CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY

APRIL 2026

St. Brendan's Community School

St. Brendan's Community School Mission Statement

"Our aim is to create a caring community of learning where each individual is valued as a unique human being."

Introduction

The key to managing a critical incident is planning. Schools are strongly advised to develop a policy in relation to critical incident response. NEPS also encourages schools to develop a Critical Incident Management Plan, outlining who will do what in the event of a tragedy.

The templates outlined below are designed as an aid to schools in drawing up a policy and plan. Each school will need to look at its own particular context and circumstances and draw up its own unique policy and plan. Additional guidance is contained in Responding to Critical Incidents Guidelines and Resource Materials for Schools (2016) R19-21 P.79-90.

St. Brendan's Community School 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 in consultation with the Care Team, through *Mr. John Kennedy* has drawn up a Critical Incident Management Plan as one element of the school's policies and plans.

Review and Research

The 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)
- Wellbeing in Post-Primary Schools Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention (DES, DOH, HSE 2013)
- Wellbeing in Primary Schools - Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion (DES, DOH, HSE 2015)

Definition of a Critical Incident

The staff and management of St. Brendan's Community School 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 Critical Incident Management Plan

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 effect a return to normality as soon as possible.

Creation of Supportive and Caring Ethos

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
- 15 minutes pre-opening & 15 minutes post opening supervision in the school yard
- Rules of the playground – include details

Psychological Safety

The management and staff of St. Brendan's Community School 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 Guidelines and Procedures and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures.
- 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.
- Staff are informed in the area of suicide awareness and some are trained in interventions for suicidal students.
- The school has developed links with a range of external agencies – e.g. Tusla, CAMHS, Jigsaw, Pieta House.
- 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 Circulars 0022/2010 (Primary) or 0023/2010 (Post-Primary).

- 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 using the "Continuum of Support" approach which is outlined in the NEPS documents published on 2007 for primary schools and 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 e.g. Tusla, Jigsaw, GP, Pieta House, CAMHS etc.
- Staff are informed about how 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.

Critical Incident Management Team Leader

The CIMT Leader is the Principal John Kennedy. In the absence of the Principal, Deputy Principal Fidelma Foy will become Team Leader.

Role of the CIMT 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 etc
- Liaises with the bereaved family.

Garda Liaison

The Garda Liaison is the Principal John Kennedy In the absence of the Principal, Deputy Principal Fidelma Foy will become Garda Liaison.

Role of the Garda Liaison

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

Staff Liaison

The staff liaison is Deputy Principal Fidelma Foy. In the absence of Fidelma Foy, Deputy Principal Paul D'Arcy will become staff liaison.

Role of the Staff Liaison

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

Student Liaison

The student liaisons are: Guidance Counsellor Patricia White and Tara Cusack, Chaplain Kate Liffey, Deputy Principal Fidelma Foy (Senior Year Groups) and Deputy Principal Paul D'Arcy (Junior Year Groups)

Role of the Student Liaison

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

Community Agency Liaison

The community agency liaisons include the Principal John Kennedy and the Deputy Principals Paul D'Arcy and Fidelma Foy.

Role of the Community/Agency Liaison

- 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

The parent Liaison's include the Principal John Kennedy, the Deputy Principals Paul D'Arcy and Fidelma Foy and the HSCL Coordinator Sabrina Carroll.

Role of the Parent Liaison

- 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 the critical incident folder).

Media Liaison

The media liaisons include the Principal John Kennedy and the Deputy Principals Paul D'Arcy and Fidelma Foy.

Role of the Media Liaison

- 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).

The Administrator

The administrator will include a member of the Clerical Officer team.

Role of the Administrator

- Maintenance of up to date telephone numbers of parents/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 Compass Notifications.
- Photocopies materials needed.
- Maintains records.

Record Keeping

Record keeping will be undertaken by the Deputy Principals Paul D'Arcy and Fidelma Foy and a member of the Clerical Officer team.

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 record keeping team will have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters, photocopying materials etc.

Critical Incident Rooms

In the event of a critical incident, the following rooms are designated for the indicated purposes.

Room Name	Designated Purpose
Staff Room	Main room for meeting staff
B10/Oratory	Meetings with students
Parent Sanctuary Room	Meetings with parents
Parent Sanctuary Room	Meetings with media
Guidance Office	Individual sessions with students
Parent Sanctuary Room	Meetings with other visitors

Confidentiality

Management and staff of St. Brendan's Community School 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.

Consultation and Communication

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 Deputy Principal Fidelma Foy.

Ratification, Implementation and Review

- This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 28/5/26
- This policy has been made available to School Personnel and the Parents' Association. It is also published on the School Website and the School App. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department of Education and the patron upon request.
- This policy and its implementation will be reviewed by the Board of Management once every two years. Written notification that the review has been completed will be made available to School Personnel and the Parents' Association. The review will also be published on the School Website and the School App. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department of Education.

Signed: Mary Loughnane Acting

Joan Hogan

Chairperson of Board of Management

Date: 28/5/26

Signed:

John Kennedy

Principal/Secretary of Board of Management

Date: 28/5/26

Date of next review: _____

Appendix

Overview of Critical Incident Roles

Role	Name
Team Leader	John Kennedy and Fidelma Foy
Garda Liaison	John Kennedy and Fidelma Foy
Staff Liaison	John Kennedy, Fidelma Foy and Paul D'Arcy
Student Liaison	John Kennedy, Fidelma Foy, Paul D'Arcy and the Student Support Team
Community Liaison	John Kennedy, Fidelma Foy and Paul D'Arcy
Parent Liaison	John Kennedy, Fidelma Foy, Paul D'Arcy and Sabrina Carroll
Media Liaison	John Kennedy, Fidelma Foy and Paul D'Arcy
Administrator	Jackie Dunne, Michelle Coakley and Lisa Deane

Cricital Incident Short Term Actions - Day 1

Task	Name
Gather accurate information	
Who, what, when, where?	
Convene a CIMT meeting – specify time and place clearly	
Contact external agencies	
Arrange supervision for students	
Hold staff meeting	**All staff**
Agree schedule for the day	
Inform students – (close friends and students with learning difficulties may need to be told separately)	

Compile a list of vulnerable students	
Prepare and agree media statement and deal with media	
Inform parents	
Hold end of day staff briefing	

Cricital Incident Medium Term Actions Days 2 - 4

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

Cricital Incident Follow Up Actions – Days 5 +

Task	Name
Monitor students for signs of continuing distress	Class teachers
Liaise with agencies regarding referrals	
Plan for return of bereaved student(s)	
Plan for giving of 'memory box' to bereaved family	

Decide on memorials and anniversaries	BOM/Staff, parents and students
Review response to incident and amend plan	Staff/BOM
Monitor students for signs of continuing distress	Class teachers