

Coláiste Cois Siúire



Critical Incident Management Policy

Policy Review History

Date	Comment
November 2016	Published
March 2019	Reviewed
Jan 2020	Amended

Coláiste Cois Siúire aims to protect the well being of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. The Board of Management, through Mr C Power, Principal, and the Student Support Team, has drawn up a Critical Incident Management Plan (CIMP) as one element of the school's policy and plan.

The staff and management of Coláiste Cois Siúire have formulated a number of policies and procedures to be followed with a view to ensuring the physical and psychological safety of both staff and students, and the creation of a supportive and caring ethos in the school, in ordinary time as well as in the event of a critical incident. Such policies include the school's Admissions Policy; its Pastoral Care/Wellbeing Policy; the Special Education Needs Policy; the school's Child Protection Policy; the Risk Assessment; the Anti-Bullying Policy; the Health and Safety Policy and the school's Code of Behaviour. The staff and management have established a Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) to steer the development and implementation of the plan.

Please note: the role of school Guidance Counsellor in Coláiste Cois Siúire is split for the academic year 2019/20, and until further notice, into two distinct job specifications. Careers and Educational Transitions'-related duties of the role are to be carried out by an appointed teacher. Counselling, pastoral and student support-related duties are to be provided for an external agent named below. For the purposes of this policy document, it should be assumed that 'Guidance Counsellor' refers to this external agent unless otherwise specified.

Context for development of the Policy and Plan

In drawing up this policy and plan the CIMT has consulted the following resource documents provided to schools:

- *Responding to a Critical Incident: Pack for Schools* (NEPS 2003)
- *Responding to Critical Incidents; Guidelines for Schools* (NEPS 2007)
- *Template for the development of a Critical Incident Policy and Plan* (NEPS)
- *Suicide Prevention in Schools: Best Practice Guidelines* (IAS, National Suicide Review Group 2002)

Definition of a 'critical incident'

The staff and management of Coláiste Cois Siúire recognise a critical incident to be "an incident or sequence of events that overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school".¹ Critical incidents may involve one or more students or staff members, or members of our 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*
- *An intrusion into the school*
- *An accident involving members of the school community*
- *An accident/tragedy in the wider school community*
- *Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism, etc*
- *The disappearance of a member of the school community*

¹ *Responding to Critical Incidents: Guidelines for Schools* – NEPS, 2016

Aim

The aim of the CIMP is to help school management and staff to react quickly and effectively in the event of an incident, to enable us to maintain a sense of control and to ensure that appropriate support is offered to students and staff. Having a good plan should also help ensure that the effects on the students and staff will be limited. It should enable us to affect a return to normality as soon as possible.

Creation of a supportive and caring ethos in the school

We have put systems in place to help to build resilience in both staff and students, thus preparing them to cope with a range of life events. These include measures to address both the physical and psychological safety of the school community.

1. Physical safety:

Some of the measures taken by the school to ensure the physical safety of the students include:

- Evacuation plan formulated and clearly visible in each room
- Evacuation procedure rehearsed and understood by all
- Regular fire drills occur
- Fully functional and regularly serviced Fire Alarm System
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
- Health and Safety Plan (and rules) for relevant practical rooms and laboratories
- A supervision and substitution rota in place in the school in accordance with guidelines on this
- Scheduled First Aid providers
- Printing of the Code of Behaviour (with behavioural expectations for the creation of a safe environment) in all homework journals
- Induction for all new students and staff

2. Psychological safety

The management and staff of Coláiste Cois Siúire aim 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 issues 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:

- 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 alcohol and drug prevention. Promotion of mental health is included in this provision.
- Staff have access to training for their role in SPHE.
- All stakeholders are familiar with the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures are familiar to all staff. All stakeholders are aware for the DLP and DDLP and necessary signage, safeguarding statement and risk assessment are displayed in the school main reception area.

- Books and resources on difficulties affecting the primary/post primary school student are available.
- Information is provided on mental health in general and such specific areas as signs and symptoms of depression and anxiety.
- The school has a designated assembly/tutorial each morning in which class management/staff have an opportunity to engage with students and provide an avenue for communication of a personal problem.
- The school has introduced the relevant programmes to its SPHE course to build resilience and positive relationships among young people.
- The school has developed links with a range of external agencies including:
 - National Education Psychological Services (NEPS)
 - Dr Olive O'Reilly, allocated NEPS psychologist
 - Health Service Executive
 - Child and Family Mental Health Services (CAMHS)
 - Kilkenny and Carlow Education and Training Board (ETB)
 - Social Services
 - National Education Welfare Board (NEWB)
 - Túsla
 - Laura Berry, Special Education Needs Officer (SENO NCSE)
 - Fiona McGarry, Education Welfare Officer (EWO)
 - Squashy Couch Waterford – RSE
 - Pamala Lannigan (SCP na Siúire)
 - Garda
 - Neighbouring schools
 - Foróige
 - Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST)
 - Local sports and recreation clubs
 - Ms Lisa Fitzgerald – True Horizon Counselling acting as School Counsellor for 2019/20
- Inputs to students by external providers are carefully considered in the light of criteria about student safety, the appropriateness of the content, and the expertise of the providers.
- The school has a clear policy on bullying and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy.
- There is a care system in place in the school. The Student Support Team comprised of the DP, the Career Guidance Counsellors, the SEN Coordinator and the Home School Community Liaison Teacher (HSCL) and the School Completion Programme Co-ordinator (SCP) meet each week to review provision of pastoral care and to address specific cases.
- Students who are identified as being at risk are placed on a target list, referred to the designated staff member (e.g. guidance counsellor or support teacher), concerns are explored, and, the appropriate level of assistance and support is provided. Parents are informed, and where appropriate, a referral is made to an appropriate agency.
- Staff are informed about how to access support for themselves including the KCETB Employee Assistance Programme.

Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)

A CIMT has been established in line with best practice. The members of the team were selected on a voluntary basis and will retain their roles for at least one school year. The members of the team will meet annually to review and update the policy and plan. The policy is made known to the entire team and is published on the school website. In the event of an incident. Each member of the team has been assigned a key role in line with best practice.

The key roles are as follows:

- Team leader – Principal
- Garda liaison - DP
- Staff liaison – Principal
- Student liaison – Guidance Counsellor
- Agency liaison – Principal
- Parent liaison – Principal
- Community liaison – Principal
- Communications Officer – Principal
- Attendance Tracker – DP
- Administrator – Maureen Connelly

Outline of Roles and Responsibilities

Team Leader: Principal

- Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting
- Coordinates the tasks of the team
- Liaises with the Board of Management; DES; NEPS; SEC
- Liaises with the bereaved family
- Is the sole point of contact and communication regarding any Critical Incident.

In the event that the Principal is unable to take on the role of Team Leader the DP or acting equivalent should assume this role.

Garda Liaison: DP

- Liaises with the Gardaí
- Ensures that information about deaths is verified before being shared

In the event that the DP is unable to take on the role of Team Leader the AP1 or acting equivalent should assume this role.

Staff Liaison: Principal

- Leads briefing meetings for staff on the facts as known, gives staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions, outlines the routine for the day
- Advises staff on the procedures for identification of vulnerable students
- Provides materials for staff (from their critical incident folder)
- Keeps staff updated as day progresses
- Is alert to vulnerable staff members and makes contact with them individually. Advises them of availability of EAS and gives them the contact number.

In the event that the Principal is unable to take on the role of Staff Liaison the DP or acting equivalent should assume this role.

Student Liaison: Guidance Counsellor

- At post-primary level, may co-ordinate information from tutors and year heads about students they are concerned about
- Alerts other staff to vulnerable students (appropriately)
- Provides materials for students (from their critical incident folder)
- Keeps records of students seen by external agency staff
- Looks after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room where agreed

In the event that the Guidance Counsellor is unable to take on the role of Student Liaison the HSCL or acting equivalent should assume this role.

Agency Liaison: Principal

- Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of
 - Key parents, such as members of the parents' council
 - Emergency support services and other external contacts and resources
- Liaises with agencies in the community for support and onward referral
- Is alert to need to check credentials of individuals offering support
- Coordinates the involvement of these agencies
- Reminds agency staff to wear name badges
- Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies

In the event that the Principal is unable to take on the role of Agency Liaison the DP or acting equivalent should assume this role.

Parent Liaison: Principal

- Visits the affected family with appropriate team members
- Arranges parent meetings if required
- Facilitate any meetings, and manage 'questions and answers'
- Manages the 'consent' issues in accordance with agreed school policy
- Ensures that sample letters are typed up, on the school's system and ready for adaptation
- Sets up room for meetings with parents
- Maintains a record of parents seen
- Meets with individual parents
- Provides appropriate materials for parents (from their critical incident folder)

In the event that the Principal is unable to take on the role of Parent the DP or acting equivalent should assume this role.

Community Liaison: Principal

- Maintains an up to date list of contact names and numbers for local community organizations.
- Ensures that accurate information is provided to local community groups who are linked in with the school.
- Liaises with organisations in the community for support.
- Provides information on an on-going basis where appropriate.

In the event that the Principal is unable to take on the role of Community Liaison the HSCL in conjunction with the SCP officer or acting equivalent(s) should assume this role.

Communications Officer: Principal

- In advance of an incident, will consider issues that may arise and how they might be responded to (e.g. students being interviewed, photographers on the premises, etc)
- In the event of an incident, will liaise where necessary with the SEC; relevant teacher unions etc.
- Will draw up press statement, give media briefings and interviews (as agreed by school management)
- Will coordinate the monitoring of communications relating to the incident.

In the event that the Principal is unable to take on the role of Communications Officer the DP or acting equivalent should assume this role.

Administrator: Maureen Connelly

- Maintenance of up to date telephone numbers of
 - ❑ Parents or guardians
 - ❑ Teachers
 - ❑ Emergency support services
- Takes telephone calls and notes those that need to be responded to
- Ensures that templates are on the schools system in advance and ready for adaptation
- Prepares and sends out letters, emails and faxes
- Photocopies materials needed
- Maintains records

In the event that the Administrator is unable to take on the role, the team should delegate these duties as required.

Attendance Tracking: AP1

- In the immediate aftermath of the critical incident special care will be paid to attendance of students.
- All absences will be carefully monitored.
- Students signing in/out must be accompanied by a parent.

In the event that the AP1 is unable to take on the role of Attendance Tracker the AP2 or acting equivalent should assume this role.

Record Keeping

In the event of an incident each member of the team will keep records of phone calls made and received, letters sent and received, meetings held, persons met, interventions used, material used etc.

The school administrator will have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters, photocopying materials, etc.

Confidentiality and good-name considerations

The management and staff of Coláiste Cois Siúire have a responsibility to protect the privacy and good name of the people involved in any incident and will be sensitive to the consequences of any public statements. The members of the school staff will bear this in mind, and, will seek to ensure that students do so also. For instance, the term 'suicide' will not be used unless there is solid information that death was due to suicide, *and* that the family involved consents to its use. The phrases 'tragic death' or 'sudden death' may be used instead. Similarly, the word 'murder' should not be used until it is legally established that a murder was committed. The term 'violent death' may be used instead. Language used when communicating with student groups will be differentiated and age-appropriate.

Critical incident rooms

In the event of a critical incident

- The Staff Room will be the main room used to meet the staff
- The library will be used for meetings with students/student groups
- Principal's office for parents
- Principal's office for press
- Career Guidance Office for individual sessions with students
- Resource Rooms and HSCL Office for other visitors

Consultation and communication regarding the plan

The relevant staff were consulted, and, their views canvassed in the preparation of this policy and plan. Coláiste Cois Siúire's final policy and plan in relation to responding to critical incidents has been presented to all staff for review and agreement before Board of Management ratification was sought. Each member of the critical incident team has access to a personal copy.

Parental consultation has been sought via parental representation on the Board of Management, and, through the Parents' Association.

Student consultation has not occurred on this occasion due to the sensitive nature of the themes referred to in this policy document.

The plan will be updated annually, refer to review schedule.

Signed:

Chairperson (BOM)

Date

Principal

Date

Ratified by the Board of Management on: 9th January 2020

Critical Incident Management Team		
Role	Name	Phone
Team leader:	Conor Power	
Garda liaison	Gary Morahan	
Staff liaison	Conor Power	
Student liaison	Ms Lisa Fitzgerald (Counsellor)	
Community liaison	Conor Power	
Parent liaison	Conor Power	
Media liaison	Conor Power	
Administrator	Maureen Conneely	
AP1	Finola Cummins	
AP2	Jason Dermody	
HSCL	Diane Hyde	
SCP	Pamela Lanigan	

Short term actions – Day 1

Task	Person Responsible
Gather accurate information	CIMT
Who, what, when, where?	CIMT
Convene a CIMT meeting – specify time and place clearly	Principal
Contact external agencies	Principal
Arrange supervision for students	DP
Hold staff meeting	All management/staff
Agree schedule for the day	CIMT
Inform students – (close friends and students with learning difficulties may need to be told separately)	Guidance Counsellor
Compile a list of vulnerable students	CIMT with Student Support Team

Prepare and agree media statement and deal with media	Principal
Inform parents	Principal and SMT
Hold end of day staff briefing	Principal

Medium term actions - (Day 2 and following days)

Task	Name
Convene a CIMT meeting to review the events of day 1	Principal
Meet external agencies	Principal
Meet whole staff	CIMT
Arrange support for students, staff, parents	Guidance Counsellor
Visit the injured	Principal/HSCL/SCP
Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements	Principal/Guidance Counsellor
Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service	CIMT
Make decisions about school closure	Principal/BOM

Follow-up – beyond 72 hours

Task	Name
Monitor students for signs of continuing distress	Class teachers
Liaise with agencies regarding referrals	Guidance Counsellor
Plan for return of bereaved student(s)	DP
Plan for giving of ‘memory box’ to bereaved family	Guidance Counsellor with Student Support Team
Decide on memorials and anniversaries	All Stakeholders
Review response to incident and amend plan	All Stakeholders

EMERGENCY CONTACT LIST

AGENCY	CONTACT NUMBERS
Garda	051 895122
Hospital	051 848000
Fire Brigade	051849982
Local GPs	Dr Helen Connolly 051 353851 Dr John Flanagan 051 643116/640527
HSE	051 842800
Community Care Team	051 842800
Child and Family Centre	St Brigid's Family & Resource Centre 051 375261
Child and Family Mental Health Service (CAMHS)	051 842146
School Inspector	01 8896553
NEPS Psychologist	01 8892700 Local: 056 7760227
DES	01 8896400
INTO/ASTI/TUI	01 4922588
Clergy	Fr Martin Tobin 086 2401278 Parish Office 051 895123
State Exams Commission	090 6442700
Employee Assistance Service	1800 411 057
Ms Lisa Fitzgerald – True Horizons Counselling (School Counsellor)	087 4447733 lisa@truehorizon.ie
Ms Diane Hyde HSCL	087 7840601