



# Coachford College Critical Incident Plan

## 1. General

### 1.1 Scope

This Plan applies to the community of Coachford College. It was drawn up in consultation with all school partners.

### 1.2 Context

This Plan has been developed in line with the ethos and mission statement of Coachford College, which has at its core the care of every student, and informed by and guided by NEPS [Responding to Critical Incidents: Guidelines and Resource Materials for Schools](#) (2016). Coachford College aims to protect the wellbeing of all in its care by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. As stated in the school's Mission Statement "*we are a community, together we share mutual respect in a positive environment*". The school has taken a number of measures to create a coping, supportive and caring ethos in the school, and recognises its role in promoting positive mental health and in creating effective care systems. The school's Wellbeing curriculum supports the physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual development of our students. The school recognises its role in the creation of a nurturing, healthy and safe environment in which learning can flourish. A number of policies and procedures have been formulated by the school with a view to ensuring the physical and psychological safety of both students and staff and during the normal course of the school day. These policies, which should be read in conjunction with this Plan, aim to promote positive mental health and wellbeing, and in so doing, act to prevent, in so far as is possible, critical incidents. Such policies include the Child Safety Statement, Anti-Bullying Policy, Appropriate Behaviour Policy, Suspensions and Expulsions Policy, Wellbeing Plan, Guidance Policy, Substance Abuse Policy, School Outings Policy and Data Protection Policy.

### 1.3 Aims of the Critical Incident Plan

The aim of the Critical Incident Plan is to support staff and management to react quickly and effectively in the event of a critical incident. The plan will also help the school to return to normality as soon as possible and limit the effects of the incident on students and staff.

## 2. Contents

1. Definition of a Critical Incident
2. Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)
  - 2.1. Points of information
  - 2.2. Constitution of Critical Incident Management Team
3. Roles and Responsibilities
4. Action Plan

- 4.1. Initial Action Plan (Day 1)
- 4.2. Medium term actions (Day 2-3)
- 4.3. Longer term actions (beyond 72 hours)
- 4.4. Student Support Team Procedures
- 4.5. Administrative Team Procedures
- 4.6. Record-Keeping
- 4.7. Confidentiality
5. Suicide
6. Road Traffic Accidents and Violent Deaths
7. Critical Incidents during State Examinations
8. Defibrillators/First Aid
9. Contacts
  - 9.1. Emergency Contacts
  - 9.2. Useful contacts
10. Monitoring, Review and Evaluation
11. Appendix 1: Checklist for Short Term Actions
12. Appendix 2: Checklist for Medium Term Actions
13. Appendix 3: Checklist for Long Term Actions

## **1. Definition of Critical Incident**

Coachford College recognises a critical incident to be an event or sequence of events that overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of the school, and disrupts the normal running of the school.

Critical incidents may involve students, staff, the school or the local community. Examples of a critical incident might be the death of a member of the school community, through sudden death, accident, suicide or terminal illness, an accident involving students or staff on or off the school premises, a serious accident or tragedy in the school community, serious damage to the school through fire, flooding, vandalism etc., the disappearance of a member of the school community, or intrusion into the school.

## **2. Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)**

### **2.1 Points of Information**

- The CIMT has been established in line with best practice.
- The members of the team were selected on a voluntary basis.
- They will retain their roles for at least one school year.
- The members of the team will meet annually to review and update the policy and plan.
- Each member of the team has a dedicated Critical Incident folder.
- The CIMT may co-opt other members of staff to assist them, should they deem it necessary.

### **2.2 Constitution of Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)**

Coachford College has set up a Critical Incident Management Team consisting of the following personnel:

- Áine-Máire Ni Fhaoláin (Principal);
- Edward Williamson (Deputy Principal);
- Alan Deegan (Deputy Principal);

- Siobhan Buckley (Chaplain);
- Jen O'Dwyer (Guidance Counsellor);
- Brian Gill (Student Support Team);
- Aoife Ní Mhurchú (CIMT Coordinator), and
- Connie Curtin.

### **3. Roles and Responsibilities**

The role of the Critical Incident Team is divided into two areas of responsibilities. Responsibility for leadership of this team will lie with the school's Senior Leadership Team. It will also be their role to liaise with all members of the school community, Cork Education and Training Board, Board of Management, staff, parents/guardians and students. The Principal and Deputy Principals will communicate with those outside the school community if appropriate in the circumstances, e.g. Media, Gardaí, etc. The Student Support Team will ensure that care and support is provided to those members of the school community affected by the incident.

### **4. Action Plan**

#### **4.1 Initial Action Plan**

4.1.1 The person who discovers the incident shall:

- Alert the Senior Leadership Team and First Aid team, as relevant, who will put the school's Critical Incident Plan in place;
- Remove students, if in the vicinity of the incident.

4.1.2 The Senior Leadership Team shall:

- Gather accurate information. Establish the facts;
- Arrange supervision of students;
- Contact appropriate agencies (ref. Emergency and Useful Contacts);
- Convene an initial meeting with the CIMT.

4.1.3 Initial CIMT meeting agenda:

- Share details of incident;
- Agree the facts;
- Confirm the agencies which have been contacted;
- Assess if other agencies should be contacted;
- Report to the Health and Safety Authority, if necessary;
- Agree a communication plan;
- Plan procedures for that day, bearing in mind the importance of routine;
- Agree how to break news to students;
- Identify vulnerable students;
- Plan a whole staff briefing;
- Plan procedures for teachers to follow;
- Devise a process for dealing with telephone enquiries;
- Arrange support for the secretary and caretaker in handling phone enquiries and manning Reception and the front door;
- Notify Cork Education and Training Board;
- Ask the staff and students not to engage with the media;
- Plan for correspondence with parents/guardians.
- Delegate responsibilities;

- Make room/s available;
- Agree the next meeting time;
- Plan a time for staff follow-up at the end of that day;
- Make contact with the family, as relevant, and ensure them of the school's support.

#### 4.1.4 The Student Support Team shall:

- Contact appropriate supports/agencies e.g. NEPS;
- Provide appropriate material for parents/guardians, ref. NEPS Responding to Critical Incidents: Guidelines and Resource Materials for Schools (2016). ;
- Advise staff on the procedures for identification of vulnerable students;
- Provide guidelines for staff in dealing with students in distress i.e. information on grief responses, identifying those with need of counselling and support;
- Visit the bereaved family, if relevant, with the team leader;
- Set up Critical Incident Room(s);
- Outline services available to affected students during the initial hours;
- Assist class teachers of the class affected in breaking news;
- Take time with the most affected students in the Critical Incident Room(s);
- Contact parents when some students request to go home;
- Be alert to vulnerable staff members and make contact with them individually;
- Encourage those who feel able to return to class;
- Meet and support any distressed parents and staff;
- Liaise with those organising the funeral, as relevant;
- Alert other staff to vulnerable students;
- Provide appropriate material for parents (from Critical Incident folder);
- Provide material for students (from Critical Incident folder);
- Keep records of students seen by external agencies, and
- Re-establish a normal routine school day as appropriate.

#### 4.2 Medium term actions (Day 2-3)

The CIMT shall:

- Convene a meeting to delegate further responsibilities;
- Arrange support for students, staff and parents/guardians;
- Update staff, students and the Student Council;
- Update the media, if necessary;
- Liaise with the family and clarify the school's involvement in funeral/memorial services, as relevant;
- Arrange for school to be open as necessary to support staff and students;
- Plan visit to the injured as relevant;
- Prepare for the return of the affected student/s;
- Plan for the reintegration of students and staff;
- Assess the roles of the BOM, the Parents Council and the Student Council.

### **4.3 Longer term actions (beyond 72 hours)**

The CIMT shall:

- Monitor students and staff for signs of continuing distress;
- Plan the long-term counselling needs of individuals;
- Plan for the management of examinations, practical work, etc. and in the case of bereavement, the return of personal items to the family;
- Plan for anniversaries and memorials, as relevant;
- Evaluate the school's response to the critical incident and amend the Critical Incident Plan;
- Evaluate the effect on student/teacher relationships;
- Evaluate the long-term effect on the educational progress of students;
- Ensure that new staff has been made aware of the Critical Incident Plan and that they are informed of the students/staff that were affected in any recent incident;
- Ensure that relevant information is provided to new staff;
- Ensure that a report is sent to the new school when a student is transferring;
- Report to the Board of Management, Cork ETB and Parents' Council.

**4.4 The Administrative Team** will ensure that sample letters are typed up and ready for adaptation.

### **4.5 Record Keeping**

All team members will keep written records of phone calls, letters, meetings, persons met, interventions used and materials used etc.

### **4.6 Confidentiality**

Coachford College is conscious of its responsibility to protect the privacy of all persons involved in any incident, and shall at all times adhere to its Data Protection Policy.

*Note: Any use of social media (outside of designated personnel) to report the incident will be regarded as a disciplinary issue.*

## **5. Suicide**

### **5.1 Prevention**

Programmes are in place through the school Wellbeing programme which seek to promote positive mental health. Student Support procedures aim at the early identification of students at risk. Students who present as vulnerable are referred to the Student Support Team, who in caring for the student, follow the procedures set out by NEPS.

Great care will be taken in the use of the term 'suicide'. A member of the Senior Leadership Team and a staff member should contact the family to establish the exact facts and the family's wishes about how the death should be described. The phrases 'tragic death' or 'sudden death' may be used instead.

## **5.2 Action Plan**

5.2.1 When a student dies by suspected suicide, the Senior Leadership Team shall make contact with the family and

- Sympathise with them and acknowledge their grief and loss;
- Organise a home visit by team leader and a member of staff (checking first that the family would welcome such a visit);
- Consult with the family regarding the appropriate support from the school e.g. at the funeral service.

5.2.2 The Senior Leadership Team will meet with students, and give the facts.

5.2.3 The Student Support Team shall:

- Inform close friends and relatives separately;
- Create safe and supportive spaces for the students where they can share their reactions and feelings;
- Advise them on their possible reactions over the next few days;
- Avoid glorifying the victim and sensationalising the suicide. Carry out the same rituals or memorial services as the school would for other student deaths such as those due to road traffic accidents;
- Advise the students of the support that is available to them. Tell them that talking is positive and helpful;
- Take any talk of suicide seriously. Follow school protocols for dealing with this. Provide support, inform parents immediately and discuss onward referral options;
- Students may wish to seek support from each other rather than adults. This will be facilitated if appropriate and if possible. However, information should be provided about how to get further help if they, or their friends, should need it.

5.2.4 It is important following the funeral of a student who has died by suicide that students and parents/guardians are encouraged to come back to the school for support.

## **6. Road Traffic Accidents and Violent Deaths**

While it is not possible for a school to identify all possible types of Critical Incidents, in the case of incidents such as Road Traffic Accidents and Violent Deaths, the procedures set out in this Plan, are followed.

## **7. Critical Incidents during State Examinations**

Critical Incidents during state examinations are managed in keeping with the relevant procedures set out in this Plan, in consultation with the relevant agencies, and in keeping with the guidance for schools set out by NEPS. Cognisance shall be given to the fact that not all students and/or staff members may be onsite or available at the time of the incident.

## **8. Defibrillators/First Aid**

All staff members should be aware that:

- There is an AED (Automated External Defibrillator) Device located in the school's Reception;
- Staff members have received Emergency First Aid training and are trained to use this device;
- Retraining will continue on an annual basis;

- First Aid Kits are located at Reception, in the Science Room, in the PE Hall, and in the Home Economics Room.
- School Outings: A First Aid Kit will be brought and the relevant staff member will have a copy of the Emergency Contact list.

## 9. Contacts

### 9.1 Emergency Contacts

GARDAÍ	Coachford 021 733 4002 Macroom 026 20590 Anglesea St. 021 4522000
AMBULANCE	999/112
FIRE BRIGADE	999
HOSPITAL	CUH 021 4922000
MEDICAL CENTRE COACHFORD	021 743 4724
HSE FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES	021 496 5511/021 492 7000
DESK CUSTOMER SERVICES	01 889 6400
SEC	090 644 2700
NEPS PSYCHOLOGIST - Aoife Cassidy	01 8560481
EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE SERVICE	1800 41 10 57
ASTI TUI	1850 41 84 00/01 604 0160 01 492 2588

Contact details for parents/guardians and staff members are held in the school, in accordance with the school's Data Protection Policy.

As set out in the Policy on School Outings, information compiled in the case of emergency during school outings includes:

- A list of all students participating in the outing;
- A list of all staff and volunteers involved;
- Details of the teacher in charge;
- Contact details for the teachers involved, and
- Relevant medical information pertaining to students.

### 9.2 Other Useful Contact Numbers

- BARNARDOS BEREAVEMENT HELPLINE  
021 431 0591 01 473 2110
- THE SAMARITANS 1850 60 90 90/021 427 1323

- CHILDLINE 1800 66 66 66
- PARENTLINE 1890 92 72 77
- AWARE 1890 30 33 02/01 676 6166
- NATIONAL SUICIDE BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT NETWORK  
024 95561
- CAMHS 021 435 7447

## 10. Monitoring, Review and Evaluation

The Critical Incident Committee will review the plan in September of each new school year as an induction for new staff and before the formation of a new Board of Management, by means of the Checklist for Reviewing the Policy and Plan (Responding to Critical Incidents: Guidelines and Resource Materials for Schools, NEPS, 2016, p.19) . On-going review and evaluation will take cognisance of changing information, legislation, developments in the school-based programme and feedback from parents/guardians, teachers and students. The plan will be revised as necessary in the light of such review and evaluation and within the framework of school planning.

This Plan was drawn up in consultation with all school partners. It will be reviewed regularly and following each Critical Incident. It will be made available to all school partners on request.

The Plan was adopted by the Board of Management of Coachford College on 09/02/2026, having been signed by the Chairperson and the Principal.

Chairperson of the Board:



Date: 09/02/2026

Principal:



*Áine-Máire Ní Fhaoláin*

Date: 09/02/2026

*\*Appendices redacted (for staff use only)*

