT NUMBERS
GARDA	Rathangan 045 524252 Kildare 045 521222
HOSPITAL	Naas 045 897221

	Portlaoise 057 862136 Tallaght (01) 414 2000
FIRE BRIGADE	999/112
LOCAL GPS	Rathangan Medical Centre Tel:045-528088 admin@rathanganmedicalcentre.ie
PARISH PRIEST	Fr.Kemmy 045 524316/0872566382
RECTOR	Rev. Linda Peelo 0469731585
NEPS PSYCHOLOGIST	
HSE/Community Care Child & Family Centre/ CAMHS	01 882400
DES	0906 442700

External Agencies

Organisation	Contact Number	Website
Pieta	1800 247 247 0818 111 126 Pieta Midlands Seán Costello Street, Athlone, Co. Westmeath Centre Queries: (090) 642 4111	
The Samaritans	Phone: 116123	jo@samaritans.ie
Childline	1800 66 66 66	https://www.childline.ie/
Barnardos	01 454 6388	info@barnardos.ie
Aware	Phone: 01 661 7211	supportmail@aware.ie
Spunout	01 675 3554	SpunOut.ie

If any additional help is required please contact the school.

Nicola Neevey
10/12/24