



Critical Incident Policy & Plan

Introduction

In Coláiste na Rinne, we aim to protect the wellbeing of our pupils and staff by providing a safe, supportive and friendly environment as outlined in our school philosophy statement.

Coiste Bainistíochta Choláiste na Rinne through the Management, staff and the college community has drawn up a critical incident management plan. They have established a Critical Incidents Management Team to steer the development and implementation of the plan.

What is a Critical Incident?

The Management and staff of Coláiste na Rinne recognise a critical incident as :

“Any incident or sequence of events which overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the Coláiste and disrupts the running of the Coláiste”.

Examples of Critical Incidents are:

- Death of a student, staff member or parent by accident, violence, suicide or suspected suicide.
- Major illness/outbreak of disease. (COVID 19, Flu, etc.).
- Criminal incidents (e.g. Dunblane shooting, Shooting at first communion etc..)
- Major accidents occurring in the serious injury or death of a student(s) or staff member(s). (Navan bus crash).
- Civil unrest, war (foreign nationals may be traumatised by events that happened in their country of origin).
- Fire, natural and technological disaster (e.g. school ceiling collapsing in Cork).
- Disappearance of student from home or college grounds (e.g. Midleton incident, Cork).
- Unauthorised removal of student from home or college grounds.
- World events that may affect the student body and/or staff. May be a need for provision of discussion and involvement in ceremonies (e.g. 9/11, tsunami).

Critical Incidents Management Team:

1. **Leadership Role:** Críostóir Ó Faoláin (Stiúrthóir) or if unavailable one of the Bainisteoirí Feidhme.
2. **Communication Role:** Bainisteoirí Feidhme.
3. **Family and Student Liason / Counseling Role:** Sinéad Uí Chochláin (Bainisteoir Feidhme).
4. **Chaplaincy Role:** An tAthair Ó Cealaigh (Sagart Paróiste).
5. **School Principal:** Eibhlín Nic Philib
6. **Nurse:** Na Banaltraí
7. **Representative of the Coiste Bainistíochta:** Aonghus Ó hEocha (Cathaoirleach).



The first-named person has the responsibility as defined.

The second-named person assists and only assumes responsibility in the absence of the first-named.

Roles and Responsibilities

1. Leadership Role – Stiúrthóir nó Bainisteoir(i) Feidhme

Intervention

- Confirm the event from a reliable source e.g. An Garda Síochána.
- Activate the Critical Incident response team – Whats App.
- Liaise with the Gardaí / Emergency services.
- Inform Cathaoirleach an Choiste Bainistíochta
- Lead briefing meetings for staff on the facts as know, give staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions, allow for silent reflection outline the routine for the day.
- Staff must not engage with the media.
- Express sympathy to family.
- Clarify facts surrounding the event.
- Make contact with other relevant agencies.
- Decide how news will be communicated to different groups (staff, pupils and the college community). The Director or in his/her absence a Bainisteoir Feidhme will deliver this news.

Postvention

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

2. Communication Role – Bainisteoir(i) Feidhme

Intervention

- With the team , prepare a public statement.
- Consider organising a designated room to address media promptly.
- Ensure telephone lines are free for outgoing and important incoming calls.
- Designate mobile number for contact.
- Liaise with relevant outside support agencies.

Postvention

- Review and evaluate effectiveness of communication response.

3. Family and Student Liaison / Counselling Role – Bainisteoir(i) Feidhme

Intervention

- Advise the staff on the procedures for identification of vulnerable pupils.
- Alert staff to vulnerable pupils.
- Outline specific services available in the Coláiste.



- Put in place clear referral procedures.
- Address immediate needs of staff.
- Provide materials for staff (from critical incident folder).
- Provide information.
- Provide counselling.
- Co-ordinate contact with families (following first contact by Management).
- Consult with family around involvement of college in e.g. funeral service.
- Assist with all communication(s) dealing with parents of any student(s) affected by the critical incident.

Postvention

- Provide ongoing support to vulnerable students.
- Monitor students most affected.
- Refer as appropriate.
- Provide ongoing support to families affected by the incident.
- Involve as appropriate the family in college liturgies /memorial services.
- Offer to link family with community support groups.
- Review and evaluate plan.

4. Chaplaincy Role – Parish Priest

Intervention

- Visit home(s), if appropriate.
- Assist with prayer services.
- Make contact with other local clergy.
- Be available as personal and spiritual support to students and staff.

Postvention

- Provide follow up support to families.
- Work in partnership with Critical Incident Team.
- Review and Evaluate Plan.

5. School Principal:

Should a critical incident occur the school principal will be requested to contact NEPS and direct them to the college for support and guidance.

6. Nursing Staff:

The nursing staff will be notified and will assist child(ren) who are visibly upset or indicate they would like to speak with a nurse in private.

7. Representative of the Coiste Bainistíochta:

The Stiúrthóir or Bainisteoir(i) Feidhme will communicate information to the Cathaoirleach an Choiste Bainistíochta and inform them that a Critical Incident has occurred.



For the following information please refer to the Critical Incident Plan below.

- Action Plan
- Media Briefing (if appropriate)
- MEDIUM-TERM ACTIONS (24 – 72 hours)
- LONGER TERM ACTIONS

Critical Incident Plan

At all times, Coláiste na Rinne aims to protect the well-being of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment as defined in our Mission Statement. The Coiste Bainistíochta has drawn up the following Critical Incident Management Plan as one element of the Coláiste's policies and plans. The aim is to establish a Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) to steer the development and implementation of the plan.

Aim:

The aim of the Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) is "to help College management and staff to react quickly and effectively in the event of an incident, to enable them to maintain a sense of control and to ensure that appropriate support is offered to students and staff". Having a good plan will also help ensure that the effects on the students and staff will be limited. It will enable the College to return to normality as soon as possible.

The staff and management of Coláiste na Rinne recognise a critical incident, to be **"an incident or sequence of events that overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the College"**. A critical incident may involve one or more student(s) or staff member(s), their family member(s) or member(s) of the local community.

- The death of a member of the College community through accident, violence, suicide or suspected suicide or other unexpected death.
- An accident involving members of the College community
- An accident/tragedy in the wider community
- An accident involving members of the College community or an intrusion into the school
- Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism, etc.
- The disappearance of a member of the College community
- Any other incident deemed critical by the CIMT.

The college has put systems in place to help to build resilience in both staff and students through our SPHE/RSE programmes, thus preparing them to cope with a range of life events. These include measures to address both the physical and psychological safety of the College community.

Physical Safety

In the area of physical safety the College has put in place the following:

- Regular fire drills
- Evacuation plan formulated
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked.
- Supervision before and after school.
- Signing in / out of pupils by parent / guardian. The book is kept in the College office



- Adhere to general College rules under the College's behaviour policy to ensure all pupils have a safe environment.

Psychological Safety

The management and staff of Coláiste na Rinne assist the personal and social development of students, giving them a sense of safety and security and providing opportunities for reflection and discussion.

- Staff are familiar with the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures
- The College has a clear policy on bullying and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy.
- Staff are made aware of children with specific needs.
- children who are identified as being at risk are referred to the Stiúrthóir. Concerns are explored and the appropriate level of assistance and support are provided. Parents are informed, and where appropriate, a referral is made to an appropriate agency.

Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)

A CIMT has been established in line with best practice. Current Team names on first page of this policy document. The members of the team will meet annually to review and update the policy and plan. Each member of the team has access to the college's Critical Incident Management Folder which includes the following:

- A copy of the Critical Incident Management Team / and the Key Roles.
- An emergency contact list / College staff contact list.
- A copy of the duties of each team member.
- A copy of the members of the Coiste Bainistíochta and contacts.

Leadership Role – Stiúrthóir / Bainisteoir(i) Feidhme

- Alert the team members to the crisis and convene a meeting
- Co-ordinate the tasks of the team
- Liaise with the Coiste Bainistíochta; DES; NEPS
- Liaise with the bereaved family(ies)

Garda Liaison – Stiúrthóir / Bainisteoir(i) Feidhme

- Liaise with the Gardaí
- Ensure that information about deaths or other developments are checked out for accuracy before being shared.
- Lead briefing for staff on facts as known, give staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions Outline the routine for the day
- Advise staff on the procedures for identification of vulnerable students
- Provide materials for staff from the Critical Incident Folder
- Keep records of students seen by external agency staff
- Look after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room where agreed

Parent and Student Liaison – Bainisteoir(i) Feidhme

- If possible or if requested visit the bereaved family with the team leader
- Arrange parent meeting(s). If held – facilitate such meetings, and manage 'questions and answers'



- Set up room for meeting(s) with parents
- Meet with individual parents
- Maintain a record of parents who have been seen
- Manage the 'consent' issues in accordance with agreed College policy
- Provide appropriate materials for parents (from the Critical Incident Folder)

Media Liaison (if appropriate) Stiúrthóir / Bainisteoir(i) Feidhme

- Prepare a written statement, if necessary.
- In advance of reaction to an incident, consider issues that may arise and how they might be responded to (e.g. students being interviewed, photographers on the premises, etc)
- Factual information
- Steps taken
- Steps to be taken
- Information or positive news about the person in question if necessary
- draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews, (as agreed by College management)

Administration -College Secretary

- Maintain up to date telephone numbers of:
- Parents or guardians
- Emergency services
- Take telephone calls and note those that need to be responded to
- Ensure that templates are on the College's system in advance and ready for use
- Prepare and send out letters and emails
- Photocopy materials needed
- Maintain records

ACTION PLAN. Short-term action plan (Day 1)

- Immediate contact with families involved in incident(s)
 - Consult with the family regarding appropriate support from the College e.g. funeral service
 - Contact with families of other children affected (options are in-college support or withdrawal by family)
 - Ensure a quiet place can be made for pupils/staff. Rooms will be made available as necessary
- Contact appropriate agencies
- Emergency services: 999
 - Medical services: 999
 - Garda Síochána – An Rinn: 058 46410, Dúngarbhán: 058 48600
 - TUSLA: 053 919210
 - FSS/ H.S.E. Psychology Departments/ Community care services: FSS/HSE 1850 241850

Convene a meeting with Key Staff/Critical Management Team

- Organise a meeting for all if appropriate
- Organise timetable/routine for the day – adhering to the normal College daily routine as much as possible is important
- Staff take note of any absentees who might need to be contacted, list of friends etc. - this information should be given to the Student Liaison person.



- Arrange supervision of pupils.
- liaise with the family, to extend sympathy and clarify the family's wishes regarding the college's involvement in funeral/memorial service.
- Arrange a home visit by two staff representatives within 24 hours, if appropriate – Stiúrthóir and another staff member.
- Have regard for different religious traditions and faiths.

Medium-Term Actions (24-72 hours)

- Preparations for pupils/staff attending funeral
- Involvement of pupils/staff in liturgy if agreed by bereaved family
- Facilitation of pupil's/staff responses, e.g. sympathy cards, flowers, book of condolences, messages from children.

Review the events of the first 24 hours:

- Reconvene key staff/critical incident management team
 - Decide arrangements for support meetings for parents/pupils/staff
 - Decide on mechanism for feedback from staff on vulnerable students
 - Have reviews with critical incident management team at times to be arranged
 - Establish contact with absent staff and pupils
 - Arrange support for individual pupils, groups of pupils and parents if necessary
 - Hold support/information meeting for parents/pupils, if necessary, in order to clarify what has happened.
 - Give any staff member who feels uncomfortable with involvement in support meetings the choice of opting out.
 - Arrange in consultation with outside agencies, individual or group debriefings or support meetings (parental permission should be sought for this).
 - Plan for re-integration of pupils, staff e.g. absentees, injured, siblings, close relatives etc. Student liaison person to liaise with above on their return to school.
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- Plan visits to injured.
 - Family liaison person + Director to visit home/hospital.
 - Attendance and participation at funeral/memorial service (to be decided)
 - Decide this in accordance with parent's wishes and College management decisions and in consultation with close school friends.

Longer Term Actions:

- Monitor pupils for signs of continued distress.
- If over a prolonged period of time a student continues to display the following s/he may need appropriate professional assistance from NEPS, Health Board, Rainbows or other agency; Uncharacteristic behaviour Deterioration in academic performance Physical symptoms, e.g. weight loss/gain, lack of attention to appearance, tiredness In appropriate emotional reactions Increased absenteeism
- Evaluate response to incident and amend Critical Incident Management Plan appropriately:
 - What went well?
 - Where were the gaps?
 - What was the most/least helpful?



Have all the necessary onward referrals to support services been made?
Is there any unfinished business?

- Formalise the Critical Incident Plan for the future.
- Consult with NEPS psychologist.
- Ensure that new staff are aware of the College policy and procedures in this area.
- Ensure they are aware of which pupils were affected in any recent incident and in what way. When individual pupils or a group of pupils affected by an incident are transferring to a new school, it would be useful to brief the new school.
- Decide on appropriate ways to deal with anniversaries and be sensitive to special days e.g. birthdays, Mothers' day, Fathers' day etc.
- Acknowledge anniversaries with the family.
- Plan a college memorial service e.g. plant tree.
- Care of deceased person's possessions – what are the parents' wishes?
- Update and amend college records.

Confidentiality.

The Coiste Bainistíochta and staff of Colaiste na Rinne have a 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. Members of staff will bear this in mind and will seek to ensure that pupils do likewise.


Resources

- "Young People and Loss, A Handbook for Schools" – Robin Cooper
- "Silver Linings: Community Crisis Response" - Rainbows
- "Responding to Critical Incidents – Resource Materials for Schools" -DES
- "Responding to Critical Incidents – Guidelines for Schools" - DES

Drawn up by the Board of Management of Coláiste na Rinne. This policy will be reviewed January 2023.

Síniú: 
(Cathaoirleach)

Dáta: 25/2/23

Síniú: 
(Stiúrthóir)

Dáta: 25/02/2023