

Athboy Community School

Critical Incident Policy

Ratified November 2023

1. Aims of the Policy

1.1 School Mission Statement

The Mission Statement of Athboy Community School states that the school will provide quality, holistic and inclusive education for the community. Our aim is to create a safe and caring environment, which encourages pupils to reach their full potential in an atmosphere of mutual respect.

In keeping with our aim to create a safe and caring environment, Athboy Community School promotes a pastoral care system, which is receptive to the changing needs of pupils and staff. The Critical Incident Policy is part of that system.

1.2 Policy Aim

Athboy Community School (ACS) aims to protect the well-being of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment. The key to managing a critical incident is planning. ACS has established a Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT), which will take responsibility for steering the development and implementation of a Critical Incident Management Policy and Plan (CIMP).

The aims of this policy are as follows:

- To formulate a step by step procedures that will facilitate a quick and efficient response from staff in the event of a critical incident.
- To ensure students and staff are supported in a time of crisis.
- To ensure that normality returns as soon as possible.

1.3 Implementation and Review

Following the implementation of this policy by the Board of Management, copies will be made available to all staff. The school will remind staff of their respective roles in the event of a critical incident.

2. Critical Incidents

The Management and staff of Athboy Community School recognise a critical incident to be “an incident or sequence of events that overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of the school”.

Incidents may involve one or more students or staff members, or members of our local community.

There may be many kinds of serious crises which may be described as critical incidents. These include but are not limited to:

- death or suicide of a student or staff member through sudden death, accident, violence, suicide, terminal illness or unexpected death
- Serious illness, serious injury, attempted suicide or abuse of a member of the school community
- The disappearance of a member of the school community, a near relative or close friend
- An accident involving members of the school community
- An accident/ tragedy in the wider community
- Disasters caused by nature, accident or criminal activity which impact on the school or its community
- An intrusion into the school – such as a hostage situation
- The threat of an attack by a person(s) verbally or by means of social media/other communication on the school or a member of the school community.

The Principal will decide what constitutes a serious crisis necessitating the implementation of this policy.

2.1 Principal’s Responsibilities

In the event of a critical incident, the Principal (or Deputy Principal in her absence) will;

- Verify the facts
- Convene CIMT and delegate tasks including agreeing a statement
- Contact the chairperson of the Board of Management – Nicky Bowman
- Contact appropriate agencies, such as NEPS Psychologist, the Gardaí and any other relevant agencies or services

2. 2. Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)

The following are members of the CIMT along with relevant Year Head. The CIMT may co-opt other members of staff to assist them should they deem it necessary.

Name	Role	Phone number
Clare Garrihy	Principal	To be advised
Tom O'Dowd	Deputy Principal	To be advised
Nicky Bowman	BOM Chairperson	To be advised
Deirdre Halligan	Chaplain	To be advised
Susan Moran	Guidance Counsellors	To be advised
Aoife O'Reilly	SEN Coordinator	To be advised
Roger Maxwell*	1 st Year Year-Head	
Liam Fox*	2 nd Year Year-Head	To be advised
Maggie McGrory*	3 rd Year Year-Head	To be advised
Louise Byrne*	TY Coordinator	To be advised
Tony Magner*	5 th Year Year-Head	To be advised
Emma Mooney*	6 th Year Year-Head	To be advised
Grace Quinn/Emma Donohue*	LCA Coordinator	To be advised
Other staff co-opted as necessary		

*Year Heads will be called on primarily when their Year Group is directly affected by a Critical Incident. The other Year Heads will assist the CIMT.

Note: In certain circumstances, staff have the right to opt out.

In the event that the critical Incident occurs in school holidays, the principal and deputy principal will form the CIMT unless it makes sense to contact other members of the CIMT also.

3. Stages Of Response

The incident will dictate the nature of the response and judgements will have to be made regarding the appropriate response.

The following are the stages that response may take:

1. Immediate Response (Short Term Actions -1st Day)
2. Medium-Term Actions (24-72 Hours)
3. Long-Term Actions

4.1 Immediate Response (Short Term Actions -1st Day)

A) Establish Facts:

It is important to obtain accurate information about the incident otherwise rumours will take over and add to the distress of those involved. This is to be done by Senior Management.

- What happened, where and when?
- What is the extent of the injuries?
- What is the location of those injured and not injured?
- How many are involved and what are their names?
- Is there a risk of further injury?
- What agencies have been contacted already?

B) Convene a meeting with the Critical Incident Management team to:

- Agree a statement of the facts for staff, students, parents and the media. There will be a written version of this statement.
- Appoint one person to deal with enquiries from the press –usually the Principal.
- Send a letter or text message home to parents.
- Delegate responsibilities to the Critical Incident Management Team.
- Appoint one person to handle phone enquiries and to deal with the media.
- Ensure that a phone line remains open and available for enquiries.
- Organise the timetable/routine for the day. (Adhering to the normal school routine is important if this is possible)
- Organise a staff meeting as soon as possible.
- Organise the supervision of students during staff meetings.
- Decide what appropriate additional professional help is needed and who should be contacted.

C) Hold Staff Meeting

It may be necessary to hold the staff meeting in two parts therefore ensuring staff are available for support of students and for cover/supervision at all times. Auxiliary staff are also to attend the staff meetings. The areas to be covered at the staff meetings are listed below:

- An account of the facts as known.
- An opportunity for the staff to express their views and feelings.
- Discussion with the staff about how the facts will be shared with the students.
- An outline of the routine for the day.
- School closure to be decided (if appropriate) by the Principal in consultation with the Chairperson of the Board of Management.
- Information for the staff about which outside agencies have been contacted or are involved and the supports that will be put in place for both students and staff.
- Information pack to be given to all teaching staff.
- A procedure for identifying vulnerable students and the name of the staff that the students should be referred to i.e., Counsellors, Chaplain or Year Heads.
- The weight of responsibility surrounding a crisis may be enormous. Staff should be aware of the need to support Management and Staff who are directly involved.

D) Inform Parents/Guardians

With regard to students directly involved, the parents/guardians will be contacted immediately.

- We will compile a list of those to be contacted. This will eliminate duplication of messages.
- One or two members of the CIMT are to be appointed by the Principal to contact relevant parents/guardians.
- We will give parents/guardians relevant, up to date and accurate information.
- We will set a room(s) aside for distressed students to meet with parents and staff.
- We will provide support to parents who arrive to the school as appropriate.
- We will provide relevant telephone numbers for enquiries.

E) Short Term Actions Assigned - Checklist (Day 1)

Task	Name
Gather accurate information	
Contact appropriate agencies	
Communicate news to staff	
Arrange supervision of students	
Hold staff meeting	
Organise timetable for the day	
Enlist staff willing to assist students	
Inform parents	
Inform students	
Make contact with affected family	
Prepare and agree media statement	
Dealing with media	
Arrange get together rooms/ meeting rooms	
Visit families affected	
Hold end of day staff meeting	

4.2 Medium-term Actions (24-72 Hours)

A) Reconvene Key Staff/Critical Incident Management Team.

Possible areas for discussion:

- Review the events of the first 24 hours.
- Need for outside agencies.
- Funeral arrangements/liaise with family
- Handling of media
- Have review staff meeting with all staff if necessary. Ensure all staff where possible are kept up to date on any developments.
- Plan a visit to injured or bereaved.
- Name key staff to visit the home or hospital.
- Establish with parents/family if it is acceptable or appropriate for students to visit bereaved or injured.
- Provide support to staff and students visiting the bereaved or injured.
- Establish contact with absent staff and students.
- Arrange support/counselling for individuals or group(s) of students and staff who have been referred or identified as those most affected.
- Update media where necessary.
- The Chaplain will liaise with family, to extend sympathy and clarify the family's wishes regarding the school's involvement in funeral/memorial service.
- Decide what form of representation from the school is appropriate.
- Take into consideration and have regard for different faiths, religions and none.
- Prepare and support students ahead, during and after the funeral.
- Encourage and assist those students who wish to write a personal message of sympathy. Also consider a common expression from the students and or/staff.
- Liaise with family or funeral directors regarding stipulations or arrangements concerning floral or other tributes.

B) Plan for the reintegration of students/staff (absentees, injured etc.)

- Name key persons to liaise with above on their return to school.
- The Principal will decide, in consultation with the critical incident team, if it is appropriate to inform the parents of those students not directly involved in the incident by letter stating the facts and brief details of the incident.

C) Inform Students

- Students will be informed as a year group by their year head or by their class tutors in their class groups. This decision will be made by the Principal.
- Give facts and avoid speculation.
- Inform students of staff and counsellors involved in providing support
- Allow students to ask questions and express feelings.
- Help students understand that overwhelming emotions are natural and normal following a critical incident.
- Class tutors will help identify vulnerable students who may need extra care or need to go home.

- Focus on the friends of a bereaved student as they can be the best source of support. Often the bereaved student may not wish to speak to an adult and may rely heavily on friends. These friends may need support as they attempt to find ways to be of help.

D) Where appropriate, facilitate parents and their children being brought together

- Contact the parents of vulnerable students and arrange for these students to be collected from school if necessary
- Facilitate distressed students and their parents/guardians by providing a private and safe space.
- Provide tea and coffee.
- Where appropriate, offer assistance with transport/taxi

E) Interaction with the Media

In the event of a high-profile incident, there may be media interest. If necessary, the Principal will prepare a written statement to include:

- The facts about the incident
- What has been done already
- What is going to be done
- Positive information about the deceased or injured person(s)
- Prepare well if asked to give a live interview
- Consider assigning the task to someone more skilled or familiar with dealing with the media
- Keep the interview factual and brief
- Decline if it is not appropriate or if not prepared
- A room may be set aside for the media if deemed appropriate by the Principal
- Media enquiries are to be dealt with by the Principal
- Brief staff and students on how to deal with unsolicited media attention

F) Medium Term Actions Assigned- Checklist (Day 2 and following days)

Task	Name
Convene a Day 2 CIMT meeting to review the events of day 1	Team Leader
Meet external agencies	
Meet whole staff	
Arrange support for students, staff, parents	
Visit the injured/ bereaved / affected	
Liaise with the bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements	
Organise timetable for the day	
Agree attendance and participation at the funeral service	
Make decisions about school closure	Principal with BOM

4.3 Long-term Actions

A)

- Monitor students for signs of continuing stress
- Inform new staff or students of the critical incident policy and procedures
- Provide a day of reflection for the class and friends most affected by the incident
- Engage with outside bereavement support agencies if necessary
- Review of curricular provision, e.g., in RE, SPHE, CSPE classes in the area of change, loss, death and other crisis issues
- Provide an annual remembrance service for all those connected to the school community who have died.

B) Follow Up Checklist – beyond 72 hours

Task	Name
Monitor students for signs of continuing distress	Subject teachers and Class tutors
Liaise with care team regarding referrals	
Liaise with agencies regarding referrals	
Decide on memorials / anniversaries	BOM, staff, parents, students
Review response to incident	CIMT/BOM/ Staff, parents and students
Amend plan as required	Staff/ BOM

4. EVALUATION AND REVIEW

Evaluate response to an incident and amend the Critical Incident Policy appropriately. This policy will be reviewed after an incident or every five years in the absence of an incident. The plan should be reviewed annually to ensure all information is up to date. The following areas can be considered in an evaluation or review:

- What went well?
- Where were the gaps?
- What was most or least helpful?
- Have all the necessary onward referrals to support services been made?
- Is there any other business or issues that need to be dealt with?

5. EMERGENCY CONTACT LIST

GENERAL	
Garda (Athboy Garda Station)	
Community Garda Mobile	To be advised
Ambulance/ Fire Service	999/112
Employee Assistance Service	1800 411 057
	01 284 4085
	Various numbers and Services for South Dublin
SCHOOL / EDUCATION	
NEPS Psychologist	To be advised
State Exams Commission	090 644 2700
Chairperson (BOM) Nicky Bowman	To be advised
LOCAL SCHOOLS - Primary	
O'Growney NS	046 943 2291
Kildalkey NS	046 943 9246
Ballivor NS	046 954 6213
St Ernan's NS	046 966 4539/
St Tola's NS	046 9664457
Clonmellon NS	046 943 3301
Bohermeen NS	046 902 9037
Rathmore NS	046 943 2359
Kilskyre NS	046 924 3947
Local Schools – Post Primary	
Boyne Community School	046 948 1654
Scoil Mhuire, Trim	046 943 1349
Loreto College Navan	046 902 3830
St Patrick's College, Navan	046 902 3772
LOCAL DOCTORS	
Athboy Medical Practice	046 943 0098

Appendix 1 Summary of Actions

Short Term Actions – Day 1

Task	Name
Gather accurate information	
Contact appropriate agencies	
Communicate news to staff	
Arrange supervision of students	
Hold staff meeting	
Organise timetable for the day	
Enlist staff willing to assist students	
Inform parents	
Inform students	
Make contact with affected family	
Prepare and agree media statement	
Dealing with media	
Arrange get together rooms/ meeting rooms	
Visit families affected	
Hold end of day staff meeting	

Medium Term Actions – Day 2 Onwards

Task	Name
Convene a Day 2 CIMT meeting to review the events of day 1	Team Leader
Meet external agencies	
Meet whole staff	
Arrange support for students, staff, parents	
Visit the injured/ bereaved / affected	
Liaise with the bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements	
Organise timetable for the day	
Agree attendance and participation at the funeral service	
Make decisions about school closure	Principal with BOM

Long Term Actions - Beyond 72 hours

Task	Name
Monitor students for signs of continuing distress	Subject teachers and Class tutors
Liaise with care team regarding referrals	
Liaise with agencies regarding referrals	
Decide on memorials / anniversaries	BOM, staff, parents, students
Review response to incident	CIMT/BOM/ Staff, parents and students
Amend plan as required	Staff/ BOM