



lmetb

Bord Oideachais agus Oiliúna Lú agus na Mí
Louth and Meath Education and Training Board

CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT POLICY

Ard Rí Community National School

September 2023

Introduction

Ard Rí Community National School (CNS) 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 the school Principal has drawn up a Critical Incident Management Plan as one element of the school's policies and plans.

Important Note: If a Louth Meath Education and Training Board (LMETB) School experiences a Critical Incident the Principal will contact the Chief Executive (CEO, the Director of Schools, LMETB and the school's National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) Psychologist immediately to alert them to the Critical Incident.

The CE and/or Director of Schools will schedule a meeting with the School Principal and/or Deputy Principals regarding next steps in implementing the Critical Incident Management Plan (CIMP).

In LMETB Schools and Colleges, the Principal will discuss any queries from the media and/or An Garda Síochána with the Director of Schools and/or Director of Organisational Support and Development (OSD) and/or CE.

School Mission Statement

In Ard Rí Community NS we aim to protect the wellbeing of our pupils and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment. As a Community National School our ethos is underpinned by the core values of: Excellence in Education, Care, Equality, Community and Respect.



Review and Research

The Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) have consulted resource documents available to schools on www.education.ie and www.nosp.ie including:

- [Responding to Critical Incidents Guidelines and Resources for Schools](#) (NEPS 2016)
- [Suicide Prevention in Schools: Best Practice Guidelines](#) (IAS, National Suicide Review Group (2002)
- [Suicide Prevention in the Community - A Practical Guide](#) (HSE 2011)
- [Well-Being in Primary Schools - Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion](#) (DES, DOH, HSE 2015)

What is meant by a Critical Incident?

The staff and management of Ard Rí CNS recognise a critical incident to be “an incident or sequence of events that overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school”. Critical incidents may involve one or more students or staff members, or members of our local community.

Types of incidents might include:

- 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 community
- Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism, etc
- The disappearance of a member of the school community

Aim of the Critical Incident Management Plan (CIMP)

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 coping 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.

Physical safety

- Evacuation plan formulated
- Regular fire drills occur
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
- Pre-opening supervision in the school yard
- Front gate locked during school hours
- Garda Vetting legislation is complied with
- A keycode system on the main entrance

Psychological safety

The management and staff of Ard Rí Community NS 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 to provide opportunities for reflection and discussion.

- Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is integrated into the work of the school. Issues such as grief and loss; communication skills; resilience; personal safety; substance abuse; bullying are addressed as part of the SPHE curriculum.
- Staff have access to training in skills which promote pupil well-being
- Staff are familiar with the Child Protection Procedures and the name of the Designated Liaison Person
- Workshops are available to parents to promote psychological well-being in their children e.g. Cyber-safety, Bullying, Building Resilience
- Staff are available to parents to discuss parental concerns in relation to pupil's well-being
- The school believes a healthy body leads to a healthy mind. We promote regular exercise and healthy eating. We are an Active School.
- The school has a clear Anti-Bullying Policy and deals with incidents of bullying in accordance with this policy
- There is a care system in place in the school using the "Continuum of Support" approach which is outlined in the NEPS documents published in 2007
- Staff are informed about and encouraged to access support for themselves

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. Each member of the team has a dedicated critical incident folder. This contains a copy of the policy and plan and materials particular to their role, to be used in the event of an incident.

Team Leader: Darragh Roe (Principal)

Deputy Team Leader: Catherine Dooley (Deputy Principal)

Role

- Take the lead in the absence of the Team Leader
- 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

Garda liaison: The School Principal will liaise with the CE and Director of Schools/Director of OSD regarding communication with An Garda Síochana.

Role

- Liaises with the Gardaí
- Ensures that information about deaths or other developments is checked out for accuracy before being shared

Staff liaison: Most Senior Assistant Principal

Role

- 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 the day progresses
- Is alert to vulnerable staff members and makes contact with them individually
- Advises them of the availability of the EAS and gives them the contact number

Student liaison: Management recognise, under the guidance of NEPS, it will be the child's class teacher at the time who is best placed to liaise with and counsel their pupils.

Role

- Communicate information from Teachers and Special Needs Assistants (SNA) about pupils they are worried about to NEPS/ counsellor/ Faith Leader/ Family as appropriate
- Alerts other staff to vulnerable students (appropriately)
- Provides materials for students (from their critical incident folder)
- Maintains student contact records (R1).
- Looks after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room or other similar intervention/ facility where agreed

Community/agency liaison: Deputy Principal

Role

- 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 the 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
- Visits the bereaved family with the team leader
- Arranges parent meetings, if held
- May facilitate such 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)

Media liaison: School Principal will liaise with the CE and Director of Schools when processing queries from the media. All media queries received by staff members in an LMETB school should be directed to the Principal

Role

- 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 a press statement, give media briefings and interviews (as agreed by school management)

Administrator: School Secretary

Role

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

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. School Secretary will have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters, photocopying materials, etc.

Confidentiality and good name considerations

Management and staff of Ard Rí CNS have a responsibility to protect the privacy and good name of people involved in any incident and will be sensitive to the consequences of public statements. Members of school staff will bear this in mind, and seek to ensure that students do so also, e.g. *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.*

Checklist - Consultation and communication regarding the plan

- All staff were consulted and their views canvassed in the preparation of this policy and plan
- Students and parent/guardian representatives were also consulted and asked for their comments.
- Our school's final policy and plan in relation to responding to critical incidents has been presented to all staff.
- Each member of the critical incident team has a personal copy of the plan.
- All new and temporary staff will be informed of the details of the plan by (Name of team member)
- The plan will be updated annually at the First Board of Management meeting of the year.

Critical Incident Management Team		
Role	Name	2023/24
Team leader:	School Principal	Darragh Roe
Garda liaison	School Principal	Darragh Roe
Staff liaison	Most Senior Assistant Principal	
Student liaison	Each class teacher responsible for the children in their own class	
Community liaison	Deputy Principal	Catherine Dooley
Media liaison	School Principal	Darragh Roe
Administrator	School Secretary	Debi Marjara

Board of Management Policy Consultation Log

Please present this form to your BOM when considering the policy at BOM level for ratification

<i>School:</i>	Ard Rí Community NS
<i>Policy:</i>	Critical Incident Policy- October 2023

Staff Consultation:

<i>Date of Final Consultation:</i>	06.11.2023
<i>Proposed By:</i>	<i>Maria O'Connor</i> (Staff Member)
<i>Seconded By:</i>	<i>Rachel Plummer</i> (Staff Member)

Parents Consultation:

<i>Date of Final Consultation:</i>	06.11.2023
<i>Proposed By:</i>	<i>Shelley Mercer</i> (Parent Association Member)
<i>Seconded By:</i>	<i>Ciara McManus</i> (Parent Association Member)

BOM & LMETB Ratification/Resolution Process for This Policy

BOM Ratification

<i>Date Ratified by the Board of Management:</i>	07-11-2023
<i>Proposed By:</i>	Darren Mc Manus
<i>Seconded By:</i>	Valerie Mc Gill
<i>Signed:</i>	Acting (Chairperson, BOM) G. Doyle

LMETB Ratification/Resolution of the ETB Board

<i>Date of Resolution of ETB Board</i>	
<i>Signed</i>	(Chairperson)