

CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY

St. Joseph's Community
College
2025-2026

Eircode: V15 EY83



Introduction

St. Joseph's Community College is a co-educational, multi-denominational school which is underpinned by the Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board core values of excellence in education, care, equality, community and respect.

St. Joseph's Community College aims to protect the well-being of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. In seeking to respond to crisis situations, the Board of Management along with the LCETB, seeks to provide a range of supports for all in the school community to call upon in a time of crisis – both in the short and long term. It will seek to raise issues of trauma in a variety of locations throughout the curriculum, particularly through the RE and SPHE programmes and also through the Bi Cinealta Policy, Fire Drills, Mental Health Awareness and the School Counselling Service. It will outline a critical incident policy for dealing with common traumas in the context of the school and will regularly review the structures of support and referral available in the school. It is the intention of the Board of Management and LCETB to provide appropriate and ongoing support and training for key personnel and for the staff in general, both teaching and non-teaching.

Consultation and Communication regarding the Plan

This plan is available on the College website [_www.kilkeecommunitycollege.ie](http://www.kilkeecommunitycollege.ie), and further copies can be requested from the Principal. The BOM review this policy annually. The Parents Association have been provided with a copy of the plan. All staff have access to a copy of this on a shared drive. Each member of the critical incident team has a personal copy of the plan. All new and temporary members of staff will be informed of the plan by Agnes Hehir/Lorraine Byrnes

Purpose of this plan is to:

- Ensure that appropriate procedures are in place should a Critical Incident befall St. Joseph's Community College and to ensure that an adequate and appropriate response to the Critical Incident is enacted, consistent with the Mission Statement of St. Joseph's Community College, and legislative requirements
- Put a set of procedures in place so that we can respond as a college community in a caring, supportive and practical way in the event of a Critical Incident occurring.
- Set out procedures which will be followed in order to ensure a timely and co-ordinated response by St. Joseph's Community College, Kilkee to critical incidents and urgent situations involving staff, students, contractors and visitors to St. Joseph's Community College.
- Be sufficiently flexible to accommodate contingencies of all types, magnitudes and duration.
- Ensure that all members of the school community are kept informed as appropriate and supported, both in the immediate aftermath of the incident and in the longer term.
- Enable us to maintain a sense of control and help ensure that the effects on the students and staff will be limited and enable us to return to normality as quickly as possible.
- 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.

Support from School Patron

Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board provides support, where required, for critical incidents.

- This includes meetings for Student Support Teams, Critical Incident Plan reviews, guest speakers and support during a critical incident if required. Our contact for this is our Director Of Schools- Donncha Ó Treasaigh.
- All Student Support Teams have access to a SharePoint site that includes all of the relevant resources and guides that support managing a critical incident (Fig.1).
- Guidance for schools on responding to a critical incident has been agreed with NEPS on the appropriate levels of support that may be required in the event of an incident (Fig.2).

The screenshot displays the SharePoint interface for the Student Support Team. At the top, there is a search bar and user profile for Donncha Ó Treasaigh. The navigation menu includes Home, SST Subcommittee, NEPS Covid-19 Resources, Resources, Covid-19 Hub, NEPS Contacts, Connecting for Life, Schools Division, Wellbeing, and Curriculum Leaders. The main content area features a large image of a meeting with the text "Welcome to the Student Support Team SharePoint Site" and a link to the Subcommittee. To the right, there are several resource tiles: "Post-Primary Schools Guidelines for Teachers", "RESPONDING TO CRITICAL INCIDENTS" (NEPS Guidelines and Resource Materials for Schools), "A Continuum for Student Support", "Responding to Critical Incidents", "Responding to Critical Incidents during School Closures and Public Health Restrictions arising from COVID-19", and "Student Support Teams - LCETBs". Below these tiles, there is a "Protocol of Incident Reporting & Request for Support" section with three levels: Low (Assessment by Principal/Deputy Principal/SST Coordinator, Managed locally by trained Team Leader of SST, Advice & Guidance from NEPS Psychologist for School (if required), Review by SST), Medium (Assessment by Principal/Deputy Principal, Meeting of Critical Incident Management Team, Advice & Guidance from NEPS Psychologist for School, Contact & inform Director of Schools), and High (Assessment by Principal/Deputy Principal & Critical Incident). To the right of this is a "Covid-19" section with "NEPS advice & resources during Covid-19" and a link to "Resources for Schools from NEPS during Covid-19". A prominent green box highlights the "Emergency Contact Number for NEPS" as 01 8892700, with a link to "Connecting for Life MidWest - HSE [Click Here]".

Fig. 1

Protocol of Incident Reporting & Request for Support



Bord Oideachais & Oiliúna
LUIMNIGH & AN CHLÁIR
LIMERICK & CLARE
Education & Training Board

Low

- Assessment by Principal/Deputy Principal/SST Coordinator
- Managed locally by trained Team Leader of SST
- Advice & Guidance from NEPS Psychologist for School (if required)
- Review by SST

Medium

- Assessment by Principal/Deputy Principal
- Meeting of Critical Incident Management Team
- Advice & Guidance from NEPS Psychologist for School
- Contact & inform Director of Schools

High

- Assessment by Principal/Deputy Principal & Critical Incident Management Team
- Inform & Request support from NEPS Psychologist for School
- Contact & inform Director of Schools and Director of Organisation Support & Development

Fig.2

Creation of a Coping and Caring Ethos in the School

St. Joseph's Community College has put in place systems 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:

The Health & Safety Statement for the school has been reviewed and redrafted to reflect most recent best practice. The physical environment is maintained in a clean and safe condition. In addition:

- Fire Drills take place once per term
- An emergency evacuation plan is in place

- Personnel have accepted specific responsibility for Health and Safety
- Service and maintenance contracts are in place for Fire Alarm Systems
- Service and maintenance contracts and training are in place for Fire Extinguishing equipment
- Staff supervision is in place at break times and for periods prior to the commencement of classes in the morning and after school has finished in the afternoon
- Emergency contact telephone numbers have been requested from the parents of all students attending St. Joseph's Community College. Parents have been advised of the importance of providing emergency contact details and of notifying the school of any changes to their contact details.
- One occupational first-aiders is in place within the school and training has been update this school year-2025-2026.

Psychological Safety:

The management and staff of St. Joseph's Community College aim to use available resources and programmes to address the personal and social development of students, to enhance the 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 and addresses 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 are facilitated in availing of in-service and training for their role in SPHE
- Staff have been briefed on the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures and on how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures. Staff have ready access to these guidelines and

procedures, while the Designated and Deputy Designated Liaison Persons have attended in-service training.

- Books and resources on difficulties affecting the post primary school student are made available to staff.
- 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, all which comply with our policy on external speakers.
- St. Joseph's Community College has a clear policy on bullying- Bí Cineálta and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy.
- There is a student support team in place in the school along with a Chaplain, Year Heads, HSCL co-ordinator, school completion team and subject teachers. This multifaceted structure seeks to identify students in need of support and provide this support in a caring, sensitive and informed manner.
- Students who are identified as being at risk are referred to an appropriate staff member, concerns are explored and the appropriate level of assistance and support is provided. Parents are informed and, where appropriate, a recommendation is made in relation to a referral to an appropriate agency
- Staff are informed about how to access support for themselves in terms of accessing the Employee Assistance Service.

Scope of the Plan

This document relates to all members of St. Joseph's Community College, including pupils, staff, parents and Board of Management.

Confidentiality and good name considerations

- Management and staff of St. Joseph's Community College 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.

Definition of a Critical Incident

The staff and management of St. Joseph's Community College 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.

Critical Incidents may include:

- Death of a student or member of the school community, following illness.
- Sudden/tragic death of a student or member of school community
- An accident/event involving a number of students within the school or connected to the school community.
- Attempted suicide
- Murder
- Attempted murder
- A child or person killed in front of others crossing the road
- Vehicle crash on a school trip or travelling to or from school where there are multiple injuries or deaths
- Disappearance of a member of the school community
- Kidnap
- Sexual assault /rape
- A physical assault of a staff member
- Serious injury or death of a person on school property
- A criminal incident occurring
- Incidents external to the school which might affect pupils e.g. a local tragedy.

- An incident with a high media profile or involving a number of schools

Please Note: [This is not an exhaustive list](#)

Critical Incident Management Team

A Critical Incident Management Team (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. This team are selected on the basis of their personal and practical skills. The roles and responsibilities of team members are clearly outlined. Each member of the team has a copy of the Critical Incident Management Plan and the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) *Responding to Critical Incidents: Guidelines and Resource Materials for Schools* document. A dedicated Critical Incident folder will be kept on Microsoft Teams which will contain these documents and additional materials to be used in the event of an incident.

The Board of Management and LCETB recognises that due to the sensitive nature of incidents that may arise, individual members of the CIMT and other members of staff may opt out of dealing with students or staff. When such an issue arises, the designated deputy will replace the person opting out or, if not available, the principal will appoint another staff member to deputise.

| The Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) includes: | |
|---|----------------------|
| Team Leader, Garda and Media Liaison | Agnes Hehir |
| Staff Liaison and Administrator | Lorraine Byrnes |
| Student Support Liaison | Catherine Donnellan |
| Parent and Community Liaison | Clodagh Healy-Murphy |

This group will form the core CIMT. Other members of staff may also be drafted onto the team if deemed appropriate by the CIMT.

Team Leader:

The Team Leader is the Principal, Ms. Agnes Hehir. In her absence, the Deputy Principal, Ms. Lorraine Byrnes, will act as Team Leader.

Examples of responsibilities to be discharged by the Team Leader include:

- Alerting team members of the crisis and convening a meeting of the CIMT
- Co-ordinating the tasks to be performed by the team
- Liaising with the Board of Management, LCETB, Department of Education & Youth, National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), State Examinations Commission (SEC)
- Liaising with a bereaved family
- Liaising with An Garda Siochana
- Ensuring that information about deaths or other developments is checked for accuracy before being shared.

Staff Liaison Person:

The Staff Liaison Person is Lorraine Byrnes

Responsibilities to be discharged by the Staff Liaison Person would include:

- Leading briefing meetings on the facts, as known, for staff and giving staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions.
- Outlining for staff the proposed routine for the day
- Advising staff on the procedures for identification of vulnerable students
- Providing materials for staff (from their critical incident folder)
- Keeping staff updated on events as the day unfolds

- Being alert to vulnerable staff members and contacting them individually
- Advising them of the availability of Employee Assistance Service (EAS) and being in a position to give them contact details.

Student Liaison Person:

The Student Liaison Person is Catherine Donnellan. The relevant Year Head/s will also have an important role to play in liaising with students.

Student Liaison Persons responsibilities would include:

- Co-ordinating information from tutors and year heads in relation to students about whom they have concerns
- Alerting staff members about students that might be considered vulnerable
- Providing materials for students (from their critical incident folder)
- Keeping records of students seen by external agency staff
- Looking after the setting up and supervision of a 'quiet' room, where agreed by the CIMT.
- Assessing levels of distress amongst the student body
- Prioritizing individuals or groups who may be in need of some intervention
- Counsel and support individual students and groups experiencing difficulties
- Contacting parents of students about whom they have specific concerns
- Liaise with NEPS and other appropriate external support groups as necessary
- Liaise with staff and keep them informed, in general terms, of concerns they may have about individual student

Parent Liaison Person

Clodagh Healy Murphy will act as Parent Liaison Person.

Functions associated with this role would include:

- Visiting a bereaved family with the Team Leader

- Arranging parent meetings if proposed by CIMT
- May facilitate such meetings and manage ‘questions and answers’
- Seeking parental consent for students to be seen by a NEPS psychologist or counsellor
- Ensuring that sample letters are typed up on the school’s system and ready for adaptation
- Setting up a venue for meetings with parents
- Maintaining a record of parents seen
- Meeting with individual parents
- Supplying appropriate materials for parents (from their critical incident folders)

Media Liaison Person

Agnes Hehir will act as the Media Liaison Person. This role is an organisational and coordination role. All communication with the media will be undertaken by the Principal, Ms Agnes Hehir, in consultation with the Chairperson of the Board of Management and LCETB.

No other member of staff or Board of Management should give interviews to the media or make comments in relation to a critical incident. If questioned by the media staff members should reply “no comment” in relation to any questions asked.

Issues to be addressed by the Media Liaison Person would include:

- In advance of an incident, consider issues that might arise and how they might be responded to e.g. students being interviewed on school premises or grounds, the presence of photographers on school premises or grounds
- Liaising with the State Examinations Commission, relevant teacher unions etc.
- Organising the drawing up of a press statement
- Organising and coordinating media briefings and interviews, as agreed by school management.

Administrator:

Lorraine Byrnes will discharge the responsibilities associated with this role.

Functions to be discharged in this role would include:

- Liaising with the school's administrative staff to ensure that all administrative needs and requirements are prepared for and provided.
- Maintenance of up-to-date telephone numbers of parents/guardians, teachers, emergency services
- Taking telephone calls and noting those that need to be responded to
- Ensuring that templates are on the school's system in advance and ready for adaptation
- Preparing and sending out letters, e-mails and faxes
- Photocopying materials needed
- Maintaining records of meetings and other relevant information.

Community/Agency Liaison Person

Clodagh Healy Murphy will discharge the responsibilities associated with this role.

Functions to be discharged in this role would include:

- Maintaining 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
- Liaising with agencies in the community for support and onward referral
- Being alert to the need to check credentials of individuals offering support
- Coordinating the involvement of these agencies
- Reminding agency staff to wear name badges
- Updating team members on the involvement of external agencies.

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, materials used etc

Critical Incident Rooms

| In the event of a critical incident, the following rooms are designated for the indicated purposes | |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| Room Name and Number: | Designated Purpose: |
| Staff Room | Main room for meeting staff |
| Assembly Hall | Meetings with students |
| Guidance Room | Meetings with parents |
| Principal's Office | Meetings with media |
| Room 4 | Individual sessions with students |
| Year Heads Office | Meetings with other visitors |

Procedures to be followed in the event of a Critical Incident (Appendix 2, 3, 4)

The procedures to be followed will vary in accordance with the nature and degree of the particular incident that has occurred. In general, the school will initially take the following steps in responding to a critical incident:

1.1 The Team Leader (Principal or, in her absence, the Deputy Principal) and CIMT will use NEPS publications *Responding to Critical Incidents: NEPS Guidelines and Resources for Schools* as guidelines to informing the response to a critical incident.

1.2 The Team Leader will obtain accurate information in relation to the incident. This will

include verifying the time, nature, cause and location of the incident, the identities of those involved, the extent of injuries and the present location of those injured, and what agencies, if any, have been contacted. This may involve contact with agencies such as Hospitals, Gardaí, Emergency Services, NEPS, Health Service Executive, State Examinations Commission, Parish Priest/Clergy, Teacher Unions, Community Care Services, the Board of Management (the chairperson may need to be informed and an emergency meeting summoned), LCETB and Department of Education & Youth personnel.

1.3 The Team Leader will make contact with NEPS in relation to the incident and take counsel in relation to the appropriate response.

14 The Team Leader will, in consultation with the Deputy Principal will, convene a meeting of the Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT), which will consider the facts, as established above, and agree an immediate plan of action. This meeting will, circumstances permitting, take place either in the evening or early morning to facilitate the preparation of a plan of action for the school day ahead. Matters for consideration and decision will be informed by Section 4.3 *Responding to Critical Incidents: NEPS Guidelines and Resources for Schools* and will include:

- Identifying the response level required for the incident:
 - **Response Level 1:** the death of a student or staff member who was terminally ill; the death of a parent or sibling; a fire in the college not resulting in any serious injury or damage to school property.
 - **Response Level 2:** the sudden death of a student or staff member.
 - **Response Level 3:** a violent death or incident with a high media profile or involving a number of students/schools.

- delegating areas of specific responsibility to the members of the CIMT, in accordance with pre-agreed roles

- visiting the homes of the bereaved

- considering the involvement of appropriate outside agencies

- planning procedures for the day, including issues relating to school routine and possible closure. Where feasible, normal school routine will be followed, in keeping with established guidelines

- agreeing a statement of the facts for staff, students, parents and the media (This may be in written form). The facts will be relayed in a clear, appropriate and consistent manner by all staff members to the students

- reaching agreement on which phone line is to be kept open for outgoing and incoming emergency calls and appointing someone to handle phone enquiries

- convening a staff meeting for this purpose (see 11.5 below), during which student supervision will be organised. An outside professional may be invited to attend and address the

meeting

- informing relatives and close friends. Students concerned will be informed as near as possible to the same time in groups no larger than normal class size (It may be necessary to inform some students in smaller groups or on an individual basis)
- identification of vulnerable students and discussion of the issue of consent for students who may need to be seen by a psychologist
- contacting parents for consent for the student to be seen by a NEPS psychologist or counsellor
- clarification on the availability of rooms and the provision of appropriate materials for those rooms
- arrangements for the remainder of the day and for subsequent days

The Staff Meeting:

- The Team Leader and Staff Liaison Person will normally lead this meeting and will be guided by Section 4.4 of *Responding to Critical Incidents: NEPS Guidelines and Materials for Schools* in the manner in which the staff meeting is conducted.
- All members of staff will be asked to attend this meeting, including non-teaching staff. This may involve dividing the staff into two separate groups to facilitate adequate supervision of students
- Accurate facts will be presented to staff and these will be updated as events unfold.
- Staff will be reminded of the importance of students being with people they know and trust and, if possible, that teachers and other school staff provide support for the students. The external 'expert' will be used primarily to advise and support school staff.
- Appropriate handouts from *Responding to Critical Incidents: NEPS Guidelines and Resources for Schools* may be distributed.
- A decision will be made in relation to the provision of an appropriate spiritual ceremony/ritual for affected students and staff.
- Staff will be encouraged to talk to each other in relation to their feelings over the incident and to support each other.
- The schedule for the remainder of the school day will be presented, including an additional meeting at the end of the day. Proposals in relation to subsequent days will be discussed.

Contact with Affected Bereaved Families:

- If appropriate, a home visit by two staff representatives will be arranged within 24 hours. Sympathy will be extended on behalf of the school community and supports, where available, will be offered to the family.
- Arrangements will be made in relation to visiting those who are injured either at home or in hospital.
- A member of the CIMT will liaise with the aggrieved family in relation to funeral arrangements or memorial services and to clarify the family's wishes regarding the school's involvement in the funeral or memorial service.
- Those involved will have particular regard for different religions and faiths.

Day 2 and Following Days (Appendix 3):

The Team Leader will be guided by Section 5 *Responding to Critical Incidents: NEPS Guidelines and Resources for Schools* in relation to Medium Term Responses within the school. It is envisaged that the CIMT will continue to meet each day until the school returns to normal functioning. Issues for consideration will include:

- Review of events and what has been done to date
- The appropriateness of school closure
- Tasks to be completed.
- Issues to be addressed at the next staff meeting, including an outline of the schedule for the day and updates on any appropriate information from the family, including funeral arrangements, and whether it is appropriate that a representative from another agency may address the staff.
- Review of the schedule for the day.
- Consideration of the list of students and staff who may be vulnerable and a review of their progress.
- Develop a system for monitoring students over the coming days/weeks, especially those considered vulnerable.

Follow-up (Appendix 4):

This relates to the work carried out in the weeks, months and years following a critical incident. The aim is to help the school community cope with the impact of the event in the longer term and to monitor those individuals with ongoing difficulties. The school may also decide to review the Critical Incident Management Plan at this time and to plan memorials.

- The Team Leader will meet with the CIMT to review the list of affected staff and students and to identify who will be responsible for follow-up.
- Where onward referrals may be indicated, referral procedures will be discussed. These will be guided by *Section 6 Responding to Critical Incidents: NEPS Guidelines and Resources for Schools*.
- Preparations will be discussed for the return of the bereaved student(s)/staff. *Resource 13 Responding to Critical Incidents: NEPS Guidelines and Resources for Schools* will inform the approach taken by the CIMT.
- Arrangements will be made in relation to what the school will do in memory of the student(s) or staff, in consultation with the deceased person's family.
- Discuss what to do in relation to events that the student(s)/staff would have been involved in e.g. Debs/Award Ceremonies.
- Discuss the treatment of exam results and the return of practical work from SEC. SEC will be notified of the need to attend to the issuing of results and submitted work.
- The return of personal belongings to the family/families will be arranged. This may involve the family visiting the school for the collection of such items and a `memory folder/box` may be considered appropriate.
- The anniversary date may be marked in advance on the school calendar as it may trigger emotional responses in students or staff that may necessitate additional support. Should the school decide to acknowledge the anniversary, the family will be consulted in relation to any proposed commemoration.

Communication with staff and student community should an incident happen at the weekend or in the holiday period.

- The school will be the headquarters. A meeting of the Critical Incident Management Team will be convened and any members available will be invited to attend.
- If it is the death of a colleague, the Critical Incident Team will be informed as soon as possible and all staff will be notified subsequently either by phone call or text message.

- If it is the death of a student, the Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) need to be informed immediately. Other staff will be informed as soon as possible by text message.
- If it is the death of a student, a system of informing the class members needs to be in place. The class tutor/Year Head/Principal/Deputy Principal will be made available to inform students.

The Board of Management and the LCETB is indebted to those members of the school community who have accepted various roles and responsibilities on the Critical Incident Management Team and in the preparation and execution of the Plan

This policy was ratified by the board of management of St. Joseph's Community College on the:

Date: 6/11/25.

Chairperson of BOM: Matt Power Matt Power

Principal: Agnes Hehir Agnes Hehir