

St. Augustine's College, Abbeyside, Dungarvan



Critical Incident Policy and Plan

Mission Statement.

St. Augustine's College is a caring community, committed to offering all of its students and staff a happy and safe environment in which they can work, learn, pray and play. We endeavour to facilitate the academic, personal, moral, spiritual and social development of each member of our school community. Our aim is to provide a balanced and well-rounded education for all our students.

Introduction

Every school faces the real prospect of having to respond, at short or no notice, to crises of various types. While critical incidents of their very nature tend to occur without warning and at any time of the day or night, this policy provides advice for those whose task it is to manage such incidents. However, the policy is more advisory than prescriptive – since each crisis situation will demand a different set of responses.

What is a Critical Incident

A Critical Incident is any incident or sequence of events, which overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of the school and disrupts the running of the school. It is important for the school to identify potential critical incidents and which procedures to follow in each instance. Some crises affecting schools are listed below:

- The death of a member of the school community through sudden death, accident, violence, terminal illness, suicide or suspected suicide, or other unexpected death.
- An accident involving pupils or staff on or off the school premises.
- A physical attack on staff member(s) or student(s) or intrusion into the school.
- Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism etc.
- The disappearance of a member of the school community. • An accident/tragedy in the wider community.

Aim

The aim of the Critical Incident Management policy and Plan (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 at St Augustine's College 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

- An Evacuation plan has been formulated and practiced by all members of the school community
- Fire drills are regularly coordinated and conducted under the supervision of the school's Health and Safety Officer, Mr. Michael McGrath (Assistant Principal)
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
- Each year group is designated an area for breaktimes/recreational use when not in class. Hurling helmets must be worn when students play hurling during breaktimes. These areas are supervised by a member of management or the teaching staff during breaktimes.

Psychological safety

The management and staff of St. Augustine's 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 curriculum of the junior and senior cycle programmes and delivered to all students in St. Augustine's college. In line with the NCCA directives, our SPHE programmes address the following issues: grief or loss, communication skills, stress, anger management, resilience, conflict management, problem solving, help seeking, bullying, decision making and the prevention of drug and alcohol misuse. The promotion of mental health is an integral part of this programme.
- 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.
- 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

(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.
- The school has a clear policy on bullying and deals with bullying in accordance with the school's policy on bullying.
- There is a care system in place in the school (Pastoral Team)
- 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
- Staff are informed about how to access support for themselves

'Wellbeing Together: Folláine le Chéile' *free phone 1800411057*

Staff are informed of the following publications which provide additional resources for schools on Mental Health Promotion.

Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice in 2019.

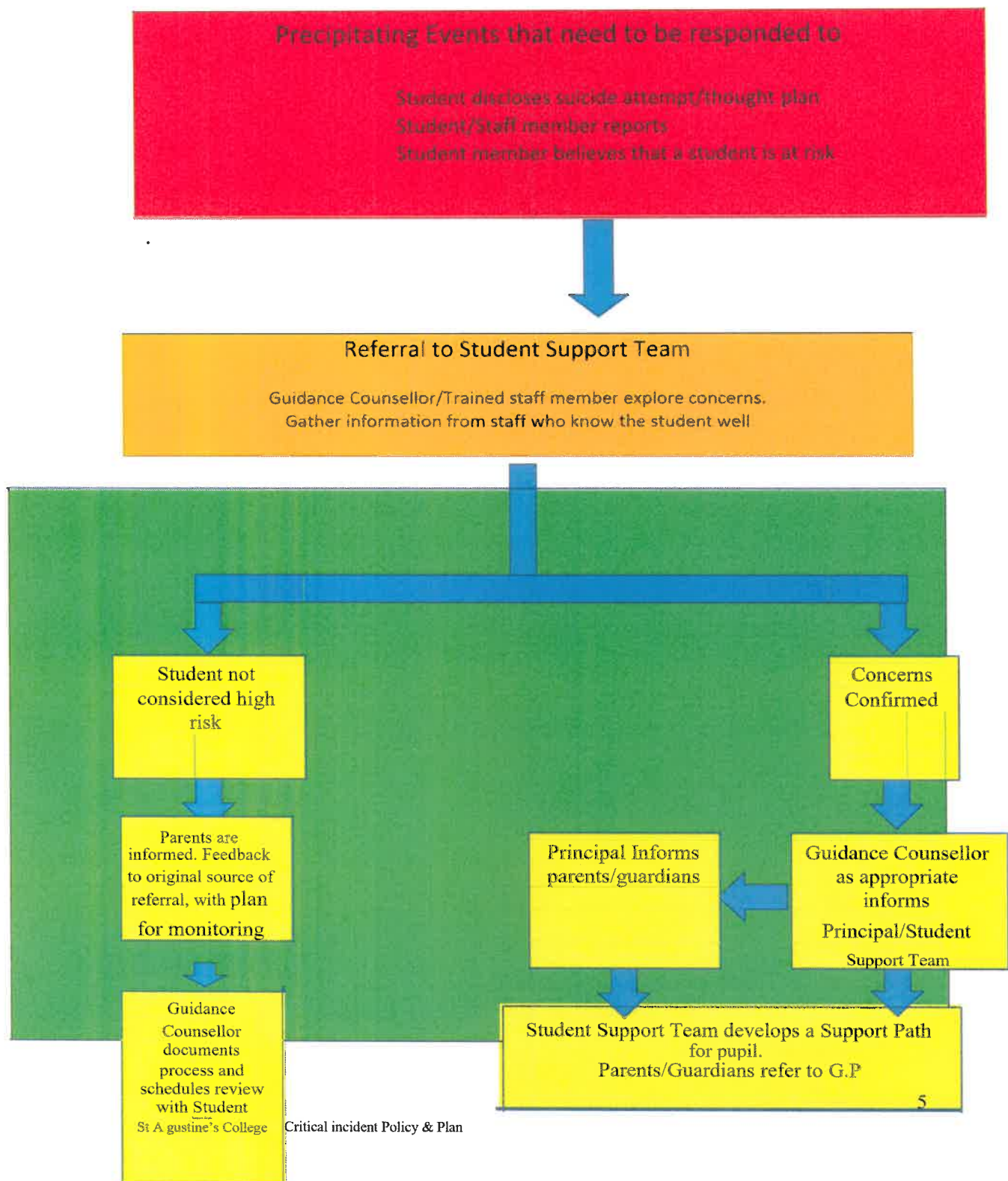
Student Support Teams in Post Primary Schools 2021.

Further information is available online following the links below:

<https://www.pdst.ie/post-primary/health-wellbeing/wellbeing>

<https://assets.gov.ie/40693/a844644845444034bb6a33b2e90cb2f2.pdf>

St. Augustine's College
Responding to Concerns Flow Chart



Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)

St Augustine's College has established a CIMT 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.

NEPS Responding to critical incidents: Guidelines & Resource Materials for Schools (2016) 3 Edition.

Also available on the department of education web site:

<http://www.education.ie> under NEPS

The key roles which need to be covered are as follows:

- Team Leader
- Garda liaison • Staff liaison
- Student liaison
- Parent liaison
- Community liaison
- Media liaison
- Administrator

Team 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
- Liaises with the bereaved family

Garda Liaison

- Liaises with the Gardaí
- 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, gives staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions, and 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

- Co-ordinates information from year heads about students they are concerned about
- Alerts other staff to vulnerable students (appropriately)
- Provides materials for students (from their critical incident folder)
- Keeps records of students seen by external agency staff
- Looks after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room where agreed

Community/agency Liaison

- Maintains 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
- 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

- 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 adaption
- 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

- 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

- 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 school's system in advance and ready for adaptation
- Prepares and sends out letters, emails and faxes
- 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.

The School Secretary 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 St. Augustine's 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.

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.

Critical incident rooms

In the event of a critical incident,

- *The Staff Room/canteen* will be the main room used to meet the staff
- *The Study Hall* for meetings with students
- *The Canteen* for parents
- *The Board Room* for media
- *Councillors Office Madeleine Hearn and Mags McGrath and/or Fr Gerry Horan-*
- *School Chaplin's Office* for individual sessions with students *Visitors Room* for other visitors

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 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 Team Leader (Principal)

The plan will be updated annually at the beginning of the School year.

Critical Incident Management Team

Role	Name	Telephone No.
Team Leader	John Keane	058 41140
Garda Liaison	John Keane	058 41140
Staff Liaison	John Keane / Nollaig Sheehan / Elaine Moore / Gary Morahan	058 41140
Student Liaison	Fr. Gerry Horan, Madeleine Hearn, Mags McGrath Deputy Principals, Appropriate Year Head	058 41140
Parent/ Guardian Liaison	Fr. Gerry Horan, Madeleine Hearn, Mags McGrath, Deputy Principals	058 41140
Community Liaison	John Keane, Nollaig Sheehan, Elaine Moore, Gary Morahan Fr. Gerry Horan	058 41140
Media Liaison	John Keane	058 41140
Administrator/Record keeping	John Keane, Nollaig Sheehan, Elaine Moore, Gary Morahan, Laura Murphy.	058 41140
Auxillary Staff	Shiovaun O'Sullivan, Olive Fitzsimons, Mark O' Brien, Natalie De Burca, Karen Murphy, Rosaleen Curran, Anita Buckley, Lisa Hanrick, Madeleine Hearn, Mags McGrath.	058 41140

Personal Numbers are available from the Office

CONFIDENTIALITY MUST BE MAINTAINED AT ALL TIMES

Short Term Actions / Day 1

Task	Name
Gather Accurate Information	Management Team
Who, What, When, Where?	Staff Room / Canteen
Convene a CIMT meeting/Specify time and place clearly	Management Team
Contact external agencies.	Management Team
Arrange supervision for students	Management Team
Hold Staff meeting	All Staff
Agree schedule for the day	Management Team
Inform Students-(close friends and students with learning difficulties may need to be told separately	Management Team
Compile a list of vulnerable students/Staff	Management Team
Contact/visit bereaved family	Management Team
Prepare and agree media statement and deal with media.	Management Team
Inform Parents/ Guardians	Management Team
Hold end of day staff briefing	Management Team

CONFIDENTIALITY MUST BE MAINTAINED AT ALL TIMES

Medium Term Actions / Day 2 and Following Days

Task	Name
Convene a CIMT meeting to review the events of day 1	Mr. Keane
Meet External Agencies	Management Team
Meet whole staff	Management Team
Arrange support for students, staff, parents/guardians	Management Team
Visit the injured	Management Team
Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements.	Management Team
Agree on attendance and participation of funeral service.	Management Team
Make decision on School closure	Board of Management

Follow Up - Beyond 72 hours

Task	Name
Monitor Students for signs of continuing distress	All staff
Liaise with agencies regarding referrals	Management Team/Guidance
Plan for a return of bereaved student(s)	Management Team/Guidance
Plan for giving memory box to bereaved family	Management Team/Guidance
Decide on memorials and anniversaries	BOM/Management/Staff/parents/students
Review response to incident and amend plan	Staff/ BOM

Emergency Contact List

Agency	Contact Numbers
St. Augustine's College	058 41140
Garda	058 42370 /058 48600
Hospital	051 848000
Fire Brigade	999 058 42222
Care Doc	1850334999
HSE/Duty Social Worker	058 20906
NEPS Psychologist Mr. David Carroll	01-8650921
DES	0906483600
ASTI	01 6040160
Fr Matt Cooney / Fr Gerry Horan	058 41140
State Exams Commission	0906442700
Wellbeing Together: Folláine le Chéile	1800 411 057
EIR CODE	X35 AH76

Local Doctors (GP's) & Dentist

High Street Medical Centre	(058) 41162
Strandside/Springside Medical Centre	(058) 41227
Shandon Medical Centre	(058) 42210
Dentist R Bradfield	(058) 42961
Dentist T Murray	(058) 41155

Signed:

Gerard Hore

(Chairperson of the BOM)

Date:

Signed:

J. Keane

(Principal)

Date: 17 / 9 / 26.

Reviewed 2025

To Be reviewed 2027