



Bandonbridge N.S. Critical Incident Policy

Date ratified by BoM: 09/09/2019

Date of review: June 2023

Introduction:

In Bandonbridge N.S., we aim to protect the well being of our pupils and staff by providing a safe, tolerant and nurturing environment as outlined in our school ethos statement.

The BoM, through the Principal, the Staff and the Parent Association, has drawn up a **Critical Incident Management Plan (CIMP)**. A **Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)** has been established to steer the development and implementation of this plan.

What is a Critical Incident?

A critical incident is “any incident or sequence of events which overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school”. Critical incidents may involve one or more students, or members of staff or members of the school or local community.

Examples:

- The death of a member of the school community through accident, violence, suicide or suspected suicide or other unexpected death
- An intrusion into the school
- An accident involving members of the school community
- An accident/tragedy in the wider community
- Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism, etc
- The disappearance of a member of the school community
- Civil unrest, war
- Fire, natural and technological disaster (e.g. school ceiling collapsing, building incident)
- Disappearance of student from home or school
- Unauthorised removal of student from school or home.
- World events that may affect the student body and/or staff.

Aim

The aim of the CIMP is to help school management and staff to react quickly and effectively in the event of an incident, to enable us to maintain a sense of control and to ensure that appropriate support is offered to students and staff. Having a good plan should also help ensure that the effects on the students and staff will be limited. It should enable us to return to normality as soon as possible.

Creation of a coping supportive and caring ethos in the school:

Systems have been put in place to help to build resilience in both staff and students, thus preparing them to cope with a range of life events. These include measures to address both the physical and psychological safety of the school community.

Physical Safety

- Health & Safety Policy in place
- Evacuation plan formulated
- Regular fire drills occur
- Fire exits, and extinguishers are regularly checked
- Front gates closed during school hours
- Main door secured with keypad entry
- Side gate locked until students are leaving
- Rules of the playground regularly reinforced to pupils and reviewed regularly

Psychological Safety

The management and staff of Bandonbridge N.S. 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.

These may include:

- Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is integrated into the work of the school. In the curriculum we may address issues such as grief and loss; communication skills; stress and anger management; resilience; conflict management; problem solving; help-seeking; bullying; decision making and prevention of alcohol and drug misuse and other issues, as necessary. Promotion of mental health is an integral element of this provision. Programmes such as “Get Up Stand Up” and “Friends for Life” may be used.
- Staff have access to training for their role in SPHE
- Staff are familiar with the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures. The risk assessment and safety statement are located in each classroom and displayed on a notice board at the main entrance where the name and photo of the DLP and DDLP are on view.
- Books and resources on difficulties which may affect the primary student are available. A list of books has been compiled and supplied to staff.
- The school has developed links with a range of external agencies e.g. Gardaí, NEPS, CAMHS, SESS, HSE, Enable Ireland.
- There is a care system in place in the school using the “Continuum of Support” approach which is outlined in the NEPS documents published in 2007 for primary schools, this document is available in the school and on www.education.ie
- Inputs to students by external providers are carefully considered in the light of criteria about student safety, the appropriateness of the content, and the expertise of the providers. (See DES circular 0022/2010)
- Students who are identified as being at risk are referred to the designated staff member (e.g. support teacher), concerns are explored, and the appropriate level of assistance and support is provided. Parents/guardians are informed, and where appropriate, a referral is made to an appropriate agency. (See Appendix 6 for guidance)
- The school has a clear policy on bullying and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy
- Information is provided on mental health in general and such specific areas as signs and symptoms of depression and anxiety
- Staff members are informed about how to access support for themselves.
- Staff are informed in the area of suicide awareness and some have attended specialist training such as ASIST provided by the HSE

Critical Incidents Management Team:

A CIMT has been established in line with best practice. The members of the team are selected on a voluntary basis early in the school year and will retain their roles until new members are selected for the following school year. The members of the team will meet to review and provide feedback for the update of the policy and plan. Each member of the team has a dedicated critical incident folder. This contains a copy of the policy and plan and materials particular to their role, to be used in the event of an incident.

The team roles are as follows:

- Team Leader
- Garda Liaison
- Staff Liaison
- Student Liaison
- Parent /Guardian Liaison
- Community Liaison
- Media Advisor
- Administrator

The names of the persons fulfilling these roles are in Appendix 1.

TEAM LEADER

(A person who carries authority and can make decisions during a crisis e.g. school closure, attendance at memorial services, etc.)

- Liaises with the Board of Management; DES; NEPS;
- Coordinates the tasks of the team
- Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting
- Liaises with the bereaved family.

This role is normally undertaken by the Principal or in the Principal's absence by the Deputy Principal.

GARDA LIAISON

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

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

STAFF LIAISON

(A staff member known and trusted by the staff)

- 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 (from their critical incident folder)
- Is alert to vulnerable staff members and makes contact with them individually
- Keeps staff updated as the day progresses
- Advises them of the availability of the Employee Assistance and Wellbeing Programme for Teachers and Special Needs Assistants and gives them the contact number. (on DES website)

STUDENT LIAISON

(A trusted and familiar figure to the students.)

- Alerts other staff to vulnerable students (appropriately)
- Maintains student contact records
- Provides materials for students (from their critical incident folder)
- Looks after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room where agreed.

COMMUNITY/AGENCY LIAISON

(Someone with good contacts with agencies and relevant individuals in the community.)

- Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of
 - Key parents, such as members of the Parent Association
 - 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/GUARDIAN LIAISON

(Someone known to parents. This person should be comfortable speaking before a large group and have skills to manage emotional reactions of individual or groups of parents)

- Visits the bereaved family with the team leader
- Arranges meetings, if held
- Manages the 'consent' issues in accordance with agreed school policy
- May facilitate such meetings, and manage 'questions and answers' sessions
- Ensures that sample letters are prepared and available on the school's IT system 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 ADVISOR

(Someone with good interpersonal skills)

- In advance of an incident, will consider issues that may arise and how they might be responded to (e.g. media requesting staff, students and parents to be interviewed, intrusion of photographers on the premises, etc.)
- In the event of an incident, will advise staff and students on dealing with the media and in dealing with unsolicited media attention.
- Will liaise where necessary with relevant teacher unions etc.
- Will draw up and issue a press statement (to be agreed by school management).
- Will adhere to confidentiality and good name considerations as set out later in this document.

ADMINISTRATOR

- Maintenance of up-to-date telephone numbers of:
 - Parents/guardians
 - Teachers
 - Emergency services
- Takes telephone calls and notes those that need a response
- Prepares and sends out letters, emails and texts
- Ensures that templates are available on the school's IT system and ready for adaptation
- Photocopies materials as 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, emails and texts sent and received, meetings held, persons met, interventions used, material used etc. The 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 Bandonbridge N.S. 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 and will seek to ensure that students do so also. For instance, the term 'suicide' or 'murder' will not be used. The role of the coroner is to enquire into the circumstances of sudden, unexplained, violent and unnatural deaths. The coroner essentially establishes the "who, when, where and how" of unexplained death, they must establish the facts. Phrases such as 'tragic death' or 'sudden death' may be considered.

Critical incident rooms:

In the event of a critical incident:

Room 8 – will be the main room used to meet the staff

Individual classrooms – for meetings with students of a specific class

GP room – for meetings with student body or multiple classes

Principal's office – for individual parents/small groups

GP room – for larger parent groups

Special Ed room – for individual sessions with students

Principal's office/Special Ed room – for other visitors

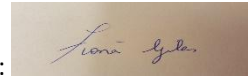
Consultation and communication regarding the plan:

All staff were consulted, and their views canvassed in the preparation of this policy and plan. Parent/guardian 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 by the Principal. The plan will be updated periodically.

Signed: Chairperson:
Date: 09/09/2019

epi Kain

Principal:

Handwritten signature of Loni Gyles in blue ink on a light brown background.

Appendix 1**Critical Incident Management Team**

Role	Name
Team Leader	Principal: Fiona Giles
Garda Liaison	Principal: Fiona Giles
Staff Liaison	Deputy Principal: Esme Langford
Student Liaison	SET team
Parent Liaison	Deputy Principal: Esme Langford
Community Liaison	Fiona Giles and School Secretary, Michelle O'Mahony
Media Advisor	Chairperson BoM : Cyril Fair
Administrator	School Secretary: Michelle O'Mahony

Date: June 2023

Appendix 2: Critical Incident Team Contact Information

Note: This document must be circulated to all of the critical incident management team and must be readily accessible to all staff, e.g. on wall in school office. However, this document should not be publically accessible, e.g. should not be on the school website.

Role	Name	Telephone numbers	Email address
Team Leader	Fiona Giles		
Garda Liaison	Fiona Giles		
Staff Liaison	Esme Langford		
Student Liaison	SET team Esme Langford Susan Helen Lyons Orla Buttimer Amy Hosford		
Parent Liaison	Esme Langford		
Community Liaison	Fiona Giles		
Media Advisor	Cyril Fair		
Administrator	Michelle O'Mahony		

Appendix 3**Critical Incident Management Team Plan****SHORT TERM ACTIONS – DAY 1**

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

MEDIUM TERM ACTIONS - (DAY 2 AND FOLLOWING DAYS)

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

FOLLOW-UP BEYOND 72 HOURS

Task	Name
Monitor students for signs of continuing distress (short term)	Class teachers
Liaise with agencies regarding referrals (short term)	Team Leader/Staff Liaison
Plan for return of bereaved student(s) (short term)	All relevant staff
Plan for giving of 'memory box' to bereaved family (medium term)	Team Leader
Decide on memorials and anniversaries (medium term)	BOM/Staff, parents and students
Review response to incident and amend plan (short & medium term)	Staff/BOM

Appendix 4 Emergency Contact List

(To be displayed in staff-room, school office and Principal's office etc.)

AGENCY	CONTACT DETAILS
GARDA Bandon Garda Station	023 8852200
HOSPITAL CUH Emergency Department	021 4922000 021 4920200
FIRE BRIGADE	999 / 112
LOCAL GPs Millbrook Medical Centre Ballymodan Family Practice Weir Clinic Bandon Primary Care Centre	023 8841132 023 8844577 023 8852918 023 8865900
Suicide Support: Pieta House	info@pieta.ie Freephone: 1800 247 247 Text: HELP to 51444
SCHOOL INSPECTOR: Gráinne Cull	grainne_cull@education.gov.ie inspectorate@education.gov.ie 0761108500
NEPS PSYCHOLOGIST Cait Fair	087 2281528 Cait_Fair@education.gov.ie
DES	info@education.gov.ie
INTO	01 8047700 info@into.ie
CLERGY Rev Denis MacCarthy (CofI) Rev Jeremy Nicoll (Meth)	087 2670179 den96mac@gmail.com 086 239 0829 jeremy.nicoll@irishmethodist.org
EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE SERVICE (for teachers and SNAs) Spectrum.Life	hello@spectrum.life 01 5180356

Appendix 5

Guidance on Social Media Use and Critical Incident

Social media is now part of everyday communication and information sharing. Most students are avid and competent users. Social media messages speed up the rate at which information is shared. This can have a significant influence on the behaviour of young people during a critical incident. Some social media communication may occur without the knowledge of school staff that leads to distress among students or their parents/guardians.

The following information may help schools to consider issues related to social media use when dealing with a critical incident.

- It is essential that schools take account of the need to have competency in the use of social media among management and staff. If the members of the CIMT have particular concerns or fears about social media, they should consult those familiar with its use. Senior-students e.g. sixth-year members of the student council could also be asked for help. Normalising social media use by the students during a critical incident is very important.
- Schools should include social media literacy in the school curriculum. It is essential that school management, staff and students understand the role of social media, and its positive and negative aspects. A positive disposition to social media by the school may encourage thoughtful use by students during a critical incident.
- Agreement on appropriate use of social media during a critical incident should be included in the school's Acceptable Use Policy (AUP). All school staff should follow agreed online professional protocols as prescribed by the New Code of Professional Conduct by Teachers i.e. "Teachers should ensure that any communication with pupils/students, colleagues, parents/guardians, school management and others is appropriate, including communication via electronic media, such as email, texting and social media etc." (The Teacher Council, 2012). The CIMT may also remind staff, students and other relevant community members about their AUP during times of crises.
- When dealing with a critical incident it is advised that schools act quickly and with caution. A message could be placed on the school website and on any other school social media account along the following lines:

'You may be aware of a recent event within the school community. We ask you to respect the family's privacy and sensitivities by considering if you should post any comments, especially on social media. We will inform you through the normal channels of any relevant developments.'

- School can use social media to provide up to date information for all concerned throughout the various stages of the incident. Positive messages and appropriate advice for young people and their parents/guardians can be provided. One important message would be to remind parents/guardians to discuss social media use with their children and monitor use more actively following a crisis.
- It is important that CIMT members are familiar with safe messaging guidelines and the document Media Guidelines for Reporting Suicide and Self-harm. Safe messaging guidelines should be followed when sending messages to staff, students, community or the media following a death by suicide. Media personnel if making contact with the school during a critical incident should be provided with the guidelines. Should the need arise during a crisis, schools can contact the Department of Education and Skills Press Office for advice and support or in the case of Education and Training Board schools the Board head office.
- Young people often post Rest-In-Peace (RIP) messages on social media sites when tragedies occur. These posts can be heartfelt and emotional particularly in cases of death by suicide. Messages such as "I miss you and will see you soon" or "I will follow in your path" should cause concern and be followed up with the individual concerned. The death by suicide of an individual may influence others. Young people are especially prone to contagion. Those who are emotionally vulnerable may act on suicidal impulses.

- Activity on social networking sites during a critical incident can be a source of potentially important information, such as suicide pacts, identification of vulnerable groups or individual young people who may be at increased risk of suicide. Given privacy restrictions to people's personal web pages, distressing information may be posted without the knowledge of parents or school management. It is likely that users will block access so activity of this nature will not be accessible to everyone.
- Monitoring sites raises issues of privacy and surveillance. Schools are not advised to engage in monitoring. However, should schools become aware of inappropriate posts by students, they could inform the parents/guardians and encourage them to request that it is deleted. The easiest way to have a post removed is for the person who originally posted it to delete it from their account or request its removal. Service providers will not usually remove posts unless content is contrary to their AUP.

The following advice for journalists is provided in the Media Guidelines for Reporting Suicide and Self-harm.

The Internet has created additional opportunities and challenges for journalists due to the speed and ease of accessing and publishing information. Points of view can now be presented more quickly and easily but sometimes without review or factual basis. It can be difficult for some readers to understand the distinction between what is fact and what is opinion. If you are posting your story on a news website or blog please consider the following points:

General tips

- Avoid linking to or mentioning the names of websites that encourage or glamorise suicide. Helpful websites offering support are listed at www.ias.ie and www.samaritans.org/ireland/links.
- Try to exercise care and judgment in the creation of news stories that will appear online, as they can often be surrounded by adverts and commentary which are outside the control of the author. Additional features on the page can create a negative context, allowing, for example, adverts promoting depression aids to appear alongside articles on mental health.
- Add hyperlinks to sources of support to ensure that people in distress can access useful resources quickly. Consider promoting www.samaritans.org within the UK and Ireland, or our worldwide equivalent, www.befrienders.org, beyond these regions.
- webwise.ie is an internet safety initiative funded by the DES, focused on raising awareness of online safety issues and good practice among students, their parents/guardians and teachers. www.webwise.ie

Reader feedback

- The ability to comment on articles or blog posts gives readers the opportunity to glamorise suicide or present controversial opinions about suicidal tendencies and mental health. The relative anonymity of these comments can encourage debates that are inappropriate for a news website, and potentially damaging to other readers.
- Responsible websites ensure that the terms and conditions each commentator agrees to when contributing online are explicit in what constitutes inappropriate material, and how it will be dealt with. In addition, site owners and moderators should understand the implications of allowing these comments to be published on their website.
- Wherever possible, attempt to educate your audience to understand how to use the feedback section with full consideration for everyone's health, safety and wellbeing, and the right of the publisher to remove inappropriate content.
- Consider making it clear to users that feedback services are moderated, whether manually or electronically.

Appendix 6 Teachers Helping Students in Time of Crisis or Emergency

1.LISTEN 2. PROTECT 3. CONNECT 4. MODEL & 5.TEACH

1.LISTEN, PROTECT, CONNECT, MODEL & TEACH

THINK ABOUT your students' "DIRECT EXPERIENCE" with the event i.e. FIRST-HAND EXPERIENCE of the event (physically experiencing or directly seeing it as it happens).

After the event, changes can happen in students' thoughts, feelings, and behaviours. Your students may worry about family members, classmates, friends, or pets they care about, and may worry that it will happen again. Common reactions to crises and emergencies include trouble sleeping, problems at school and with friends, trouble concentrating and listening, and not finishing work. Your students may become more irritable, sad, angry, or worried as they think about what has happened, and as they experience recovery efforts after the event.

When students share their experiences, thoughts and feelings about the event, LISTEN for RISK FACTORS for adverse reactions.

Risk factors that may indicate a need for counselling referral for students include:

- loss of a family member, schoolmate, or friend
- observing serious injury or the death of another person
- family members or friends missing after the event, past traumatic experiences or losses
- getting hurt or becoming sick due to the event
- home loss, family moves, changes in neighbourhoods/schools, and/or loss of belongings.

If a student has had any of these experiences, you may wish to consider referring her or him to the HSE services. Your NEPS psychologist will be available to provide support and advice. Now that you know what can affect your students after a disaster, school crisis, or emergency, you're ready to Listen, Protect, Connect, and Model & Teach

1.LISTEN, PROTECT, CONNECT, MODEL & TEACH

The first step after an event is to listen and pay attention to what they say and how they act. Your students may

also show their feelings in non-verbal ways, like increased behavioural problems or increased withdrawal. Let your students know you are willing to listen and talk about the event, or to make referrals to talk to an appropriate professional, if they prefer it. Use the following questions to talk with your students. You can listen

for clues that indicate when students are having a hard time. Write down a few examples that may be helpful to note:

- What might be preventing a student from coming to or staying in school?
- What might be preventing a student from returning to other school-based activities?
- What might be preventing a student from paying attention or doing homework?

Listen, observe, and note any changes in:

- Behaviour and/or mood
- School performance
- Interactions with schoolmates and teachers
- Participation in school-based activities
- Behaviours at home that parents/guardians discuss with you.

LISTEN 2. PROTECT, CONNECT, MODEL & TEACH

You can help make your students feel better by doing some or all of the following:

- Answer questions simply and honestly, clearing up any confusion students may have about what happened
- Talk to your students about what is being done by the school and community to keep everyone safe from harm
- Remember, what is not upsetting to adults may upset and confuse students, and vice versa

- Provide opportunities for your students to talk, draw, and play, but don't force it
- Limit access to live television and the Internet that show disturbing scenes of the event
- Keep your eyes and ears open for bullying behaviours
- Find ways for your students to feel helpful to your classroom, the school, and the community
- Maintain daily routines, activities and structure with clear expectations and consistent rules
- List other things you do that help your students feel better. Sharing this list with other teachers may increase ideas to help your students.
- Let your students know that they are not alone in their reactions
- Make adjustments to assignments to be sensitive to students' current level of functioning
- Watch for anything in the environment that could re-traumatize your students
- Encourage students to "take a break" from the crisis focus with activities unrelated to the event

LISTEN, PROTECT 3.CONNECT, MODEL & TEACH

Reaching out to people in your school and community will help your students after a school crisis or emergency.

These connections will build strength for everyone. Consider ways to make some or all of the following connections:

- "Check in" with students on a regular basis
- Find resources that can be supportive to your students and staff
- Restore interactive school activities, including sports, club meetings, student projects, and student councils, coaches, etc.)
- Encourage student activities with friends, including class projects and extracurricular activities
- Empathise with your students by allowing a little more time for them to learn new materials
- Build on your students' strengths by encouraging them to find ways to help them use what they have learned in the past to help them deal with the event
- Remind your students that major disasters, crises, and emergencies are rare
- Discuss feeling safe and times they have felt safe
- List programs and activities that connect you and your students with the community
- Share your list with other teachers to create a larger list of activities and resources.

LISTEN, PROTECT, CONNECT 4. MODEL & TEACH

As you help your students after a disaster, crisis, or emergency, your efforts may be more successful – and you may be less stressed – if you keep in mind:

- It is good to be aware of your own thoughts, feelings, and reactions, these can be seen and may affect your students
- How you cope and behave after an event will influence how your students cope and behave. Your students will be watching you for both verbal and non-verbal cues
- Monitor conversations that students may hear
- Acknowledge the difficulty of the situation but demonstrate how people can come together to cope after such an event.

LISTEN, PROTECT, CONNECT, MODEL & 5. TEACH

Talk to your students about expected reactions after a crisis (emotional, behavioural, cognitive, and physiological). There are "normal" reactions to abnormal events.

- Different people may have very different reactions, even within the same family
- After the event, people may also have different amounts of time they need to cope and adjust
- Encourage your students to identify and use positive coping strategies to help them after the event
- Help your students problem-solve to get through each day successfully
- Help your students set small "doable" goals and share in these achievements as "wins" for the students and your classroom
- Remind students that with time and assistance, things generally get better. If they don't, they should let a parent or teacher know
- Over time, you, your students, their families, your classroom, can EXPECT RECOVERY.