

CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT POLICY OF



Tarbert Comprehensive School

Ratified by the Board of Management: 6/2/18

Critical Incident Management Policy - In the Event of a Tragedy

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1. Background

This Critical Incident Management Policy (CIMP) has been drawn up by the School as one element of its policies and plans to act as a key strategy in managing a critical incident.

Tarbert Comprehensive School aims to protect the well-being of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. The Schools' Critical Incident Management Policy supports the values of the school outlined in its Mission Statement:

'In Tarbert Comprehensive School we seek to foster mutual respect and an atmosphere of trust. We promote a healthy work ethic and a love of learning in a spirit of collegiality and co-operation so that all may reach their full potential'

Formulated by the Students, Parents, Staff and Management of Tarbert Comprehensive School, Partners in Education, April 2006. Ratified by the Board of Management, May 2006.

2. Research

In formulating this CIMP School personnel have consulted resource documents available on www.education.ie and www.nosp.ie including:

- 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)
- Responding to Critical Incidents Guidelines and Resources for Schools (NEPS 2016)

3. 'Critical incident' – a definition

The staff and management of Tarbert Comprehensive School 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 might include:

- *An unexpected or sudden death of a member of the school community resulting in such grief that it interferes with the normal operations of the school*
- *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*

4. Aim

The aims of this CIMP are to:

- Help school management and staff to react quickly and effectively in the event of an incident
- Enable us to maintain control
- Ensure that appropriate support is offered to students and staff

- Help ensure that the effects on the students and staff will be limited
- Enable us to effect a return to normality as soon as possible

5. **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.

(A) Physical safety

School Management and staff prioritises and promotes the Health and Safety of its students and Staff (Please see separate Health & Safety Policy). Examples of measures include (list is not exhaustive):

- Code of Behaviour
- Mobile Phone Policy
- School Visitor Policy (Sign in/sign out)
- Healthy Eating Policy
- Active School Flag
- Promoting extra-curricular activity involvement
- Evacuation plan formulated
- Regular fire drills occur
- ICT Acceptable Use Policy (AUP)
- Whole School Guidance Plan
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
- Defibrillators are regularly checked
- Supervision in the school yard/corridors before 9 am, during breaks and after School at bus time
- Use of the pedestrian crossing encouraged by students/staff
- Car park etiquette for staff use
- Student Driver Policy
- Garda Vetting of all teaching, voluntary and ancillary staff

(B) Psychological safety

The management and staff of Tarbert Comprehensive School 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. Examples of measures include (list is not exhaustive):

- SPHE is integrated into the Wellbeing Programme at Junior Cycle in 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
- Books and resources on difficulties affecting the school student are available
- Information is provided on mental health in general and such specific areas as signs and symptoms of depression and anxiety
- Personal Reflection Days for JC2 and LC1 students allowing them to openly discuss and become aware of their personal feelings
- Guest speakers who build awareness on a variety of personal issues, foster resilience and encourage communication. Inputs to students by these external providers are carefully considered in the light of criteria about student safety, the appropriateness of the content, and the expertise of the providers. (DES CL 0023/2010)
- Staff are informed in the area of suicide awareness and some are trained in interventions for suicidal students
- The School has a dedicated School Chaplain and Guidance Counsellor
- Pastoral Care and Whole School Guidance Policies are in place
- The school has developed links with a range of external agencies – such as NEPS, Garda Síochána, LINK, PDST, CAMHS, Diocesan advisor, Túsla, EWO etc.
- 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 for post primary schools).
- Students who are identified as being at risk are referred to the designated staff member (e.g. Chaplain, Guidance Counsellor or Principal/Deputy), 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 external agency.
- The School engages a qualified external counsellor where appropriate. This service is monitored by the Principal through the School Chaplain and is funded by the School, Parents Association fundraising and/or Parental finances
- Staff are informed about how to access support for themselves e.g. Carecall for teachers

6. Critical Incident Team (CIT) & Roles

A CIT has been established in line with best practice. The members of the team were selected on a roles/expertise basis and retain their roles for at least one school year. The members of the team meet throughout the year and have a direct input into the review of this plan. Each member of the team has a dedicated critical incident folder (two copies, one for home and another for School use). This folder contains a copy of the policy and plan and materials particular to the various roles, to be used in the event of an incident. The folder also contains contact phone numbers for members of the CIT as well as all Year Heads and Class Teachers.

A) Team leader: *Principal*, (Deputy Principal to assume role in Principal's absence)

Role

- 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 etc.
- Liaises and sympathises with the bereaved family
- Liaises with the Gardaí (where necessary)

- Ensures that information about deaths or other developments is checked out for accuracy before being shared
- 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 (where necessary)
- 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 Carecall and gives them the contact number.
- Will draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews as appropriate.
- Assigns/delegates other duties to members of the CIT/Pastoral Care team (PCT)/Staff (if necessary).

B) Student liaison – Chaplain & Guidance Counsellor

Role

- Co-ordinates information from Class Teachers and Year Heads about students they are concerned about
- Co-ordinates information from staff about colleagues they are concerned about who may have been affected by similar situations personally and alerts the Principal accordingly
- Alerts other staff to vulnerable students (appropriately)
- Provides materials for students from their critical incident folder (where necessary)
- Maintains student contact records (R1).
- Looks after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room where agreed
- Ensures that templates are on the schools system in advance and ready for adaptation
- Prepares and sends out letters, emails and texts
- Photocopies materials needed
- Maintains general records of CIT meetings
- Visits the bereaved family with the team leader (Chaplain)
- Manages the 'consent' issues in accordance with agreed school policy

C) Community/agency liaison – Deputy Principal

Role

- Ensures copies of this policy are made available to the CIT, the staffroom and the office.
- Provides cover to necessary staff if/when required
- 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
- 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 visitor badges
- Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies
- Visits the bereaved family with the team leader

- Arranges parent meetings, if held
- May facilitate such meetings, and manage 'questions and answers'
- Ensures that sample letters are typed up, on the school's system and ready for adaptation
- Sets up room for meetings with parents
- Maintains a record of parents seen
- Maintains minutes of CIT meetings
- Meets with individual parents
- Provides appropriate materials for parents (from their critical incident folder)

D) Administrator – Office Staff

Role

- 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
- Maintains a visitor sign in system and is alert to the need to check credentials of individuals offering support

E) 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.

School secretary(s) will have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters, photocopying materials, etc.

7. Confidentiality

Management and staff of Tarbert Comprehensive School will do their utmost 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 the use of that term. 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.

8. Consultation and communication regarding the plan

Staff were consulted in the preparation of this policy and plan through the Assistant Principal structure. Students and parent/guardian 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 (CIT) and Pastoral Care Team (PCT) has a personal copy of the plan.

All new and temporary staff will be informed of the details of the plan by the Deputy Principal.

9. Line of Communication in the Event of a Tragedy

1. Principal informed
2. Principal informs Deputy Principal
3. Critical Incident Team informed by phone and/or text message as appropriate
4. Staff informed via School text message (as appropriate, regardless of how public the incident is known so as to alert staff who may be absent)
5. Principal contacts family.
6. Students are at all times encouraged to speak to teachers and School support staff if distressed. It is anticipated that this will occur at times when students become aware of incidents before School personnel.
7. If tragedy occurs during school day – an urgent staff meeting will be held.
8. Principal may temporarily expand the CIT to include additional expertise (if necessary). The Pastoral Care Team (PCT) may also be enlisted.
9. Members of the Board of Management with relevant expertise may also be called upon (if necessary)

10. Suggested Schedule of Events

Short term actions – Day 1

School Remains Open

- Principal checks the facts and verifies as far as possible
- Staff Meeting @ 8.00am (many students in the building by 8.30am). All staff attend whether or not they are on first class.
- Principal ascertains whether all staff are comfortable with informing students. If any member is not comfortable a member of Critical Incident Team/Pastoral Care Team will be assigned to do so. Alternatively the Principal may address the affected year group/student body in assemblies.
- School routine goes on as normal.
- If a student becomes upset they are sent with a friend to a member of CIT/PCT (who will be freed up). Names and venues on separate sheet will be handed out to staff members – e.g. Chaplain's office/Guidance office etc.
- Where a teacher becomes distressed cover is provided by a colleague (since all staff will be present).
- No immediate outside support will be called on.
- NEPS (Counsellor) alerted

- Chaplain, Principal and Deputy Principal visits bereaved family (speak to family regarding funeral arrangements (readings, offertory procession, reflection, guard of honour). Family wishes will dictate involvement of school in the funeral itself.
- Contact will be made with parents of distressed students by Principal, Deputy Principal, Chaplain, Guidance Counsellors or other members of CIT/PCT.
- Minutes' silence and short prayer/reflection over the intercom (Chaplain).
- Letter to be set home via students regarding support structures and coping with critical incident available in the school. A follow up text will be sent to parents to consult this letter.
- Staff meeting @ 3.50pm to discuss how the day went, identify vulnerable students and plan for funeral next day.

Key Tasks - Summary

1. Gather accurate information - Who, what, when, where?

2. Convene a CIT meeting – specify time and place clearly

3. Hold staff meeting

4. Agree schedule for the day

5. Arrange supervision for students/staff

6. Contact external agencies

7. Compile a list of vulnerable students

8. Inform students – (close friends and students with learning difficulties may need to be told separately)

9. Inform parents

10. Prepare and agree media statement and deal with media

11. Hold end of day staff briefing

Medium term actions - *DAY TWO*

Funeral

- Speak to students intending to go to funeral and distribute letters for parental consent.
- If student is a 1st, 2nd, 3rd year, TY or LCA – the class members wishing to go, capable of going and those with parental consent, will be taken to the funeral in school uniform.
- If student is LC1 or LC2 – class reps and close friends attend. (See School Policy on Funerals)
- Bus to be organised by the Guidance Counsellor.
- A guard of honour may not always be appropriate at funerals. The School in consultation with the family will decide on its appropriateness and organisation depending on the circumstances, time of year etc.
- Staff will be represented at the funeral usually by the Principal, Deputy Principal, Chaplain and Year Head. Others including the Class teacher may also be requested by the Principal.
- Service will be held in school in as far as possible to coincide with the funeral. Service to be held within the week (lunch-time) and open to all students.

Key Tasks Summary
1. Convene a CIT meeting to review the events of day 1
2. Meet whole staff
3. Meet external agencies
4. Arrange support for students, staff, parents
5. Visit the injured (if appropriate)
6. Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements
7. Remind Staff/Students of arrangement on attendance and participation at funeral service
8. Make decisions about school closure

Follow-up – beyond 72 hours

Task
1. Liaise with agencies regarding referrals
2. Plan for return of bereaved student(s)
3. Monitor students for signs of continuing distress

4. Plan for giving of 'memory box' to bereaved family (if appropriate)
5. Decide on memorials and anniversaries (if appropriate)
6. Review response to incident and amend plan

11. Critical Incident Team/Pastoral Care Team

The School's **CIT** is made up of the Principal, Deputy Principal, Chaplain, Guidance Counsellor and the associated Year Head.

The School's **PCT** is made up of the Principal, Deputy Principal, Chaplain, Guidance Counsellor, Ms Bríd Carroll, Ms Paula Falvey and Mr Andrew McNamara

12. Year Heads/Coordinators (2017/18)

1st Years – Ms G. O'Callaghan, 2nd Years - Mr K. O' Keeffe, 3rd Years – Ms E Fitzgerald, LC1 – Mr J. Dore, LC2 – Ms R. O' Donoghue, LCA1 – Mr Denis O'Shea, TY Co-ordinator – Ms M. Hogan, LCVP – P. McElligott

13. Review

This Critical Incident Policy was updated in February 2018 to reflect changes in staffing, structures and relevant guidance documents.

It will be reviewed and updated every 3 years and following any change to guidelines and/or following any critical incident.

14. Glossary

AUP	Acceptable Use Policy
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
CIMP	Critical Incident Management Plan
CIT	Critical Incident Team
CL	Circular Letter
DES	Department of Education and Skills
DLP	Designated Liaison Person (Child Protection)
DDLDP	Deputy Designated Liaison Person (Child Protection)
DOH	Department of Health
ETB	Education and Training Board
EWO	Education Welfare Officer
HSE	Health Service Executive
IAS	Irish Association of Suicidology
ICT	Information & Communication Technology
JC	Junior Cycle
LC	Leaving Certificate
LCA	Leaving Certificate Applied
LCVP	Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme
LINK	Learning Initiative North Kerry
NCGE	National Centre for Guidance in Education
NCSE	National Council for Special Education
NEPS	National Educational Psychological Service
PCT	Pastoral Care Team
RE	Religious Education
SC	Senior Cycle
SEC	State Examinations Commission
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SPHE	Social, Personal and Health Education
Túsla	Child and Family Agency
TY	Transition Year
WSG	Whole School Guidance