



# Presentation Secondary School

## Castleisland

### Co. Kerry



## **Critical Incident Policy 2023 - 2024**

### **Overview**

Presentation Secondary School Castleisland aims to protect the wellbeing of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times in accordance with our school mission and vision statements. The Board of Management, through Principal, Mr. Pierce Dargan, has drawn up a critical incident management plan as one element of the school's policies and plans.

### **Aim**

Our aim is to establish a Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) to steer the development and implementation of the Critical Incident Management Plan. 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 affect a return to normality as soon as possible.

Though the Principal obviously exercises a pivotal role in the school's response to a critical incident, Best Practice recommends the formation of a Critical Incident Team (CIT) composed of key school personnel, in providing a supportive role.

The role of NEPS is to support schools in supporting students and staff.

### **Review and Research**

The CIMT should consult resource documents available to schools on [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie) and [www.nosp.ie](http://www.nosp.ie), these include:

- Initiate and establish structures
- Well-Being in Primary Schools - Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion (DES, DOH, HSE 2015)
- Well-Being in Post-Primary Schools Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention (DES, DOH, HSE 2013)
- Suicide Prevention in the Community - A Practical Guide (HSE 2011)
- Suicide Prevention in Schools: Best Practice Guidelines (IAS, National Suicide Review Group (2002)
- Other useful documents may be found on websites listed on pages 95 and 96 of NEPS Guidelines
- Define what you mean by the term 'critical incident'
- Responding to Critical Incidents Guidelines and Resources for Schools (NEPS 2016)

### **Defining a Critical Incident**

A Critical Incident is any incident or sequence of events, normally involving death, which overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of the school and disrupts the running of the school. Some typical incidents would be:

- The death of a member of the school community through sudden death, accident, permanent injury, terminal illness or suicide.
- A life threatening accident involving pupils or staff on or off the school premises.
- A physical attack on staff member(s) or student(s) or intrusion into the school causing serious personal injury.
- Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism etc.
- The disappearance of a member of the school community.
- An accident/tragedy in the wider community that has a significant impact on the school community

Presentation Secondary School is committed to the welfare of its students. This is currently evident in the relationship between staff and students, and supported by many other programmes such as anti-bullying, peer support, mentoring initiative, SPHE, pastoral care structures and our Student Support Team, links with outside agencies and procedures for referral (NEPS).

### **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

## Prevention

### Physical safety

#### The school has:

- Evacuation plan formulated
- Regular fire drills occur
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
- Pre-opening supervision in the school yard
- Updated defibrillator

### Psychological safety

- Child protection procedures
- Anti-bullying policies
- Peer support programmes
- Effective student support systems
- Well Being in Post-Primary Schools -Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention (2013)
- Student Support Team

## Roles and Responsibilities in the Critical Incident Management Team

| <b>Team</b>            | <b>Responsibility</b>   |
|------------------------|---|
| <b>Team Leader</b>     | Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting informing them of all relevant facts. Delegates and coordinates the tasks of the team.<br><br>Informs and liaises with the Board of Management, NEPS, Túsla, DES and with the local Gardaí, HSE (where appropriate).   |
| <b>Staff Liaison</b>   | Briefs staff at the earliest opportunity. Students will be supervised at these times. The facts, as known, will be disclosed to the staff members who will be given an opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions. Staff will be briefed on the procedures for identification of vulnerable students. Materials for staff (from critical incident folder) will be provided. Staff will be updated as appropriate.            |
| <b>Student Liaison</b> | Inform students of the facts of the incident, coordinate information from subject teachers regarding students whom they are concerned about, alert other staff to vulnerable students, provide materials for students from critical incident folder, keep records of students seen by external agencies, organisation and supervision of 'quiet room' (Wellbeing Room to be used with a small group & M7 if number of students too large) |

|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| <b>Parent Liaison</b> | Liaise with the family, visits the family with the Principal, may arrange a meeting of parents, manages the 'consent' issues in accordance with agreed school policy, ensures that sample letters are typed up and stored on the school system ready for adaptation, sets up in the <b>Meeting Room in the MBuilding</b> for meeting with parents, maintains a record of parents seen, meets with individual parents, provides appropriate materials for parents (from their critical incident folder). |
|-----------------------|---|

## The Critical Incident Management Team

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|--|--|
| <b>Team Leader</b>   | <b>P. Dargan (Principal)</b>   |
| <b>Staff Liaison/Garda Liaison/<br/>Outside Agencies</b>   | <b>P. Kelliher (Deputy Principal)</b>  |
| <b>Guidance Co-ordinator</b>   | <b>E. Clarke</b>   |
| <b>Students' Liaison</b>   | <b>V. Ross-Dowd, E. Clarke, K. O'Reilly, A. Leen, E. Cosgrave, T. Dooley, D. Hurley, M. Lane-Cronin, S. Moloney, R. Nagle, E. O'Shea, M. Murphy, A. O'Connor</b> |
| <b>Parents' Liaison</b>  | <b>P. Dargan, P. Kelleher</b>  |
| <b>Community Liaison</b>   | <b>P. Dargan (Principal)</b>   |
| <b>Media Liaison</b>   | <b>P. Dargan (Principal)</b>   |
| <b>Relevant Year Head</b>  | <b>K. O'Reilly, A. Leen, E. Cosgrave, T. Dooley, D. Hurley, M. Lane-Cronin</b>   |
| <b>Administrator</b>   | <b>Office Staff</b>  |
| <p>The following staff/agencies may be involved as the CIM team see fit:</p> <p>Student Support Team, Student Liaison officer, NEPS, School Secretary and Caretaker.</p> <p>Other staff members may be asked to be part of the team as deemed appropriate.</p> |  |

# Procedures to be followed in the event of a critical incident

## Day One

### **Principal and Deputy Principal**

1. Gather the facts of the incident (who, what, when, where).
2. Contact appropriate agencies, if necessary (Emergency services, Health Service Executive, Community Care Services, NEPS, DES, Board of Management, and CEIST).
3. Convene a meeting of the Critical Incident Management Team.

### **Critical Incident Management Team**

**Full details of the agenda page 20&21 of *Responding to Critical Incidents Guidelines for schools*.**

1. Agree a statement of facts for staff, students, parents and media (to include decision on appropriate wording e.g. tragic or sudden death)
2. Inform **all** staff of incident -Staff communication via short memo which includes detail of staff meeting outside school hours (**8:15a.m. Or 12:45p.m. Or 3:45/3:20p.m.**)
3. Delegate responsibilities to the CIMT members.

### **All Staff**

1. Decide on how, and what facts will be shared with students.
2. Inform staff of what outside agencies have been contacted.
3. All staff share factual information with student population.
4. Maintain the normal routine as far as possible for classes not immediately affected.

Identify high risk students. Relatives and close friends informed separately.

# Procedures to be followed in the event of a critical incident

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## Day Two & Three

### Principal and Deputy Principal

1. Convene Critical Incident Management Team - **7:30 am**
2. Convene staff meeting at **8:15 a.m.** (Decide who will contact absent staff, a friend of absent staff member to make said contact). Staff agenda will be included in critical incident pack.

### Critical Incident Management Team

1. Review the events of the first 24 hours.
2. Check how everyone is coping.
3. Pierce Dargan & Padraig Kelliher to hold information meeting with Year Heads.
4. Arrange support for students, (*pg 27 Guidelines*) providing a suitable room for this to happen – subject teacher makes referrals.
5. It is recommended that school management will endeavour to have a male and female teacher on corridor supervision.

### All Staff

1. Look for feedback from teachers on vulnerable students.
2. Principal and Deputy Principal to liaise with family/families involved in incident. In the case of bereavement arrange with the family the school's involvement in the funeral/memorial service.
3. Teachers who are uncomfortable with providing support will not be required to do so. (They request Guidance & SPHE Coordinator to arrange).
4. Seek parental approval for support meetings with outside agencies.

## Beyond 72 hours: Follow-up

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|---|---|
| Monitor students for signs of continuing distress | All Staff   |
| Liaise with agencies regarding referrals          | Principal, Deputy Principal, Guidance Counsellor, SENCO |

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Plan for return of bereaved student(s)(R13 Guidelines)   | Principal & Student Support Team & Year Head |
| Plan for giving of 'memory box' to bereaved family   | Principal, Year Head & Student Support Team  |
| Decide on memorials and anniversaries  | BOM & Student Support Team                   |
| Review response to incident and amend plan   | BOM & CIMT                                   |
| Plan for the return of absent students and staff   | Principal & Student Support Team & Year Head |
| Plan for reintegration of siblings, close relatives, injured students etc., involved in the incident | Principal & Student Support Team & Year Head |

## Evaluation

Evaluation is a vital part of the process of maintaining a viable Critical Incident Strategy. Crisis management can only develop with analysis of past incidents, feedback in the light of past responses and systematic evaluation of all protocols in place.

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

- The confidence of the Crisis Management Team in their roles in the event of an incident.
- Was internal communication effective between staff?
- Were all staff furnished with accurate facts and kept updated 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 this incident?

## Emergency Telephone Numbers

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|   |   |
|---|---|
| Garda   | 999 or 112                                    |
| Fire  | 999 or 112                                    |
| Ambulance   | 999 or 112                                    |
| <br>  |   |
| Kerry Ambulance Control Centre                          | 066 - 7121866                                 |
| Tralee Garda Station                                    | 066 - 7102300 / 7122022                       |
| Castleisland Garda Station                              | 066 - 7141204                                 |
| Kerry University Hospital                               | 066 - 7184000 / 7126222                       |
| Kerry University Hospital Acute Unit                    | 066 - 7184802                                 |
| Health Service Executive Community Services (HSE South) | 066 - 7184500<br>01 - 6352500<br>045 - 880400 |
| <br>  |   |
| Senior Social Worker/Designated Officer                 | 066 - 7121566                                 |
| Kerry Adolescent Counselling                            | 066 - 7181333                                 |
| National Education Psychological Service                | 01 - 8738600 / 7180671                        |
| Dept of Social and Family Affairs                       | 066 - 7149500                                 |
| National Education Welfare Board                        | 01 - 8728600                                  |
| Dept of Education                                       | 090 - 6483600<br>01 - 8896400                 |
| <br>  |   |
| <b><u>DOCTORS:</u></b>                                  |   |
| Dr. Anne Fleming  | 066 - 7141295                                 |
| Dr. Pat Daly  | 066 - 7141228                                 |
| Dr. Anita O'Sullivan                                    | 066 - 7141055                                 |
| Dr. Colm O'Giollagain                                   | 066 - 7141044                                 |

**GARDAI:**

Castleisland 066 - 7141204  
Tralee 066 - 7102300

**PRESBYTERY:**

Castleisland 066 - 7141241

Barnardos 01 - 4530355

Barnados Bereavement Counselling for Children 01 - 4732110

The Samaritans 1850 - 609090

Childline 1800 - 666666

Parentline 1890 - 927277

Aware 1800 - 804848

National Suicide Bereavement Support Network 024 - 95561

Rainbows 01 - 4734175

The Bereavement Counselling Service – Dublin 01 - 8391766

Bereavement Counselling Service 01 - 6767727

I.S.P.C.C. 01 – 5224300

Spectrum Life 1800 - 411057

Mary O'Keefe 2/10/23  

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(Chair Person)

Pierce Dargan 2/10/23  

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SECRETARY

# Appendices

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## **Appendix 1**

### Sample Teacher Communication Text Message

#### **Student Death**

Dear Staff,

It is with great sorrow that I inform you of the death of one of our student's \_\_\_\_\_ in class \_\_\_\_\_, due to a car accident. This is a huge loss for \_\_\_\_\_'s family, our school and the community. The School's Critical Incident Management Team has met to plan our response.

Principal

## Appendix 2

### Sample Teacher Communication Text Message

#### Teacher Death

Dear Staff

It is with great sorrow that I inform you of the death of one of our teacher's \_\_\_\_\_ due to a car accident. This is a huge loss for \_\_\_\_\_'s family, our school and the community. The School's Critical Incident Management Team has met to plan our response.

Principal

### **Appendix 3**

#### Sample Announcement to the Media – Student Death

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am the Principal of Presentation Secondary School, Castleisland. We learned this morning of the death of \_\_\_\_\_, a \_\_\_\_\_ year student in our school. This is a terrible tragedy for \_\_\_\_\_'s family, our school and the wider community. We are deeply saddened by these events. Our sympathies, thoughts and prayers are with \_\_\_\_\_'s family and friends.

We have been in contact with her parents and they have requested that we respect their need for privacy at this very difficult time. Offers of support have been pouring in and are greatly appreciated. Our school has implemented our Critical Incident Management Plan. Psychologists from the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) are supporting and advising teachers in their efforts to assist our students at this time. The school staff has been helping students to deal with the death. The school has been open to parents and guardians to support them and offer advice and guidance. We would ask you to respect their privacy at this challenging time.

Thank You

## Appendix 4

### Sample Letter to Parents – Student Death

Dear Parents/Guardian

Over the weekend, the school learned of the sudden death of \_\_\_\_\_, one of our students. We are all deeply saddened by this loss. The school has support structures in place to deal with this tragedy.

Our Pastoral Care team has been working closely with counsellors from the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS). It is possible that your daughter may have feelings that she may like to discuss with you. You can help your daughter by taking time to listen to her and encourage her to express her feelings.

It is important to let her know that her feelings, concerns and reactions are normal and that she will experience a number of emotions over the next few days and weeks. If you have any additional questions or concerns please feel free to contact the school.

I anticipate that the next few days will be difficult for everyone, however school will continue as usual.

Principal

## Appendix 5

### Sample Parent Communication Text -Student Death

Today, with great sadness we learned of the death of \_\_\_\_\_  
one of our \_\_\_\_\_Year students. Our thoughts and prayers are with  
\_\_\_\_\_’s family and friends during this difficult time. Further  
communication will follow in due course.

Principal

## **Appendix 6**

### Sample Community Notice (to be read at Mass)

The community of Castleisland is extremely saddened to hear of the death of \_\_\_\_\_ who was a \_\_\_\_\_ year student in Presentation Secondary School.

I am sure all of us will make every effort to comfort and support \_\_\_\_\_'s family as they attempt to come to terms with their traumatic loss. We remember her in our prayers in Mass today and we extend our heartfelt sympathies to her family, relatives, teachers and classmates.

**Appendix 7**

Sample letter requesting consent for Involvement of outside Professionals

Dear Parent/Guardian

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 the students either in small groups or on a one to one basis, and offering reassurance and advice as appropriate.

Your daughter has been identified as one of the students who would benefit from meeting with (x). If you would not like your daughter to receive this support, please sign the attached 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

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I/We do not wish our daughter meet with \_\_\_\_\_

I/We understand that my daughter may meet x in an individual/group session, depending on the arrangements that are thought most appropriate.

Name of Student: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_