



CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY

Presentation Secondary School

Milltown, Co. Kerry.



School Mission

Our school is a Catholic school which aspires to the full development of all its members according to Christian Principles. Every effort is made to ensure that each student develops according to his/her talents and potential: physically, spiritually, emotionally, intellectually.

We aim to develop fully integrated people who are aware of their own dignity as persons, who have Christian values, who are reliable, trustworthy, honest, truthful, caring, prayerful, devoted to duty, lovers of God and of neighbour; people who are prepared to reach out to those less fortunate than themselves.

Aim & Rationale

Presentation Secondary School, Milltown aims to protect the well-being of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. The Board of Management, through the Principal, has drawn up a Critical Incident Management Plan (CIMP) as one element of the school's policies and plans.

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.

Review & Research

The Critical Incident Management Team (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 201 6)
- 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 201 5)

What is a Critical Incident ?

The staff and management of Presentation Secondary School, Milltown 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 may 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*

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

Plans and procedures are in place in to ensure that our school is a safe as possible.

- Evacuation plan formulated
- Regular fire drills occur
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
- Security door and sign-in/out system at main entrance.

Psychological Safety

The management and staff of Presentation Milltown 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
- 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 NEPS, TUSLA & KDYS
- 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 in line with DES Circular 0023/2010.
- 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 in 2010 & 2014 for post primary schools (www.education.ie)
- 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. In consultation with the Principal/Deputy, parents are informed, and where appropriate, a referral is made to an appropriate agency.
- Staff are informed about how to access support for themselves. (eg. Inspire)

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 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.

It is acknowledged that every Critical Incident will be different in nature and that flexibility will be required within the plan/strategy. “Responding to Critical Incidents: NEPS Guidelines and Resource Materials for Schools” will be used by the CIRT to determine in each case how to proceed.

Team Leader: *Kerry Harkin (Sean Costelloe – Deputy 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/affected family

Garda Liaison: *Kerry Harkin*

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

Staff Liaison: *Kathleen Stack*

- 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: *Denis Maguire*

- 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: *Sean Costelloe*

- Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of
 - 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
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Parent Liaison: *Trish Corbett*

- Arranges parent meetings, if needed
 - Liaise with key members of the Parents Association, if appropriate.
 - 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 adaptation
 - Sets up room for meetings with parents
 - Meets with individual parents and maintains a record of parents seen
 - Provides appropriate materials for parents (from their critical incident folder)
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Media Liaison: *Eileen Kirby*

- 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)
 - Will inform staff as to how to respond to the media
 - In the event of an incident, will liaise where necessary with the SEC; relevant teacher unions etc.
 - Will draw up a press statement and work with the Principal/Deputy with regard to media briefings and interviews
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Administrator: *School Secretary*

- 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 school’s system in advance and ready for adaptation
 - Prepares and sends out letters, emails and texts
 - Photocopies materials needed
 - Maintains records
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Media

The CIRT Leader & Media Liaison will prepare a written statement of the facts known to date and update this statement as appropriate. The statement may include; -

- The facts about the incident
- What has been done already
- What is going to be done
- Positive information or comments about the deceased/injured/missing student/staff.

All members of staff /school community will be informed as to how to respond to the media. Other than the designated media contact person on the CIRT all queries /comments must be directed to the school Principal.

All interviews will be carried out by the Principal or the designated member of the CIRT who has been fully briefed on the incident/press release. Interviews will be kept simple, factual and brief.

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

Management and staff of Presentation Milltown 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

Our school's final policy and plan in relation to responding to critical incidents has been presented to our staff, Parents Association and Student Council. It has also been published on our website. 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. The plan will be updated annually.

Ratified - 6th February 2020

Next Review - February 2022
