



Kilrush Community School

Critical Incident Policy

Mission Statement

In an Irish and global context, Kilrush Community School endeavours to create an inclusive community of mutual understanding and respect within which students can learn and thrive. We co-create opportunities for every student to fulfil their potential.

Kilrush Community School Aims:

1. To develop an excellent learning environment which promotes high expectations of individual performance from students.
2. To give students access to a broad and balanced curriculum within a caring, co-operative, and inclusive community.
3. To ensure that all staff and students enjoy equality of esteem and opportunity.
4. To foster among students an awareness of their environment, heritage and health enabling them to play a positive role within the local and wider community.
5. To equip students with a strong sense of self-esteem, self-discipline, and self-motivation.
6. To foster universal values of care, inclusion respect and innovation.

Kilrush Community School

The staff and management of Kilrush 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*

Aims of the Critical Incident Management Policy (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 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 measures include:

- Evacuation plan formulated and displayed in each room
- Regular fire drills occur
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
- Staff supervision before school starts, during break and lunch times, and after school
- School doors locked during class time
- Covid Response Plan has been formulated

Psychological safety measures include:

The management and staff of Kilrush 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 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 including Happy Feet Happy Minds, Pieta House, Clarecare, Clare Youth Services etc.
- 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 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 for post primary schools. See also Student Support Teams in Post Primary Schools: A Guide to Establishing a Team or Reviewing an Existing Team (2021). These documents are available on www.education.ie
- The Pastoral Care Team meet weekly to discuss students in need of support and how best to support them.
- Students who are identified as being at risk are referred to the designated staff member (e.g. guidance counsellor), concerns are explored and the appropriate level of assistance and support is provided. Where appropriate, a referral is made to an appropriate agency and parents are informed.
- Staff are informed about how to access support for themselves and a Staff Wellbeing board is displayed in the staff room and updated regularly.
- Appropriate resources have been developed for parents and are available on www.kilrushcoms.com

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)
- 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)

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. 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 critical incident folder on One Drive including access to the policy and plan and materials particular to their role, to be used in the event of an incident.

Team Leader: *Principal*

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

Staff liaison *Team leader supported by Deputy Team leader*

Role

- Informs new and temporary staff of the Critical Incident Plan
- 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: *Team leader supported by Chaplain & Guidance*

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: *Team leader supported by HSCL*

Role

- Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of
 - Key parents, such as nominees to the BOM
 - 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: *Team leader by supported by HSCL*

Role

- Visits the bereaved family with the team leader
- Arranges parent meetings, if held
- May facilitate such meetings
- 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: *Team leader supported by Deputy Team Leader*

- 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: *Team Leader supported by Chaplain*

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
- In collaboration with the team leader/deputy team leader, 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.

Those fulfilling the role of Administrator 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 Kilrush 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 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.

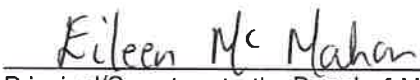
Our school's final policy and plan in relation to responding to critical incidents has been presented to all staff. Each member of the critical incident team has a personal copy of the plan.

All new and temporary staff will be informed of the details of the plan by the Principal/Deputy Principal as part of new staff induction.

This Policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 29 / 09 / 26

Signed: 
Chairperson, Board of Management

Date: 29/09/26

Signed: 
Principal/Secretary to the Board of Management

Date: 29/09/26

Next Review Date: ~ 1 Sept, 27

Kilrush Community School

Critical Incident Plan

Critical Incident Rooms	
In the event of a critical incident, the following rooms are designated for the indicated purposes	
Room Name:	Designated Purpose:
Gym/Cafeteria	Main room for meeting staff
Gym/Cafeteria Classroom	Meetings with students
HSCL Office	Meetings with parents
Library	Meetings with media
Chaplain/ GC Office	Individual sessions with students
Principal's Office	Meetings with other visitors

Critical Incident Management Team	
Role	Name
Team leader:	Principal Deputy Principal (Deputy)
Staff liaison	Principal Deputy Principal (Deputy)
Student liaison	Principal Chaplain Guidance
Community liaison	Principal HSCL
Parent liaison	Principal HSCL
Media liaison	Principal Deputy Principal (Deputy)
Administrator	Principal Chaplain

The procedures to be followed will depend on the particular incident, the time and the place where it occurs.

Short term actions – Day 1

Task	Name
It is important to obtain accurate information about the incident otherwise rumours will take over and add to the distress of those involved. Gather accurate information Who, what, when, where? ➤ What happened, where and when? ➤ What is the extent of the injuries? ➤ Who is involved? ➤ Who else might be at risk?	Team Leader
Convene a CIMT meeting – specify time and place clearly Agenda to include: ➤ Agree statements of facts for staff, students, parents and media. ➤ Delegate responsibilities to the critical incident management team. ➤ Appoint key person to deal with phone enquiries. ➤ Organise a timetable routine for the day, this should follow the normal timetable where possible. ➤ Organise a staff meeting. ➤ Organise the supervision of student during the staff meeting (includes teaching and ancillary staff). ➤ Decide whether or not an outside professional should be invited to the staff meeting (N.E.P.S.).	Team Leader
Contact external agencies	Team Leader & Community & Agency Liaison
Agree schedule/timetable for the day Arrange supervision for students	Team Leader, DP & Student Liaison
Hold staff meeting All staff should be asked to attend, including ancillary staff. The areas which might be covered are listed below. ➤ An account of the facts as known. ➤ An opportunity for staff to express their views and their feelings. ➤ Discussion with the staff about how the facts will be shared with the students. (There should be an agreed approach to this if possible). ➤ An outline of the routine for the day.	Team Leader & Staff Liaison

➤ Information for staff about which outside agencies have been contacted, or are involved and the supports that will be put in place for both students and staff. ➤ A procedure for identifying vulnerable students, friends. ➤ Distribution of relevant handout material (see Resource Documents).	
Inform students – (close friends and students with learning difficulties may need to be told separately) Careful preparation is important when meeting students to inform them of a critical incident. Consideration should be given to the following: ➤ The age of the pupils. ➤ The optimum group size. ➤ The suitability of the ‘messenger’ should also be considered. ➤ The nature of the event will clearly have an influence on how students are informed. The key points/actions in the process are listed below: ➤ Give facts and avoid speculation. This will help to dispel rumours, which can cause unnecessary stress. ➤ Allow pupils to ask questions, tell their story and express feelings. ➤ Help students realise that overwhelming emotions are natural and normal following a critical incident (see Resource Documents on reactions of grief and critical incidents).	Team Leader & Student Liaison
Compile a list of vulnerable students	Team Leader & Student Liaison
Prepare and agree media statement and deal with media Some points to remember if you are asked to give a live interview: ➤ A prepared statement only should be given. ➤ Consider assigning the task to someone skilled or familiar with dealing with the media. ➤ Take some time to prepare ➤ Remember that everything you say is on record and, therefore, keep it simple, factual and brief.	Team Leader & Deputy Team Leader

➤ Decline if you are not ready or think it inappropriate. ➤ Consider setting aside a room for the media. This may help to control their access to staff and students. ➤ Brief staff and students and advise them on dealing with the media.	
Inform parents Inform parents/guardians of identified students. Procedures for children directly involved: Parents/guardians should be contacted as soon as possible, and this first contact will need to be handled with great sensitivity. The steps involved are set out below: ➤ Agree who should share information with parents and how this should be done. ➤ Make a list of parents/guardians who have been contacted and those who still need to be told to avoid duplication of messages. ➤ Give parents/guardians relevant and factual information. ➤ Set a room aside for distressed students to meet their parents/guardians. ➤ Give telephone numbers for enquiries. Procedures for children not directly involved: ➤ The parents of other children in the school should be informed of the incident and that their child may be upset. ➤ Send a letter to parents stating the facts and brief details of the incident. It may not be appropriate at this point to disclose the names of those involved. (See Appendix for sample letter). Organise the reunion of students with the parents, if necessary. ➤ Inform students that their parent/guardians will be collecting them as soon as possible. ➤ Facilitate distressed students and their parents by providing a private room where they can meet following an incident. This could be a very emotional time.	Team Leader & Parent Liaison

➤ Where appropriate, offer help with transport, especially for younger children.	
Hold end of day staff briefing	Team Leader & Staff Liaison

Summary Checklist for Critical Incident Management Team – Day 1

1. Gather the facts – Who? What? When? and Where?
2. Contact appropriate agencies.
3. Convene the Critical Incident Management Team.
4. Organise for the supervision of students.
5. Inform staff.
6. Agree on a statement of the facts.
7. Identify high risk students.
8. Appoint key person to deal with phone enquiries.
9. Organise timetable for the day, keeping as close as possible to the normal school routine.
10. Inform parent/guardians.
11. Inform students.
12. Make contact with the bereaved family.
13. Organise support.
14. Respond to the media.

Medium term actions - (Day 2 and following days)

Task	Name
Convene a CIMT meeting to review the events of day 1 ➤ Reconvene key staff/Critical Incident Management Team ➤ Briefly check out how each person on this team is coping. ➤ Decide arrangements for support meetings for parents/students/staff. ➤ Decide on mechanism for feedback from teachers on vulnerable students. ➤ Update media, if necessary.	Team leader
Meet external agencies	Team Leader & Community/Agency Liaison
Meet whole staff ➤ Have review staff meeting with all staff if necessary. Ensure that all staff are kept up-to-date on any developments. ➤ Be sensitive as to how all staff are coping on a personal and professional level.	Team Leader & Staff Liaison
Arrange support for students, staff, parents ➤ Establish contact with absent staff and pupils. ➤ Arrange support for individual students, groups of students, and parents, if necessary. ➤ ➤ Provide a suitable room. ➤ Hold support/information meeting for parents/students in order to clarify what has happened. Offer advice and reassurance, inform them about support services and provide relevant handouts. (See Resource Documents). ➤ Give any teacher who feels uncomfortable with involvement in support meetings the choice of opting out. ➤ Arrange, in consultation with outside agencies, individual or group debriefings or support meetings with parental permission. See Appendix for sample letter for parental consent. Plan for the reintegration of students and staff (e.g. absentees, injured, siblings, close relatives etc.)	Team Leader, Student, Staff & Parent Liaisons

➤ Name key person(s) to liaise with above on their return to school.	
Plan visits/visit the injured ➤ Name key person(s) to visit home/hospital.	Team Leader, Parent & Student Liaison
Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements/memorial service ➤ Designate staff member of liaison with family, to extend sympathy and clarify the family's wishes regarding the school's involvement in funeral/memorial service. ➤ Arrange a home visit by two staff representatives within 24 hours, if appropriate. ➤ Have regard for different religious traditions and faiths.	Team Leader, Parent & Student Liaison
Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service	Team Leader, Parent & Student Liaison
Make decisions about school closure ➤ Request a decision on this from school management.	BOM

Follow-up – beyond 72 hours

Task	Name
Monitor students for signs of continuing distress A referral to outside agencies may be necessary. (See Resource Document). For example, if over a prolonged period of time, a student continues to display the following, he/she may need assistance from GP/outside agencies: ➤ Uncharacteristic behaviour. ➤ Deterioration in academic performance. ➤ Physical symptoms – e.g. weight loss/gain, lack of attention to appearance, tiredness, restlessness. ➤ Inappropriate emotional reactions. ➤ Increased absenteeism.	Team Leader & Class teachers
Liaise with agencies regarding referrals	Team Leader & Community/Agency Liaison
Plan for return of bereaved student(s)	Team Leader, Parent Liaison & Student Liaison
Plan for giving of 'memory box' to bereaved family	Team Leader, Parent Liaison & Student Liaison
Decide on memorials and anniversaries ➤ Anniversaries may trigger emotional responses in students/staff and they may need additional support at this time. ➤ Acknowledge the anniversary with the family and liaise on any proposed commemoration. ➤ Be sensitive to significant days like Birthdays, Christmas, Mother's Day, Father's Day.	BOM/Team Leader, staff, parents and students
Review response to incident and amend plan ➤ What went well? ➤ Where are the gaps? ➤ What was most/least helpful? ➤ Have all necessary onward referrals to support services been made? ➤ Is there any unfinished business?	Team Leader/Staff/BOM
Review Inform new staff or new school of pupils affected by critical incidents where appropriate	Team Leader & Deputy Team Leader

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Ensure that new staff are aware of the school policy and procedures in this area.➤ Ensure they are aware of which pupils were affected in any recent incident and in what way.➤ When individual pupils or a class of pupils affected by an incident are transferring to a new school, it would be useful to brief the Principal of the new school. | |
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EMERGENCY CONTACT LIST

AGENCY	CONTACT NUMBERS
Garda	999 / 112 (Emergency) 065 9080550 (Kilrush Garda Station)
Hospital	061 30 11 11 (UHL – Limerick) 065 6863100 (Ennis)
Fire Brigade	999/112 (Emergency)
Local GPs	Kilrush Medical Centre, Banklawn House, Toler St. Kilrush. Tel: 0659051374
HSE	0656868090
Clare Community Social Welfare Service	Kilrush Health Centre, Tel: 0659054200
Child and Family Mental Health Service (CAMHS)	061 483388
NEPS Psychologist	01 8892700 065 6865904 (Ennis office)
Department of Education	01 8896400
Teacher Unions	01 6040160 (ASTI) 01 4922588 (TUI)
Clergy	065 9062729 / 087 2300627 (Fr Larkin)
State Exams Commission	090 644 2700
Employee Assistance Service	018860324