

Critical Incident Policy



**Our Lady of Mercy College
Beaumont
Dublin 9**

Approved by the BOM:

Date 10th April 2024

:

1. Introductory Statement:

Our Lady of Mercy College 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 school Principal, has drawn up a Critical Incident Management Plan (CIMP) as one element of the school’s policies and plans.

2. Mission Statement:

Our Mission Statement states that the core value of Our Lady of Mercy College, Beaumont is respect for all and the nurturing of individual potential, academically, spiritually and culturally as a member of the school community and in the spirit of the Mercy Ethos.

3. Scope:

This policy sets out how this school creates a supportive environment. It establishes a framework within which the school community can work should the need arise.

4. Rationale/Aim:

Our aim is to establish a Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) to steer the development and implementation of the plan. It is necessary to provide a framework for response actions and follow-up procedures in cases of a critical incident that involves the whole school community. 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, staff and parents. Having a good plan should help ensure that the effects on the students and staff will be limited. It should also enable us to return to normality as soon as possible.

5. Definition of the term ‘critical incident’:

The staff and management of Our Lady of Mercy 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
- An intrusion into the school
- An accident/incident 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.

6. Creation of a coping supportive and caring ethos in the school:

The school places a high value on the wellbeing of all in the school community. Where an individual student or a group of students have been involved in a critical incident in school, the school will follow up with her/their families to ensure that she/they receive all the support and help required. The school will liaise with external agencies as necessary.

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.

7. Physical safety:

- The school has a Health & Safety policy.
- Evacuation plan has been formulated
- Regular fire drills occur
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
- Pre-opening and end of day supervision takes place in the school. (8:20am-8:50am & 15:50pm- 16.00pm)
- Key Pads are in place on doors.

8. Psychological safety

The management and staff of Our Lady of Mercy College aim to use available programs 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.

Students are;

- encouraged to address issues such as grief and loss; communication skills; stress and anger management; conflict management; problem solving; help-seeking; bullying; decision making; the prevention of alcohol/drug misuse and how to look after their mental health through Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) RSE.
- monitored by the care system in place in the school i.e. Year Head & Class Tutor system, Care team GC, HSCL, SCP Yearhead SEN DP and P..
- encouraged to be positive in their outlook and know that if they need to they can talk to the relevant staff member e.g. Guidance Counsellor, who will offer assistance and support. Parents are informed, and where appropriate a referral is made to a supporting agency.

Staff;

- have access to training for their role in SPHE/RSE and to books and resources on difficulties affecting the post primary school student.
- are familiar with the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures.
- are informed about how to access support for themselves.
- monitor assistance given by outside agencies to ensure student safety, appropriateness and level of expertise.
- make contact with supporting agencies as relevant, National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), Health Service Executive (HSE).

The school;

- has a clear policy on bullying and deals with bullying accordingly.

9. Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT):

A CIMT has been established in line with best practice. The members of the team volunteer and will retain their roles for at least one school year. There is an onus of duty and care on all staff members and where appropriate additional members will be co-opted to the team. 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.

10. Preparation of CIMP:

Roles

The key roles which need to be covered are as follows:

- Team Leader
- Garda liaison
- Staff liaison.
- Student liaison
- Parent liaison
- Community liaison
- Media liaison
- Administrator

Team leader Principal

- 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 family as appropriate

Garda liaison Principal

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

Staff liaison Principal/Deputy Principal

- 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 Career Guidance Teacher/RE Teachers

- Coordinate 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)
- Keeps records of students seen by external agency staff
- Looks after setting up and supervision of ‘quiet’ room where agreed

Community/agency liaison Principal

- 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
- Reminds agency staff to wear name badges
- Coordinates the involvement of these agencies
- Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies

Parent liaison Relevant Year Head/Tutor

- Visits the bereaved family with the team leader
- 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 the critical incident folder)

Media liaison Principal/Chairperson of Board of Management

- 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)

Administrator 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 of letters are on the schools system in advance and ready for adaptation
- Prepares and sends out letters, emails, faxes and webtexts
- Photocopies materials needed
- Maintains records

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.

11. Notifications:

On the occurrence of a critical incident the Principal/Deputy Principal will notify in the first instance the parents/guardians of those involved, the Chairperson of the Board of Management, staff, social services and any other external agencies as necessary.

12. Confidentiality and good name considerations:

The management and staff of Our Lady of Mercy College have a responsibility to protect the privacy and good name of the people involved in any incident and will be sensitive to

the consequences of any public statements. The members of the school staff will bear this in mind, and will seek to ensure that students do so also.

13. Critical incident rooms:

In the event of a critical incident,

The Staffroom will be the main room used to meet the staff

Concert hall for meetings with students

Concert hall for parents

Concert room for media

Career Guidance office, Oratory or prayer room for individual/group sessions with students

Canteen/Board room for other visitors.

Prior to admission the school gives a general letter to all parents stating that, in the event of a critical incident, support may be available from NEPS, and that the school may decide that individual or group support would be helpful to certain students. (*see Appendix*) Parents indicate their agreement/non agreement to this in the relevant section of the Entry Renewal Form.

14. School Trips - Compiling emergency information for school trips:

This should include:

- A list of all the students/staff involved and the teacher in charge
- A list of mobile phone numbers for the teacher in charge and other accompanying staff members
- Up to date medical information on students with allergies, epilepsy etc. (*see procedures for school trips*)

A trip itinerary with contact details together with the contact details for all those on the trip will be given to the Principal/Deputy Principal prior to travel.

15. Staff Familiarisation:

All new and temporary staff will be informed of the details of the plan at induction.

16. Review.

The plan details will be updated annually. This policy will be reviewed and evaluated every 3 years and, as necessary, in the light of experiences. This will be done within the framework of school development planning.

Date ratified: 10th April 2024.

Contents of Critical Incident folder:

- 1 Critical Incident Plan.
- 2 Copies of resource letters and sheets

Critical Incident Policy - Appendices

Resources are taken from NEPS Publication, Responding to Critical Incidents, Resources for schools

No.	Title	
1	CIMT & Plans of action	
2	Emergency Contact list	
3	CIMT Plan of Action during Covid School Closure	
R1	Resource for Teachers, Student Contact Record	
R2	Sample Letter to Parents: Informing them about a sudden death/accident	
R3	Sample Letter to Parents: In case of Violent death.	
R4	Sample announcement to the Media	
R5	A Classroom Session following News of Critical Incident	
R6	Resource Parents/Teachers: Children's understanding and reaction to death according to age.	
R7	Resources for Teachers: Stages of Grief	
R8	Resource for Parents/Teachers: How to cope when something terrible happens.	
R9	Reactions to a Critical Incident	
R10	Resource for Students Grief after Suicide or Suspected Suicide	
R11	Reintegration of the Bereaved Child in School	
R12	Resource for Parents: Way to help your Child through this difficult time:	
R13	Resource for Teachers: A General Interview Guide	
R14	Teachers: Checklist Students at risk	

R15	Resource for Teachers: Exploring Suicide Risk & Guidance if Student express Suicide Ideation	
R17	FAQ Teachers	
R18	FAQ Parents	
R22	Guidance on Social Media Use & Critical Incidents	
R23	Teachers Helping Students in time of Crisis or Emergency	
R24	Useful Websites and Helplines for Accessing Resources	

Appendix 1

This list is to be updated each September and to be displayed in the staff room. Personal telephone not for public display.

Critical Incident Management Team

Role	Name	
Team Leader	Principal	
Garda Liaison	Principal	
Staff Liaison	Principal/Deputy	
Student Liaison	Career Guidance/RE	
Parent Liaison	P/DP/Year Head/Tutor	
Community Agency Liaison	Principal	
Media Liaison	Chairperson/Principal	
Administrator	Secretary	

This list is not exhaustive and in the event of a critical incident there will be other tasks that need to be attended to.

Short term actions where appropriate – Day 1

Task	Name
Gather accurate information Who, what, when, where?	Principal

Convene a CIMT meeting – specify time and place clearly	Principal/D Principal
Contact external agencies	Principal
Arrange supervision for students	Deputy Principal
Hold staff meeting	All staff
Agree schedule for the day	Principal/D P
Inform students – (close friends and students with learning difficulties may need to be told separately)	Class Tutor
Compile a list of vulnerable students	Year Head
Contact/visit the bereaved family	Principal/Year Head
Prepare an agreed media statement and deal with media	Principal
Inform parents	Principal
Hold end of day staff briefing	Principal/DP

Medium term actions where appropriate (Day 2 and following days)

Convene a CIMT meeting to review Day 1	Team leader
Meet external agencies	Principal & D Principal
Meet whole staff	Deputy Principal
Arrange support for students, staff, parents	CG +
Visit the injured	Principal & Year Head
Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements	Principal
Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service	Principal & Year Head
Make decisions about school closure	BOM

Follow-up where appropriate–beyond 72 hours

Monitor students for signs of continued distress	Class teachers
Liaise with agencies regarding referrals	CG + Principal
Plan for return of bereaved student(s)	Year head
Plan for giving of “memory box” to bereaved family	Principal
Decide on memorials and anniversaries	BOM/Staff, parents and students
Review response to incident and amend plan	Staff/BOM

Appendix 2 Emergency Contact List

To be displayed in staffroom, school office and Principal's Office etc

Agency	Contact Number
Garda	6664000 Santry Garda Station
Beaumont Hospital Main No.	8093000/8377755 8092714/8092720
Emergency Dept	
Fire Brigade Tara St	6778221 4971841
Local GPs	Beaumont Park Clinic 01 8378158 Hampson Surgery, 40 Whitethorn Rise 01 8312260 Medical Centre, Omni Park, Santry 01 8425901
HSE/Community Care Team/Child & Family Centre	Cromcastle Rd. 8164200
NEPS Psychologist	8892700 Fax 8892755
DES Marlboro St	8896400
Athlone	09064 83600
Parish Priest Clergy	8477740 8476359
State Examinations Commission	09064 42700
Employee Assistance Service	1 800 411 057

Resources(R) 1 -24 from
NEPS Publication
Responding to Critical Incidents in School