



## **CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY**

### **Mission Statement**

***Coláiste Abbáin endeavours to provide quality education for all students in a caring, disciplined and respectful environment. We aim to prepare students for life and responsible citizenship and motivate them towards the achievement of their full potential.***

#### **What is a critical incident?**

Coláiste Abbáin recognises a critical incident to be “an incident or sequence of events that overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of the school, and disrupts the normal running of the school”. Critical incidents may involve students, staff, the school or the local community. 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, terminal illness or suicide.
- An accident involving pupils or staff on or off the school premises.
- A physical attack on staff members or students 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, a loss of family member or school friend, a major accident locally or abroad etc.

The term ‘suicide’ will not be used without the consent of the family involved or until it has been established categorically that a person’s death was as a result of suicide. **The term ‘tragic death’ or sudden death shall be used instead.**

#### **Critical Incident Management Team**

To ensure that the school is in a position to respond effectively to any crisis that it may encounter, the Principal will establish a standing committee of the school staff comprising the following members of staff.

1. Principal
2. Deputy Principal

3. Guidance Counsellor
4. Relevant Year Head and Class Tutor (s)
5. School secretary

***The Principal will act as team leader or in his absence the Deputy Principal.***

### **Procedures to be followed in the event of a Critical Incident**

1. **Hearing the News** – Once a critical incident comes to the attention of a member of the school community, he/she should, where possible and practical, inform the Principal who will subsequently inform the Chairperson of the Board of Management, CEO WWETB. However, where it is apparent that an emergency situation exists, it may be necessary to call one or other of the emergency services in the first instance.
2. **Establish the facts** - Before taking any action it is crucial that the school has the correct information regarding the crisis. Therefore, it is important that the Principal and appropriate staff gather to establish the facts as soon as is practically possible.

#### **Confidentiality and good name considerations:**

Management and staff of Coláiste Abbain 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 will seek to ensure that students do so also.

3. **Management to convene a Meeting of the Critical Incident Team** – Once the facts of the crisis have been established, a meeting of available members of the Critical Incident Team should be called forthwith. This group will need to agree an immediate plan of action, which may include outlining the facts, contacting relevant agencies (Emergency Services, Health Personnel, NEPS and DES Inspectorate etc.) preparing a written statement liaising with the media and outside agencies and assigning roles to team members as the incident requires. Provision for appropriate and relevant counselling services will also be made.
4. **Staff Meeting** – The Principal will meet with the staff to address some key issues such as:
  - Facts of the incident
  - Convey a plan of action/information for staff about which outside agencies have been contacted or are involved and the supports that are in place for both the students and the staff. Needs of any staff/ student member need to be acknowledged.
  - How information is to be relayed to students.
  - How the school will communicate with the media through CIMT team only. Identify students particularly affected.
  - Agree the common response when dealing with the public.
  - Teacher support will be sought to provide supervision on an ad hoc basis when necessary. Visits to affected families organised.
  - When normal school or abridged school practices should continue/resume.

5. **Office Procedure** – An agreed statement is to be issued when responding to phone enquiries. Further enquiries are to be directed to the Principal or other members of the critical incident team. Phone numbers should be available for pupils, parents, guardians, staff and all emergency support services. It is important to maintain a log of events, letter(s) to parents, telephone calls made and received.
6. **Room Allocation** - Students should follow the normal class timetable in so far as possible. Where needed the critical incident team may assign a room to outside agencies e.g. counselling service / school psychologist. A supervised area of support room can be available to facilitate meeting with concerned parents.
7. **After Incident** – The Principal with the assistance of the critical incident team will prepare a report for the BOM and DES. Counselling of those affected will continue as needed. The school will offer any appropriate requested assistance to the family.
8. **Long Term** – The critical incident team should meet as soon as possible to review the procedures followed, consult with the school community and amend as deemed necessary.

#### **Role of CIMT Leader**

- The team leader alerts team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting of the team.
- Co- ordinates/ delegates tasks to the other team members.
- Liaises with the Board of Management, Department of Education and Science, WWWETB.
- In case of bereavement, liaises with the bereaved family.

#### **Other areas of responsibilities which may be delegated by the team leader to other members of the team would include:**

- Contacting Emergency support services
- Briefing and advising the staff and noting their feelings and concerns.
- Organising the supervision of students in the school.
- Keeping staff updated on information/developments/progress.
- Meeting students to brief them on the situation
- Taking care of “vulnerable students/vulnerable teachers”
- Liaising with external agencies for support or referrals.
- Liaising with school organisations such as parents’ association and student council.
- Meeting with individual parents or groups of parents.
- Visiting bereaved families or families closely associated with the incident
- Preparing a press release and liaising with the media.
- Preparation of an “Incident Room”

#### **Record keeping:**

All team members will keep written records of phone calls, letters, meetings interventions etc.

### **Confidentiality**

The school is conscious of its responsibility to protect the privacy and good name of people involved in any incident and will be sensitive to the consequences of any public statements.

### **Pastoral Care Policy**

Our Pastoral Care Policy outlines our ongoing support structures in our school and how we strive to prevent critical incidents arising.

# Critical Incident Action Plan

## Short term actions – Day 1

- Gather accurate information
- Who, what, when, where?
- Convene a CIMT meeting – specify time and place clearly
- Contact external agencies
- Arrange supervision for students
- Hold staff meeting
- Agree schedule for the day
- Inform students – (close friends and students with learning difficulties may need to be told separately)
- Compile a list of vulnerable students
- Prepare and agree media statement and deal with media
- Inform parents
- Hold end of day staff briefing

## Medium term actions - (Day 2 and following days)

- Convene a CIMT meeting to review the events of day 1
- Meet external agencies
- Meet whole staff
- Arrange support for students, staff, parents
- Visit the injured
- Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements
- Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service
- Make decisions about school closure

## Follow-up – beyond 72 hours

- Monitor students for signs of continuing distress
- Liaise with agencies regarding referrals
- Plan for return of bereaved student(s)
- Plan for giving of 'memory box' to bereaved family
- Decide on memorials and anniversaries
- Review response to incident and amend plan

The Critical Incident Policy was adopted by the BOM on 03/12/25.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Chairperson of board of management)

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_