



ST. COLUMBA'S GIRLS NATIONAL SCHOOL WITH FACILITY FOR DEAF CHILDREN

CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT PLAN

Introduction

St. Columba's Girls' National School with Facility for Deaf Children aims to protect the wellbeing of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times as outlined in our mission statement.

We recognise that critical incidents can greatly affect people and that co-ordinated and systematic procedures are necessary to facilitate the provision of a rapid and appropriate response at the time of the incident as well as post incident support. The aim of the critical incident plan is to ensure that management and staff will react effectively and promptly to maintain control of the situation. The plan will also assist the school community to return to normal as quickly as possible and limit the effects of the incident on staff and students.

We acknowledge that the complex nature of traumatic events and bereavements may have far reaching consequences and can affect one's attitude, performance and ability to cope. It is, therefore, important for school to have clear supportive strategies in place for our students and staff.

What is a critical incident?

"A critical incident is any incident or sequence of events which overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school and disrupts the running of the school".

Examples:

- Death of a member of the school community through sudden death, accident, terminal illness or suicide.
- Criminal incidents

- Major accidents, serious injury involving pupils or staff on or off school premises.
- Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism etc.
- Civil unrest, war
- A physical attack on staff member(s) or student(s) or intrusion into the school premises.
- Disappearance of a member of the school community.
- Unauthorised removal of a student from school or home. •
- An accident or tragedy in the wider school community.

Critical Incidents Management Team:

Leadership Role: Louise Roche, Principal & Hansey Power, Deputy Principal

Communication Role (media): Gwen Whyte and Mary Poulter

Staff/Student Liaison Role: Aoife Quinn and Karen McKevitt (and Isla Dineen if someone in the Deaf/ Hard of Hearing community is involved)

Chaplaincy Role: Fr. Teddy O’Sullivan and Gwen Whyte

Family Liaison Role: Hansey Power and Geraldine Canty (and Isla Dineen if someone in the Deaf/ Hard of Hearing community is involved)

Parents Association and Community Liaison Role: Carmel Lester and Marina Lawler.

B.O.M. Rep: Dónal Murphy

N.E.P.S: Mary Atkins

School Secretary: Orla Quilligan

The first-named person has the responsibility defined.

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

Roles and Responsibilities

Leadership Role: Louise Roche and Hansey Power

Intervention

- Confirm the event
- Activate the Critical Incident response team. (Appendix 1). Express sympathy to family
- Clarify facts surrounding event
- Make contact with other relevant agencies
- Decide how news will be communicated to different groups (staff, pupils, outside school)

Postvention

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

Communication Role (media): Mary Poulter and Gwen Whyte

Intervention

- With Team, prepare a public statement (Appendix 3)
- Organise a designated room to address media promptly if necessary
- Ensure telephone lines are free for outgoing and important incoming calls
- Liaise with relevant outside support agencies

Postvention

- Review and evaluate effectiveness of communication response

Student/ Staff Liaison Role: Karen McKevitt, Aoife Quinn and Isla Dineen

Intervention

- Outline specific services available in school
- Put in place clear referral procedures
- Address immediate needs of staff
- Advise staff on how to handle questions from students
- Provide information

- Organise counselling

Postvention

- Provide ongoing support to vulnerable students
- Support Staff
- Monitor class/staff most affected
- Refer on, as appropriate
- Review and evaluate Plan

Chaplaincy Role: Father Teddy O’Sullivan and Gwen Whyte

Intervention

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

Postvention

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

Staff Liaison Role: Karen McKevitt, Aoife Quinn and Isla Dineen

Intervention

- Communicate news to the staff.
- Outline the Critical Incident Management Plan
- Advise them on how to handle questions from pupils and the public.

Postvention

- Provision of ongoing support.
- Involve (as appropriate) staff in in-school liturgies/memorial services
- Review and evaluate plans.

Family Liaison Role: Colleen Forsythe, Ger Canty, Isla Dineen

Intervention

- Coordinate contact with families (following first contact by principal) • Consult with family around involvement of school in e.g. funeral service • Assist with all communication dealing with parents of any student affected by critical incident

Postvention

- Provide ongoing support to families affected by the incident • Involve (as appropriate) family in in-school liturgies/memorial services • Offer to link family with community support groups
- Review and evaluate plans.

Parents' Association and Community Liaison Role: Carmel Lester and Marina Lawler

Intervention

- Communicate news to the Parents' Association and community where appropriate.
- Source and organise volunteers from the P.A. and community where appropriate.

Postvention

- Link community support groups to the family (while communicating with Family Liaison person).
- Involve members of the PA and Community (where appropriate) in funerals and memorial services.
- Review and evaluate plans.

Action Plan

SHORT TERM ACTIONS (24 HOURS) (Appendix 2)

- Immediate contact with family/families.
 - Consult with the family regarding appropriate support from the school e.g. funeral service.
 - Breaking the news to students (**Appendix 4**)
 - Ensure that a quiet place can be made for students/staff. •
- Rooms will be made available as appropriate:
- Individual meetings
 - Parents room

Media Briefing (if appropriate)

- Designate a spokesperson. (Louise)
- Prepare a brief statement. (Team)
- Protect family's privacy.
- Gather accurate information.
- It is important to obtain accurate information about the incident.
 1. What happened, where and when?
 2. What is the extent 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 (Appendix 1)

1. Emergency services
2. Medical services
3. H.S.E Psychology Departments/Community Care Services
4. NEPS - Mary Atkins
5. BOM - Dónal Murphy
6. DES/Schools Inspector

Convene a meeting with Key Staff/Critical Management Team Louise, Colleen, Carmel, Karen, Mary Poulter, Marina, Ger, Aoife, Gwen, Isla

Organise a staff meeting, if appropriate.

1. Ensure any absent staff members are kept informed
2. Organise a timetable/routine for the day. (Adhering to the normal

- school routine is important, if this is possible).
3. Class teachers take note of any absentees who might need to be contacted, list of friends etc, or any other relevant information and give it to the Student Liaison person.
 4. Arrange supervision of students.
 5. Liaise with the family regarding funeral arrangements/memorial service.
 1. The Chaplain/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. (Student Liaison person + Class teacher if possible)
 3. Have regard for different religious traditions and faiths.

MEDIUM TERM ACTIONS (24-72 HOURS)

- Preparation of students/staff attending a funeral.
 - Involvement of students/staff in liturgy, if agreed by the bereaved family.
 - Facilitation of students'/staffs' responses, e.g. Sympathy cards, flowers, book of condolences, etc.
 - Ritual within the school.
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- Review the events of the first 24 hours (**Appendix 5**)
 1. Reconvene Key Staff/Critical Incident Management Team.
 2. Decide arrangements for support meetings for parents/students /staff.
 3. Decide on a mechanism for feedback from teachers on vulnerable students.

4. Have a review of the Critical Incident Management Team meeting.
5. Establish contact with absent staff and pupils.

• Arrange support for individual students, groups of students, if necessary.
(Appendix 6)

1. Hold support/information meetings 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 **(Appendix 7)**

- Plan for the re-integration of students and staff e.g. absentees, injured, siblings, close relatives etc.)
1. Student Liaison person to liaise with above on their return to school.
 2. Plan visits to injured
 3. Family/Liaison person + Class Teacher + Principal to visit home/hospital.
 4. Attendance and participation at funeral/memorial service (To be decided)
 5. Decide this in accordance with parents' wishes and school management decisions and in consultation with close school friends.
 6. School closure (if appropriate)
 7. Request a decision on this from school management.

LONGER TERM ACTIONS (Appendix 8)

- 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 Health Board or other professional bodies. **(Appendix 9)** 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 of Critical Incidents where appropriate

1. Ensure that any new staff is 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 where appropriate.

- 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.
 4. Plan a school memorial service.
 5. Care for the deceased person's possessions. What are the parent's/family's wishes?
 6. Update and amend school records.

Updated & reviewed by Hansey Power October 2025

Drawn up by Marie O'Riordan, Úna Collins and Triona Fitzgerald, September 2010.

Reviewed: September 2014, November 2019, February 2022 and September 2022

Signed _____ Date _____

Chairperson of Board of Management

October 2025

Appendix 1

Management Team

School Principal Louise Roche

School Deputy Principal Colleen Forsythe

Assistant Principal 1 Carmel Lester

Assistant Principal 1 Karen Mc Kevitt

Middle Management Team Marina Lawler, Geraldine Canty, Mary Poulter, Gwen Whyte, Aoife Quinn, Hansey Power

Deaf Teacher: Isla Dineen

School Secretary Orla Quilligan

Chaplaincy Role Father Teddy O'Sullivan

The Critical Incident Management Team may co-opt other members of staff to assist them, should they deem it necessary

Name of the Team Member	Tasks -
School Principal	See Below
Deputy Principal	
Secretary	

Chaplain	
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Emergency Contact Numbers

Gardaí	999 or 112 (021) 494 7120 Togher Garda Station
Ambulance	999 or 112
Hospital	(021) 492 2000
Church	086 8168020 Fr. Teddy (021) 489 4128 St. Columba's Parish Office
Fire Brigade	999 or 112
D.E.S.	(090) 648 3600
N.E.P.S. Psychologist Mary Atkins	0761108459

Appendix 2

Short Term Actions and Roles Assigned

1st Day

Task	Name
Gather Accurate Information	Louise Roche & Orla Quilligan
Contact Appropriate Agencies	Colleen Forsythe
Convene a Meeting with Key Staff	Carmel Lester & Karen McKeivitt
Arrange Supervision of Students	Marina Lawler

Hold Staff Meeting	Louise Roche\Colleen Forsythe
Organise Timetable for the Day	Hansey Power
Inform Parents	Louise Roche & Orla Quilligan
Inform Students	Karen Mc Kevitt & Aoife Quinn(+ Isla Dineen if someone from the Deaf \ Hard of Hearing community is involved)

	N.E.P.S. psychologist - Mary Atkins
Make Contact with the Bereaved Family	Fr. Teddy O'Sullivan , Louise Roche Colleen Forsythe & Isla Dineen
Dealing with the Media	Mary Poulter & Hansey Power

Appendix 3

Sample Statement for the Media and letter to Parents

It is with profound sadness that the Management, staff and students of St. Columba's G.N.S. have learned of the tragic death of

Our sincerest sympathy is extended to the family of

On hearing the tragic news, the School Plan was put into immediate operation. The Crisis Response team convened a meeting to ensure that students affected by this loss are cared for adequately. Procedures are in place to ensure that all in the school community affected by this loss are given all of the help they need to cope at this time.

The school is offering counselling and support for students and parents affected by this tragedy. Prayer services have been held with each class in the

school. Students will attend and participate in the funeral service in consultation with the wishes of the family.

Our prayers and support are with everyone affected by this tragedy.

Appendix 4

Breaking the News to Students – Guidelines for Teachers

- only if incident is confirmed by the family, can it be relayed as such to the students.
- The Class of the student who has died should be the first to be told with the Chaplain.
- Not every class is going to be traumatised as some students may not even know the deceased. But it is important to acknowledge the loss for the whole school community.
- Tell the class you have sad news and it is difficult for you to do this.
- let them know the name of the person the news is about.
- let them know the facts – rumours should be prevented as far as possible.
- Encourage questions
- Let the class know of common reactions tragic news
- the common reaction is shock.
- Expect outbursts and tears
- don't allow a student to leave the class in a distressed state unless they have supervision somewhere else in the building.
- let them know that you support them
- let them know who else is available to support them
- don't be afraid to let them know that you are also upset by the news
- Allow them time to mingle and talk to one another in groups.
- Explain how they can support one another
- be attentive to identifying those who are not coping well with the news.

- a short prayer or time of reflection for the deceased may be appropriate.
- If the students appear ready, A Year Group Assembly may be held later in the day.
- Some students may be able to continue and go to class, and may want to Some will need to stay with the Crisis Response Team for the morning
- Encourage students to stay in school to support their friends · Some may need to go home – only if parents can collect them
- Those who go to class may not be able to concentrate on the work of the class
- Class Teachers will need to make allowances for them to talk in groups

Appendix 5

Medium Term Actions and Roles Assigned

24 - 72 Hours

Task	Name
Review the Events of the First 24 Hours	Louise
Arrange Support for Individual/Groups/Parents/Students/Teachers	Colleen
Plan the Re-integration of Staff and Students	Carmel

Plan Visits to the Injured	Louise
Liaise with Family Regarding Funeral Arrangements, etc.	Louise, Colleen, Isla
Attendance and Participation at Funeral Service	Senior Staff members, class teacher\ s and those closest to the injured parties.
School Closure	BOM - Dónal Murphy

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Appendix 6

Sample Letter to Parents/Guardians

Dear Parents/Guardians

The school has experienced (the sudden death/injury) of 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 daughter/son may have some feelings that she/he may like to discuss with you. You can help your daughter/son by taking time to listen to her/him and encouraging her/him to express her/his feelings. It is important to give truthful information that is appropriate to her/his age.

If you would like any advice or support you may contact the following people at school. *(Details)*

Principal.

Appendix 7

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

Your daughter/son has been identified as one of the students who would benefit from meeting with (X). If you would like your daughter/son 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 daughter/son meet with

I understand that my daughter/son 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)

Appendix 8

Beyond 72 Hours

Task	Name
Monitor Students for Continuing Signs of Stress	Marina
Evaluate Response to Incident and Amend Critical Incident Plan Appropriately	Ger
Formalise Plan for the Future	Karen

Inform New Staff and Pupils	Carmel
Decide on Appropriate Way to Deal with Anniversaries	Louise & Colleen

Appendix 9

Useful Contact Numbers

Barnardos	01-4530355
The Samaritans	116123
Childline	1800666666
Parentline	1890927277
AWARE	1800804848
National Suicide Bereavement Support	012493333
Rainbows	01-4734175
Bereavement Counselling Service (Túsla)	
Bereavement Counselling	0761074000
Spectrum – Staff Counselling	01 5180356
CUH	021 4922000
Ambulance	999 or 112
Gardaí	999 or 112
Gardaí – Anglesey Street	021 4522000
Gardaí - Douglas	021 4857570
Gardaí - Togher	021 4947120

Fire Brigade	021 4924000
NEPS	01 8892700
NEPS Psychologist	0761108459

Local GPs	Douglas Medical Centre 021 4363550 City South GP 021 4963799 Douglas Road Medical 021 4893829
HSE	1800 700 700
CAMHS	021 4357449
INTO	01 8047700
DES	01 8892700
School Inspector	
Fr. Teddy O'Sullivan	086 8168020
St. Columba's Parish Office	021 4894128