



**Fingal Community College**

**Seatown Road, Swords, Co Dublin**

## **CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT POLICY**

## **Introductory Statement**

Fingal Community College was established in 1985 and is under the patronage of Dublin Dún Laoghaire Education and Training Board. Our college is a caring and proud learning community committed to the pursuit of excellence. Students, teachers and parents are encouraged and supported to be the best that they can be in a school environment that respects diversity and fosters justice and equality for all.

## **Aim and Rationale**

We, at Fingal Community College, aim to protect the wellbeing of our students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. Every effort has been taken to create a coping, supportive and caring ethos in our college and to ensure the physical and psychological safety of all members of the school community during the normal course of the academic day.

The staff and management of Fingal Community College acknowledge the importance of preventing, where possible, and managing critical incidents. A Critical Incident Management Team (CMIT) has been established, as one element of the school's policies and plans, to steer the development and implementation of the 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 appropriate support is offered to students and staff. Having a good plan should also help to ensure that the effects on students and staff will be managed as far as possible and to enable us to effect a return to normality as soon as possible.

This policy outlines the school's actions in the procedures for managing a critical incident.

## **Research**

Resource documents available to schools on [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie) have been consulted, as well as the following guidelines:

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

## **Definition of a Critical Incident in a school context**

The staff and management of Fingal Community College recognise a critical incident to be an incident or sequence of events which overwhelms the normal mechanisms of the school and disrupts the normal running of the school. Critical incidents may involve students, staff, the school or the local community.

Examples of a critical incident include:

- The death of a member of the school community through sudden death, accident, terminal illness or suicide.
- An intrusion into the school which has an adverse impact on the school community.
- Serious damage to the building through fire, flood, vandalism and so on.
- A physical attack on staff member(s) or student(s).
- An accident involving members of the school community.
- The disappearance of a member of the school community.
- An accident/tragedy in the wider community.
- An accident or tragedy outside the school community which impacts on the school community.

This list is not exhaustive.

## **Creation of a Coping Supportive and Caring Ethos in the College**

Fingal Community College has put systems in place to help build resilience in both staff and students, in this way, preparing them to cope with a range of life events. These incorporate measures to address both the physical and psychological safety of the school community.

### **Physical Safety**

Plans and procedures are in place to ensure that our college is as safe as possible.

- An evacuation plan is formulated.
- Regular fire drills occur.
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked.
- School front door is locked during school hours and sign-in/out system in place at main office.
- Pre-opening supervision between 8:30 and 8:45, lunch break and immediately after normal school hours.
- Both internal and external CCTV cameras monitor corridors, doors and outdoor spaces.

- All side entrances to the school grounds are closed during the school day and are only opened at the beginning and end of the school day and at lunch time.

## **Psychological Safety**

The management and staff of Fingal Community College 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 attending to issues such as grief and loss; communication skills; stress and anger management; 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 student are available from the guidance counsellor.
- 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 in line with DES Circular 0023/2010.
- Fingal Community College has a clear policy on bullying and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy.
- The school has developed links with a range of external agencies – Child & Adolescent Mental Health (CAMHS), Jigsaw, Pieta House, Túsla, Psychological Support Service (PSS).
- 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 & 2014 for post primary schools.
- Students who are identified as being at risk are referred to the guidance counsellor. Concerns are explored and the appropriate level of assistance and support is provided. In consultation with the Principal/Deputy, parents are informed, and where appropriate, a referral is made to an appropriate agency.
- Staff are informed about how to access support for themselves, Employee Assistance Service (EAS). (Appendix)

## **Critical Incident Management Team (CMIT)**

<b>Roles</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
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<p>and year heads about students they are concerned about</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Alerts other staff to vulnerable students (appropriately)</li> <li>Provides materials for students (from critical incident folder)</li> <li>Keeps records of students seen by external agency staff</li> <li>Looks after setting up supervision of "quiet" room where agreed</li> </ul> <p><b>Community/agency</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of all parents</li> <li>Emergency support services and other external contacts and resources</li> <li>Liaises with the PSS for support and onward referral</li> <li>Is alert to the need to check credentials of individuals offering support</li> <li>Coordinates the involvement of these agencies</li> <li>Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies</li> </ul>	<p><b>Guidance Counsellor</b></p> <p><b>Guidance Counsellor</b></p> <p><b>Guidance Counsellor</b></p> <p><b>Guidance Counsellor</b></p> <p><b>Nominated Team Member</b></p> <p><b>Guidance Counsellor</b></p> <p><b>Principal</b></p> <p><b>Principal</b></p> <p><b>Guidance Counsellor</b></p>
<p><b>D. Parent Liaison</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Visits the bereaved family with the team leader</li> <li>Arranges parent meetings, if held</li> <li>May facilitate such meetings, and manage "questions and answers"</li> <li>Ensures that sample letters are typed up, on the school's system ready to adapt</li> <li>Set up room for meetings with parents</li> <li>Maintains a record of parents seen</li> <li>Meets with individual parents</li> </ul>	<p><b>Principal/Year Head/Tutor</b></p> <p><b>Principal/Deputy Principal/Year Head/Tutor</b></p> <p><b>Office/Admin</b></p> <p><b>Guidance Suite</b></p> <p><b>Record of meeting forms</b></p>



**Critical incident rooms**

In the event of a critical incident, **staffroom** will be the main room used to meet the staff.

**Guidance Suite** for meetings with small groups of students.

**Base classroom** for meetings with full classes.

**Guidance Suite or Boardroom** for parents

**Guidance Suite** for media

**Guidance Suite** for individual sessions with students

**Guidance Suite** for other visitors

**Record Keeping**

In the event of an incident each member of the team will keep records of phone calls made and received, meetings held, persons met, interventions used, materials used and so on. The school secretaries 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 Fingal Community College have a responsibility to protect the privacy and good name of the people involved in any incident and will be sensitive to the consequences of any public statements. The members of the school staff will bear this in mind and will seek to ensure that students do so also. For

instance, 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 Regarding the Plan**

### **Implementation**

#### **Roles and Responsibilities**

- All Staff - familiarising themselves with the policy and following its procedures.
- CMIT - maintaining the CIM Policy and implementation of the policy.
- Principal - leading the CMIT and overseeing the implementation of the policy.

#### **Timeframe**

This policy has been revised in the 2020-2021 school year. It will be implemented in its entirety once agreed by the Board of Management.

### **Monitoring**

Implementation of the policy will be monitored by the principal, and the Critical Incident Management Team.

### **Review**

This policy will be reviewed annually and in light of events that may impact on its working.

### **Ratification and Communication**

This policy will be communicated directly to staff in the course of staff meeting and will be made available electronically also. A hard copy will be accessible alongside other school policies.

## Critical Incident Management Template

### Short Term Actions – Day 1

<b>Task</b>	<b>Name</b>
Gather accurate information Who, what, when, where?	
Determine level of incident	
Convene a CMIT meeting – specify time and place clearly Clarify & Assign agencies?	Principal
Contact external agencies?	Principal/ Guidance Counsellor
Arrange supervision for students	Deputy Principal
Hold staff meeting	Principal/ Deputy Principals
Agree schedule for the day	CMIT
Inform students – (close friends and students with learning difficulties may need to be told separately)	Principal Year Head Guidance Counsellor
Compile a list of vulnerable students	Guidance Counsellor/ Special Education Needs (SEN) Team
Contact/visit the bereaved family	
Prepare and agree media statement and deal with the media	
Inform parents/guardians	Principal/ Deputy Principal
CMIT review and plan day 2	Principal
Hold end of day staff briefing	Principal

### Medium Term Actions – Day 2 and following days

<b>Task</b>	<b>Name</b>
Convene a CMIT meeting to review the events of day 1	Principal

Meet external agencies	Principal/Guidance Counsellor
Meet whole staff	CMIT
Arrange support for students, staff, parents/guardians	Principal Deputy Principals Guidance Counsellor Year Heads
Visit the injured	Principal and others
Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements	Principal Deputy Principals Guidance Counsellor Year Heads
Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service	Principal to delegate with CMIT members
Make decisions about school closure	<b>DDLETB</b>

### Follow-Up Beyond 72 Hours

<b>Task</b>	<b>Name</b>
Monitor students for signs of continuing distress	Class teachers
Liaise with agencies regarding referrals	Guidance Counsellor
Plan for return of bereaved student	Principal Deputy Principals Guidance Counsellor
Plan for giving of 'memory box' to bereaved family	Year Head/Tutor/Guidance Counsellor
Decide on memorials and anniversaries	BOM/Staff, parents, and students
Review response to incident and amend plan	Staff/BOM

## Emergency Contact List

(To be displayed in staffroom, school office and Principal's Office)

<b>Agency</b>	<b>Contact Numbers</b>
Garda	112/999 or 01 6664700 (Swords Station)
Hospital	112/999 01 8093000 – Beaumont 01 8032000 – Mater Temple Street – 01 8784200
Fire Brigade	112/999
HSE	1850 241850/ 046 9251200
Tusla	01 7718500 (National Office)
DDLETB	01 4529600
Psychological Support Service	01 4598446
CAMHS	01 8075392 (Swords Office)
State Examinations Commission	090 6442700
Parish Priest	01 8407277 (St Colmcille's)
Teachers Union	1850453545 – TUI 1850418400/01 6040160 - ASTI
Employee Assistance Service	1800411057 (Freephone) SMS & WhatsApp: text 'Hi' to 087 3690010

## **Appendix**

### **Staff Support**

From July 26<sup>th</sup> 2020, [Spectrum.Life](#) was awarded the new Employee Assistance and Wellbeing Programme (EAS) contract. The service for these employees is known as 'Wellbeing Together: Folláine le Chéile', which extends the EAS to all school staff.

The EAS provides advice to employees on a range of issues including wellbeing, legal, financial, bereavement, conflict, mediation etc. The EAS also provides advice and support to managers and delivers interventions to help them deal with health and wellbeing issues in the workplace.

Where appropriate, short-term counselling is available to employees and their family members. A family member includes a spouse, civil partner or dependent, where the family member can be described as a person over the age of 18 and residing at the family home. In addition, online cognitive behavioural therapy is also provided to employees.

A bespoke wellbeing portal and app is available offering a host of online services with access to live chats, videos, podcasts and blogs on topics around mental health, family life, exercise and nutrition. The platform is available via Web, iOS App or Android App.

As part of the EAS, a Mental Health Promotion Manager is also available to develop and deliver evidence based mental health and wellbeing initiatives. Spectrum.Life also provides a series of webinars and presentations to promote wellbeing in schools.