



DOMINICAN COLLEGE MUCKROSS PARK

CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT POLICY

(Ratified January 2023)

Critical Incident Management Policy

Dominican College Muckross Park

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‘Be who God meant you to be and you will set the world on fire’.

Catherine of Siena

Our Vision

As a school in the Catholic, Dominican tradition, our educational vision as expressed in our motto, Veritas, encompasses the lifelong search for truth, respect for tradition, and commitment to human flourishing.

Our Mission

We are proud of our lived Christian heritage, which inspires us to welcome and respect people of all backgrounds and beliefs. We tailor our educational approach to the needs of each individual student. We aim to excel in teaching and learning and provide an extensive programme of additional activities as we believe that every student deserves the opportunity to flourish.

Sustained by our Dominican tradition, we invite our students to engage with the values of Jesus Christ, who is the Way, the Truth and the Life. Our educational community cultivates care in our students and staff for themselves, their neighbours, and their planet. We aim to strengthen empathy, nurture integrity and discernment, and generate a love of lifelong learning throughout our school community.

Context

Within this context, Dominican College Muckross Park acknowledges the need to have a school policy in place in the event of a crisis/critical incident occurring usually without warning, and at any time of the day or night.

This policy was prepared with reference to *Responding to Critical Incidents NEPS Guidelines and Resource materials for Schools* (available on the DES website www.education.ie)

However, it is important to note that this policy is more **advisory** than prescriptive given that each crisis/critical incident will demand a different set of responses.

DEFINING A CRITICAL INCIDENT

A critical incident or sequence of events which overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of the school (NEPS 2016)

The life of any school is affected by many and various traumas such as

- Bereavement
- Suicide of a student, teacher, parent
- Death of a staff member or student
- Serious illness of a close relative of student/staff
- School fire, explosion or other emergency
- Serious violence or threat of same in the school/school community
- The disappearance of a member of the school community
- Intrusion into the school
- An accident on a school trip.

Dominican College Muckross Park is committed to addressing the issues of death, loss and tragedy in a comprehensive manner and this policy document will attempt to outline structures and strategies which the school has in place in anticipation of such events within the school community.

CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM

The purpose of a **Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)** is to deal with any significant trauma that may occur in the life of the school.

The CIMT should consult the following resource documents:

- Responding to Critical Incidents Guidelines and Resources for Schools (NEPS 2016)
- Suicide Prevention in Schools: Best Practice Guidelines (IAS, National Suicide Review Group (2002)
- Suicide Prevention in the Community - A Practical Guide (HSE 2011)
- Well-Being in Post-Primary Schools Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention (DES, DOH, HSE 2013)

The CIMT is composed of

- Leadership: Principal (Deputy Principal in absence of Principal & most senior member of staff in the absence of the Deputy Principal)
- Coordinator
- Deputy Principal
- Relevant Year Head/ Facilitator

- Guidance Counsellor
- The Staff Representative if appropriate
- School Secretary (and Caretaker if necessary)
- Representative of the Board of Management
- Family Liaison
- Chaplain/Head of R.E.
- Communication
- Garda Liaison/ Community Officer/Fire Brigade Representative

SHORT TERM ACTIONS

Procedures to be Followed in the Event of a Critical Incident Occurring (1st Day)

Hearing the News

Once a critical incident comes to the attention of a member of the school community, s/he should, where possible and practical, inform the senior management of the school forthwith. However, where it is apparent that an emergency situation exists, it may be necessary to call one or other of the emergency services in the first instance.

1. Establish the Facts:

- Gather the facts - Who? What? When? And Where?
- Location of the event
- Extent of the injuries
- How many involved, names etc
- Risk of further injuries
- Relevant Agencies/Parents/Guardians already contacted

2. Convene a meeting with the Critical Incident Management Team

Once the facts of the crisis have been established, a meeting of the available Critical Incident Management Team should be called forthwith. The team will need to agree an immediate plan of action which may/will involve:

- Assigning responsibilities to the Team members
- Agreeing a statement of the facts for staff, students, parents and media. If possible there should be a written version of this
- Informing staff and students (where possible all staff should have been informed in the first instance)
- Contacting parents
- Visiting families most immediately affected by the crisis
- Organising a timetable for the day and adhering to the normal routine in so far as is possible
- Organising a school assembly/prayer service/Mass

- Liaising with relevant support groups. Counsellors, Health Boards, NEPS, DES, etc.

3. Arrange for the Supervision of Students

4. Convene a Staff Meeting

All staff, teaching and non-teaching should attend and the following areas may be dealt with:

- An account of the facts as known.
- An opportunity for staff to express feelings and views.
- Discussion with staff re informing students...an agreed approach is best.
- An outline of the schedule for the day as proposed by the CIMT.
- Details regarding outside agencies which may have become involved and the supports they will put in place.
- A procedure for identifying vulnerable students.
- Distribution of relevant handout materials, Resource Documents, etc.

5. Inform Students

It is important that all those who need to be informed of the incident receive the necessary information as soon as possible. To assist in this process the following will be considered:

- An agreed statement re the incident (care to be taken with terminology used).
- The assembly size of the group, class groups/years groups/seniors/ juniors etc.
- The staff members assigned to this task, (some may be uncomfortable in this undertaking)
- Time allocated for this task, allowing students to voice their feelings/reactions etc.
- A room set aside for distressed students, tea/coffee etc to be made available if needed.
- A clear statement as to the help/support which will be available to the students.
- The use of an 'outside expert' where relevant

6. Inform Parents

- A designated person to share information to be agreed upon.
- A list of who has and who needs to be informed to be kept.
- A written account of the event, how the school proposes to deal with it, and how parents can assist their daughters/family members in recovering from a trauma to be forwarded as soon as possible.

7. Informing Media

- A designated person to act as spokesperson, (clarity regarding 'on the record' and 'off the record' comments should be established).
- Permission from the family must be sought.
- Family to be informed about any press release and the contents to be made known to them

- Personal details of students/staff members involved (phone numbers addresses, etc) should not be divulged.
- Staff and students to be briefed on dealing with the media.

MEDIUM TERM ACTIONS (24-72 hrs)

Review the events of the first 24 hours

- Re-convene the Critical Incident Management Team
- Decide on allocation of tasks
- Briefly check on how each person is coping
- Decide arrangements for support meetings for parents/students/staff
- Decide on mechanism for feedback from teachers on vulnerable students
- Ensure that all staff are kept up to date with information, reconvene staff meeting if necessary
- Update media if necessary

Arrange support for individual students/groups of students and parents if necessary.

Plan visits to the injured.

Liaise with family regarding funeral arrangements/memorial services.

Attendance and Participation at funeral/memorial service.

School Closure: decision from Chairperson of the BOM.

Plan for the reintegration of students and staff upon their return to school after trauma.

LONG TERM ACTIONS

- Monitor students for signs of continued distress.
- Evaluate response to the incident and amend the Critical Incident Management Plan appropriately.
- Decide on appropriate memorials/anniversary events.

DEALING WITH THE AFTERMATH OF A SUICIDE OR SUSPECTED SUICIDE

The term 'suicide' should not be used until it has been established without doubt that the victim's death was indeed as a result of suicide. The phrases 'tragic death' or 'sudden death' should be used in the interim.

When somebody dies through suicide, those who know the person experience a deep sense of shock and sometimes, trauma. It is important that the school community has guidelines in place which will help with coping in such difficult circumstances.

How the school can support the:

FAMILY

- An appointed staff member should contact the family to establish the facts and the family's wishes about how the information should be disseminated.
- Acknowledge their grief and loss
- Organise a home visit by designated staff members (Year Head, Principal etc)
- Consult with the family with regard to their wishes re school support/funeral services etc

STAFF

- Convene a meeting of all staff to brief them on details.
- Inform staff of support, policy and procedures available within the school community.
- Outsource support from NEPs, etc. for staff who will in turn brief them on how to break news to students.
- Revisit the **Resource Document**, provided by NEPS, re potential suicide and indicators of high risk students.
- Identify high risk students and what supports are available.
- Arrange for updates of information via Bulletin Board, etc.
- Allow staff time and space for their own reactions/responses.

STUDENTS

- Give facts as they are appropriate.
- Create a safe and supportive environment where students can share their reactions and feelings.
- Advise them on their possible reactions over the coming days.
- Avoid sensationalising the suicide.
- Inform them of the supports available to them.
- Take any talk of suicide seriously and provide support or refer immediately.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF CIM TEAM

CHAIRPERSON

The School Principal (or someone acting on his/her behalf) is the chairperson of the CIM team.

Responsibilities

1. Determine whether it is necessary to activate the CIM plan
2. Designate the person who will investigate all the details
3. Nominate the coordinator
4. Contact the CIM team, outside school if necessary
5. Convene and chair the CIM team
6. Activate the CIM plan
7. Contact and inform the BOM
8. Brief the staff
9. Liaise with the Media

Tasks

1. Have/keep telephone numbers of the CIM team to hand.
2. Brief staff on the need to know basis at the earliest opportunity and keep them informed of developments as appropriate.
3. Indicate to staff what, if any, information is to be shared with the students.
4. Ensure that the Principal deals with all news media enquiries.
5. If appropriate, prepare a statement for the news media, expressing the school's feelings and explaining the school's response plans.
6. Agree a specific time for press briefings if situation is 'on-going'.
7. Nominate a specific location for media briefings.
8. Ensure that the school runs as normally as possible, if appropriate.

COORDINATOR

The coordinator, nominated by the Principal, is responsible for the implementation of the CIM plan and for ensuring appropriate support throughout the critical incident.

Responsibilities

1. Responsibility for overseeing the implementation of the decisions of the CIM team.
2. Ensuring that each person/group understands and is fully briefed on his/her role within the response.
3. Responsibility for the updating procedures where appropriate and for keeping staff informed of such changes.

Tasks

1. Ascertain the facts of the situation.
2. Meet with the CIM team.
3. Ensure that each member of the CIM team understands fully their role and has the necessary information and support to carry it out.
4. Regular meetings, in the aftermath of the critical incident and in the days that follow, with updated briefings as appropriate.
5. Attendance at in-service and/or other training relevant to a critical incident and to the school's response.
6. Evaluation of the communication process afterwards.

DEPUTY PRINCIPALS

The Deputy Principals are responsible for administration.

Responsibilities:

1. Members of the CIM team.
2. Keep the school running as normally as possible.
3. Make rooms available for: Counselling, Chaplain/Reflection, Parents/Public to meet, Other.
4. Free up teachers who are: helping out with students, Helping the coordinator and facilitator, affected by the situation.
5. Know what is happening.
6. Know where it is happening.

Tasks:

1. Continue with school administration but in unusual circumstances.
2. Link with the CIM coordinator.
3. Are part of the CIM team.

FACILITATOR/YEAR HEAD

The Facilitator is usually the Year Head of the relevant student group affected by the Critical Incident.

Responsibilities:

1. To work closely with the tutors in order to identify specific needs within the school.
2. The facilitator works closely with the Deputy Principal to relay information regarding: extra classrooms which may be needed, changes in classrooms, changes required re staff.
3. The facilitator is responsible for overseeing the delivery of the response to the students.

Tasks

1. The facilitator meets as a member of the CIM team.
2. The facilitator meets with the relevant tutor and teachers throughout the day. The information obtained at these meetings will be disseminated at the CIM team meetings or to key personnel throughout the day.
3. The facilitator maintains his/her role as facilitator throughout the critical incident and during the aftercare period.

COUNSELLING

The guidance counsellor/counselling staff.

Responsibilities

1. To support teachers in their implementation of the response in the classroom.
2. To provide counselling/emotional support to students and staff affected by the incident.
3. To ensure follow up and evaluation towards best practice in critical incident response.

Tasks

1. Offer support to teacher and be present if necessary when story is being verified.
2. Feedback to CIM team.
3. Support the teacher and Year Head in the classroom by:

- Providing resource materials and guidelines on talking and listening to students.
 - Checking that teachers are comfortable with their roles and identifying alternatives where necessary.
 - Helping teachers identify the needs of particular groups of students in relation to one-to-one or group support.
4. Provide space and time for one-to-one and/or group consultation with students.
 5. Provide space and time for one-to-one support for staff members affected by the incident.
 6. Access and facilitate support from outside agencies where necessary.
 7. Develop a resource pack for use in a Critical Incident.

CHAPLAIN/SPIRITUAL ROLE/R.E. DEPT.

Responsibilities

1. Liaise with local parish in the case of a death
2. Provide opportunity for prayer in the school (working with R.E. team)

Tasks:

1. Contact local parish re funeral arrangements.
2. Liaise with parish and home with regard to school involvement in liturgy.
3. Organise students/staff to be involved in funeral if invited to do so.
4. Work with RE team to provide prayer for the affected group as soon as possible.
5. Establish 'quiet' or prayer space in the school.
6. Be available to staff if required.

COMMUNICATION

Person/s Nominated by Principal.

Responsibilities:

To ensure that information is disseminated to all members of the school community in the event of a critical incident.

Tasks:

1. To liaise with the office staff re accessing up-to-date records of telephone numbers (school term and holiday), mobile phone numbers, home addresses and e-mail addresses of all CIM team members.
2. To liaise with office staff re accessing all contact details of all staff members.

3. To liaise with Principal regarding communications to staff, students, public.
4. To organize a 'communication-to-all-staff' system when dissemination of information is required outside school time.
5. To organize a 'Bulletin Board' in the staffroom during the critical incident and to update where necessary.

Note: The next of kin list, "*Critical Incident Next of Kin Contact Details*", is located on Google Drive. It is shared with the Principal and both Deputy Principals.

The list of members of the C.I.M.T., "*Critical Incident Management Team Contact Details*", is located on Google Drive. It is shared with the Principal and both Deputy Principals.

This reviewed policy was ratified and adopted by the Board of Management on 17th January 2023

Signed: Mary White
Chairperson of Board of Management

Date: 17/1/23

Signed: Siobhán Kelly
Principal

Date: 17/1/23

Date of next review: January 2025

EMERGENCY CONTACT LIST

Garda Station	Irishtown Garda Station	666 9200
Ambulance	St Vincent's Hospital Emergency	221 4358
Fire Brigade	Donnybrook	673 4000
Hospital	St Vincent's Emergency St Vincent's General	221 4358 221 4000
Local GP	D4 Medical Centre 95a Morehampton Road Donnybrook	667 4984
	Dr Columb Main Street, Donnybrook	269 6588
Health Board	Information Head Office Naas	0818 241850 045 880400
Local Churches	Sacred Heart Church Donnybrook Fr Ciaran O'Carroll	283 8311
	Presbyterian Church Adelaide Road Donnybrook	269 4922
Offices of the Inspectorate		889 6553
State Examinations Commission		090 6442700
DES Dublin		873 4700
ASTI		604 0160

Critical Incident Management Team Contact Details

Mary White (B.O.M.) 087 1259934

Senior Management Team:

Anne Marie 085 7232841

Síobhán 087 6543067

Caitriona 087 8262897

Year Heads:

Sixth Dan Farrell 086 3317574

Fifth Jessica Blount 086 3397617

Fourth Paddy Sugrue 086 1744141

Third Danielle Lawless 085 2715030

Second James Ward 086 4049041

First Damien Langan 087 1332391

Guidance Counsellor:

Bill Core 087 2437945

Resource Coordinator:

Gareth Wynne 086 7327398

NEPS Office:

01-8650400 (local)

01-8892700 (head)

USEFUL CONTACT NUMBERS

Barnardos Bereavement Counselling for Children

Hyde Square
654 South Circular Road
Dublin 8
Tel: (01) 473 2110
Open Mon-Fri 10am - 12 noon
Fax: (01) 453 0300
Email: bereavement@barnardos.ie

Samaritans

112 Marlborough St, Dublin 1
Phone: 0818 60 90 90
open 24hrs, 365 days
Email: jo@samaritans.org
replies within 24 hrs

AWARE

72 Lower Leeson Street, Dublin 2.
tel. 01 661 7211
fax. 01 661 7217
e. info@aware.ie

Console, living with suicide.

1800 201890
www.console.ie

Childline 1800 666666

Childline Text Talk 50101

Parentline 01 8733500

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