



## Critical Incident Management Policy

### Introductory Statement

Presentation College, Carlow aims to protect the wellbeing of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. The Critical Incident Management Policy (CIMP) has been developed following consultation between staff, parents, students, Principal and the Board of Management. In this policy document the term 'parent' is taken to include 'guardian'. This policy reflects the educational philosophy of the Presentation Sisters, CEIST and the core values and ethos of the school, as outlined in the school's Mission Statement: *'We aim to prepare all of our pupils, boys and girls alike for the challenges, responsibilities and experiences of adult life. All members of the school community – pupils, parents, teachers and other staff – are held in very high regard and their dignity, worth and individuality are respected. We strive to build a sense of community based on Christian values. The school's Code of Behaviour acknowledges this and aims to promote a culture of respect throughout the school'.*

The Board of Management, through the Principal, has drawn up a Critical Incident Management Plan as one element of the school's policies and plans.

### Review and Research

The Critical Incident Management Team has consulted resource documents available to schools on [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie) and [www.nosp.ie](http://www.nosp.ie) including:

- Responding to Critical Incidents Guidelines and Resources for Schools (NEPS 2016)
- Critical Incident Suggestions for Secondary Schools (IGC)
- Suicide Prevention in Schools: Best Practice Guidelines (IAS, National Suicide Review Group (2002)
- Suicide Prevention in the Community - A Practical Guide (HSE 2011)
- Wellbeing in Post-Primary Schools Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention (DES, DOH, HSE 2013)
- Wellbeing Guidelines (DES, 2016)

### Definition of the Term 'Critical Incident'

The staff and management of Presentation College 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:

- The death of a member of the school community through accident, violence, suicide or suspected suicide or other unexpected death, resulting in such grief that it interferes with the normal operation of the school
- 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

*This list is not exhaustive.*



## Aim

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.

## 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

In line with the school's Safety and Health Policy the following measures are in place to provide for the physical safety of the school community:

- We have an up-to-date Safety Statement and Policy
- A Post of Responsibility (API) involves management of safety, health and plant management
- Evacuation plan formulated and displayed in all rooms
- Induction on health and safety, fire drill and evacuation procedures for new staff is provided at the start of each academic year
- Regular fire drills occur
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
- Demonstration on the correct use of fire extinguishers is given to staff
- First Aid supplies are available to students and their location clearly indicated
- A list of staff who are trained First Aid Responders is available and displayed in the staffroom and at the First Aid point for students
- A blood contamination kit is available in the First Aid point
- Induction in First Aid procedures and Blood Contamination Kit operation is conducted for new staff at the start of the academic year
- A defibrillator is located outside the Principal's office
- A number of staff have completed training in CPR and in the use of the defibrillator. The names are recorded in the Safety Statement
- Supervision in the school grounds before school starts, at morning break, at lunchtime and after school
- The Askea gate is normally locked during school hours (open at the following times: 7.30-8.50am, 12.45-1.15pm, 1.45 – 2.10pm and 3.45-6.30pm).
- Junior students are not permitted to leave the school ground during the school day, without parental collection
- Senior students are only permitted to leave the school grounds during lunchtime, and are also permitted to leave with parental consent, provided contact has been made with the parent by the Year Head (or member of Senior Management) and consent given by the parent
- Junior students leaving the premises must be collected by a parent unless a note has been furnished to the Year Head in advance of leaving (see Attendance and Participation Policy)



- Students are not permitted to stay on the school grounds after school unless supervised by a member of staff
- Security cameras monitor the school building and grounds.

## Psychological Safety

The management and staff of Presentation 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. Examples of the provision for psychological safety of the school community include:

- The school's Mission Statement is communicated to the school community and is the basis of an atmosphere of respect for each member of the school community
- At least four hundred hours of Wellbeing is provided to students in Junior Cycle, effective from September 2020, and students at Senior Cycle are also supported psychologically through SPHE, Career Guidance, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities
- A range of extra-curricular activities are available to students to support their wellbeing
- 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. See DES Circular 0043/2018 (Post-Primary)
- Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and Wellbeing are integrated into the work of the school. They are 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 and wellbeing is an integral part of this provision.
- There is a Student Care system in place in the school. This includes the following teams:
  - Junior Student Support Team
  - Senior Student Support Team
  - Special Educational Needs Team
  - Meitheal Team
- A clear reporting mechanism is in place for staff to notify one of the first three teams above of concerns in relation to students' behaviour, work or psychological safety or wellbeing.
- 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.
- The school has a clear Anti-Bullying Policy and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy.
- The Year Head has overall responsibility for the students in a Year Group. The Dean of Discipline has responsibility for discipline-related matters for students in a Year Group. The Guidance Counsellors are available to support students in a Guidance and Counselling capacity, subject to resources.
- Books and resources on difficulties affecting the post primary school student are available.
- Information is provided on mental health and wellbeing in general and such specific areas as signs and symptoms of depression and anxiety.
- Staff have access to training for their role in SPHE / Wellbeing.



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- Staff are familiar with the Child Protection Procedures (2023) and the Child Safeguarding Statement (2023), and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures, and have completed online training in Child Protection.
- Staff are informed in the area of suicide awareness and some are trained in interventions for suicidal students.
- Staff are informed about how to access support for themselves e.g. Employee Assistance Service: Spectrum.Life (<https://www.spectrum.life/> Phone 01-5180356)
- The school has developed links with a range of external agencies e.g.
  - National Education Psychological Service (NEPS),
  - Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS),
  - Carlow Regional Youth Services (CRYS)

The staff Link Person with NEPS and CAMHS is Ms. Vanessa Keating. The staff Link Persons with CRYS are Ms. Marie Cumiskey and Ms. Tara O'Sullivan (Guidance Counsellors).

- The physical environment of the school is clean, with appropriate artwork and signage, conducive to the safety and psychological welfare of the school community.

### Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)

A Critical Incident Management Team is a group of individuals from the staff of Presentation College who know the students, community and each other well enough to make the necessary decisions called for when a critical incident occurs. 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.

### Team Personnel Roles

- The Team Leader is a person who carries authority and can make decisions during a crisis e.g. liaising with Board of Management re school closure, attendance at funeral/memorial service etc.
- The Garda Liaison Person is a staff member who has sufficient authority to liaise with Gardaí on behalf of the school.
- The Staff Liaison Person is a staff member who is known and trusted by staff.
- The Student Liaison Person is a staff member who is a trusted and familiar figure to the students.
- The Community/Agency Liaison Person is a staff member with good contact with agencies and relevant individuals in the community.
- The Parent Liaison Person is a staff member who is known to parents, who is comfortable speaking in front of large groups and has the skills to manage emotions/reactions.
- The Media Liaison Person is a person who carries the authority and competence to deal with media in a clear, professional, prudent, sensitive and appropriate manner.
- The Year Head has overall responsibility for a year group while maintaining an orderly, secure and healthy learning environment and communicates the guiding vision of the school to the year group.
- The Administrators are staff members who organise and record the practical communications system to ensure that communication is kept clear and appropriate throughout and in the aftermath of a critical incident.



- Depending on the particular critical incident and the manner in which staff may be impacted by same, there will be a degree of flexibility in the roles of the team personnel. Where a member of staff feels unable to perform the role requested of them, he/she should inform the Principal who will endeavour to reassign his/her role where possible.
- The CIMT will meet daily for as long as is considered necessary by the Principal in order to be briefed and updated on the implementation of the CIMP and agree future/upcoming actions.

**Team Leader: Principal: Mr. Ray Murray**

**Role**

- Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting of the CIMT
- Coordinates the tasks of the team
- Liaises with the Board of Management; DES; NEPS; SEC
- Liaises with the bereaved family
- Attend the funeral, if appropriate
- In the absence of the Principal, a Deputy Principal (Ms. Lorraine Gillespie / Mr. Gary Carley) will lead the team. In the absence of all members of Senior Management the Principal will nominate in advance an Acting Principal and two Acting Deputy Principals from the Assistant Principal I Post-Holders, by agreement, and this will be communicated to the staff via email or staffroom noticeboard. Those who are in the Acting capacity will assume responsibility in the event of a critical incident, co-ordinated by the Acting Principal.

**Garda Liaison: Principal: Mr. Ray Murray**

**Role**

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

**Staff Liaison: Deputy Principal: Mr. Gary Carley**

**Role**

- 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
- Arranges S&S roster to ensure that classes are taught/supervised and that relevant members of the CIMT are available, as required



**Student Liaison: Guidance Counsellor:** Ms. Marie Cumiskey; Ms. Rebecca Murphy (**SEN Coordinator**), Ms. Lorraine Gillespie (**Deputy Principal**)

**Role**

- Coordinates information from Year Heads, Deans, Student Care Teams and the Special Educational Needs Teams about students they are concerned about
- Alerts senior management and 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 room for vulnerable students
- Looks after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room
- Helps contact parents of students identified as vulnerable

**Community/Agency liaison:** Ms. Vanessa Keating (NEPS Link Person)

**Role**

- 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
- Advises staff of the availability of the EAS and gives them the contact number (01-5180356)
- Helps contact parents of students identified as vulnerable

**Parent Liaison: Guidance Counsellor:** Ms. Tara O'Sullivan; Ms. Rebecca Murphy (**SEN Coordinator**), Ms. Lorraine Gillespie (**Deputy Principal**)

**Role**

- Visits the bereaved family with the Team Leader, if appropriate
- 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 adaptation
- 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)
- Helps contact parents of students identified as vulnerable

**Media Liaison: Principal: Mr. Ray Murray****Role**

- 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)

**Safety and Health Officer: Mr. Ray Murray****Role**

- Manages the activities and work of the Caretaking and Cleaning Staff
- Oversees access to the school building and to the appropriate rooms within the building for all relevant personnel
- Be of assistance to the Principal, as required

**Year Head: Relevant Year Head, as appropriate to the year group****Role**

- Meets with students in the affected year group in a supportive capacity
- Visits the bereaved family with the Team Leader, if appropriate
- Liaises with parents of students who may need to go home to arrange for their safe collection
- Liaises with the Ethos Coordinator, R.E. Coordinator and Principal re the organisation of a communal ritual, if appropriate (e.g. Prayer Service)
- Attends the funeral, if appropriate

**Administrators: School Secretaries: Ms. Patricia Whelan and Ms. Majella O'Shea****Role**

- Maintenance of up-to-date telephone numbers of
  - Parents
  - Teachers
  - Emergency services
- Take telephone calls and note those that need to be responded to
- Ensure that templates are on the school's Data Management system in advance and ready for adaptation
- Prepare and send out letters, emails and texts
- Photocopy materials needed
- Maintain records





## **Record Keeping: School Secretaries:** Ms. Patricia Whelan and Ms. Majella O'Shea

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 College 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.

In the event that a Critical Incident occurs during the school holidays it is anticipated that this plan will be implemented but in a limited capacity.

<b>Critical Incident Rooms</b>	
In the event of a critical incident, the following rooms are designated for the indicated purposes	
<b>Room Name:</b>	<b>Designated Purpose:</b>
<b>Staffroom</b>	Main room for meeting staff
<b>Library, Hall</b>	Meetings with students
<b>Room 12</b>	*Meeting with most vulnerable students
<b>Boardroom</b>	Meetings with parents and meetings of CIMT
<b>Room 39</b>	Meetings with media
<b>Room 24</b>	Place of quiet reflection / prayer
<b>Guidance Offices</b>	Individual sessions with students
<b>Rooms 30, 31, and 38.</b>	Meetings with other visitors

*\*In discussion with the Principal, the use of Room 12 is confined to use with vulnerable students. This is to ensure that vulnerable students are kept safe, in proximity to a Guidance Counsellor and at a distance from media, reassured and supported in the short term until such time that they can be collected by parents. Depending on circumstances the allocation of rooms may change as needs arise, and communicated to staff via email and staff notice board by Mr. Carley.*





## 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 Management Team has a personal copy of the plan.

All new and temporary staff will be informed of the details of the plan by the Safety and Health Officer. The plan will be updated annually.

In the event of a Critical Incident the line of communication is initiated by the Principal who will inform staff as appropriate, depending on the circumstances of the event. The initial communication may be in the form of a group text message to all staff or an email.

In many situations the school will remain open on the first day of a Critical Incident, but this will depend on the circumstances of the event and the decision of the Board of Management. The Principal will be advised on this matter by NEPS. Depending on the severity of the Critical Incident, it may not be possible for classes to continue on the first day of the incident. Students and staff may wish to avail of the necessary supports in the school and gather for mutual support. Arrangements will be decided by the Principal in consultation with the Board of Management, and communicated to staff and students as early as possible.

## Short Term Actions – Day One

Task	Name
Gather accurate information	Mr. Ray Murray
Who, what, when, where?	Mr. Ray Murray
Convene a CIMT meeting – specify time and place clearly	Mr. Ray Murray
Contact external agencies	Ms. Vanessa Keating
Arrange supervision for students	Mr. Gary Carley
Hold staff meeting	All staff Convened by Principal
Agree schedule for the day	Mr. Gary Carley
Inform students – (close friends and students with learning difficulties may need to be told separately)	Mr. Ray Murray Ms. Lorraine Gillespie Mr Gary Carley Ms. Marie Cumiskey Ms. Tara O'Sullivan Ms Rebecca Murphy Year Head



<b>Compile a list of vulnerable students</b>	Ms. Marie Cumiskey
<b>Prepare and agree media statement and deal with media</b>	Mr. Ray Murray
<b>*Inform parents</b>	Mr. Ray Murray Ms. Marie Cumiskey Ms. Tara O'Sullivan Ms. Lorraine Gillespie Ms Rebecca Murphy
<b>Hold end-of-day staff briefing</b> (discuss how the day went and plan for the next day)	Mr. Ray Murray

*\*Depending on the circumstances, the Principal may initially communicate the news to parents via group text. Thereafter, a letter will be sent home via students regarding the event, support structures and coping with critical incidents. The letter templates of the National Education Psychological Service will be used as templates for letters to parents and for media announcements. Parents of students identified as vulnerable will be contacted by phone.*



## Medium Term Actions - (Day Two and Following Days)

Task	Name
Convene a CIMT meeting to review the events of Day One	Mr. Ray Murray
Meet external agencies	Ms. Lorraine Gillespie Ms Vanessa Keating Mr Gary Carley Ms Marie Cumiskey Ms. Tara O'Sullivan
Meet whole staff	Mr. Ray Murray Mr. Gary Carley Ms. Lorraine Gillespie
Arrange support for students, staff, parents	Mr. Ray Murray Ms. Lorraine Gillespie Mr. Gary Carley Ms. Marie Cumiskey Ms. Tara O'Sullivan Ms Rebecca Murphy Ms Vanessa Keating Year Head
Visit the injured	Mr. Ray Murray Members of relevant Student Support Team, as appropriate
Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements	Mr. Ray Murray who in turn communicates with Prefect Coordinator who communicates with Prefects
*Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service	Mr. Ray Murray who in turn communicates with Year Head, Deputy Principals and Prefect Coordinator who communicates with Prefects
Organise communal ritual, if appropriate (e.g. Prayer Service)	Year Head who liaises with Ms. Gillespie and R.E. Coordinator
Make decisions about school closure	Board of Management

*\*This is done by consultation with the bereaved family. The Prefect Coordinator will organise parental consent where Prefects will attend a funeral service. The Prefect Coordinator will, if required, organise suitable transport to and from the venue, meet with Prefects to brief them on expectations re uniform etc. The Principal will liaise with the Deputy Principal (Mr. Gary Carley), as Staff Liaison Person, regarding who may represent the staff at*



the funeral service. The Principal will communicate with the family re the appropriateness or wishes for or against a Guard of Honour, and thereafter the Prefect Coordinator will organise same, if required.

## Follow-Up – Beyond Seventy-Two Hours

Task	Name
Monitor students for signs of continuing distress	Year Heads Class teachers Guidance Counsellors Non-teaching staff
Liaise with agencies regarding referrals	Ms. Vanessa Keating
Plan for return of bereaved student(s)	Mr. Ray Murray Student Support Teams
Plan for giving of 'memory box' to bereaved family	Mr. Ray Murray
Decide on memorials and anniversaries	Board of Management Staff Parents Students
*Review response to incident and amend plan	Board of Management Staff

*\*An evaluation of the implementation of the Critical Incident Management Plan will be conducted by the CIMT at an appropriate time after the event. This evaluation is a vital part of the process of maintaining a viable Critical Incident Management Plan. Since crisis management can only develop with an analysis of past incidents, feedback in light of past responses and systematic evaluation of all protocols in place is essential. The NEPS resource materials 'Responding to Critical Incidents' will be used to help guide key personnel in the management of a critical incident. Appendix I contains questions for consideration as part of a review and evaluation of the implementation of CIMP, as appropriate.*

Reviewed and Ratified by the Board of Management on: 5<sup>th</sup> October 2023

Date of next review: October 2024

Signature (Chairperson): \_\_\_\_\_  
For and on behalf of the Board of Management



## Appendix I

Issues to be aware of in light of effective evaluation include:

- The confidence of the Critical Incident Management Team in their roles in the event of a Critical Incident
- Was internal communication effective between staff?
- Were all staff furnished with accurate facts and kept up-to-date on a consistent basis?
- Was the overall communication strategy successful?
- Was information disseminated quickly to avoid speculation and rumour?
- Was there adequate and effective communication with the family involved?
- What lessons could be learned from an analysis of this strategy?
- Was feedback obtained from staff as to whether they felt sufficiently equipped to deal emotionally and physically with the incident?
- Was there sufficient guidance and support to individual teachers, staff and students?
- Were students adequately supervised during the Crisis Meeting?
- Was there sufficient Pastoral Care provided to deal with the incident?
- Was communication with the media effective?
- Have all necessary referrals to support services been made?
- Were external support agencies met with for feedback in the aftermath of the incident?
- Were all expenses incurred met and dealt with in a timely manner?
- What amendments need to be made to any further crisis management incidents in the light of the review of the incident?