

Columba College

Critical Incident Policy

Columba College aims to protect the well being of its students by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. The school has taken a number of measures to create a coping, supportive and caring ethos in the school. The school has also formulated a number of policies and procedures to be followed with a view to ensuring the physical and psychological safety of both staff and students during the normal course of the school day and in the event of a critical incident.

Such documents would include

- Health and Safety statement
- Anti Bullying Policy
- Code of Behaviour
- Guidance Plan.
- S.P.H.E Programme

Definition of Critical Incident:

A critical incident is “an incident or sequence of events that overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of the school, and disrupts the normal running of the school”.

Critical incidents may involve students, staff, the school or the local community.

Examples of a critical incident might be;

- The death of a member of the school community, through sudden death, accident, suicide or terminal illness
- A serious accident or tragedy in the school community
- Serious damage to the school through fire, flooding vandalism etc.
- The disappearance of a member of the school community either from home or school
- A physical attack on a staff member or student
- Intrusion into the school.

Aim of Plan:

The aim of the Critical Incident Plan is that in the event of such an incident as outlined above, the plan will help staff and management to react quickly and effectively and to maintain control of the situation. The plan will also help the school to return to normality as soon as possible and limit the affects of the incident on staff and students.

Critical Incident Management Team:

Columba College has set up a Critical Incident Management Team consisting of the following personnel:

- The Principal
- The Deputy Principal
- The School Secretary

- The School Guidance Counsellor
- The Home School Community Liaison Coordinator
- Board of Management representative
- Parents Association Representative

The Critical Incident Management Team may co-opt other members of staff to assist them, should they deem it necessary. The Principal will act as Team Leader or in their absence the Deputy Principal.

Roles and responsibilities

Team Leader: (Principal)

Intervention by team leader:

- Confirm that the event has occurred
- Alert team members to the crisis and convene a meeting of the team
- Clarify facts surrounding the event
- Brief and advise the staff
- Convene students to inform them of the incident
- Co-ordinate/delegate tasks to the other team members.
- Make contact with and liaise with The Board of Management and all other relevant agencies
- In case of bereavement, liaise with the bereaved family and express sympathy with the family
- Decide how information will be communicated to different groups (staff, students, parents etc.)

Postvention

- Ensure provision of ongoing support to staff and students
- Facilitate appropriate events e.g. memorial events,
- Review plan

Communication/Support Role: (Principal /Deputy Principal)

Intervention by person responsible for communication:

- Prepare a public statement (with assistance of full team)
- Organise a designated room to address media promptly
- Ensure telephone lines are free for outgoing and important calls
- Liaise with relevant outside support agencies
- Support the Principal and staff
- Identify vulnerable staff and assist in accessing appropriate support
- Liaise with Secretary in communicating with parents e.g. Text messages

Postvention

- Review and evaluate the effectiveness of the communication response

Student Liaison/Counselling Role: (Guidance Counsellor)

Intervention by person responsible for student liaison:

- Outline specific services available in school
- Put in place clear referral procedures
- Address immediate needs of staff
- Liaise with student council

Postvention

- Provide ongoing support to vulnerable students
- Monitor classes most effected
- Refer to other agencies as appropriate
- Review and evaluate plan

Family Liaison Role: (HSCL)

Intervention by person responsible for family liaison

- Coordinate contact with families (following first contact from Team Leader)
- Consult with family around involvement of school
- Assist with all communication dealing with the parents of any student affected by the critical incident

Postvention

- Provide ongoing support to families affected by the critical incident
- Involve as appropriate the family in school memorial services where appropriate
- Offer to link family with support groups
- Review and evaluate plan

Organisation Role: (Deputy Principal/Post holder)

Intervention by person responsible for organisation

- Organise the supervision of students in the school
- Arrange meeting to ensure staff are updated on information/developments /progress
- Arrange meeting with students to brief them on the situation
- Liaise with caretaker to arrange opening of school and organisation of meeting rooms etc.
- Identify staff member who will organise service of reflection/prayer

Postvention

- Review and evaluate plan

Record Keeping:

All team members will keep written records of phone calls, letters, meetings, interventions etc.

Confidentiality:

The school is conscious of its responsibility to protect the privacy and good name of people involved in any incident and will be sensitive to the consequences of any public statements.

Columba College Critical Incident

Management Plan 2013/2014

Support Team

Principal	Ms. Bernice Martin
Deputy Principal	Mr. Dermot Brady
Guidance Counsellor	Ms. AnnMaire Kiernan
Home School Community Liaison	Ms. Miriam MacElroy
School Secretary	Ms. Fiona Cully
Board of Management Representative	Fr. Richard Matthews
Parents Association Representative	Mr. David Glover

The Critical Incident Management Team may co-opt other members of staff to assist them, should they deem it necessary. In addition they may access the services of some of the following SCP, NEPS, HSE and JLO.

Emergency Contact Numbers

Gardai Killucan Mullingar	999 (044) 9374112 (044) 9348915
Ambulance	999
Hospital Mullingar Regional Hospital	999 (044) 9340221
Parish Clergy Fr. Richard Matthews, Killucan Fr. Seamus Heany, Delvin Fr. Tom Gilroy, Kinnegad Fr. Eamonn Marron, Raharney	(044) 9374127 (044) 9664127 (044) 9375117 (044) 9375252 – Emergency Only
Fire Brigade	999
Department of Education	(090) 6483600 (090) 6442700
N.E.P.S Psychologist	(044) 9337023 (044) 9390226 (087) 2866488
Local GP's Killucan Health Centre Kinnegad Health Centre	(044) 9374120 (044) 9375289
Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services	(044) 939 4219
Family Centre	(044) 934 4877
Employee Assistance Services	1800 411 057
State Examinations Commission	(090) 644 2700
Social Workers	(044) 934 4877

Action Plan

SHORT-TERM ACTIONS (Day 1)

- Immediate contact with family/families.
- Consult with the family regarding appropriate support from the school, e.g. funeral service, contact with appropriate agencies.
- Ensure that a quiet place can be made for students/staff.
- Rooms will be made available as follows:
 - Prayer room
 - Individual Meetings
 - Parents

Media Briefing (if appropriate)

- Designate a spokesperson.
- Prepare a brief statement.
- Protect the family's privacy.
- Gather accurate information
- It is important to obtain accurate information about the incident.
 1. What happened, where and when?
 2. What are the extents of the injuries?
 3. How many are involved and what are their names?
 4. Is there a risk of further injury?
 5. What agencies have been contacted already?
- Contact appropriate agencies
 1. Emergency services
 2. Medical services
 3. H.S.E. Psychology Departments/Community Care Services
 4. NEPS
 5. BOM
 6. DES/Schools Inspector.
- Convene a meeting with Key Staff/Critical Management Team (8.30 a.m.)
 1. Organize a staff meeting, if appropriate. (9.00 a.m.)
 2. Ensure any absent staff members are kept informed.
 3. Organize timetable/routine for the day. (Adhering to the normal school routine is important, if this is possible).
 4. Class teachers to take note of any absentees who might need to be contacted, list of friends etc., or any other relevant information and give to the Student Liaison person.
 5. Arrange supervision of students
- Liaise with the family regarding funeral arrangements/memorial service.
 1. The Principal will liaise with the family, to extend sympathy and clarify the family's wishes regarding the school's involvement in funeral/memorial service.
 2. Arrange a home visit by two staff representatives within 24 hours, if appropriate. (HSCL person, Guidance Counsellor, Class Teacher as deemed most appropriate)
 3. Have regard for different religious traditions and faiths.

MEDIUM-TERM ACTIONS (24-72 HOURS)

- Preparation of students/staff attending funeral.

- Involvement of students/staff in liturgy if agreed by bereaved family.
- Facilitation of students'/staffs' responses, e.g. Sympathy cards, flowers, book of condolences, etc.
- Ritual within the school.
- Review the events of the first 24 hours
 1. Reconvene Key Staff/Critical Incident Management Team. (8.30 a.m.)
 2. Decide arrangements for support meetings for parents/students/staff.
 3. Decide on mechanism for feedback from teachers on vulnerable students.
 4. Have review of Critical Incident Management Team meeting. (3.00 p.m.)
 5. Establish contact with absent staff and pupils.
- Arrange support for individual students, groups of students, and parents, if necessary.
 1. Hold support/information meeting for parents/students, if necessary, in order to clarify what has happened.
 2. Give any teacher who feels uncomfortable with involvement in support meetings the choice of opting out.
 3. Arrange, in consultation, with outside agencies, individual or group debriefings or support meetings with parental permission.
 4. Plan for the re-integration of students and staff e.g. absentees, injured, siblings, close relative etc.)
 5. Student Liaison person to liaise with above on their return to school.
- Plan visits to injured
 1. Family Liaison person /Class Teacher / Principal to visit home/hospital.
 2. Attendance and participation at funeral/memorial service (To be decided)
 3. Decide this in accordance with parents' wishes and school management decisions and in consultation with close school friends.
- School closure (if appropriate)
- Request a decision on this from school management.

LONGER TERM ACTIONS

- Monitor students for signs of continuing distress.
- If, over a prolonged period of time, a student continues to display the following, he/she may need assistance from the HSE. Constant communication with family is essential.
 1. Uncharacteristic behaviour
 2. Deterioration in academic performance
 3. Physical symptoms — e.g. weight loss/gain, lack of attention to appearance, tiredness, restlessness
 4. Inappropriate emotional reactions
 5. Increased absenteeism.
- Evaluate response to incident and amend Critical Incident Management Plan appropriately.
 1. What went well?
 2. Where were the gaps?
 3. What was most/least helpful?
 4. Have all necessary onward referrals to support services been made?
 5. Is there any unfinished business?
- Formalise the Critical Incident Plan for the future
 1. Consult with NEPS Psychologist
- Inform new staff/new school pupils affected by Critical Incidents where appropriate
 1. Ensure that new staff are aware of the school policy and procedures in this area.

2. Ensure they are aware of which pupils were affected in any recent incident and in what way.
 3. When individual pupils or a class of pupils affected by an incident are transferring to a new school, the Principal should brief the Principal of the new school.
- Decide on appropriate ways to deal with anniversaries (Be sensitive to special days and events)
 1. Anniversaries may trigger emotional responses in students/staff and they may need additional support at this time.
 2. Acknowledge the anniversary with the family
 3. Be sensitive to significant days like Birthdays, Christmas, Mother's Day, and Father's Day.
 - Plan a school memorial service.
 - Care of deceased person's possessions. What are the parent's wishes?
 - Update and amend school records.

SAMPLE LETTER TO PARENTS/GUARDIANS

Dear Parents/Guardians

The school has experienced (the sudden death/injury) to one of our students/staff. We are deeply saddened by this death/injury.

(Brief details of the incident, and in the case of death, perhaps some positive remembrances of persons lost)

We have support structures in place to help your child cope with this tragedy.

(Elaborate)

It is possible that your son/daughter may have some feelings that he/she may like to discuss with you. You can help your son/daughter by taking time to listen to him/her and encouraging him/her to express their feelings. It is important to give truthful information that is appropriate to their age.

If you would like any advice or support you may contact the following people at school

(Details)

Principal.

Sample letter requesting consent for Involvement of outside Professionals.

Dear Parents/Guardians,

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

Your son/daughter has been identified as one of the students who would benefit from meeting with (X). If you would like your child 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 or if you would like to talk to the psychologist, please indicate this on the slip, or contact the school.

Principal.

I/We consent to having our son/daughter meet with
I understand that my son/daughter may meet x in an individual or group session, depending on the arrangements that are thought most appropriate.

Name of Student: _____.

Class: _____

Date of Birth: _____.

Signed: _____

(Parents /Guardians)

USEFUL CONTACT NUMBERS.

BARNARDOS	(01) 450355
THE SAMARITANS	1850 609090
CHILDLINE	1800 666666
PARENTLINE	1890 927277
AWARE	(01) 6766166 1890 303302
NATIONAL SUICIDE BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT	(024) 95561
RAINBOWS	(01) 4734175
BEREAVEMENT COUNSELLING	(01) 6767727
BEREAVEMENT COUNSELLING SERVICE	(01) 8391766

Instructions for sending web text to students

Log on to www.sendmode.ie

On the top right hand corner click log in

On the page that appears use the following

Username: college

Password: columba 3006

In the home page click on school text

Then on Send SMS to classes/groups

Click on the appropriate groups on the left hand side and type the text you want to send in the box on the right hand side.

Click on send message

Logout