



# **CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY**

Annual review by CIMT on 15<sup>th</sup>  
October

# 2024

**Ramsgrange Community School is a  
welcoming, open and inclusive school.**

**Our aim is to develop each of our  
students as a whole person by  
promoting an atmosphere of respect,  
honesty, and fairness in which all in the**

**Ramsgrange  
Community  
School**

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# **school community can achieve their full potential.**

## **Context**

Ramsgrange Community School aims to protect the well being of its students by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. The school has taken a number of measures to create a coping, supportive ethos in the school. The school has also formulated a number of policies and procedures to be followed with a view to ensuring the physical and psychological safety of both staff and students during the normal course of the school day and in the event of a critical incident.

### **Creation of a coping supportive and caring ethos in the school**

We have put systems in place to lessen the probability of the occurrence of an incident. These include measures to address both the physical and psychological safety of both staff and students.

### **Psychological Safety**

The school aims to create an open and encouraging environment in the school where students can talk about their difficulties and seek help for the same through the following:

- Student Mentoring (Check n connect)
- Meitheal programme
- SPHE Programme
- Chaplain
- Code of Behaviour
- Substance misuse policy
- Anti-Bullying policy
- Guidance policy
- Care-team
- Counseling
- SCP Key worker
- HSCL
- BFL
- CAP
- Acceptable use policy
- Childprotection policy
- Referrals to outside agencies

- Staff are informed of difficulties affecting individual students and are aware and vigilant to their needs
- Staff has access information which may help and support members of the school community.
- The school has developed links with outside agencies which may be contacted in the event of an emergency and for onward referral of its member.



### **Definition of Critical Incident:**

Ramsgrange Community School recognises a critical incident to be *“an incident 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.
- 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
- A physical attack on a staff member or student
- Intrusion into the school.
- Covid 19 related incidents.

### **AIM OF PLAN:**

The aim of the Critical Incident Plan is that in the event of such an incident as outlined above, the plan will help staff and management to respond quickly and effectively and to maintain control of the situation. The plan will also help the school to return to normality as soon as possible and limit the affects of the incident on staff and students.

### **RATIONALE:**

- Elements of preparedness in place
- Guidelines/Steps known to all staff
- Schools role in responding is recognised
- Schools role in support and partnership with other agencies.

### **Team:**

Ramsgrange Community School has set up a Team consisting of the following personnel.

- The Principal
- The Deputy Principal - Staff liaison
- The School Clerical Officer - Administration
- The School Chaplain
- The School Guidance Counsellor
- Home School Liaison Officer
- Teacher representing year group
- Behaviour For Learning Teacher

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

- The membership of the Critical Incident Management Team will be renewed at the start of each school year, and all staff will be informed of its membership.
- Where appropriate, in-service training will be provided for members of the Critical Incident Management Team
- The Critical Incident Management Team will prepare and agree an outline Critical Incident Management Plan which will be general in nature.
- The Critical Incident Management Team will meet at least once a year to review the role of the Team and the outline Response Plan. Meetings will be chaired by the Principal or his/her designate.
- Other areas of responsibility may be delegated by the team leader to other members of the team.

### **Role of Team Leader**

- The team leader alerts team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting of the team.
- Co-ordinates/delegates tasks of the other members.
- Liaises with The Board of Management and the Department of Education and Science & NEPS.
- In the case of bereavement, liaises with the bereaved family.

Other areas of responsibilities which may be delegated by the team Leader to other members of the team would include:

- Contacting Emergency support services
- Briefing and advising the staff and noting their feelings and concerns.

### **Gardai Liaison**

(This may be seen as part of the team leader's role)

- Liaises with the Gardaí
- Ensures that information about deaths or other developments is checked out for accuracy before being shared.

### **Staff liaison**

- Leads briefing meetings for staff on the facts as known, gives staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions, outlines the routine for the day
- Advises staff on the procedures for identification of vulnerable students

- Provides materials for staff
- Keeps staff updated as the day progresses
- Is alert to vulnerable staff members and makes contact with them individually
- Advises them of the availability of the Staff support services and gives them the contact number.

### **Student liaison**

- At post-primary level, may co-ordinate information from tutors and year heads about students they are concerned about
- Alerts other staff to vulnerable students (appropriately)
- Provides materials for students
- Keeps records of students seen by external agency staff
- Looks after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room where agreed

### **Community/agency liaison**

- Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of
  - Key parents, such as members of the Parents Council
  - Emergency support services and other external contacts and resources
- Liaises with agencies in the community for support and onward referral
- Is alert to the need to check credentials of individuals offering support
- Coordinates the involvement of these agencies
- Reminds agency staff to wear name badges
- Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies

### **Parent liaison**

- Visits the bereaved family with the team leader
- Arranges parent meetings, if held
- May facilitate such meetings, and manage 'questions and answers'
- Manages the 'consent' issues in accordance with agreed school policy
- Ensures that sample letters are typed up, on the school's system and ready for adaptation
- Sets up room for meetings with parents
- Maintains a record of parents seen
- Meets with individual parents
- Provides appropriate materials for parents (from their critical incident folder)

### **Media liaison**

- In advance of an incident, will consider issues that may arise and how they might be responded to (e.g. students being interviewed, photographers on the premises, etc)
- In the event of an incident, will liaise where necessary with the SEC; relevant teacher unions etc.

- Will draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews (as agreed by school management)

### **Administrator**

- Maintenance of up to date telephone numbers of
  - Parents or guardians
  - Teachers
  - Emergency services
- Takes telephone calls and notes those that need to be responded to
- Ensures that templates are on the schools system in advance and ready for adaptation
- Prepares and sends out letters, emails and faxes
- Photocopies materials needed
- Maintains records

### **Record keeping**

In the event of an incident each member of the team will keep records of phone calls made and received, letters sent and received, meetings held, persons met, interventions used, material used etc.

*School secretary* will have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters, photocopying materials, etc.

### **Confidentiality and good name considerations**

The management and staff of Ramsgrange Community School have a responsibility to protect the privacy and good name of the people involved in any incident and will be sensitive to the consequences of any public statements. The members of the school staff will bear this in mind .

### **Procedures in the Event of a Crisis**

1. On hearing news of the event, the Principal will inform the Chairperson of the Board of Management, and will, as soon as possible, call a meeting of the Critical Incident Management Team.
2. The team, under the direction of the Principal, will establish the facts relating to the case. This may involve liaison with the Gardai or other reliable source of information such as hospitals or parents.
3. A written report detailing the facts relating to the situation will be prepared and agreed by the Team members and will be disseminated to all interested parties as soon as possible. It is the intention of the School authorities that rumour and/or speculation will be avoided in such distressing situations.

**Staff members will have the option of excusing themselves**



from direct involvement in dealing with traumatic situations.

## IN RELATION TO PARENTS/GUARDIANS OR RELATIVES

The Critical Incident Management Team will set out a plan for informing parents/ guardians or relatives in the event of a crisis involving students away from home, and will also agree on what supports can be offered to affected people. The Team may decide that, depending on the nature of the crisis, some communication may need to be in person, while in other circumstances, information may given over the phone or to assembled groups.

Priority will be given to those most directly affected by the crisis.

The same prepared statement will be used by all members who are informing parents/guardians.

Information will be given in a sensitive manner.

In instances where a child has not yet come home, team members will try to help parents/guardians in dealing appropriately with their child when she gets home.

Parents/guardians will be informed of the support that will be available to them and their children.

## Agendas

### Agenda for CIMT Meeting

- Share details
- Agree facts
- Agency check. ie NEPS pack
- Phone line
- Media
- Liaison with bereaved family[ies]
- Arrange timetable for the day – as far as possible **maintain normal routines**
- Arrange a staff meeting – supervision

### Agenda for Staff Meeting

- Share information
- Allow time for emotional response
- Schedule for day – Routine
- OK to be upset
- How to share facts with students
- NB – seek booklet for script.
- Provide literature
- Identifying vulnerable students/staff members
- Students with learning difficulties.
- Cultural sensitivity and awareness re; service/mass
- Support for staff
- Quiet room/Media room/Agency room
- Staff will have the option of excusing themselves from direct involvement in dealing with traumatic situations.

### **Agenda for Informing Pupils**

- Decide who will inform pupils and how
- Adjust information to the age of the Child
- Provide facts and avoid speculation
- Allow pupils to ask questions
- Danger of rumour mill
- Discuss possible range of reactions
- Normalise reactions
- Allow pupils to process the information and to talk about their emotional response.
- Support is best given by the adults known to the children
- Separate arrangements for immediate class of child[ren] who are directly involved-  
Arrangements for siblings/close friends/relations

### **Short Term Actions continued**

- Inform parents/guardians – tell what reactions their children might have.
- Absentee students/staff
  - Contact absentee student/staff necessary
  - Appoint a staff member to speak with them when they return
- Dealing with the media – press Statements.
- Meeting with staff at the end of Day 1 to review the day.

### **Dealing with the Media**

- Media spokesperson
- Pro-active approach
- No student interviews
- No photos of the deceased
- Media statement – if appropriate

- Interviews – sensitive language, short,
- Factual and to the point.

### Consultation and communication regarding the plan

All staff were consulted and their views canvassed in the preparation of this policy and plan. Students and parent representatives were also consulted and asked for their comments. Our school’s final policy and plan in relation to responding to critical incidents has been presented to all staff.

Each member of the critical incident team has a personal copy of the plan.

All new and temporary staff will be informed of the details of the plan

The plan will be updated annually

### Critical incident rooms

In the event of a critical incident,

1. *Staff room* will be the main room used to meet the staff
2. *Central Area* for meetings with students
3. *Oratory/Principals Office* for parents
4. *Principals Office* for media
5. *Oratory/Guidance Room* for individual sessions with students
6. *Home School Liaison Office* for other visitors

### TEAM

* ROLE	NAME	MOBILE
Team Leader	Ms. Rachel O Connor	
Garda Liaison	Mr. Niall O Donnell (JLO)	
Staff Liaison	Ms. Tracey Edwards	
Student Liaison	Ms. Marie McCabe	
Parent Liaison	Ms. Sharon McDermott	
Community Liaison	Ms. Linda Rogers	

<b>Media Liaison</b>	<b>Mr. Rachel O' Connor</b>
<b>Administrator</b>	<b>Ms. Orla Marks</b>

**\*Roles may change depending on Critical incident**

## **EMERGENCY CONTACT LIST**

<b>HOSPITAL</b>		
	<b>Wexford -051 9142233</b>	<b>Waterford- 051 848000</b>
<b>FIRE BRIGADE</b>	<b>999</b>	
<b>CAREDOC</b>	<b>059 9138199</b>	<b>1850 334999</b>
<b>LOCAL GPS</b>	<b>Dr. Doyle -051 389215</b>	<b>Dr. Byrne -052 397111</b>
<b>HSE/Community Care Team/ ChildCare</b>		
	<b>New Ross-051 421445</b>	<b>Wexford-053 9123522</b>
<b>SCHOOL INSPECTOR</b>	<b>01 8896553</b>	
<b>NEPS PSYCHOLOGIST</b>		
<b>Dublin-01 8892700</b>	<b>Wexford-053 9143300</b>	
<b>DES</b>	<b>018896400</b>	
<b>ASTI</b>	<b>1850 418400 01 6040160</b>	<b>TUI 01 4922588</b>
<b>PARISH PRIEST/CLERGY</b>		
	<b>Ramsgrange – 051 389148</b>	<b>Duncannon-051 389118</b>

<b>SUICIDE RESOURCE OFFICE</b>	<b>051 874013</b>
<b>STATE EXAMS COMMISSION</b>	<b>090 6442700</b>
<b>EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE SERVICE 1800 411 057</b>	

## **Daily Routines**

### **Short term actions – Day 1**

- Gather accurate information
- Who, what, when, where?
- Convene a CIMT meeting – specify time and place
- clearly
- Contact external agencies
- Arrange supervision for students
- Hold staff meeting All staff
- Agree schedule for the day
- Inform students – (close friends and students with learning difficulties may need to be told separately)
- Compile a list of vulnerable students
- Contact/visit the bereaved family
- Prepare and agree media statement and deal with media
- Inform parents
- Hold end of day staff briefing

### **Medium term actions - (Day 2 and following days)**

- Convene a CIMT meeting to review the Team leader
- events of day 1
- Meet external agencies
- Meet whole staff
- Arrange support for students, staff, parents
- Visit the injured
- Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements
- Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service
- Make decisions about school closure BOM

### **Follow-up – beyond 72 hours**

- Monitor students for signs of continuing distress Class teachers
- Liaise with agencies regarding referrals
- Plan for return of bereaved student(s)
- Plan for giving of 'memory box' to bereaved family
- Decide on memorials and anniversaries BOM/Staff, parents and students
- Review response to incident and amend plan Staff/BOM

