



# Critical Incident Management Policy CIMP

## Background

This Critical Incident Management Policy (CIMP) has been drawn up by Bruce College to act as a key strategy in managing a critical incident. The goal of the Critical Incident Management Policy (CIMP) for Bruce College is to provide a caring, safe and supportive environment, which respects the whole school community, so that all those involved will emerge from any critical incident knowing that there are structures in place that will help them deal appropriately with the event.

## Critical incident – Definition

The staff and management of Bruce College recognise a critical incident to be “an incident or sequence of events that overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school”. Critical incidents may involve one or more students or staff members, or members of our local community. Types of incidents might include:

1. An unexpected or sudden death of a member of the school community resulting in such grief that it interferes with the normal operations of the school.
2. An accident/tragedy in the wider community.
3. Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism, etc.
4. The disappearance of a member of the school community.

This list is not exhaustive and can be amended at any time.

## The aims of the CIMP

1. Help school management and staff to react quickly and effectively in the event of an incident.
2. Enable us to maintain control.
3. Ensure that appropriate support is offered to students and staff.
4. Help ensure that the effects on the students and staff will be limited.
5. Enable us to effect a return to normality as soon as possible.

# Creation of a supportive and caring ethos in the school

Bruce College has put systems in place to help 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.

## (A) Physical safety

School Management and staff prioritises and promotes the Health and Safety of its students and staff (Please see separate Health & Safety Policy). Examples of measures include (list is not exhaustive):

1. Code of Behaviour.
2. Mobile Phone Policy.
3. School Visitor Policy (Sign in/sign out).
4. Promoting extracurricular activity involvement.
5. Evacuation plan formulated.
6. Regular fire drills occur.
7. ICT Acceptable Use Policy.
8. Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked.
9. Garda Vetting of all teaching, voluntary and ancillary staff.

## (B) Psychological safety

The management and staff of Bruce College 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. Examples of measures include (list is not exhaustive):

1. Staff are familiar with the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures.
2. Books and resources on difficulties affecting the school student are available.
3. Information is provided on mental health in general and in such specific areas as signs and symptoms of depression and anxiety.
4. Guest speakers who build awareness on a variety of personal issues, foster resilience and encourage communication. Inputs to students by these external providers are carefully considered in the light of criteria about student safety, the appropriateness of the content, and the expertise of the providers.
5. Staff are informed in the area of suicide awareness and some are trained in interventions for suicidal students.
6. The school has a dedicated Guidance Counsellor.
7. The school has developed links with a range of external agencies – such as An Garda Síochana, Túsla, etc.
8. The school has a clear policy on bullying and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy.

## Critical Incident Team (CIT) & Roles

A CIT has been established in line with best practice. The members of the team were selected on a roles/ expertise basis and retain their roles for at least one school year. The members of the team meet throughout the year and have a direct input into the review of this plan.

### **A) Team leader: Principal, (Year Head to assume role in Principal's absence). Role:**

- 1.** Alert the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting.
- 2.** Coordinates the tasks of the team.
- 3.** Liaise and sympathises with the bereaved family.
- 4.** Liaise with the Gardaí (where necessary).
- 5.** Ensure that information about deaths or other developments is checked out for accuracy before being shared.
- 6.** Lead 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.
- 7.** Advise staff on the procedures for identification of vulnerable students.
- 8.** Provide materials for staff (where necessary).
- 9.** Keep staff updated as the day progresses.
- 10.** Is alert to vulnerable staff members and makes contact with them individually.
- 11.** Draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews as appropriate.
- 12.** Assigns/delegates other duties to members of the CIT Care team.

### **B) Student liaison – Guidance Counsellor. Role:**

- 1.** Coordinates information from Class Teachers and Year Heads about students they are concerned about.
- 2.** Coordinates information from staff about colleagues they are concerned about who may have been affected by similar situations personally and alerts the Principal accordingly.
- 3.** Alerts other staff to vulnerable students (appropriately).
- 4.** Provides materials for students from their critical incident folder (where necessary).
- 5.** Maintains student contact records (R1).
- 6.** Looks after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room where agreed.
- 7.** Ensures that templates are on the schools system in advance and ready for adaptation.
- 8.** Prepares and sends out letters, emails and texts.
- 9.** Photocopies materials needed.
- 10.** Maintains general records of CIT meetings.
- 11.** Visits the bereaved family with the team leader (Chaplain).
- 12.** Manages the 'consent' issues in accordance with agreed school policy.

### c) Community/agency liaison – Year Head. Role:

1. Maintain up to date lists of contact numbers of (a) Parents contact numbers (b) Emergency support services and other external contacts and resources.
2. Is alert to the need to check credentials of individuals offering support.
3. Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies.
4. Arranges parent meetings, if held.
5. Ensures that sample letters are typed up on the school's system and ready for adaptation.
6. Sets up room for meetings with parents.
7. Maintains a record of parents seen.
8. Maintains minutes of CIT meetings.
9. Meets with individual parents.
10. Provides appropriate materials for parents (from their critical incident folder).

### d) Administrator – Office Staff: Role

1. Maintenance of up to date telephone numbers of (a) Parents or guardians (b) Teachers (c) Emergency services.
2. Takes telephone calls and notes those that need to be responded to.
3. Maintains a visitor sign in system and is alert to the need to check credentials of individuals offering support.

### e) Record keeping

In the event of an incident each member of the team will keep records of phone calls made and received, letters sent and received, meetings held, persons met, interventions used, material used etc. School secretary(s) will have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters, photocopying materials, etc.

## Confidentiality

Management and staff of Bruce College will do their utmost to protect the privacy of people involved in any incident and will be sensitive to the consequences of public statements. Members of school staff will bear this in mind, and seek to ensure that students do so also, e.g. the term 'suicide' will not be used unless there is solid information that death was due to suicide, and that the family involved consents to the use of that term.

The phrases 'tragic death' or 'sudden death' may be used instead. Similarly, the word 'murder' should not be used until it is legally established that a murder was committed. The term 'violent death' may be used instead.

## Line of Communication in the Event of a Tragedy

1. Principal informed.
2. Critical Incident Team informed by phone and/or text message as appropriate.
3. Staff informed via school text message (as appropriate, regardless of how public the incident is known so as to alert staff who may be absent).
4. Principal contacts family.
5. Students are at all times encouraged to speak to teachers and school support staff if distressed. It is anticipated that this will occur at times when students become aware of incidents before school personnel.
6. If tragedy occurs during school day – an urgent staff meeting will be held.
7. Principal may temporarily expand the CIT to include additional expertise (if necessary).
8. Members of the Board of Management with relevant expertise may also be called upon (if necessary).
9. Suggested Schedule of Events.

## Short term actions – Day 1

1. School Remains Open.
2. Principal checks the facts and verifies as far as possible.
3. Staff Meeting. All staff attend whether or not they are on first class.
4. Principal ascertains whether all staff are comfortable with informing students. If any member is not comfortable - a member of Critical Incident Team will be assigned to do so. Alternatively the Principal may address the affected year group/student body in assemblies.
5. School routine goes on as normal.
6. If a student becomes upset they are sent with a friend to a member of CIT (who will be freed up).
7. Where a teacher becomes distressed cover is provided by a colleague (since all staff will be present).
8. No immediate outside support will be called on.
9. Principal visits bereaved family (speak to family regarding funeral arrangements (readings, offertory procession, reflection, guard of honour). Family wishes will dictate involvement of school in the funeral itself.
10. Contact will be made with parents of distressed students by Principal, Guidance Counsellors or other members of CIT.
11. Minutes' silence and short prayer/reflection over the intercom.
12. Letter to be set home via students regarding support structures and coping with critical incident available in the school. A follow up text will be sent to parents to consult this letter.
13. Staff meeting to discuss how the day went, identify vulnerable students and plan for funeral.

## Key Tasks - Summary

Gather accurate information - Who, what, when, where?

1. Convene a CIT meeting – specify time and place clearly.
2. Hold staff meeting.
3. Agree schedule for the day.
4. Arrange supervision for students/staff.
5. Contact external agencies.
6. Compile a list of vulnerable students.
7. Inform students – (close friends and students with learning difficulties may need to be told separately).
8. Inform parents.
9. Prepare and agree media statement and deal with media.
10. Hold end of day staff briefing.

## Medium term actions – Day 2

### Funeral

1. Speak to students intending to go to funeral and distribute letters for parental consent.
2. Staff will be represented at the funeral usually by the Directors, Principal, and Year Head.
3. Others including the Class teacher may also be requested by the Principal.

## Key Tasks Summary

1. Convene a CIT meeting to review the events of day 1.
2. Meet whole staff.
3. Meet external agencies.
4. Arrange support for students, staff, parents.
5. Visit the injured (if appropriate).
6. Remind Staff/Students of arrangement on attendance and participation at funeral service.
7. Make decisions about school closure.
8. Follow-up – beyond 72 hours.

## Tasks

1. Plan for return of bereaved student(s).
2. Monitor students for signs of continuing distress.
3. Review response to incident and amend plan (if appropriate).

Bruce College reserves the right to update or amend this policy at any time.

*Date of Policy: May 2024*

