



Coláiste Pobail Acla

Critical Incident Management Policy

**Coláiste Pobail Acla,
Polranny,
Achill,
Co. Mayo.**

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1. Background

‘The key to managing critical incidents is forward planning. Responding to Critical Incidents: Guidelines and Resource Materials for Schools outlines how schools can plan for crises and also considers preventative approaches that schools should adopt in creating a safe and supportive environment.’ (Responding to Critical Incidents, NEPS Guidelines and resource materials for Schools, 2016)

This policy was completed with reference to

- Responding to Critical Incidents – Guidelines for Schools, NEPS, 2007
- Responding to Critical Incidents – Resource Materials for Schools, NEPS, 2007

Issues the school needs to address:

- Creation of a coping, supportive and caring ethos in the school
- Defining a critical incident
- Creation of a critical incident management team
- Development and communication of the plan
- Administrative Tasks

2. Definition of a Critical Incident

For the purposes of this policy a critical incident is defined as any incident or sequence of events which overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of the school and disrupts the running of the school e.g.

- The death of a member of the school community, a recent past pupil or a Parent/Guardian.
- A serious accident involving pupils or staff.
- A traumatic event involving the school, e.g. fire, disappearance of a member of the school community, etc.
- Serious accident or tragedy in the wider community

As each Critical Incident will require the school to respond in a manner appropriate to that incident at that time, this C.I.M.P. is intended to serve as a general outline of procedures to be followed in the event of a critical incident occurring.

In general, it is regarded as good practice for the school to form a Critical Incident Management Team.

3. Psychological Safety

The management and staff of Coláiste Pobail Acla aim to use available programmes and resources to address the personal and social development of students, to enhance a sense of safety and security in the school and to provide opportunities for reflection and discussion. It is intended that measures such as these will assist in prevention of critical incidents, build resilience in the school community and strengthen coping skills.

- Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is integrated into the work of the school. It is addressed in the curriculum by addressing issues such as; coping with loss, communication skills, use and abuse of social media, conflict management, anger management, help seeking, bullying, decision-making, and prevention of alcohol and drug misuse. Promotion of emotional health is an integral part of this provision. Staff have access to training for their role in SPHE
- Wellbeing is now a part of the Junior Cycle curriculum in Coláiste Pobail Acla.
- Staff are familiar with the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures
- Books and resources on difficulties affecting students are available by contacting the School Chaplain or Guidance Counsellor. Information is provided on mental health in general and such specific areas as signs and symptoms of depression and anxiety.
- Staff have attended workshops relating to students' mental health and wellbeing. Staff are made aware that they must report any signs of depression, anxiety or vulnerability.
- The school has developed links with a range of external agencies - NEPS, CAMHS (Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service - HSE), Social Workers, School Completion Programme, NCSE, Mindspace, local GPs, local clergy and MSLETB.
- Interactions with external providers are carefully considered in the light of criteria about student safety, the appropriateness of the content and the expertise of the providers.
- The school has a clear policy on bullying and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy. A bullying survey is carried out by staff each term.
- There is a pastoral care system in place in the school. This team meets weekly to discuss vulnerable students and measures are enacted to address the issues presented. School Completion and HSCLO work closely with the Pastoral Care Team.
- Students who are identified as being at risk are referred to the designated staff member (e.g. Guidance Counsellor, Chaplain or Home School Community Liaison Officer). Concerns are explored and the appropriate level of assistance and support is provided.
- Where a student is deemed to be at risk, Parents/Guardians are informed, and where appropriate, a referral is made to an appropriate agency.
- Staff are informed about how to access support for themselves.
- Positive Mental Health Week and various other initiatives are held regularly throughout the year.

4. Critical Incident Management Team

The Critical Incident Management Team includes:

The Principal	Jason Ó Mongáin
The Deputy Principal	Paul Fahy
Assistant Principals	Jennifer Murtagh Karen Lavelle Adrian Lally
Guidance Counsellor	Margaret Ebbs
Chaplain & Student Support Officer	Julie Ann O'Grady
Home School Liaison Officer	Jennifer Murtagh
Representatives of Board of Management	Martin O Reilly Máire Sweeney
Representatives of Administrative Staff	Denise Cafferkey Damien McGinty

This team will meet at least once in each school year and also when the need arises, e.g. during the time period surrounding a critical incident. The school Secretary will maintain an up-to-date list of contact numbers for:

- Staff
- Parents/guardians of students
- Emergency support services

Copies will be kept in the Administrative office and Principal's office. These lists will be updated when necessary by administrative staff.

In the case of School Tours, the Lead Teacher will compile an information pack to include:

- Name of the Tour Leader.
- A list of all participating teachers and pupils.
- A list of mobile phone numbers for all participating teachers and pupils.
- Passport details and photographs of participating pupils (in the case of tours outside the country).
- Home contact numbers and mobiles of all involved.
- Relevant medical information on pupils and permission forms from parents in case of a medical emergency.
- Insurance details
- Copy of itinerary

A copy of this file should be left with the Principal prior to departure and school mobile phones will be made available to staff for outings, trips, etc. See the Out of School Activities Policy for details of guidelines in the event of an accident or medical emergency. In the event of serious injury/death the accompanying teachers should contact the school which will initiate the critical incident response.

By way of protection of our staff and students, the following on-going measures are in place:

- Health and Safety Policy.
- Fire Evacuation Procedures, Appendix 9, Health and Safety Policy.
- Record of emergency contact numbers.
- Provision of defibrillators and trained personnel. See Appendix A.
- Emergency Response Protocol, Appendix 7, Health and Safety Policy.
- Pastoral Care.
- Provision for Psychological Safety as earlier outlined.
- Covid Response Plan

Staff will be reminded of these procedures at the initial staff meeting annually and this information included in the packs provided to new and substitute teachers.

5. Trauma Response Plan

5.1. Procedures to be followed in the event of critical incidents

Upon notification of a critical incident, the Principal will convene the Critical Incident Management Team to:

Action	Person(s) Responsible
Ascertain the facts	School Management
Make contact with the family/families concerned	Jason Ó Mongáin
Contact appropriate agencies (e.g. N.E.P.S., D.E.S)	Paul Fahy
Inform Staff, B.O.M. and MSLETB	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jason Ó Mongáin - Call BOM Chair• Jason Ó Mongáin - send text to BOM• Jason Ó Mongáin - Contact CE and Director of Schools• Paul Fahy - Contact Staff
Agree on a statement of the facts for staff, pupils, parents/guardians and the media and inform these parties as appropriate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jason Ó Mongáin (Preparation)• Paul Fahy (Media)
Identify 'high risk' pupils.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• School Support Team & all staff
Appoint one person to deal with phone calls. A dedicated phone number may be assigned for dealing with incoming and outgoing calls.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• School Secretary
Organise timetable/supervision rota for the day.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Paul Fahy
Organise support and rooms for counselling/assistance where appropriate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Offices• OT Room• Classroom

Endeavour to maintain the regular school routine, if possible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School Management & all Assistant Principals
When appropriate arrange for representatives from the school to visit the home(s) of the person(s) concerned.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jason Ó Mongáin Jennifer Murtagh

5.2. In the event of an incident during State Exams

If the State Examinations are in progress contact the State Examinations Commission (0906- 442700) as soon as possible, so that they can alert the Examination and Assessment Manager (EAM) for the school. Alternatively, contact the area EAM directly.

5.3. In the event of death

Action	Person(s) Responsible
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inform staff and pupils re: funeral arrangements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secretary will send text to staff & parents School management send email to staff
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arrange involvement in liturgy if agreed with bereaved family. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chaplain
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate staff and pupils' response e.g. book of condolence, vote of sympathy, flowers, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chaplain
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support distressed pupils and staff. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Margaret Ebbs, Jennifer Murtagh, Julie Ann O'Grady
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure counselling service is available. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jason Ó Mongáin/Paul Fahy contact NEPS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Care of deceased person's possessions in keeping with parent/guardians' wishes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School Secretary
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate return to school of siblings and close friends. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Year Head, HSCL, school management
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor siblings and friends of the deceased. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student Support Team and all relevant members of staff.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update and amend school records and inform DES. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School Secretary

5.4. Long Term Tasks

In the aftermath of a critical incident, awareness of the following is important:

- Keep in contact with the family/families concerned.
- Be sensitive to occasions such as anniversaries, birthdays, Christmas, etc.
- Organise school services/memorial as appropriate.

- Review the support structures available.
- Provide the appropriate support.
- Review and update overall school response.

5.5. Checklist for School Management during a Critical Incident

1. Gather the facts – what has happened, when, how, where, and who is injured or dead.
2. Consult Responding to Critical Incidents: Guidelines for Schools (available on the DES website www.education.ie). Go to NEPS link.
3. Is it an incident requiring a NEPS Response at Level 1, 2 or 3?
4. Who do I need to call? (see Emergency Contact List – Appendix A)
5. Meet with the Critical Incident Management Team.
6. Meet with other agencies, if involved, to agree on roles and procedures.
7. Have administration staff photocopy appropriate literature.
8. Arrange for the supervision of students.
9. Address the staff meeting.
10. Identify vulnerable students.
11. Identify vulnerable staff.
12. Inform students.
13. Draft a media statement.
14. Prepare for a media interview.
15. Draft a letter to Parents/Guardians.
16. Meet with the C.I.M.T. to review the day and arrange an early morning meeting for the following day.
17. Meet with the staff group.
18. Contact the affected family/families.

6. Covid-19

In Covid and post-Covid times, when there are greater levels of anxiety and stress in society in general, the school is aware of how this may impact on members of the school community and aims to provide support through measures detailed herein that will assist in prevention of critical incidents arising due to Covid-19 related issues.

7. Declaration

This Coláiste Pobail Acla Policy was formed following consultation with all staff, members of the Board of Management, Parents/Guardians and Students. It is recommended that this policy be reviewed every three years or whenever it is deemed necessary by School Management. The Board of Management of Coláiste Pobail Acla adopted it on:

Signed: 

Mr. Martin O'Reilly

Chairperson of the Board of Management

Date: 9/9/25

Signed: 

Mr. Jason Ó Mongáin

Board Secretary & School Principal

Date: 09/09/25

Appendix 1 – Emergency Contact Details

Location of Defibrillator: Outside Staff Room

Persons Trained to use the Defibrillator:

- Paul Fahy
- Damien McGinty
- Louise O'Malley
- Caroline Lavelle

EMERGENCY CONTACT LIST	
Contact Person	Phone Number
Jason Ó Mongáin	Removed from online version
Paul Fahy	Removed from online version
HSCL	Removed from online version
Chaplain	Removed from online version
Margaret Ebbs	Removed from online version
School Secretary	098 45139
Damien McGinty	Removed from online version
Fr John Murray (P.P.) Achill Sound	098 45288
Keel Health Centre	098 43105
Achill Sound Health Centre	098 45231
Achill Sound Gardaí	098 45108
Westport Gardaí	098 25555
Mayo General Hospital	094 902 1733
Achill Fire Brigade	999
Achill RNLI	098 45612
Achill Coastguard	086 3993221
Health and Safety	1890 289 389
NEPS, Thomas St. Castlebar	094 90 28310
NEPS	01 889 2700
Care Call, Employee Support	1800 411 057
School Completion Program	Removed from online version
Childline	1800 666 666
The Samaritans	1850 60 90 90

Role	Name
C.I.M.T. Leader	Jason Ó Mongáin
Garda Liaison	Jason Ó Mongáin
Staff Liaison	Jason Ó Mongáin
Student Liaison	Julie Ann O'Grady
Parent Liaison	Jennifer Murtagh (HSCL)
Community Liaison	Jennifer Murtagh (HSCL)
Media Liaison	Jason Ó Mongáin
C.I.M.T. Administrator	School Secretary

Appendix 2 – Abbreviations and Acronyms

Below is a list of abbreviations used across several Coláiste Pobail Acla policies and documents.

ACE	Autism Centre of Excellence
ASC	Autistic Spectrum Condition
BOM	Board of Management
BSP	Behaviour Support Plan
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
CAT	Cognitive Ability Test
CPNS	Child Protection Notification System
CSPE	Civic, Social and Political Education
DDLDP	Deputy Designated Liaison Person
DEIS	Delivering Equality of Education in Schools
DES	Department of Education and Science
DLP	Designated Liaison Person
EP	Education Plan
EPSEN	Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs
ETB	Education and Training Board
GRT	Group Reading Test
HSCLO	Home School Community Liaison Officer
HSE	Health Service Executive
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IEP	Individual Education Plan
JCSP	Junior Certificate Schools Programme
LCVP	Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender
MUGA	Multi Use Games Area
NBSS	National Behaviour Support Service
NCBI	National Centre for the Blind Ireland
NCSE	National Council for Special Education
NEPS	National Educational Psychological Service
NEWB	National Education and Welfare Board
NLN	National Learning Network

OT	Occupational Therapy
PC	Pastoral Care
PE	Physical Education
RACE	Reasonable Accommodations at Certificate Examinations
RE	Religious Education
RSE	Relationships and Sexuality Education
SCP	School Completion Programme
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SENO	Special Educational Needs Officer
SESS	Special Education Support Service
SETS	Special Education Teacher Support
SNA	Special Needs Assistant
SPHE	Social, Personal and Health Education
SSE	School Self Evaluation
TUSLA	Child and Family Agency
TY	Transition Year