



Presentation Secondary School

Church Street, Castleisland, Co. Kerry



Critical Incident Policy

2026 – 2027

This Policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 15th September 2026



Our vision is to prepare accomplished, confident, independent and resilient young adults, who follow their passions, develop a love of learning and become positive role models in society.

Critical Incident Policy 2026 – 2027

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. The school and Board of Management will adopt the *Child Protection Procedures for Schools 2025* in line with Circular 0041/2025 on Tuesday 15th September 2026, and this Critical Incident Policy operates consistently with these new procedures.

Aim

Our aim is to establish a Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) to steer the development and implementation of the ***Critical Incident Management Plan***. 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 in place will help to minimise the effects on our students and staff. It should enable us to 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 Management Team (CIMT), composed of key school personnel, in providing a supportive role.

The role of the National Educational Psychological Service (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 and www.nosp.ie, these include:

A. Department of Education Circulars & Core Guidance

1. *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (Revised 2025) – Circular 0041/2025*. (The Board will formally accept these procedures and update the relevant policy documents and templates at the first Ordinary Board of Management meeting of the Academic Year 2026 – 2027 on Tuesday 15th September 2026).
2. *Bí Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2024) – Circular 0055/2024*. (The school's Bí Cinealta Policy is in place since September 2025 and reviewed annually).

3. *Understanding Behaviours of Concern and Responding to Crisis Situations – Guidelines for Schools (Dec 2024) – Circular 0081/2024. Follow up Circular 0042/2026.*
4. NEPS – Responding to Critical Incidents: Guidelines & Resource Materials (2016).
5. Well-Being in Post-Primary Schools Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention (DES, DOH, HSE 2013).
6. Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2018–2023 (Department of Education).
7. Ireland’s Strategy to Reduce Suicide and Self-Harm: Connecting for Life 2026–2035 (Government of Ireland).
8. Best Practice Guidance for Suicide Prevention Services (2019).

B. Key National Legislation

- Children First Act 2015
 - Mandated reporting obligations continue in parallel with, and are never suspended by, the Critical Incident Management Plan.
- Education Act 1998
- Education (Welfare) Act 2000
- Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005
 - The school has a duty to notify the Health and Safety Authority (HSA) of relevant workplace accidents/dangerous occurrences.
 - To remind staff of the *Employee Assistance Service* for staff wellbeing after an incident.
- Fire Services Acts 1981 & 2003
- Licensing of Indoor Events Act 2003
- Building Control Act 1990
- Data Protection Act 2018 (GDPR)
- Mental Health Act 2001

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 (this is not an exhaustive list):

- 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.
- A critical incident involving a student or staff member in the other schools in Castleisland.
- 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.
- A serious child protection or safeguarding incident.
- A significant data breach involving student or staff personal data.
- An incident occurring on a school tour or off-site/abroad.
- A serious incident linked to protest, public disorder, or an active threat.
- A public-health/infectious-disease closure.

Presentation Secondary School, Castleisland 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 the anti-bullying FUSE programme, Belong To programme, peer support, student mentoring, SPHE, pastoral care structures, student support team and links with outside agencies and procedures for referral (NEPS).

Please note, that where a critical incident has, or may have, a child protection dimension, the Children First mandated-reporting pathway (Circular 0041/2025) runs in parallel with — and is never replaced or delayed by — the Critical Incident Management Plan.

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:

- Classroom Evacuation Plan.
- Classroom Illness Protocol.

- Fire drills – one per term.
- Fire exits and routes regularly checked.
- Fire evacuation routes clearly signposted in each room in the school.
- Supervision of the entire school: before and after school and each break time.
- Annual servicing of:
 - Defibrillator
 - Fire equipment
 - Oil boilers
- School alarm (fire & burglary) serviced quarterly.
- Vape sensors in each student bathroom, monitored from the front office.
- Wellbeing gardens and outdoor SEN friendly area in operation.
- Sensory room.
- First aid kits regularly checked and refilled by our Leader of Health, Safety and Welfare.
- Staff training:
 - Staff trained in first aid every two years.
 - Medical training received by teachers and SNA's in the area of epilepsy, allergies, diabetes etc.
 - Staff trained in the use of fire equipment every two years.
 - Staff trained in use of defibrillator and CPR.

Psychological Safety

- Child protection procedures
- Anti-bullying policies – Bí Cineálta
- Anti-bullying and inclusion programmes – FUSE and LGBTQ+ Quality Mark.
- Whole School Guidance programme.
- Peer support programmes/workshops e.g. *Bodywhys*
- Effective student support systems, e.g. *Consent Ed. programme*
- Leaders of Staff and Student Wellbeing.
- Whole School Events
- Themed Weeks/Days
- Shona Project
- Student Support Team

Roles and Responsibilities in the Critical Incident Management Team

Full details of each role in the document:

RESPONDING TO CRITICAL INCIDENTS: NEPS Guidelines and Resource Materials for Schools

Team	Responsibility
Team Leader	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. Informs and liaises with the Board of Management, CEIST (Patron), NEPS, Túsla, Department of Education & Youth and with the local Gardaí, HSE (where appropriate).
Staff Liaison	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 in the Principal's office) will be provided. Staff will be updated as appropriate.
Student Liaison	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' (A6 to be used with a small group & M7 if number of students too large).
Parent Liaison	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 Meeting Room in the M-Building 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 (CIMT)

Team Leader	P. Dargan (<i>Principal</i>) Note: if Team Leader (Principal) Mr. Dargan is himself unavailable, directly affected, or a party to the incident, Deputy Principal, Mr. Kelliher will fill the role of Team Leader and subsequent roles.
Staff Liaison/Garda Liaison/ Outside Agencies	P. Kelliher (<i>Deputy Principal</i>) Note: if (Deputy Principal) Mr. Kelliher is himself unavailable, directly affected, or a party to the incident, a nominated Assistant Principal 1 will fill his roles, as appropriate.
Guidance Co-ordinator	E. Clarke
Students' Liaison	V. Ross-Dowd, K. O'Reilly, E. Clarke, A. Leen, E. Cosgrave, K. Finnegan, S. Moloney. R. Nagle, E. O'Shea, N. Reidy, M. Murphy.
Parents' Liaison	P. Dargan, P. Kelliher
Community Liaison	P. Dargan (<i>Principal</i>)
Media Liaison	P. Dargan (<i>Principal</i>) <u>only</u>
Relevant Year Head	K. O'Reilly, E. Clarke , K. Finnegan, E. Cosgrave, A. Leen
Administration Team (data protection)	Management and Office Staff
The following staff/agencies may be involved as the CIMT see fit: Student Support Team, NEPS, Cleaners and Caretaker. Other staff members may be asked to be part of the team as deemed appropriate.	

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 (HSE), Community Care Services, NEPS, Department of Education & Youth, Board of Management and CEIST).
3. Convene a meeting of the Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT).

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)

The school will follow HSE/National Office for Suicide Prevention media guidelines on the safe reporting of suicide and self-harm in all external communications. The new *Connecting for Life 2026–2035 Strategy* is the framework underpinning the school's postvention response. The Principal will always seek advice before any external communication is made.

The team will adapt communication of facts for students with SEN or additional needs (e.g. individualised support from the SEN team) and also ensuring EAL students and their families receive translated or interpreted communications during a critical incident.

2. Inform all staff of the incident - staff communication via short memo which includes details of the staff meeting outside school hours (**8:15am or 1.15pm or 3:50/1:15p.m.**). Also includes the sensitive and careful use of social media and that the Principal is the only staff member to engage with the media.
3. Delegate responsibilities to the CIMT members.

Procedures to be followed in the event of a critical incident

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.
 - Written statement from management, including use of social media.
4. Maintain the normal routine as far as possible for classes not immediately affected.
5. Identify high risk students. Relatives and close friends informed separately.

Day Two & Three

Principal and Deputy Principal

- Convene Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) - **7:30 am**
- 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, 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 Co-ordinator to arrange).
4. Seek parental approval for support meetings with outside agencies.

Procedures to be followed in the event of a critical incident

Beyond 72 hours: Follow-up

Monitor students for signs of continuing distress	All Staff
Monitor staff for signs of continuing distress	All Staff
Provide contact details of the <i>Employee Assistance Service</i> (or equivalent occupational health/staff counselling support)	School Management
Liaise with the State Examinations Commission (SEC) (if applicable)	School Management
Liaise with agencies regarding referrals	Principal, Deputy Principal, Guidance teacher, SENCO
Plan for return of bereaved student(s)(R13 Guidelines)	Principal, Student Support Team & Year Head
Plan for the giving of a ‘ memory box ’ to the 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 (possible reduced timetable arrangements for students etc.)	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

Data Protection (GDPR)

Personal data shared with outside agencies (Gardaí, HSE, NEPS, Túsla) and its legal basis will comply with Data Protection and GDPR guidelines. Consent slips (Appendix 7) and memory-box /record materials will be stored securely and for a defined retention period and the information released to the media or the wider community (Appendices 3 and 6) will be limited to what the bereaved family has agreed to.

State Examinations

Our school will liaise with the State Examinations Commission (SEC) if a critical incident occurs around/during State Examinations in June to discuss the procedures and alternative arrangements, as appropriate.

Evaluation

Evaluation is a vital part of the process of maintaining a viable Critical Incident Plan. 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 Critical Incident 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 Critical Incident Staff 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

Gardaí	112 or 999
Fire	112 or 999
Ambulance	112 or 999
Kerry Ambulance Control Centre	066 - 7121866
Tralee Garda Station	066 - 7102300 / 7122022
Castleisland Garda Station	066 - 7141204
University Hospital Kerry	066 - 7184000 / 7126222
University Hospital Kerry Acute Unit	066 - 7184802
Health Service Executive Community Services (HSE South)	066 - 7184500
Senior Social Worker/Designated Officer	066 - 7121566
Kerry Adolescent Counselling	066 - 7181333
National Education Psychological Service (NEPS)	01 - 8738600 / 7180671
Department of Social Protection	066 – 7142729
Tusla Education Support Service (TESS)	021 - 2428611
Department of Education and Youth	01 - 889 6690
<u>DOCTORS:</u>	
Dr. Pat Daly	066 – 7141228
Dr. Aoife De Faoite	066 – 7141055
Dr. Colm O’Giollagain	066 – 7141044

Castleisland Parish Office	066 – 7141241
Barnardos	01 – 4530355
Employee Assistance Service	• Freephone: 1800 411 057 • SMS 'Hi' to 087 145 2056 • Whatsapp: 087 369 0010
Barnardos Bereavement Counselling for Children	01 – 4732110
Mental Health Crisis Text Service	Text 'HELLO' to 50808
The Samaritans	116 123
Childline	1800 – 666666
Parent line	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
South West Counselling	064 - 6636416
Pieta House	1800 247 247
Turn 2 Me	1800 666 666

Signed: Mary O'Keefe Signed: Piera Dargan
Chairperson, Board of Management Principal/Secretary to the Board of Management

Date: 15/09/26

Appendices

All templates will be printed on school headed paper

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 students _____ in class _____, due to _____. 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 Colleague,

It is with great sorrow that I inform you of the death of one of our teachers _____ due to _____. 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

Principal

Appendix 4

Sample Letter to Parents

Student Death

Dear Parents/Guardians,

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 Student Support 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

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: _____