



Ardee Community School

CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY & PLAN

Ardee Community School aims to protect the wellbeing of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times in keeping with the school's vision and mission statements. The Board of Management, through **Ms Mary Jackson Principal** has drawn up a critical incident management plan as one element of the school's policies and plans.

Our aim is to establish a Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) to steer the development and implementation of the Critical Incident Management Plan.

The staff and management of **Ardee Community School** 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. Such as:

- 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
- A major accident/tragedy in the wider community
- Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism, etc.

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 impact on students and staff will be limited. It should enable us to effect a return to normality as soon as possible.

Creation of a coping supportive and caring ethos in the school

We have put systems 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

- Code of Behaviour endeavours to ensure the physical safety of the school community
- Evacuation Plan formulated
- Regular fire drills occur
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
- Supervision of corridors
- First Aid Room
- Staff trained in First Aid
- Health & Safety Policy

Psychological safety

The management and staff of **Ardee Community School** 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 include:

- Staff are familiar with the Child Protection Procedures and the name of the Designated Liaison Person
- Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is integrated into the work of the school. 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 are addressed in the SPHE curriculum. Promotion of mental health is an integral part of this provision.
- Staff have access to training for their role in SPHE
- Resources on difficulties affecting students are available.
- Staff are informed in the area of suicide awareness and some have attended specialist training such as ASIST provided by the HSE
- Information is provided on mental health in general and such specific areas as signs and symptoms of depression.
- The school has developed links with a range of external agencies including Samaritans, ISPC, SOSAD, Pieta House, Cycle against Suicide etc
- Students who are identified as being at risk are referred to the designated staff member (e.g. guidance counsellor, Chaplain, School Completion Programme or support teacher, the HSCL supports parents of those who are identified as being at risk), 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.
- There is a care system in place in the school that involves key personnel in the school who meet weekly and work in accordance with the schools Pastoral Care Policy.
- As system of referring students in need of care is established in the school.
- 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 0023/2010 (Post-Primary)
- The school has a clear anti-bullying policy and deals with incidents of bullying in accordance with this policy
- Staff are informed about how to access support for themselves.
- School run a mental health promotion week.

Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)

A CIMT has been established in line with best practice. The members of the team were selected on a voluntary basis and will retain their roles for at least one school year. The members of the team will meet annually to review and update the policy and plan. The school, Care Team has a particular function within the CIMT. The team consists of Principal, Deputy Principal, Guidance Counsellors, Chaplain, Home School Community Liaison Officer, SPHE Co Ordinator, School Completion staff and Year head Representatives. The CIMT will also consist of other appropriate personnel.

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.

Key Roles

TEAM LEADER: School Principal

A person who carries authority and can make decisions during a crisis

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

GARDA LIAISON: School Principal

- Liaises with the Gardaí
- Ensures that information about deaths or other developments are checked out for accuracy before any communication.

STAFF LIAISON: Deputy Principals assisted by available members of Schools Care Team

A staff member known and trusted by 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)
- Keeps staff updated as the day progresses
- Is alert to vulnerable staff members and makes contact with them individually
- Advises them of the availability of the Employment Assistance Service and gives them the contact number.

STUDENT LIAISON: School Care Team/ Year heads/ Tutors

A trusted and familiar figure to the students, this may be team of people.

- Co-ordinates information from tutors and year heads about students they are concerned about
- Alerts other staff to vulnerable students (appropriately)
- Provides materials for students (from their critical incident folder)
- Maintains student contact records (R1)
- Looks after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room where agreed.

COMMUNITY/AGENCY LIAISON: Home School Community Liaison Officer

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 Parents 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.
- Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies.
- Reminds agency staff to wear name badges.

PARENT/GUARDIAN LIAISON: Home School Community Liaison Officer

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

- Visits the bereaved family with the team leader.
- Arranges meetings, if (As such meetings are required)
- May facilitate such meetings, and manage 'questions and answers' sessions
- Manages the 'consent' issues in accordance with agreed school policy
- Manages the 'consent' issues in accordance with agreed school policy
- 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 LIAISON: School Public Relations Personnel

Someone with good interpersonal skills who would be comfortable talking to the media by phone or in person. A person who can set limits without being offensive.

- In the event of an incident, will liaise where necessary with the DE, relevant teacher unions etc.
- In advance of an incident, will consider issues that may arise and how they might be responded to (e.g. students being interviewed, photographers on the premises, etc.)
- Will draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews (as agreed by school Management).

ADMINISTRATOR: School Secretary

- Maintenance of up to date telephone numbers of
 - Parents/guardians
 - Teachers
 - Emergency services
- Takes telephone calls and notes those that need a response.
- Ensures that templates are available on the schools IT system and ready for adaptation.
- Prepares and sends out letters, emails and texts as required.
- 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 Ardee Community School 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' will not be used unless there is confirmed information that death was due to suicide, and that the family involved consents to its use. 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.

Critical incident rooms

In the event of a critical incident,

Staff Room - will be the main room used to meet the staff

Dalton Room & Timetabled classrooms - for meetings with students

Room 35 - for parents

Room 62 New Building - for media

All existing Pastoral Care Personnel, Year head Offices & the reflection room-for individual sessions with students

Room 50 - for other visitors

First Aid Room- First Aid room new Building.

Consultation and communication regarding the plan

All staff were consulted and their views canvassed in the preparation of this policy and plan.

Students and 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 during their induction.

The plan will be updated annually.

Supplementary Resources

Supplementary Resources for dealing with particular issues can be found in the 'Responding to Critical Incidents' book which can be obtained from the health & safety shelf in the main office.

CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEMPLATE

Ardee Community School Plan

CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM

Role	Name & Email address	Telephone Number
Team Leader	Mary Jackson mary.jackson@ardeecs.ie	087 2896311
Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)	Mary Jackson Pauline Duffy Marcella Greenan Clara Neavyn The Year head(s) of the impacted year(s) Sean Moran Bridget Smith Leanne Kirk Sinead Crossan Mairead McGuinness Eyelyn Daly SCP (TBC)	
Garda Liaison	Mary Jackson. Principal Mary.jackson@ardeecs.ie	087 2896311
Staff Liaison	Ms Pauline Duffy Deputy Principal Pauline.duffy@ardeecs.ie	086 8602205
Student Liaison	Deputy Principals for their respective year groups Ms Pauline Duffy pauline.duffy@ardeecs.ie Ms Marcella Greenan Marcella.greenan@ardeecs.ie Ms Clara Neavyn clara.neavyn@ardeecs.ie	086 8602205 (Pauline) 086 0691174 (Marcella) 087 9334896 (Clara)
Parent Liaison	Mary Jackson with Bridget Smith HSCL mary.jackson@ardeecs.ie bridget.smith@ardeecs.ie	087 2896311 (Mary) 087 6340491 (Bridget)
Community Liaison	Mary Jackson with Bridget Smith HSCL mary.jackson@ardeecs.ie bridget.smith@ardeecs.ie	087 2896311 (Mary) 087 6340491 (Bridget)

Media Liaison	Mary Jackson mary.jackson@ardeecs.ie	087 2896311
Administrator	TBC	0416853554

Short Term Actions- Day 1

Task	Name
Gather accurate information	Mary Jackson
Who, What, When, Where?	CIMT following meeting which can be held on line if necessary.
Convene a CIMT meeting-specify time & place clearly	Mary Jackson
Contact external agencies	Mary Jackson
Arrange supervision for students	Pauline Duffy, Marcella Greenan, Clara Neavyn and each Year Head
Hold Staff Meeting	Pauline Duffy to arrange, all CIMT. Mary Jackson to lead, Pauline Duffy in her absence
Agree schedule for the day	Senior Management team with the CIMT
Inform students – close students, students with learning difficulties may need to be told separately	Deputy Principal and Year Head assigned to the relevant year (s)
Compile a list of vulnerable students	Teachers, tutors, guidance team, chaplain, HSCL to be e mailed to the relevant DP
Contact/visit the bereaved family	Mary Jackson, Sean Moran and Bridget Smith
Prepare & agree media statement and deal with the media	Mary Jackson

Inform parents/ guardians	Senior Management Team
Hold end of day staff briefing	Pauline Duffy

MEDIUM TERM ACTIONS - (DAY 2 AND FOLLOWING DAYS)

Task	Name
Convene a CIMT meeting to review the events of day 1	Mary Jackson and full CIMT team
Meet external agencies	Mary Jackson and the Guidance Team
Meet whole staff	Pauline Duffy to convene the meeting, to be led by the senior management team
Arrange support for students, staff, parents, guardians	CIMT
Visit the injured	The relevant DP and year head and anybody who has had a direct relationship with the injured (Chaplain, Guidance)
Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements	Mary Jackson and Sean Moran
Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service	CIMT team
Make decisions about school closure	Board of Management

FOLLOW-UP BEYOND 72 HOURS

Task	Name
Monitor students for signs of continuing distress	Class teachers, tutors
Liaise with agencies regarding referrals	Relevant Deputy Principal
Plan for return of bereaved student(s)	CIMT
Plan for giving of 'memory box' to bereaved family	Sean Moran and Bridget Smith in consultation with the Deputy Principal and year Head
Decide on memorials and anniversaries	BOM/ Staff, parents and students
Review response to incident & amend plan	Staff/BOM

EMERGENCY CONTACT LIST

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

Agency	Contact Numbers
Garda: Ardee	041 6853222
Hospital : Our Lady Of Lourdes Hospital, Drogheda	041 983 7601
Fire Brigade	999
Local GP's	John St Practice 041 6853929 Market/Tierney St Practice 0416853205 Unit 3 Ash Walk 0416857277
HSE/Primary Care Team/ Primary Care Centre/ CAMHS/ Resource Officer for Suicide Prevention	CALMS Drogheda 041 9893300
School Inspector	
NEPS Psychologist	Roisin West 01 6850780
DES/ETB	
ACCS	Aine O Sullivan Paul Thornton Head office 01 4601150
Trustees LMETB Navan office Archdioceses of Armagh	046 9010064 048 37526182
ASTI/TUI	ASTI 01 6040160 TUI 01 9422588 (Contact through the school Union reps)
Pariah Priest/ Clergy	041 6850920 Sean Moran to make direct contact with the clergy.
State Exams Commission	090 6442700
Employee Assistance Service	1800 411057

GUIDANCE ON SOCIAL MEDIA USE AND CRITICAL INCIDENTS

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 facts is 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.

TEACHERS HELPING STUDENTS IN TIME OF CRISIS OR EMERGENCY

1. LISTEN 2. PROTECT 3. CONNECT 4. MODEL & 5. 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?
- Let your students know that they are not alone in their reactions
- Provide opportunities for your students to talk, draw, and play, but don't force it
- Talk to your students about what is being done by the school and community to keep everyone safe From harm
- Watch for anything in the environment that could re-traumatize your students
- Keep your eyes and ears open for bullying behaviours
- Maintain daily routines, activities and structure with clear expectations and consistent rules
- Make adjustments to assignments to be sensitive to students' current level of functioning
- Limit access to live television and the Internet that show disturbing scenes of the event
- Remember, what is not upsetting to adults may upset and confuse students, and vice versa
- Encourage students to "take a break" from the crisis focus with activities unrelated to the event
- Find ways for your students to feel helpful to your classroom, the school, and the community
- List other things you do that help your students feel better. Sharing this list with other teachers may increase ideas to help your students.

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
- List programs and activities that connect you and your students with the community
- Discuss feeling safe and times they have felt safe
- 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.

Adapted by the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) for Irish schools from Psychological First Aid materials developed by the American Red Cross (2014 and FEMA, see www.ready.gov). We acknowledge with thanks.