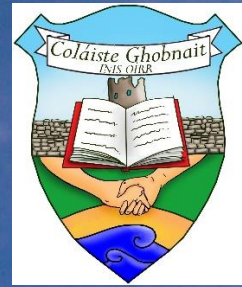


Coláiste Ghobnait

Inis Oírr



Critical Incident Management Policy

2023/2024

Adopted by the Board of Management on 11/05/2023

Approved by Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board (GRETB) on
??/??/20??

This policy has been prepared in consultation with Parents, Students, Staff, The Board of
Management and GRETB

THIS POLICY APPLIES TO:

Pupils, School Staff, Parents, the school's Board of Management as well as Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board.

MISSION STATEMENT

Our mission at Coláiste Ghobnait is to encourage the educational, intellectual, physical and cultural development of the school's students in a pleasant and healthy environment that prioritises the self-esteem, independence and development of all members of the school community.

SCHOOL VISION

"Growing and learning together diligently through the medium of Irish, in which balance, respect for well-being and integrity are given priority, with the spirit of co-operation among the whole school community."

ETHOS

Rationale

This policy outlines the steps to be taken to support our students deal with a potential crisis as a result of a critical incident. Having a Critical Incident Response Policy in place is in keeping with the caring ethos and commitment to a holistic education that is contained and outlined in our Mission Statement. The school has taken a number of measures to create a coping, supportive and caring 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.

Included in these policies are:

- Health and Safety Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Code of Behaviour
- RSE Policy

Definition of a Critical Incident

A Critical Incident may be defined as a single incident, or a sequence of incidents, of a sudden and unexpected nature which might have the capacity to overwhelm normal coping mechanisms and be most traumatic for everyone and also disrupt the normal running of the school.

Examples of critical incidents could 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.

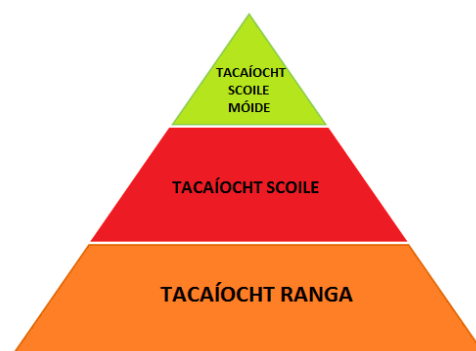
Goals

- Ensure that a response/process can be quickly put in place to deal with the critical incident
- Ensure that a response/process is in place
- Facilitate students to cope with trauma that may arise from the critical event
- Provide support to students, teachers, parents and all school staff
- Help prevent the onset of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
- Explain to students what a normal reaction is to such an incident
- Identify vulnerable students
- Have a plan in place to ensure that things return to normal as soon as possible.

Physical Safety

Coláiste Ghobnait ensures the physical safety of all staff members, students and anyone entering the school building – see Health and Safety statement.

- The Social, Personal and Health Education Programme is central to the school's work
- Training is available to the SPHE teacher
- All staff are familiar with the Child Protection guidelines and procedures
- Coláiste Ghobnait has an Anti-Bullying policy.



- In Coláiste Ghobnait the Continuum of Support is used to develop a learning environment in which each student feels they are provided with the care relevant to their needs and their participation in school life.

Critical Incident Management Team

Coláiste Ghobnait has a Critical Incident Management Team in place which consists of:

- The Principal
- Deputy Principal
- Career Guidance Teacher.

The Critical Incident Management Team can appoint other staff members to assist them if they deem it necessary.

The Principal will act as Team Leader or if absent the Deputy Principal will do so.

Role of Team Leader

- The team leader alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting of the team
- Tasks are delegated to the other team members
- The Board of Management and GRET B will be contacted
- In the event of a death the bereaved family will be contacted.

The following responsibilities may be delegated to other members of the team by the team Leader:

- Contacting Emergency Support Services
- Briefing and advising the staff and noting their feelings and concerns
- Organizing the supervision of students in the school
- Keeping staff updated on information/developments/progress
- Meeting the students and briefing them on the situation
- Taking care of “vulnerable students/vulnerable teachers”
- Contacting external agencies for support or referrals such as National Educational Psychological Service
- Liaising with school organisations such as Parents Association, Anam Chara and the Student Council
- Meeting with individual parents or groups of parents
- Visiting bereaved families or families closely associated with the incident
- Preparing a press release and liaising with the media
- Preparing an Incident Room.

This team will:

- Meet annually
- Maintain an up to date list of contact numbers for the Team, Parents/Guardians of students and Emergency Services

- Establish a communication system among the team for circulating information from person to person in the case of a critical incident outside of school hours. Such a system may include text or e-mail.

Keeping Records

All team members will keep written records of phone calls, letters, meetings, interventions etc.

If the secretary is present in the school, the secretary will have a central role in making and receiving phone calls, sending letters, making photocopies etc.

Confidentiality

The school understands it has a responsibility to protect the privacy and good name of people involved in any incident and will be sensitive to the consequences of any public statements.

The term 'suicide' should not be used unless you have absolute evidence that the case in question was suicide and the school has received the family's consent to use the term. Phrases such as 'tragic death' or 'sudden death' can be used instead of suicide. The term 'murder' should not be used unless legally confirmed. The term 'violent death' can be used instead of murder.

CRISIS MANAGEMENT ROOM

Room:	Designated Function:
2	Main room for meeting with team
6	Main room for meeting with students
3	Meeting with Parents
Art Room	Meeting with media
4	Individual session with students
Art Room	Meeting with other visitors

Pre-Incident Preparation

- Meeting Room
- Members of the Critical Incident Team are available to provide support to students. The school may also contact the NEPS Psychologist and/or the visiting counsellor
- Pre-prepared text for breaking the news to students (*see Appendix 1*)
- Prayers/Service for students most affected by this bereavement
- Assemblies for classes, year groups and full school
- Guidelines for all teachers (*see Appendix 2*)
- Prepared letters for parents (*see Appendix 3 & 4*)
- Sheet of Useful Advice for Parents (*Appendix 5*)
- Information sheet for students and parents in relation to Normal Reactions (*see Appendix 6*)
- Information sheet for parents in relation to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (*see Appendix 7*)
- Communication with media (*see Appendix 8*).

Procedures to be followed in the event of a Critical Incident

1. Establish the Facts

It is crucial that the school has the correct information regarding the crisis. The Critical Incident Management Team will establish the facts and agree a general statement in response to the crisis. Information gathering may involve contacting others such as hospitals, Gardaí and parents.

2. Outline Immediate Response

The team will agree an immediate plan of action which may involve:

- Informing the staff, the Board of Management and the Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board
- Informing the Students, Parents/Guardians
- Informing external agencies such as the Gardaí, Emergency Services and NEPS Psychologist etc.
- Consulting with local personnel who could be of assistance
- Assigning tasks to the staff
- Developing a crisis plan for the day
- Agreeing a common statement in relation to the crisis
- Devising a process for dealing with telephone enquiries, logging telephone calls made and received, letters sent and received and important information gathered. These records will be held onto by the Principal in case of any follow up questions at a later stage
- Reviewing the events of the first day so as to plan for the following day.

3. Providing Information

It is vital that all those needing information receive it as quickly as possible. Staff should be informed in the first instance. It would be helpful to make use of the agreed statement when informing students and others as a way of reducing rumours. If at all possible, the students should be told at the same time in groups no larger than normal class size.

The written statement should be communicated in a sensitive manner and should seek to:

- Give the facts as they are known i.e. what happened, who was involved
- Outline the support to be provided
- Indicate the actions planned in the case of a suspected suicide, great care should be taken not to use the term "suicide" until it has been established that the student's death was a result of suicide.

Where a critical incident has occurred on a school trip, an agreed statement to assist those who have to telephone Parents/Guardians will be required. It is better to have a number of staff involved in this so that all concerned are informed at or around the same time. Some further considerations when contacting Parents/Guardians:

- Offer any practical help needed – transport, phone numbers, contact names
- Enquire if the parent is alone or have they someone to support them
- Ensure the information being relayed to the Parents/Guardians has been fully understood by them.

Liaising with the Media (see Appendix 8).

If there are enquiries from the media, it is important that only one person acts as contact – this will normally be the Principal, or in their absence, the Deputy Principal or any designated person authorised to speak about the incident. All staff and students should understand that all press enquiries are to be referred to the designated person. No other discussion with the press should take place and no interviews should be given without the approval of the Principal.

In preparing a press statement, thought should be given to the following suggestions:

The press statement should be simple and brief:

- It should express the sorrow of the entire school community and extend sympathy to the family/families
- Priority should be given to the needs and sensitivities of those affected directly by the crisis
- The names, addresses and telephone numbers of those affected should not be given
- Questions likely to be asked should be considered and a response prepared
- In the case of an ongoing event, a specific location and time should be selected for releasing information to the press.

In the event of a Critical Incident, the Critical Incident Team and/or relevant staff members will speak to the students about appropriate and responsible use of social media.

Others to be informed: Where possible inform the chairperson of the Board of Management and come to an agreement with them on whether or not an emergency meeting of the Board is required. Consultation with the Galway and Roscommon Education Training Board may be necessary.

Consider if, or when, it is appropriate to inform the school's insurance company and any other relevant agencies.

4. Short-term Action

The short-term action needed will obviously very much depend on the nature of the crisis.

Actions will come under a number of headings:

- Staff/Students/Parents

STAFF

Critical Incident Meeting on the next school day

- Confirm the roles each of the Critical Incident Team will undertake during the day
- Ensure all members of the Critical Incident Team are familiar with the facts and prepared statements for staff meeting (and the supervision of students for that period)
- Confirm support arrangements from the relevant agencies (internal & external)
- Confirm contact with the bereaved/affected family. If appropriate the Principal or another member of the Critical Incident Team will visit the family and, during this or a subsequent visit, will liaise with a relative regarding funeral arrangements and the school's possible involvement. This will all depend on the wishes of the family.

Staff Meeting after meeting of the Critical Incident Team

- All staff should be present
- A brief statement will be given of the facts as known (previously agreed by Critical Incident Team)
- Staff should be given an opportunity to express their views/feelings
- Agreement should be reached on how the facts will be relayed to the students and how staff should respond to student queries
- Staff will be informed of the timetable for the day
- Staff will be informed of external agencies involved and of supports put in place for students and staff
- Methods for identifying and dealing with vulnerable students will be outlined
- With regards to those staff directly involved with the incident it must be ensured that they receive support, that their duties are looked at and they have time to recover
- If a staff member feels, for one reason or another, unable to be involved in the school's direct response to the incident they should be able to opt out without question
- The main people who will be responding to the crisis in the short and medium term will be the guidance counsellor, other members of the Pastoral Team and outside agencies. They need to be supported, and be provided with assistance and resources in their work. They will have to meet with the Principal regularly to review progress being made. It will be this group who will liaise and support the other members of staff
- The Principal and Deputy Principal must also ensure they themselves are receiving support. The weight of responsibility relating to a crisis may be enormous. The Principal/Deputy Principal need to take care of their own well-being and should seek whatever support is appropriate within and outside of the school.

All members of staff/school community should be informed as to how to respond to the media. Other than the Designated Media Contact Person on the Critical Incident Team all queries /comments must be directed to the school Principal.

STUDENTS

Aims:

- Provide students with a safe and private place in which to ask questions, tell their story and share their feelings
- Draw the attention of the school to those in need of more specific long term support
- Prevent the onset of Post-traumatic Stress Disorder
- Enable the entire student body to return to normal function as quickly as possible.

Initial Class Contact

- It is important to remember that not all classes will be suffering. However, the loss for the whole school community must be acknowledged
- The deceased student's year group should be told first and the Principal, Deputy Principal, members of the Critical Incident Team, Teachers and class teacher should be present
- This should be done in a sensitive and clear manner. If any teacher feels uneasy about informing a class, a member of the Critical Incident Team will accompany them and if necessary, inform the class
- Students should be told the day's schedule
- Students should be given an opportunity to talk among themselves. An effort should be made to sustain an atmosphere where it is "okay" to talk about the incident. This may cause problems for some teachers. However, assistance should be accepted from all staff who are available and willing to help. The teachers and Principal must be sympathetic to the time students need for this conversation among themselves. It is essential to have a balance between continuing with the normal school routine and the availability of support personnel for students
- Students should be told of the supports available around the school (internal & external)
- Where it's appropriate to continue with school work it might be a better option to do revision rather than undertaking new work in order to relieve the pressure on students. Students should not be left to their own devices. They should either be in class or with friends in a supervised area.

The Rest of Day 1

- The school should continue to maintain a calm, supportive environment and, as far as is possible, continue with normal schedule whilst allowing for flexibility
- Staff members should continually throughout the day emphasise the supports available
- To support students it is advisable that, during breaks, more staff than normal would talk to students
- The students might like to organise some service or ritual in the school. They should be consulted as to the nature of such a service. Such an event may be very beneficial to staff and parents
- The Critical Incident Team will meet to evaluate the school's response, to gather names of students about whom colleagues would have a concern and to agree a plan for the afternoon
- A brief staff meeting should be held at the end of the school day to discuss how the day went, to identify vulnerable students, to plan for the following day and to pass on funeral arrangements if available.

PARENTS

Contacting Parents of very Distressed Students

- In the initial stages of the crisis it is advisable to contact the home. Parents need to be able to contact the school if they have information that will help the school in any way to care for their child
- Teachers should contact the designated member of the Critical Incident Team regarding very distressed students

In some cases it may be necessary to inform the parents of our concerns, and possibly suggest that the student might be better at home, with family support, for the remainder of the day.

5. 24 – 72 Hours after a Critical Incident

The Critical Incident Team will meet again the following morning to:

- Find out how members of the Critical Incident Team and other colleagues are coping
- Decide on an effective means of monitoring vulnerable students
- Where appropriate confirm the family's wishes regarding school involvement in the funeral arrangements.

Another Staff Meeting will be held to:

- Keep staff updated on developments
- Gather feedback from teachers about students they have concerns about
- Be sensitive to the manner in which colleagues are coping on a personal and professional level.

6. The Funeral

- With regard to closing the school on the day of the funeral, as a mark of respect, the Principal will, if necessary, contact the relevant bodies (GRETB). However, in most cases it would be the school's intention to remain open to allow students seek support throughout the day and also allow year groups who may not know the student involved to continue as best as possible with their studies
- A member of the Critical Incident Team will organise student involvement in the funeral (Guard of Honour, etc.). Other staff will be asked to assist where necessary
- Involvement requires invitation, planning and reviewing. The families involved need to be consulted, students invited to take part, time allocated to prepare for the participation and then finally an opportunity created for anyone who participated to recover. While it would be appropriate for the deceased student's classmates to attend the funeral and the burial, it might not be appropriate for large numbers of students to be present. It might be inappropriate for a large number of young people to attend such an emotional event and it could also be upsetting for individual students and for the parents of the deceased student.

The right of the deceased's family to privacy should always be respected

- Prepare students for the funeral, for some students it may be their first time attending such a sad occasion
- Students involved in the funeral on behalf of the school should be dressed in their full school uniform.

Following the Funeral

- Members of the Critical Incident Team, and other relevant staff, should support students on their return to school following their absence due to the incident. Vulnerable students should be monitored and referred to counselling
- Students who are finding the events of the previous days upsetting and stressful should be invited to a Critical Incident Stress Debriefing session. This session would be facilitated by a counsellor, and would include members of the Critical Incident Team and/or other teachers who knew the deceased well
- This session would last for approximately 90 minutes, with a maximum group of 20-25 students and could help students to start dealing with the grieving process.

7. Medium and Long-term Actions

- The Pastoral Care Team will continue to monitor students for signs of ongoing distress
- The school's response to the incident will be assessed and amendments made to our policy for dealing with the sudden death of a student or teacher

- New staff members will be made aware of the recent events, of vulnerable students and of school procedures
- The anniversary of an incident could trigger emotional responses once again and additional support might be required at these times
- The Pastoral Care Team will be of support to everyone in the school, through the regular reviewing of the needs of students, staff and parents in relation to issues of trauma
- The Pastoral Care Team, in co-operation with the Principal, should carry out regular reviews of curricular provision, of specialist staff training and of links with external agencies on issues relating to change, loss, death and crisis
- In the event of a subsequent bereavement in the school setting, those who were bereaved previously should be supported as this trauma may trigger deep emotional reactions once again.

8. Review:

All these procedures should be reviewed regularly based on experience from previous occurrences. Subsequent to the implementation of policies and procedures it is well worthwhile taking time to evaluate their effectiveness. It would also be a good idea to contact other schools and professionals to compare the effectiveness of their Plan for Responding to Critical Incidents and assess their proposed plan of action and actions taken.

9. Conclusion:

Hopefully the above Plan will be of support in the event of a tragedy occurring in our school community. However, it is important to understand that these guidelines cannot replace the most essential qualities needed to deal with personal issues such as suicide, bereavement and loss – the sensitivity, care and compassion we offer to one another and to our students on a daily basis.

PRINCIPAL – CHECKLIST/ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

This is a checklist of things to consider on the morning of a tragedy. It does not lay out the order in which the actions should take place. It is important for the Principal to spend time planning their own actions and considering what will be appropriate for them to say to all those involved.

- Take time to let the news sink in
- Call a meeting of the Critical Incident Management Team
- Gather as much factual information as possible
- Inform the staff of what has occurred
- Discuss schedule for day one with the staff
- Identify students who should perhaps be told of the occurrence on their own, e.g. close friends, relatives etc.
- Inform the students that a pupil has died tragically and explain that it will be hard for everyone to deal with this. Clarify the school's schedule for that day and also the support and assistance available to the students
- Contact Galway & Roscommon Education and Training Board, the National Educational Psychological Service and the HSE Crisis Service
- Contact the family of the deceased
- Meet with key staff who can offer student support and decide on the format for this to take place
- Make decisions on all other arrangements that have to be dealt with on day one, i.e. prayers for the student and their family
- Visit the staff room (the kitchen) during the day, and monitor what is happening in the school
- Take note of any teacher in particular who could be very upset, for example teachers who experienced a recent bereavement or a suicide in their own family
- Encourage staff to come to you during the day and let you know how things are going
- Check out the funeral details etc. and communicate this to staff and students. Contact the family of the deceased
- Review events at end of day one and plan for the following day
- Inform staff of the most vulnerable students and the supports that will be available to them
- If there is a likelihood of media interest in the event draw up a strategy for dealing with those.

Appendix 1: A sample of pre-prepared text for breaking the news to the classes

This morning we heard the extremely sad news that who is in year, died last night. We are all upset and saddened by this tragic news and would like to express our sincere sympathy to all of friends', class mates and family.

Death is a difficult issue for all of us to deal with and it causes a lot of emotional reactions including disbelief, tears and anger. We do not have the funeral arrangements at present but we will keep you informed over the course of the day.

If any of you feel the need to talk to someone or talk things through with an adult, simply ask your teacher or tutor for help.

Appendix 2: Guidelines for all teachers

Teachers go to Room 2 on arrival at school.

The Principal or Deputy Principal will brief the teachers on the facts as known.

The funeral arrangements if known will be outlined.

Preparations for supervision will be required, for example, The Critical Incident Management Team, Year Heads.

Preparations will be made for emotional reactions.

Information is given in relation to

- Normal Reactions
- Post-traumatic Stress Disorder

All available information regarding the day's schedule will be passed on.

Information on arrangements for one to one counselling, if required, will be passed on.

The role of the Critical Incident Management Team will be outlined.

Appendix 3: Prepared letter for Parents/Guardians – Sudden Death/Accident



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Principal: **Bríd Ní Dhonnacha**

Deputy Principal: **Diane Ní Mhainín**

Dear Parent/Guardian,

It is with great sadness that I inform you **of the sudden death/accidental injury of _____, a pupil in the school.** We are deeply upset by the death/deaths/event/events. Our thoughts are with the _____ (**family name**).

We have a support structure in place to help your child cope with this tragedy (**specify**).

Your child may have questions and emotions they would like to discuss with you. It is important to provide your child with accurate and factual information appropriate to their age.

You can help your child by taking time to listen to them and by encouraging them to express their feelings. No two children are the same and will express their feelings in different ways. It is not uncommon for children to have difficulty concentrating or to be fearful, anxious, or irritable. They may become withdrawn, cry, complain of toothache or physical aches, have difficulty sleeping or have nightmares. Some may not want to eat. In most cases these are short-term reactions. Please keep an eye on your child in the days ahead and let them express their feelings without criticism.

Although classes will continue as usual, I anticipate that the next few days will be difficult for everyone. (**Optional**) An information night for parents is planned for (**date, time and place**). At that time, further information about how to help children in grief will be given.

We have enclosed some information which you may find useful in helping your child through this difficult time.

Quiet often young people go straight to social media for more information, or to find out what others are saying. At this time, it is important to monitor their use of social media and talk to them about what they read. We strongly advise you to make them understand the need for extreme care and sensitivity when posting anything at this time.

If you need advice do not hesitate to contact the school at 099-75016.

Is mise, le meas,

Bríd Ní Dhonnacha, Principal

Appendix 4: Letter to Parents/Guardians – Violent Death



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Principal: **Bríd Ní Dhonnacha**

Deputy Principal: **Diane Ní Mhainín**

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I wish to inform you of a very sad event that has happened recently.

A (child/young person from the area)/(a sister/brother of (**pupil's name**)) (**pupil attending school**) has died due to (a **violent attack/violent incident on the street/etc.**) a few days ago. We are deeply upset by their death.

We have shared this information and discussed it with all of the students so that they know what has happened. School staff were available for students throughout the day today. Other support personnel (*including psychologists etc, according to the arrangements set out*) are available to advise staff members when supporting students.

The death of any young person is tragic, but a violent death is even more difficult. It is hard to have to teach our children about violence in the world and to have to accept that sometimes we cannot prevent it.

This death may cause a variety of reactions in your child. Some children/young people may be afraid for their own life or for the lives of the ones they love. Take time to listen to them and to their reasons for being fearful. Reassure them that what has happened is rare.

We have enclosed some information which you may find useful at this difficult time.

There are journalists in the school vicinity and they may approach you or your children. You do not have to talk to them. We will not allow the journalists to interview your child at school and we advise you not to let your children be interviewed outside of school either. These children are not mature enough to judge what to say and may say something they will regret later.

Quiet often in these incidences young people go straight to social media for more information or to see what others are saying. While your child may find solace in social media we strongly advise you to make them understand the need for extreme care when posting something to others.

Our thoughts are with the _____ (family name) and with all of you.

Is mise, le meas,

Bríd Ní Dhonnacha, Principal

Appendix 5: Some Useful Advice for Parents

Young people react differently to trauma. Some will cope extremely well, more will let it fade from their minds quite quickly but others will find it more difficult and will need more time. It often depends on how close they were, or how well they knew, the person who has died.

Schedules

Some families and young people find it helpful to keep to their usual routines, as much as possible. Students should be encouraged to keep up their social activities, hobbies and sports. This will help them to manage stress and will distract them, for periods of time, from thoughts of the tragedy.

To talk or not to talk

Let your son or daughter know they can talk to you about their thoughts and feelings but allow them to select the occasion and time for this. Reassure them that it's normal to have strong emotions at such a time. Sometimes young people prefer to talk to someone outside their family. Be supportive and non-judgemental. No two people deal with trauma in the same manner and one way is as valid as the next.

Support from other people

Encourage them to spend time with supportive friends. By talking to others who work with your son/daughter (e.g. teachers) you let these people know how your child has been affected and ways they could help. Consult your son or daughter on this so that they know they have some control over matters to do with themselves.

Actions

Encourage them to keep up their social activities, hobbies and sport etc. This will help them to manage stress and will take their minds off the tragedy for periods of time.

Be Firm

Keep to your usual expectations from your son or daughter but allow for some flexibility in things that are less important. Set firm limits on behaviour that involves aggression or self-harm. Seek professional help for such behaviour.

Humour

It is ok to use humour when it is natural to do so. It can be a good way to lighten the burden of sadness.

Professional Help

Be aware of how your son or daughter is coping at home, in school and with friends. Seek professional help if you notice any signs of depression, restlessness or persistent change in personality. (See Appendix 10)

Be reassured

With time and care young people can make a full recovery from trauma. Help is available if they need it.

Appendix 6: Information sheet for students and parents in relation to Normal Reactions

Coping with a traumatic incident can often be difficult and stressful. It can affect the way a person feels, thinks and behaves. The following information will help you understand some of the reactions and emotions you may experience within hours, days or weeks of the event. There are some suggestions also about things that could help you at this time.

Physical and Behavioural Reactions

It is quite normal to experience tiredness, sleeplessness, nightmares, headaches, loss or increase of appetite, bowel/bladder problems, loss of concentration, irritability. Sometimes people feel unwell.

Emotional and Cognitive Reactions (How we feel and think)

You may experience:

Shock - at what happened. Things may feel unreal. Shock sometimes causes people to deny what has happened. This does not mean that you don't care. You may feel like withdrawing, crying or becoming hysterical.

Fear - of the unpredictability of everything, especially life, of a similar incident happening again, or breaking down or losing control of yourself or of being alone

Guilt - feeling responsible in some way for what happened, for not being able to make things better or not being able to help others, for being alive and better off than others.

Shame - for not reacting as you thought you should and for needing support from others

Anger - at someone or something, wanting to blame someone or something for what has happened, at the injustice of the event

Confusion - about the event, how you should react, having mixed feeling about everything

Pain - at the loss of the person, of associating this with other incidents, bereavements or losses that you may have experienced before

Left Out - that people are not acknowledging your involvement in the incident or your relationship with the person who was injured.

It is important to ask questions and after an incident to clarify what actually happened. Rumours spread quickly and different versions of a story can be confusing and stressful.

Remember

- You need to look after yourself
- You are normal and are having normal reactions to an abnormal event
- There are people you can talk to
- You may not experience any of the above feelings
- If you do have these there is little you can do to avoid these uncomfortable feelings and thoughts
- But there are things you can do to help you recover.

What can Help?

Talk about it – Try to talk about the event and how you feel. Don't bottle things up. Sharing your experience with others who have had a similar experience may help. Let someone know if you are not coping well. If you find it difficult to talk, keep a record of how you are feeling or draw your experiences or emotions

Thinking over the incident - you need to reflect on the incident and allow it more into your mind over time. After some time, you may need to talk about it, write about it, and dream about it over and over again to help you to eventually accept what has happened.

Going Back - returning to where the incident happened may help you deal with the incident

Attending Memorials – going to funeral services

Helping Others – doing things to help others may bring some relief

Diet - Try to eat a regular meal three times a day

Exercise and Relax – Spend some time exercising, relaxing and resting.

Approximately one month after the event seek help if:

1. You cannot deal with overwhelming feelings
2. You continue to have nightmares and sleeplessness
3. You still have intrusive thoughts about the event
4. You begin to have problems at school
5. You are using excessive drinking or smoking or other substances to help you cope with the event.

Appendix 7: Information Sheet on Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder – For Staff

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder is a form of anxiety disorder with symptoms showing after experiencing an extremely traumatic event. The event must be very significant to cause the individual to respond with fear, helplessness and horror.

These are examples of traumatic events:

- An incident where a person or persons is threatened with death or
- Serious Injury
- Witnessing an event involving death or injury to another person
- Learning about death or violence to a family member
- The sudden destruction of a person's home or in the community
- Being kidnapped, assaulted, tortured or incarcerated
- Serious car accident
- A person being diagnosed with a life threatening illness.

Signs of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder:

Constantly re-experiencing the event by

- recurrent flashbacks or dreams
- behaving as if the event is happening again
- being very upset by events that remind you of the trauma.

Persistent avoidance of responsibility or being numb to responsiveness as seen by

- efforts to avoid feelings associated with the trauma
- efforts to avoid activities that arouse memories of the trauma
- feeling detached from others
- not being able to recall an important aspect of the trauma
- impaired ability to feel emotions associated with loving and intimacy.

Constant feelings of increased arousal

- difficulty falling or staying asleep
- irritability or outbursts of anger
- difficulty with concentration
- feeling tense or on edge
- exaggerated startle response.

The disorder can occur at any age, even in children. Symptoms usually begin within the first three months after the trauma but there can be a delay of months or years before symptoms appear. To be certain that a person is suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder the full symptoms must be present for more than one month and must cause distress or not be able to function as well at work, at home, in school or socially.

Source: American Psychiatric Association: Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (1994)

Appendix 8: A sample Text or Template for the Media



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Notification from Coláiste Ghobnait for the Media

(Name) is my name and I'm the principal of (Name). This morning we learned the sad news of the death of **(one of our pupils' or student's name)**. This is a terrible tragedy for the family/families, for our school and for all the community. We are deeply saddened by what has happened. We extend our sympathy to (Name) family and their friends and our thoughts are with them.

(Student's name/students' names) was a ___ year pupil and all those who knew them will miss them deeply.

We were in contact with the pupil's parents and they asked us to respect their privacy at this difficult time.

A lot of you offered support and we really appreciate that. The school has implemented a Critical Incident Management Plan.

Psychologists from the National Educational Psychological Service as well as **(insert other info)** have spent the day with us supporting us and advising teachers in their efforts supporting students at this time.

Teachers are helping students to deal with this tragedy.

The school is keen to welcome parents so we can support them, offer them advice and give them guidance.

We ask you to understand our need for privacy at this time.

Go raibh maith agaibh.

Signed: Date:

Appendix 9: Useful addresses & Relevant References for the Critical Incident Policy

THE IRISH FRIENDS OF THE SUICIDE BEREAVED - Support group for individuals bereaved by suicide. P.O. Box 162, Cork. Phone: 021- 294318

Solas – BEAREAVEMENT ADVICE FOR CHILDREN – Bereavement service for children and their families following the death of a parent, carer or brother/sister. Barnardo's, Christ Church Square, Dublin 8. Phone: 01-4540355

The following is only a small portion of the content available and it includes references to books mentioned in these guidelines

The Grieving Child - A Parent's Guide by Helen Fitzgerald. Simon & Schuster New York 1992. A great guide for parents and adults providing care.

Good Grief: Talking and Learning about Loss & Death by Barbara Ward & Janice Houghton. White Crest Press, Luton 1987. A pack which examines the emotional questions relating to death and bereavement.

The Mourning Handbook by Helen Fitzgerald. Simon & Schuster, New York 1994. Significant resource.

Death and Dying: A resource pack compiled by Nóirín Hynes and Margarita Synnott. Available from MREI, Marino Institute of Education, Griffith Avenue, Dublin 9. A teaching resource pack especially valuable for teachers of religion.

When Someone Close Dies. Available from the Medical Social Work Department, Beaumont Hospital, Dublin 9. Phone: 01-8093290

Suicide among Young People, Northern Ireland Guidelines 1996. ISBN 1 897592 051 A very clear and practical resource in relation to a whole school approach to this question. W.I.N.N.

Suicide and the Irish by Michael Kelleher. Mercier: ISBN 1 85635 149 1, Comprehensive study.

Suicide: The Irish Experience by Sean Spellissey. On Stream Cork 1996. Comprehensive study for the Irish context.

A Special Scar: The Experiences of People Bereaved by Suicide by B. Allison Wertheimer. Routledge London 1991. Based on a study of 50 bereaved people – offers practical help.

Guidelines for Schools on how to Respond to the Sudden Unexpected Death of a Student. Post-Primary Association, Ireland 1997. A very useful practical guide for schools.

In the Event of a Tragedy - A Response. Available from the Northwest Health Board, Manorhamilton, Co. Leitrim. Phone 071-60222. Children in Crisis: A Team Approach in the

Emotional Problems in Children and Young People by L. Winkley. Cassell London 1996. Provides great understanding on a range of questions.

Barnardos. (1999). Responding to youth suicide and attempted youth suicide in Ireland: Barnardos Policy Briefing 1.

Department of Education, Northern Ireland. (1996). Suicide among young people: Managing the issue in schools. Pieta 1800 247 247

Appendix 10: Short-term actions and roles on the first day

TASK	NAME:
Gather accurate information (Who, what, when, where)	
Contact the relevant agencies	
Call a meeting of the Critical Incident Management Team (Be clear about time and place)	
Organise supervision of students	
Call a staff meeting	All staff members
Organise the day's timetable	
Inform Parents	
Inform the Students	
Contact the bereaved family	
Deal with the media (Prepare and agree a statement for the media)	
Update staff at the end of the day	

Appendix 11: Medium term actions and roles for delegation for 24 -72-hour period

TASK	NAME:
Review the events of the first 24 hours	Staff Leader
Hold a meeting with staff	
Hold a meeting with external agencies	
Organise support for individuals/groups/parents/students/teachers	
Plan for the reintegration of students and staff	
Plan visits to the injured	
Contact the family in relation to funeral arrangements etc.	
Attendance and participation in funeral	
School closure	Board of Management

Appendix 12: Long-term actions and roles to be delegated beyond 72 hours

TASK	NAME:
Monitor students for continuing signs of stress	Class Teachers
Contact the relevant agencies	
Inform new staff members and students	
Decide on the best way to deal with a memorial service	Board of Management/Staff, Parents, Students
Evaluate response to incident and amend the critical incident plan appropriately	Staff/Board of Management

EMERGENCY CONTACT LIST

EMERGENCY CALL	112 / 999
Principal	087-2232520 / 099-75016
Chairperson of the Board of Management	087-9185674
Chief Executive of the Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board	091-874500
Education Officer of the Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board	091-874500
DOCTOR	099-75976 / 087-0989998
NURSE	099-75006/ 086 - 8721924
PRIEST	086-1030405
NEPS - National Educational Psychological Service, Galway, Ruaidhrí Ó Béarra	091-864519/087-7807286
GARDA STATION, INIS MÓR	099-61102
GARDA STATION, SALTHILL	091-521333
SÍOB AN PHOBAIL	087-2298039
State Exams	0906-442700
Childline	1800 66 66 66
Parents Helpline	1800 927 277/01-8733500
Samaritans	091-561222
Jigsaw Galway	091-549252
Pieta	1800 247 247 Text 'HELP' to 51444
Spectrum (EAS)	1800 411 057 Text 'Hi' to 087 3690010