

*Meánscoil na mBráithre Críostaí, Cill Chainnigh*  
**Christian Brothers Secondary School, Kilkenny.**

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## Critical Incident Management Policy March 2023

<b>School Name:</b>	Christian Brothers Secondary School, Kilkenny
<b>School Address:</b>	James's Street, Kilkenny
<b>School Details:</b>	CBS Kilkenny is a Voluntary Roman Catholic Secondary School under the Trusteeship and the Patronage of the Edmund Rice Schools Trust. The School is grant aided by the Department of Education & Skills and is a single sex (boys) school.
<b>School Management:</b>	The Board of Management of CBS Kilkenny is a statutory Board appointed pursuant to the provisions of the Education Act 1998.

### Mission **Statement**

Inspired by its founder, CBS Kilkenny aims to provide Catholic education in the Edmund Rice tradition. The school endeavours to be a caring Christian Community which promotes to the best of its ability the personal, spiritual, physical and intellectual development of its students.

### **Ethos**

As an Edmund Rice School, CBS Kilkenny seeks to promote the five key elements of an Edmund Rice School as espoused by the ERST Charter:

- Nurturing faith, Christian spirituality and Gospel-based values
- Promoting partnership in the school community
- Excelling in teaching and learning
- Creating a caring school community
- Inspiring transformational leadership.

## **Definition of a Critical Incident**

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

Examples of a critical incident might be:

- The death of a member/members of the school community through accident, illness or suicide
- A serious accident or tragedy in the school community
- A serious accident or tragedy in the wider community
- Serious damage to the school through fire, flooding, vandalism, etc.
- The disappearance of a member of the school community
- A physical attack on a staff member or student
- Intrusion into the school.

This policy has been reviewed in accordance with CBS Kilkenny Child Safeguarding Statement and in line with The Children First Act 2015 and The Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017.

While reviewing the Critical Incident Policy due consideration has been given to all aspects of the wellbeing of students and staff at CBS Kilkenny and particularly to the Wellbeing School Improvement Plan (May 2018)

General Data Protection Regulation came in to force in May 2018 and this policy has been reviewed in light of this regulation.

## **The Role of the School**

The school can offer security at a time of insecurity. It is within such a normal environment that students and staff can best be helped to deal with traumatic reactions to critical incidents. Most incidents require a multi-dimensional approach involving all aspects of the community. If teachers, students and parents receive support and information, within the bounds of GDPR legislation, they can become important agents of recovery, dispelling rumours and helping all members of the school community to cope. It is recognised that the first 48 hours are crucial and that the first three weeks following a critical incident is a time of particular vulnerability for staff and students.

## Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)

### Purpose

Mr Tom Clarke Ms Lucy Ryan Mr John Kennedy Ms Norah King Mr Peter Mulhall Ms Mandy Dowling	Ms Derarca Maguire Mr Gerard Morrissey Ms Martina Kehoe Ms Ashley Staunton Mr Niall Tyrrell Fr Jim Murphy Ms Joanne Kelly
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### Purpose

- To identify key roles so that there is clarity about who will do what, when and how (see **Appendix 5**)
- To ensure that no one person is overburdened
- To ensure that nothing is forgotten or left to chance.

### Aim

- To support the school community in the event of a critical incident
- To help school management and staff to react quickly and effectively in the event of a critical incident
- To support the principal and staff in responding quickly and effectively to the critical incident at school level
- To prevent or minimise a mass hysterical reaction
- To seek the support of and collaborate with appropriate outside agencies

### Action Plan

While each school's response to a critical incident is dependent on the individual school context, many of the actions herein are based on best practice as detailed in the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) document, *Responding to Critical Incidents, NEPS Guidelines and Resource Materials for Schools* (DES, 2016) (see **p52 for Resources**)

## Immediate / Short Term Actions

### 1. Initial Assessment of the Incident

#### Step A: What type of response is needed?

- Response Level 1: the death of a student or staff member who was terminally ill; the death of parent/guardian/sibling; a fire in school not resulting in serious injury; serious damage to school property.
- Response Level 2: the sudden death of a student or staff member (see **Appendix 4**).
- Response Level 3: an accident/event involving a number of students; a violent death; an incident with a high media profile or involving a number of schools.

#### Step B: Should a psychologist be involved?

- Consider the nature of the event and how your school is coping, i.e. what support is needed from the National Educational Psychological Services (NEPS) and/or other agencies?

#### Step C: How does the CIMT assess the needs of the school?

- Is there a feeling of being overwhelmed by this event?
- Has there been a previous incident? How recent? What kind of incident? If more than one, how many? (If the school has experienced a recent incident or a number of incidents, staff may be exhausted or distressed. On the other hand, they may feel more experienced and better able to deal with the situation).
- Is there a critical incident plan in place?
- Is there a good pastoral care system in the school?
- Is there significant media interest in the incident?
- Are other agencies already involved?

#### Step D: What action does the CIMT take? (see **Appendix 5**)

- For an incident requiring a Level 1 response it may be sufficient to talk to a psychologist on the phone.
- Refer to *Responding to Critical Incidents: Guidelines and Resource Materials for Schools (2016)*. The psychologist will refer to these and talk the CIMT through relevant sections. A copy of these has been made available to all schools. It is also available on **www.education.ie** by following the links to NEPS.
- In the case of an incident requiring a Level 2 or Level 3 response, make contact with NEPS. Depending on the incident, at least one psychologist will visit the school.

**2. Initial Action Plan**

- Gather accurate information - rumours add to distress
- Establish the facts - what, when, how, number and names of student/staff involved, extent of the injuries, location of the injured parties
- Contact appropriate agencies - Emergency services (See **Appendix 7**)
- Convene a meeting with key staff / CIMT
- Formulate a plan and designate roles and responsibilities of CIMT members (**Appendix 5**)
- Meet with wider staff group
- The school may need to contact parents.
- Gardaí should NOT interview students on school premises
- School management must strive to maintain a normal routine if at all possible. The option of school closure must be considered.
- Record and log all steps taken by the CIMT in dealing with the incident
- Appraise the Board of Management of the details of the incident.

**3. Meet with Whole Staff Group**

- Inform staff of all relevant information. Ensure factual accuracy. Keep staff updated. It may be necessary to meet staff in two separate groups so students can be supervised
- Identify vulnerable staff members
- It may be helpful to meet again briefly at the end of the day
- Communicate with staff as to how students will be informed. Relatives must be told separately

**4. Students**

- It is best to keep students on school premises
- Let them talk in natural groupings
- Give them up to date information
- . Every effort will be made by the school and support personnel to reassure and support students as they deal with the crisis in hand.

**5. Vulnerable Students**

In an incidence of death or other emotional trauma, the school community will endeavour to be particularly mindful of the following:

- Close friends or relatives of deceased
- Students who have been bereaved in the past, especially bereaved by suicide
- Students who experienced a recent loss, e.g. death, divorce, separation.
- Students experiencing serious difficulties within their homes, e.g. mental illness, child protection issues
- Students with a history of mental health difficulties including students with a history of suicide attempts/self-harm.
- Students with a history of substance abuse.

- Non-communicative Students who have trouble talking about their feelings - including students with ASD or those with less fluent English and less able students.
  - Staff members will be advised that where they have a concern for the emotional wellbeing of a student they should inform the Guidance and Counselling team.

#### **6. Contact with Affected Family/Families**

- Home visit in first 24 hours
- Liaise with family about funeral arrangements and clarify their wishes regarding the school's involvement
- Be aware of cultural differences, different religious traditions, rituals.

#### **7. Normal Reactions to a Critical Incident**

- Feelings: e.g. guilt, confusion, numbness etc.
- Thoughts: e.g. disbelief, preoccupation with images of event/person etc.
- Physical responses: e.g. tiredness, sleeplessness, headaches etc.
- Behaviour: e.g. nightmares, over dependency, loss of concentration, aggression, withdrawal etc.

#### **8. Suicide and Violent Death**

Care is needed in the use of the term 'suicide' - do not use it 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.

### **Medium Term Actions**

- CIMT continues to meet daily until normal functioning resumes (see **Appendix 6**)
- Review the decision regarding closure of school
- Set out tasks for the day, including liaison with family and media
- Funeral arrangements
- Schedule for the day
- Staff meeting
- Review vulnerable students and staff, and plan how to monitor progress over the following days
- Prepare for return of bereaved students and siblings.

### **Longer Term Plan**

- Monitor students
- Memorials - returning belongings to family
- Be aware of anniversaries and significant dates
- CIMT de-brief, evaluate response and amend plan if necessary

- Continue to monitor students and offer in-school support or referral to outside agencies where appropriate
- Make all students aware of relevant resource pages in their student homework journal ;Where to seek help in school and Where to seek help outside of school. (**Appendix 8**)
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- Watch for - hostility, hero worship, shock, grief, guilt, blame, numbness, copy-cat
- Care for principal and CIMT.

## **Role of NEPS Psychologists in Critical Incidents**

In the event of a critical incident, NEPS psychologists provide:

- Immediate short term support, information and advice by phone or in school
- Assistance to staff in planning how to respond to a critical incident
- Screening to identify students and staff in most need of support.

It is important to note that NEPS Psychologists do not provide counselling.

### **CONSENT**

Signed informed consent is required from parents/legal guardians for NEPS to meet a student.

Consent options include:

- General letter stating support is available from NEPS psychologist in the event of a critical incident.
- Ask that parents complete a slip to say they do or do not give consent (see **Appendix 3**)
- State that the school assumes agreement unless the slip is signed and returned saying they do not wish their son to be seen
- State that the school will seek verbal consent to be followed by written parental consent.

## **Dealing with the Media**

- Advise parents, students and staff that only the designated spokesperson will deal with the media
- Allow limited and controlled access to the media
- Prepare a press statement - accurate, brief and carefully considered
- Protect and respect the privacy of the people most affected
- Major incidents – seek advice from DES press office, teacher unions
- Do not speak of situations outside school
- Media can be useful in dispelling rumours and stating that the school is coping well
- Seek legal advice
- Seek PR advice.

### **Dos & Don'ts when dealing with the Media**

- Do write a press statement (see **Appendix 2**)
- Do consider contacting the ASTI or other relevant body for advice and guidance
- Do use careful and sensitive language
- Do keep it short
- Do regard everything as recorded and quotable (generally the media will)
- Do ask whether there will be the possibility of editing the interview
- Do ask in advance for an outline of the questions that you will be asked
- Do avoid sweeping statements and generalisations
- Do avoid being drawn into speculation
- Don't go into personal details of those involved
- Don't read the statement to the camera
- Don't engage in rambling discussions afterwards
- Don't use "No Comment"
- Don't respond to "quotes" from others
- Don't answer questions you don't know the answer to
- Don't make 'off-the-record' comments.

## **Summary Checklist for Principals**

- Gather the facts - Who? What? When? Where?
- Contact appropriate agencies
- Convene the Critical Incident Management Team
- Organise for the supervision of students
- Inform staff
- Agree on a statement of the facts
- Identify high risk students
- Appoint someone to deal with phone enquiries
- Organise timetable for the day
- Maintain the normal school routine when at all possible
- Inform parents/guardians
- Inform students
- Make contact with the bereaved family



- Organise support
- Respond to the media
- Decide on school arrangements for funeral, services etc.
- Prepare principal's letter to parents
- Decide on information (if any) to be posted on website

## **Suggested Agenda for Meeting with CIMT / Key Staff**

- Share full details of the event
- Agree on the facts. These will need to be relayed in a clear, appropriate and consistent manner by all staff to the students
- Discuss what agencies have been contacted and whether there are additional ones that should be informed (check Emergency Contact List, see **Appendix 7**)
- Managing communication needs careful attention. Use of social media can be a good medium for facilitating factual and appropriate communication.
- When a number of external agencies are involved in a response, coordination will be needed and procedures will need to be agreed. An agency such as NEPS may take on this role.
- Plan procedures for the day
- Discuss issues relating to school routine, including school closure. Remember it is important to maintain a normal routine when at all possible. 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 and temporarily shelve all academic activities if necessary.
- You may wish to consult students about what to do if there is an event scheduled such as a trip, concert, match, etc. This should reduce the likelihood of students being angry later on as a result of any school action or in-action.
- Discuss how to break the news to relatives and close friends and who should do this (remember that they must always be told separately)
- Discuss how to break the news to the rest of the students. It is often best to do this with class groups, rather than large assemblies.
- Discuss how to identify vulnerable students
- If there are students of various nationalities and religions in the school, this needs to be taken into consideration in organising prayer services, attendance at the funeral etc.

## **Approval**

This policy has been approved by CBS Kilkenny Board of Management.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Chairperson, Board of Management

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Bibliography**

DES. (2016). *Responding to Critical Incidents NEPS Guidelines and Resource Materials for Schools*. Retrieved September 26, 2022, from [www.fcspa.ie](http://www.fcspa.ie):  
<http://www.fcspa.ie/downloads/Responding%20to%20Critical%20Incidents-1.pdf>

## Appendices

### APPENDIX 1: TEMPLATE LETTER TO PARENTS - VIOLENT DEATH

Dear Parents,

I need to inform you about a very sad event that has happened.

(Give accurate information about the incident, but avoid using the word murder as this will not be established until the court case is completed).

A child/young person from the neighbourhood, who is the brother of \_\_\_\_\_, a student here at school, was killed as a result of (a violent incident in the street etc.) earlier this week. We are all profoundly saddened by his death.

We have shared this information and have had discussions with all of our students so that they know what has happened. School staff members have been available for students on an on-going basis today. Other support personnel (including psychologists etc., according to actual arrangements) are available to advise staff and, where necessary, to talk to students. This support will continue to be available for (if appropriate insert how long).

The death of any young person is tragic, but a violent death is even more difficult. It is hard to have to teach our children about the violence in our world and to accept that sometimes we do not have the power to prevent it.

This death may cause a variety of reactions in your child. Some children/young people may be afraid for their own life and for the lives of those they love. Take time to listen to their fears and reassure them that what has happened is rare.

We have enclosed some additional information that may be useful during this time.

The media are in the vicinity of the school and may approach you or your children. We will not allow the media to interview your child at school and our general advice is that you should not let your children be interviewed. They are not mature enough to judge what to say and may say something they will regret later.

(If planned) A support meeting for parents is planned for (date, time and place). At that time, we can talk further about how to help ourselves and our children. Our thoughts are with (family name) and with each of you.

Sincerely,

Principal's Name.

**APPENDIX 2: TEMPLATE ANNOUNCEMENT TO THE MEDIA**

**This can be used as a template by schools to be emailed or given to the media. It may help to decrease the number of media calls and callers to the school.**

**In some instances, it is not appropriate to provide names or information that might identify individuals.**

**This announcement will need to be changed based upon confidentiality issues, the wishes of the victim's family and the nature of the incident.**

My name is (Name) and I am the principal of (Name) School. We learned this morning of the death of (one of students or Name of Student). This is a terrible tragedy for the \_\_\_\_\_ family(ies), our school and our community. We are deeply saddened by these events. Our sympathy and thoughts are with (Name) family and friends.

(Name of student/students) was a (5<sup>th</sup> Year boy) and will be greatly missed by all who knew him. We have been in contact with his/her parents and they have requested that we all understand their need for privacy at this difficult time.

Offers of support have been pouring in and are greatly appreciated. Our school have implemented our Critical Incident Management Plan.

Psychologists from the National Educational Psychological Services (NEPS) and (insert other information if relevant) have been with us all day supporting and advising teachers in their efforts to assist our students at this time.

The teachers have been helping students to deal with the tragic event. The school has been open to parents, to support them and to offer them advice and guidance. We would ask you to respect our privacy at this time.

Thank you.

**APPENDIX 3: SAMPLE CONSENT LETTER TO PARENTS**

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 to children, either in small groups or on a one-to-one basis and offering reassurance and advice as appropriate.

Your son/daughter has been identified as one of the students who would benefit from meeting with the psychologist. If you would like your child 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 or to talk to the psychologist, please indicate this on the slip or telephone the school.

Yours sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_

I/We consent to having our son met by a psychologist employed by the Minister for Education & Skills.

I/We understand that my son may meet the psychologist(s) 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 \_\_\_\_\_ to avail of the support being offered by the psychologist.

SIGNED: \_\_\_\_\_ (Parent/Guardian)

**APPENDIX 4: TEMPLATE LETTER TO PARENTS-**  
**SUDDEN DEATH/ACCIDENT**

Dear Parents,

The school has experienced (the sudden death, accidental injury etc.) of .....  
We are deeply saddened by the death/events.

(Brief details of the incident, and in the event of a death, perhaps some positive remembrances of the person lost).

Our thoughts are with the (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 may like to discuss with you. It is important to give factual information that is appropriate to their age.

You can help your child by taking time to listen and by encouraging them to express their feelings. All children are different and will express their feelings in different ways. It is not uncommon for children to have difficulty concentrating or to be fearful, anxious, or irritable. They may become withdrawn, cry, complain of physical aches and pains, have difficulty sleeping or have nightmares. Some may not want to eat. These are generally short term reactions. Over the course of the days to come, please keep an eye on your child and allow him to express his feelings without criticism.

Although classes will continue as usual, I anticipate that the next few days will be difficult for everyone.

(OPTIONAL) An information night for parents is planned for (date, time and place). At that time, further information about how to help children in grief will be given.

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 following people at the school.  
(Details).

Principal's Signature:

**APPENDIX 5: Short term actions – Day 1**

<b>Task</b>	<b>Name of person responsible</b>
<b>Gather accurate information/facts</b>	
<b>Contact appropriate agencies</b>	
<b>Convene a meeting with key staff</b>	
<b>Arrange supervision of students</b>	
<b>Hold staff meeting &amp; keep staff updated</b>	
<b>Organise Timetable for the day</b>	
<b>Inform parents/parents council</b>	
<b>Inform students</b>	
<b>Make contact with the bereaved family</b>	
<b>Dealing with the media</b>	
<b>Take care of vulnerable students</b>	
<b>Meet parents/groups of parents</b>	
<b>Set up an incident room</b>	
<b>Consider school closure</b>	

**APPENDIX 6: Medium Term Actions & Roles Assigned 24-72 Hours**

<b>Task</b>	<b>Name of person responsible</b>
<b>Review the events of the first 24 hours</b>	
<b>Arrange support for students/parents/teachers</b>	
<b>Plan the reintegration of staff and students</b>	
<b>Plan visits to the bereaved/injured</b>	
<b>Liaise with family regarding funeral arrangements</b>	
<b>Attendance and participation at funeral service</b>	
<b>School closure</b>	



**APPENDIX 7: EMERGENCY CONTACT LIST**

	<b>CONTACT NUMBERS</b>
Garda	056-7722222
Hospital	056-7785000
Fire Brigade	999
Local GP's	Ayrfield – 056/7721320
HSE	056/7784100
Community Care Team (James's Green)	0567784600
Child and Family Centre (Tusla – Clonmel)	052/6177302
Child and Family Mental Health Service (CAMHS)	Kilkenny 056/7734828 Carlow 059/9178033
School Inspector	01/8896553
NEPS Psychologist	NEPS Office–076/1108921 Dr. V. Jones-087/2391876
DES	090/6483600
INTO/ ASTI/ TUI	01/8047700 01/6040160 01/4922588
Clergy	Fr.J. Murphy-087/2609545
State Exams Commission	090-6442700
Employee Assistance Service	1800 411 057
Barnardos	01-4530355
The Samaritans	1850 609090
Childline	1800 666666
Parentline	1890 927277
Aware	01-6766166 / 1890 303302
National Suicide Bereavement Support Network	024-95561
Ossory Youth Kilkenny	056 7761200
Teac Tom	056 7796592
Rainbows	01-4734175
The Bereavement Counselling Service (Dublin)	01-8391766 <a href="http://www.bereavementireland.org/">http://www.bereavementireland.org/</a>
Kilkenny Bereavement Support	056 7756538

## APPENDIX 8

### Where to find help outside of school

<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Childline (ISPCC)</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Freephone 1800 666 666 (any time, day, or night)</li> <li>• Text 50101 (from 10am to 4pm every day)</li> <li>• Chat online at <a href="http://www.childline.ie">www.childline.ie</a> (from 10am to 4pm every day)</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>BeLonG To Youth Services</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BeLonG To provide support for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI+) young people in Ireland between the ages of 14 – 23 years</li> <li>• Text LGBTI+ to 086 1800 280 to chat in confidence with a trained crisis volunteer (anytime day or night, standard SMS rates may apply)</li> <li>• Visit <a href="http://www.belongto.org">www.belongto.org</a> for more information</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Text About It</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 50808 is a first of its kind for Ireland: a free 24/7 text service, providing everything from a calming chat to immediate support for people going through a mental health or emotional crisis - big or small. From breakups or bullying, to anxiety, depression and suicidal feelings, crisis volunteers are available 24/7 for anonymous text conversations. Start a conversation by free-texting the word HELLO to 50808 any time, day or night</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Spunout.ie</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SpunOut.ie provides a wide range of articles and information for young people aged 16 – 25 years, on many different topics, including mental health</li> <li>• Free-text SPUNOUT to 50808 to chat anonymously to a trained volunteer 24/7</li> <li>• Visit <a href="http://www.spunout.ie">www.spunout.ie</a> for more information</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Jigsaw</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jigsaw is a mental health charity focused on providing expert advice and support, online and in person, to young people across Ireland aged 12 – 25 years old.</li> <li>• Find a Jigsaw near you by visiting <a href="http://jigsaw.ie/services">jigsaw.ie/services</a></li> <li>• Talk to one of our team through 1:1 Live Chat by visiting <a href="http://jigsaw.ie/livechat">jigsaw.ie/livechat</a></li> <li>• Contact our support line on Freephone 1800 JIGSAW (544729) (1pm to 5pm Mon to Fri)</li> <li>• Text CALL ME to 086 180 3880 and one of our team can call you back when it suits you</li> <li>• Visit <a href="http://jigsaw.ie">jigsaw.ie</a> for more information or email <a href="mailto:help@jigsaw.ie">help@jigsaw.ie</a></li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Samaritans</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Freephone 116 123</li> <li>• The Samaritans telephone service is available 24 hours a day. For confidential, non-judgmental support email <a href="mailto:jo@samaritans.ie">jo@samaritans.ie</a></li> <li>• Visit <a href="http://www.samaritans.ie">www.samaritans.ie</a> for details of the nearest branch</li> </ul>