

CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT POLICY



Coláiste Muire Ballymote in conjunction with its Mission Statement (<https://www.cmbm.ie/pages/about-us.php>) 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 Principal, has drawn up a Critical Incident Management Plan (CIMP) as one element of the school's policies and plans. Our aim is to establish a Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) to steer the development and implementation of the Critical Incident Management Policy (CIMP).

Review and Research

The CIMT have consulted resource documents available to schools on <https://www.gov.ie/en/category/education/>, www.hse.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 & 2015)
- Well-Being in Post-Primary Schools Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention (DES, DOH, HSE 2013)
- Well-Being in Primary Schools - Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion (DES, DOH, HSE 2015)
- NCCA Junior Cycle Wellbeing Guidelines 2021

Define what you mean by the term 'critical incident'

The staff and management of *Coláiste Muire Ballymote* 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

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 impact on students and staff will be limited. It should enable us to effect 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

- Health & Safety Policy in place
- Evacuation plan formulated
- Regular fire drills occur
- Fire exits, extinguishers and alarms are regularly checked and serviced
- Supervision from 8.45am to 4pm daily
- Code of behaviour sanctions will apply where boundaries of physical safety are breached by students.

Psychological safety

The management and staff of *Coláiste Muire Ballymote* 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. 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
- Staff have access to training for their role in SPHE
- Staff are familiar with the Child Protection Procedures, the names of the Designated Liaison Person/Deputy Designated Liaison Person, their role as a Mandated Person and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures
- Information is provided on mental health in general and such specific areas as signs and symptoms of depression and anxiety.
- Sources of support are made available to students/staff/parents (poster format).
- Staff are informed in the area of suicide awareness and have attended specialist training such as ASIST (HSE)
- The school has developed links with a range of external agencies – Youth Liaison Service, NEPS, Pieta House, AWARE, mindfulness coaching services, SEC, DES, CAHMs, EAS, ASTI, TUI, HSE, DCU FUSE, Ballymote Family Resource Centre, YAPs.
- 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. See DES Circular 0023/2010 (Post-Primary)
- The school has a clear policy on anti-bullying 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 2010 for post primary schools. See also Student Support Teams in Post Primary Schools (2014). These documents are available on www.education.ie
- Students who are identified as being at risk are 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 (EAS)

Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)

A CIMT has been established in line with best practice. The members of the team are 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 access to a dedicated critical incident folder in school plan in Sharepoint. 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: *Principal*

Role

- 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

(In the event of absence, Deputy Principal will assume the role of Team leader)

Garda liaison *Principal*

Role

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

Staff liaison *Principal, Deputy Principal, AP1 holders*

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 *Guidance Counsellor, Special Education Teacher, Student Support Team, Youth Liaison Officer*

Role

- 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)
- Maintains student contact records (R1).
- Looks after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room where agreed

Community/agency liaison *Principal, Deputy Principal, Special Education Teacher*

Role

- Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of
 - Key parents, such as members of the Parents Association
 - 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

Parent liaison *Principal, Deputy Principal, Guidance Counsellor, Student Support Team*

Role

- 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 *Principal, BOM*

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 schools 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. Confidential information will be held on the appropriate individual's personal file and reference will be made to our Data Protection & Data Retention Policies when storing and processing all records.

The School Secretary 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 Muire Ballymote* 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.

Critical Incident Rooms	
In the event of a critical incident, the following rooms are designated for the indicated purposes	
Room Name:	Designated Purpose:
<i>Staff room</i>	Main room for meeting staff
<i>Library/GP Room</i>	Meetings with students
<i>Principal's office</i>	Meetings with parents
<i>Principal's office</i>	Meetings with media
<i>Principal's office/Learning Resource Room/Guidance office/Year Head office</i>	Individual sessions with students
<i>Principal's office/Year Head office</i>	Meetings with other visitors

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 the Principal/Deputy Principal. The plan will be updated annually.

Review and Ratification

This Policy was reviewed in December 2021 and ratified by the Board of Management on 31st January 2022.

Signed by Chairperson of the Board: *M. Molloy*

Signed by Secretary of the Board: *M. McDermott*