



St Gerald's DLS College

Critical Incident Policy and Plan - Framework

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ST. GERALD'S DLS COLLEGE - CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT PLAN

1.0 Introduction by the Board of Management

This policy was developed in consultation with all stakeholders and approved by the Board of Management. It is reviewed annually as part of the School Development Planning Process and aligns with our Child Safeguarding Statement.

The Board of Management is committed to the care and protection of all students and staff. This plan addresses our response to critical incidents while maintaining our duty of care under safeguarding legislation and NEPS guidance.

2.0 School Ethos

St Gerald's College is a Lasallian centre providing human and Christian education with special concern for the disadvantaged.

3.0 Aim of this plan

The purpose of the Critical Incident Management Plan (CIMP) is to support the post-primary school in responding to critical incidents in a timely, effective, and coordinated manner, in line with NEPS Critical Incident Guidelines and our Lasallian ethos. The plan provides a clear framework to assist school management and staff in maintaining order, safety, and effective communication during an incident. It ensures that appropriate pastoral and psychological supports are made available to students and staff, seeks to minimise the impact of the incident on the school community, and supports a safe, structured, and phased return to normal school routines as soon as practicable.

4.0 Definition of Critical Incident

An incident that overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of the school, including:

- Death of a current student or current staff member (sudden death, suicide, anticipated death)
- Serious injury or threat to students/staff
- Disappearance of a member of the school community
- Intrusion or violence on school premises
- Major fire, flood, or structural damage



- Accident during school activities/trips
- Tragedy in the wider community
- Allegation of abuse against a staff member
- Unexpected tragic death of a family member belonging to the school community
- Unexpected tragic death of someone in the wider community, known to students / staff

5.0 Initial Assessment of the Incident

1. Is it a critical incident?
2. What level of an incident is it?

STEP 1

What type of response is needed?

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

STEP 2

Should a psychologist be involved?

- Consider the nature of the event and how your school is coping. What support do you need from NEPS and/or other agencies?

STEP 3

How do I assess the needs of the school?

- Is there a feeling of being overwhelmed by this event?
- Has there been a previous incident? How recent? What kind of incident? If more than one, how many? (If the school has experienced a recent incident or a number of incidents staff may be exhausted or distressed. On the other hand, they may feel more experienced and better able to deal with the situation).
- Is there a critical incident plan/team in place?
- Is there a good pastoral care system in the school?
- Is there significant media interest in the incident?
- Are other agencies already involved?



STEP 4

What action do I take?

- For an incident requiring a level 1 response it may be sufficient to talk to the psychologist on the phone. Locate your Responding to Critical Incidents: Guidelines and Resource Materials for Schools (2016). The psychologist will refer to these and talk you through relevant sections. A copy of these has been made available to all schools. It is also available on www.education.ie by following the links to NEPS.
- In the case of an incident requiring a Level 2 & Level 3 response, make contact with NEPS. Depending on the incident at least one psychologist will visit the school.

6.0 The Critical Incident Management Team

A CIMT has been established in line with best practice. The members of the team will meet annually to review and update the policy and plan. Each member of the team has access to this document and has been consulted in its compilation.

The key roles on this team, are as follows:

Team leader	Shaun Burke
Garda liaison	Regina Duffy
Staff liaison	Niamh Loftus Staff meeting – Shaun Burke
Student liaison	Led by Sharon Geraghty Supported by team
Parent/Guardian liaison	Regina Duffy
Community & Media liaison	Shaun Burke
Administrator	Fiona Mongan

Outlined below are some points on the key responsibilities of each role.

Team Leader	• Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting (in person/virtually) • Coordinates the tasks of the team • Liaises with the Board of Management; DES, NEPS, SEC, Le Chéile by appropriate means: phone, letter, email, text, website notice • Liaises with the bereaved family (phone calls, writing a card, sympathy message or letter) • The DP will take the lead in the absence of team leader, followed by the Guidance Counsellor and teacher in order of seniority.
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Garda Liaison	• Liaise with the Gardaí by phone. • Ensures that information about deaths or other developments is checked out for accuracy before being shared.
Staff Liaison	• Leads briefing meetings for staff on the facts as known to give staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions • Contacts the relevant Year-head and invites them onto the CI team for the duration of the response • Outlines the routine for the day (This may be done virtually). • Advises staff on the procedures for identification of vulnerable students on the advice of the Guidance Counsellor • Provides materials for staff by email • Keeps staff updated by email as the day progresses and shares with staff any resources being forwarded to parents • Is alert to vulnerable staff members and contacts them individually, by phone if necessary • Advises staff of the availability of the EAS Service and gives them the contact number • Draws teachers attention to Teacher Wellbeing and Self Care
Student Liaison	• Full CI team to work with SG in this role. • At post-primary level, may coordinate information from year heads about students they are concerned about • Alerts other staff to vulnerable students (appropriately) • Continues to link in with students, especially more vulnerable students (In accordance with school policy, some staff may decide to link directly with students via telephone, video link or email. Post Primary staff should refer to DES document on 'Continuity of Guidance Counselling-Guidelines for schools' providing online support for students) • Maintains student contact records • Looks after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room where agreed - the meeting room will be used to conduct meetings of the Critical Incident team and it will be reserved for the use of a quiet space for students / staff that can be monitored throughout the period by a member of the team. • Reminds students that maintaining communication is important for wellbeing, and encourage them to keep in touch with close family and friends, whilst observing HSE guidelines. Remind students and staff that others are available to provide support including online supports. • Reassures students of their resilience and ability to cope. Encourages them to think of times and ways that they have coped in the past and to identify attributes that have helped them during difficult times. • Advises parents to make a referral to their family GP should their child show signs of severe emotional distress.



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 • Liaise with agencies in the community and other external contacts and resources • 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 e.g., NEPs
Parent / Guardian Liaison	• Visits/contacts the bereaved family with team leader/guidance counsellor • Arranges meetings for parents if necessary • May facilitate such meetings and manage ‘questions and answer’ sessions • Manages the consent issues in accordance with agreed school policy • Ensures that sample letters are prepared and available on the school’s IT system 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
Administrator(s)	• Maintenance of up-to-date telephone numbers of: ○ Parents/guardians ○ Teachers ○ Emergency • Takes telephone calls and notes those that need a response • Ensures that templates are available on the school's IT system and ready for adaptation • Prepares and sends out letters, emails, and texts • Photocopies materials as needed • Maintains records.



7.0 Child Protection Integration

This plan operates in conjunction with our Child Safeguarding Statement. All CIMT members are aware that:

- The Designated Liaison Person (DLP) for child protection must be immediately informed of any incident involving harm or alleged harm to students
- Tusla must be contacted where there are reasonable grounds for concern about abuse or neglect
- Mandated reporting obligations apply (Children First Act 2015)
- All responses prioritise student safety and welfare
- Confidentiality is balanced with safeguarding requirements
- Records are kept in line with GDPR and child protection guidance

DLP Contact: Mr Shaun Burke (087) 6604384

Deputy DLP Contact: Ms Regina Duffy (087) 9328463

Tusla Contact:

8.0 Initial Response Procedures

Upon notification of an incident:

1. Team Leader confirms facts and convenes CIMT immediately (in person or virtually)
2. CIMT assesses nature and scale of incident. Relevant Year Head is added to the team for the duration of the Critical Incident response and added to the WhatsApp group. They will be removed after the Critical Incident response has been completed.
3. Contact emergency services/Tusla/NEPs as appropriate
4. Inform Chairperson of Board of Management
5. Activate support structures for students and staff.

Staff Notification:

- Staff Liaison convenes emergency staff meeting (virtual/in-person) before students are informed. Depending on the nature of the incident, it may be deemed more appropriate for the Principal to make this announcement.
- Staff must receive accurate information, support procedures, and guidance on vulnerable students.
- Staff should be reminded of confidentiality and appropriate language.



- Staff should be encouraged to talk to a member of the Critical Incident team if they are feeling vulnerable as a result of this announcement and support measures can be individually put in place.
- Only information that the family has given permission to share may be communicated by members of the Critical Incident Management Team.

Parent/Guardian Notification:

- Letter/text sent same day outlining facts and support available.
- Template letters adapted by Principal / Critical Incident team.

9.0 Support Structures

Task	Name
Gather accurate information	SB, RD, SG & NL
Convene a CIMT meeting	NL
Contact external agencies	SB & SG
Arrange supervision of students	RD
Organise staff meeting	NL
Agree on schedule for day	CI team
Inform students (close friends and students with learning difficulties may need to be told separately)	Sharon supported by team and AEN team if required.
Compile list of vulnerable students	SG
Contact/visit the bereaved family	SB, RD, SG (AN other)
Prepare and agree on media statement and deal with media	CIMT/SB
Inform parents/guardians	RD
Hold end of day staff meeting	SB

**Immediate Actions (Day 1-3):**

- Identify vulnerable students (close friends, those with mental health difficulties, previous bereavements, child protection concerns)
- Designated quiet room with staff supervision – Meeting room.
- Contact NEPS psychologist for advice and support – Guidance Counsellor / Principal
- Individual support for affected students via Guidance Counsellor
- Staff support via Employee Assistance Service (Inspire: 1800 437 757)
- Maintain routine where possible

Short-term (Week 1-4):

- Monitor identified students daily
- Referrals to external supports (Jigsaw, Pieta House, CAMHS) via parents/GP
- Liaison with bereaved family regarding funeral and school involvement
- Principal to make contact with family by phone
- Principal / Deputy Principal / Guidance Counsellor to visit house, if appropriate. Other people make be considered more appropriate depending on their relationship.
- Decisions on school closure (Principal with BoM Chairperson)
- Regular CIMT meetings to review progress

Medium/Long-term:

- Class teachers monitor student wellbeing ongoing
- Plan return of bereaved student(s) with sensitivity
- Anniversary planning (birthdays, date of death)
- Balanced memorialisation avoiding over-emphasis that may cause contagion risk
- Record all interventions and outcomes

10.0 Responding to Death by Suicide

Following NEPS guidance *Responding to Critical Incidents* (2016):

- Phrases ‘tragic death’ / ‘sudden death’ maybe used instead of suicide. 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.



- Agreement on terminology to be used is essential - only use term "died by suicide" (never "committed suicide") if agreed at Critical Incident meeting and deemed to be appropriate
- Avoid any discussion of method
- Emphasise help-seeking: "If you're struggling, talk to a trusted adult"
- Avoid excessive memorialisation
- Staff briefed on contagion risk and warning signs (withdrawal, behaviour change, giving away possessions, talk of hopelessness)
- Share helplines via Compass and school email –
For example, Pieta House (1800 247 247), Childline (1800 66 66 66), Text 50808

11.0 Safeguarding Vulnerable Students

Student Liaison maintains a confidential list of vulnerable students including:

- Those known to Tusla
- Students with child protection plans
- Students receiving CAMHS support or counselling support
- Those with prior bereavements/trauma
- Students with additional needs

These students receive immediate individual check-ins and ongoing monitoring. Parents are contacted and external agency liaison is maintained.

12.0 Confidentiality / Sensitivity

Management and staff of St Gerald's DLS College have a responsibility to respect 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 will seek to ensure that students do so also.

13.0 Record Keeping

All CIMT members record phone calls, meetings, letters sent, interventions used, students/parents met. Records stored securely for minimum 7 years post-incident (longer if child protection element).

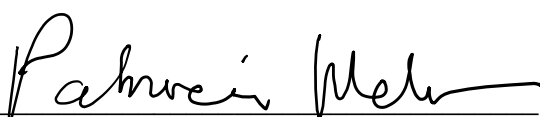


14.0 Emergency Contacts

Agency	Contact Numbers
Gardaí	0949022222
Hospital	0949021733
Fire Brigade	0949021211
Túsla	0949042283
NEPS Psychologist - Theresa	0870520802
Le Chéile - Orla	
Fr. Shane Costello	0879326512
State Examinations Commission	0906442700
Inspire Service (Employee Assistance Scheme)	1800 411 057 Text – ‘Hi’ 087 1451056 WhatsApp – ‘Hi’ 087 3690010 Spectrum.Life website

15.0 Review and Training

- Plan reviewed annually by CIMT and BoM
- CIMT training on roles (including child protection refresher) provided biannually
- Whole-staff briefing on plan
- Plan updated following any incident activation
- Cross-referenced annually with Child Safeguarding Statement, Anti-Bullying Policy (Bi Cinealta) and Wellbeing Strategy

Signed:  (Chairperson, BoM)

Signed:  (Principal)

Ratified on: January 22nd 2026

Review Date: September 2028



APPENDIX 1:

Agreed procedure for Guards of Honour: (During academic year and holidays)

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In the event of the death of a student, and subject to the agreement of the family, the students in the deceased student's class and members of their friendship group will be informed and may be invited to participate in a guard of honour. - Permission / discussions regarding the guard of honour usually take place with the funeral director. The Principal will request this permission and will inform the Year-head who will then contact the relevant students by email and set up the event accordingly. The Year-head will also have the task of informing the year group of the funeral details by email. - Staff will be informed of the death and invited to participate in the Guard of Honour if they are available at the time. This invitation will come from Principal / Deputy Principal via email. A Compass notification will go out to check the school email if it occurs during holiday time. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In the event of the death of a member of staff, either current or retired, and subject to the agreement of the family, the Student Council Liaison Teacher will be informed and requested to coordinate student representation at the guard of honour. The SC will lead the guard of honour, but other students may join if they are in attendance, if appropriate. - Permission / discussions regarding the guard of honour usually take place with the funeral director. The Principal will request this permission and will inform the liaison person who will then contact the relevant students by email and set up the event accordingly. - Staff will be informed of the death and invited to participate in the Guard of Honour if they are available at the time. This invitation will come from Principal / Deputy Principal via email. A Compass notification will go out to check their school email if it occurs during holiday time. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In the event of the death of a parent or guardian of a member of the school community, and subject to the agreement of the family, the Student Council may represent the school, or students from the relevant class may attend, as appropriate. This will be decided by the Principal. - Permission / discussions regarding the guard of honour usually take place with the funeral director. The Principal will request this permission and will inform the Year-head / Student Council Liaison Teacher who will then contact the relevant students by email and set up the event accordingly. The Year-head will also have the task of informing the year group of the funeral details by email. - Staff will be informed of the death and invited to participate in the Guard of Honour if they are available at the time. This invitation will come from Principal / Deputy Principal via email. A Compass notification will go out to check their school email if it occurs during holiday time. |

Other points to note:

- The **Principal or Deputy Principal** will write an online **condolence message** on behalf of the school community.
- A **memorial card** will be organised by the **administrator** to be sent to the family.
- **Social media posts** will only be uploaded for past / present staff or for current students.