



## **Critical Incident Policy**

### **Short-term, Medium- term and Long- term Plan**

#### **Scope**

This policy applies to all members of the school community at Gaelcholáiste Charraig Uí Leighin.

#### **Aims**

We, at Gaelcholáiste Charraig Uí Leighin, aim to protect the well-being of our students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. This policy aims to facilitate implementation of a plan of action, should the School Management be notified of a Critical Incident affecting the school community.

#### **Objectives**

1. Definition of a Critical Incident;
2. Identification of Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT);
3. To outline Procedure following a Critical Incident:
  - Short-term (Day 1)
  - Medium term (Days 2-3)
  - Follow up (72 hours);
4. To offer support following Suicide;
5. To provide Emergency contact lists;
6. To outline Defibrillators/First Aid procedures.

#### **Review**

We at Gaelcholáiste Charraig Uí Leighin view this policy as a “live policy”. As a result, it will be reviewed periodically in consultation with all relevant partners after each Critical Incident.

#### **Media**

When necessary, the Principal or deputized staff member will handle media queries.

## **Appendices**

1. Letter to parents (Sample letter requesting consent for involvement of outside professionals);
2. Letter to parents (Sample letter informing parents of Critical Incident);
3. Sample Statement for the Media;
4. Guidelines for breaking news to students;

### **1. Defining a Critical Incident**

A Critical Incident is any incident or sequence of events which overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of the school.

Examples of crises affecting schools:

- The death of a member of the school community.
- An accident involving pupils or staff on or off the school premises.
- Serious damage to the school e.g. fire, flood, explosion, vandalism etc.
- The disappearance of a member of the school community.
- An accident/tragedy in the wider community that will impact on the school community.

### **2. The role of the Critical Incident Team (C.I.T.)**

The Team consists of the Principal, the Deputy Principal and the School Counsellor. Other members of staff may also be included, depending on the nature of the Critical Incident.

Aims of C.I.T. meetings:

- 1) Roles and responsibility for tasks are discussed and allocated
- 2) Emergency information and contact numbers are updated and filed.
- 3) Team members identify a response to a Critical Incident. (Details of the procedure that will be followed)

### **3. Procedure: Short-term (Day 1) Medium term (Days 2-3) Follow up (72hours)**

#### **Short Term Response (24 hours directly after incident)**

It is important to maintain a normal routine when at all possible and it is recommended that the school timetable runs as normal. That will provide a sense of safety and structure which is comforting for many students. Teachers should give students the opportunity to talk about what has happened if appropriate and temporarily defer academic activities if necessary.

## Short Term Checklist

Task	Assigned to	Completed by
Gather accurate information relating to incident and establish the facts (who, where, when, etc.)		
Contact appropriate supports/agencies eg NEPS		
Organise a C.I.M.T. meeting		
Organise student supervision		
Prepare and carry out a full staff meeting		
Plan procedures for the remainder of the day		
Make contact with family and close friends of affected party if applicable and appropriate		
Inform students		
Inform parents		
Deal with media (prepare and agree on statement)		
Arrange a quiet reflection area for use of students who may need time out to process the incident if appropriate		
Organise staff briefing at the end of the day		

## Medium Term Response (24-72 hours)

It is sometimes the case that the first day following an incident is quite calm as people may be in shock. Day 2 may be a day when more support is needed as the news begins to sink in. It is advisable that the C.I.M.T. continues to meet each day until the school returns to normal functioning.

## Medium Term Checklist

Task	Assigned to	Completed by
Hold a C.I.M.T. meeting to review what has been done to date and plan for the following days		
Meet whole staff		

Meet external agencies if applicable and appropriate		
Arrange support for students, staff and parents		
Plan the re-integration of staff and students		
Visit any injured parties		
Liaise with affected family regarding funeral/ritual arrangements if applicable and appropriate		
Agree on attendance at funeral		
Make decision about school closure/suspension of classes		
Develop a plan for monitoring vulnerable students over the next few weeks		

### **Follow up (Beyond 72 hours)**

Follow-up is the work carried out in the weeks, months and years following a critical incident. The goal of follow-up is to help the school community cope with the impact of the event in the longer term, and to monitor those individuals with ongoing difficulties.

The school may also decide to review the Critical Incident Policy and plan memorials.

### **Follow Up Checklist**

Task	Assigned to	Completed by
Monitor students/every staff member for ongoing distress		
Liaise with agencies regarding referrals		
Meet whole staff if necessary		
Plan for return of affected students/staff		
Return personal items to family		
Decide on memorials and anniversaries		
Review response to incident. Update plan if necessary		

#### 4. Suicide

Firstly, great care will be taken in the use of the term 'suicide'. A staff member should contact the family to establish the exact facts and the family's wishes about how the death should be described. The phrases 'tragic death' or 'sudden death' may be used instead. Issues that may arise when a student dies by suspected suicide:

##### Family

- Sympathise with them and acknowledge their grief and loss
- Organise a home visit by two staff members (checking first that the family would welcome such a visit)
- Consult with the family regarding the appropriate support from the school e.g. at the funeral service

##### Students

- Give the facts as agreed with the bereaved family;
- Inform close friends and relatives separately;
- Create safe and supportive spaces for the students where they can share their reactions and feelings;
- Advise them on their possible reactions over the next few days;
- Avoid glorifying the victim and sensationalising the suicide. Carry out the same rituals or memorial services as you would for other student deaths.
- Advise the students of the support that is available to them. Tell them that talking is positive and helpful;
- Take any talk of suicide seriously. Follow school protocols for dealing with this. Provide support, inform parents immediately and discuss onward referral options;
- Students may wish to seek support from each other rather than adults. Facilitate this if appropriate and if it is possible. However, information should be provided about how to get further help if they, or their friends, should need it;

It is important following the funeral of a student who has died by suicide that students and parents are encouraged to come back to the school for support.

#### 5. Emergency Services for Gaelcholáiste Charraig Uí Leighin:

Service	Contact Number
Fire	(021) 437 4147
CUH	(021) 492 2000
Gardaí	(021) 491 9370
Irish Water	1800 278 278
Electricity	1850 372 999

Gas	1850 20 50 50
Priest	<a href="http://www.carrigalineparish.ie/contact/">http://www.carrigalineparish.ie/contact/</a> Fr. Pat Fogarty 021 437 1684
Emergency Services	112 / 999
Doctors:	
Owenabue Medical Centre, Ballea Road, Carrigaline	021 437 4997
Carrig Medical Centre, Station Road, Carrigaline	021 437 3555
Cork Road Clinic, Cork Road, Carrigaline	021 437 1177
Carrigaline Surgery, Main Street, Carrigaline	021 437 2635
Bridge House Surgery, Main Street, Carrigaline	021 437 2663
South Doc – Cork City – Southside/Kinsale Road Unit 17/18 South Ring Business Park, Kinsale Road, Co. Cork	1850 335 999
Carrigaline Primary Health Care Centre	021-4540201
Carrigaline Wellness Centre	087-7876361
Jigsaw	021-2452500
Pieta House	021-4395333

### School Address

Gaelcholáiste Charraig Uí Leighin,  
Ardnacloghy,  
Carrigaline,  
Co. Cork  
P43 XV78

### 6. Defibrillators/First Aid

There is an AED (Automated External Defibrillator) Device located in the school's First-Aid Room. All staff members have received Emergency First Aid training and are trained to use this device.

Retraining will continue on an annual basis.

In addition, there are First Aid kits located in the First-Aid Room, the Science room, and the Home Economics room.

For school outings/trips, this kit will be brought and the relevant staff member will have a copy of the Emergency Contact list.

## Appendices

1. Letter to parents (Sample letter requesting consent for involvement of outside professionals)
2. Letter to parents (Sample letter informing parents of critical incident)
3. Sample Statement for the Media
4. Guidelines for breaking news to students

### **1. Letter to parents (Sample letter requesting consent for involvement of outside professionals)**

Dear Parents,

Following the recent (tragedy, death of X) we have arranged professional support for students in school who need particular help. (X...) is available to help us with this work. This support will usually consist of talking and listening to students, either in small groups or on a one-to-one basis and offering reassurance and advice as appropriate.

If you would like your son/daughter to receive this support, please sign the attached permission slip and return it to the school by \_\_\_\_\_. If you would like further information on the above, please indicate this on the slip or telephone the school.

Yours Sincerely,

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Donnchadh Ó Cróinín  
Príomhoide na Scoile

.....  
I/ We consent to having our son/ daughter avail of the support provided by the Department of Education and Skills. I/ We understand that my son/ daughter may avail of the support being offered in an individual or group session depending on the arrangements which are thought to be most appropriate.

Name of student: \_\_\_\_\_

Class/ Year: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

I would like my son/ daughter \_\_\_\_\_ to avail of the support being offered.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

## **2. Letter to parents (Sample letter informing parents of Critical Incident)**

Dear Parents/ Guardians,

The school has experienced (the sudden death, accidental injury, etc) of (Name of student(s)).

We are deeply saddened by the death/ event. (Brief details of the incident, and in the event of a death, perhaps some positive remembrance of the person lost). Our thoughts are with (family name).

We have support structures in place to help your child cope with this tragedy. (Elaborate). It is possible that your child may have some feelings and questions that he/ she may like to discuss with you. It is important to give factual information that is appropriate to their age. Although classes will continue as usual, I anticipate that the next few days will be difficult for everyone.

We have enclosed some information which you may find useful in helping your child through this difficult time. If you would like advice you may contact the Critical Incident Team at the school. (Details).

Yours Sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_



### **3. Sample Statement for the Media**

It is with profound sadness that the Management, staff and students of Gaelcholáiste Charraig Uí Leighin have learned of the tragic death of \_\_\_\_\_.

Our sincerest sympathy is extended to the family of \_\_\_\_\_.

On hearing the news the Critical Incident Policy was put into immediate operation. The Critical Incident Team (C.I.T) convened a meeting to ensure that students affected by this loss were cared for adequately.

Procedures are in place to ensure that all in the school community affected by this loss are given all the help they need to cope at this time. The school is offering counselling and support for students, parents and staff affected by this tragedy.

Students will attend and participate in the funeral service, in conjunction with the wishes of the family. Our support and prayers are with everyone affected by this tragedy.

### **4. Guidelines for breaking news to students**

1. The class of the student who has been involved in the accident/ death should be told first with the Principal and Vice Principal present. Only tell the facts as you have them. Class teachers of the other classes should inform them, again only with the facts.
2. Acknowledge to the class the news is upsetting and that they may feel shock, anger or be traumatised. Acknowledge their feelings and allow them to share their feelings amongst one another.
3. Be attentive to identify those who are not coping well.
4. Identify who else is available to support them especially the names of the C.I.T. and where they will be located.
5. Allow students to talk to and support one another, keeping them in the classroom. Do not allow anyone to leave the classroom in a distressed state.
6. Some may have to go home but only allow this if parents or guardians come to collect them.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management of Gaelcholáiste Charraig Uí Leighin on May 16<sup>th</sup> 2016.

It was reviewed on February 1st, 2022.

It has been made available to all school partners and will be reviewed regularly.