



Cork Educate Together National School

Critical Incident Policy

2025

Introduction:

Cork Educate Together National School aims to protect the wellbeing of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. Our school mission statement states that our school aims to provide each child with an education in a caring and happy environment. We have formulated a policy and procedures to be followed with a view to ensuring the physical and psychological safety of staff and children both in ordinary time and in the event of a critical incident.

What is a critical incident?

The staff and management of Cork Educate Together N.S. recognise a critical incident to be **"An incident or sequence of events that overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school"** (DES 2008). Critical incidents may involve one or more students or staff members or members of our local community. Types of incidents may include:

- The death of a member of the school community through accident, violence, suicide, 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.

Aim:

The aim of the Critical Incident Management Plan is to assist 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 to ensure that the effects on the students and staff will be limited. It should enable us to affect a return to a sense of equilibrium 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 both staff and children.

Physical Safety:

The school Health & Safety Statement has been created and in accordance with this statement, the school has established a safety management system to meet the requirements of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 and all relevant safety legislation including approved codes of practice and guidelines.

Examples of what the school is doing at this point include: -

- Evacuation plans have been formulated and communicated to students and staff.
- Regular fire drills occur. Two in September and then one termly.
- Extra camera surveillance has been installed.
- A buzzer system of entry has been installed.
- Internal phones have been installed in each classroom.
- Fire exits and extinguishers are checked regularly.
- Outer school doors secured during school time.
- External lighting has been installed.
- Pre-opening supervision in the school yard occurs from 08:35-08:50 a.m. where the Special Needs Assistants and teachers supervise the yard.

Psychology:

The management and staff of Cork Educate Together N.S. have created an open and encouraging environment in the school where children can talk about their difficulties and seek help.

- S.P.H.E. 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.

- The school has developed links with outside agencies such as N.E.P.S. School Nurse, School Inspector and I.N.T.O.
- The school has a clear policy on bullying and deals with bullying including cyber-bullying in accordance with this policy.
- Staff are familiar with the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures and details on how to proceed with disclosures. The school has a designated liaison person, Principal Maura O’Riordan. The DLP is Katie Duggan the Deputy Principal.
- Weekly Assembly/Monthly Core Values: Kindness, Respect, Empathy, Happiness, Resilience, Love, Honesty, Responsibility, Trust and Courage.
- Annual “Wellbeing Week”
- Weaving Wellbeing: Junior Infants Class to 6th Class
- Webwise 5th/6th class.
- Staff are informed of difficulties affecting individual students and are aware of and vigilant regarding their needs.
- The school has developed links with a range of external agencies:
 1. Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).
 2. National Educational Psychological Services (NEPS).
 3. Our Public Health Nurse.
 4. Relevant Social Workers.
 5. Relevant Childcare Workers
 6. The Paediatric Development Team.
 7. Relevant Play Therapists
 8. Relevant Speech Therapists.
 9. Relevant Occupational Therapists.

- 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.

Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)

Cork Educate Together N.S. has set up a CIMT in line with best practice and will maintain this team in the future. The members of the team were selected on a voluntary basis and will maintain their role for at least one year. They will meet annually to review and update the plan. Each member of the team has a Ready to go pack with relevant materials to be used in the event of an incident.

Critical Incident Management Team

Key roles have been identified and assigned as follows:

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|----------------------|---------------------------|
| • Team Leader | Maura O’Riordan Principal |
| • Deputy Team Leader | Katie Duggan |
| • Staff Liaison | Katie Hickson |
| • Deputy | Louise Thornhill |
| • Parent Liaison | Aisling Kennedy |
| • Deputy | Francesca Pizzo |
| • Community Liaison | Valerie Kent |
| • Deputy | Rob Flannaghan |
| • Media Liaison | Claire Coleman |

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

Team Leader Maura O’Riordan Principal & Katie Duggan

- Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a team meeting.
- Co-ordinates the tasks of the team.
- Liaises with the Board of Management and DES and NEPS
- Liaises with the bereaved/affected family.

Staff Liaison- Katie Hickson & Louise Thornhill

- Leads briefing meetings for the staff on the facts as known, gives staff members the opportunity to express their feelings and outlines the routine of the day.

Advises staff on the procedures for identification of vulnerable children.

- Is alert to vulnerable staff members and makes contact with them individually.
- Advises them of the availability of the Employee Assistance Service (EAS).

Parent Liaison- Aisling Kennedy & Francesca Pizza

- Visit the bereaved/affected family with the Team Leader.
- Arranges meeting with individual parents.
- Sets up room for meeting with parents. (School Hall).
- Maintain a record of parents present.
- Provide appropriate materials for parents from Critical Incident folder.

Community Liaison- Valerie Kent & Rob Flannaghan

- Access lists of contact numbers of parents through the secretary and PTA WhatsApp Group
- Is alert of the need to check credentials of individuals offering support.
- Updates the team members on the involvement of external agencies.
- Reminds agency staff to wear name badges.

Media Liaison - Claire Coleman

- 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).
- In the event of an incident, will liaise where necessary with the communications section in the DES.
- Will draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews as agreed by the school board of management.

Administrator-Maura O'Riordan Principal

- Maintenance of up-to-date telephone numbers of Parent/ Guardians, Teachers, Staff, Emergency Services.

Deputy Administrator- Sandra O'Neill

- Takes telephone calls and notes those that need to be responded to.
- Ensures that templates are on the school system in advance and ready for adaptation.
- Prepares and sends out letters, e-mails.
- Photocopy material needed.

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, materials used etc.

The school secretary will have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters etc.

Letter to Parents

The team leader with the support of the team will prepare a brief, written statement to include:

The sympathy of the school community for the affected/bereaved family.

Positive information or comments about the deceased/injured persons.

The facts of the incident.

What has been done.

What is going to be done.

Confidentiality and good name considerations

The management and staff of Cork Educate Together N.S are aware of their responsibility in protecting the privacy and good name of the people involved in the incident and will be sensitive to the consequences of any public statements. The members of the staff will bear this in mind.

Critical Incident Rooms

In the event of a critical incident the staff room will be used to meet the school staff. The school hall will be the main room for Parents and other visitors.

All staff were consulted in the preparation of this draft plan. All new and temporary staff will be informed of the details of the draft plan by the principal.

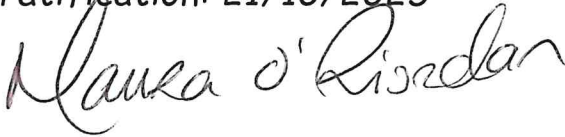
Emergency Contact List

Agency	NAME & Contact NUMBERS
FIRE BRIGADE	999
Mercy Hospital	021 4271971
AMBULANCE	999/ 112
HSE	Cork North Lee 021 4273087
CAMHS	021 4226501
SCHOOL INSPECTOR	Kay Foley
NEPS MAIN OFFICE	021 4536358
DEPT OF EDUCATION& SKILLS	09064-74621
INTO	01 8047700
EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE OFFICE	1800411057 (Available to Teachers and Special Needs Assistants 24 hours a day,365 days a year)

Review:

This policy will be reviewed annually.

Date of ratification: 21/10/2025

Signed: 

Principal, Maura O' Riordan

Signed: 

Chairperson of Board of Management, Claire Coleman