



# Monaghan Collegiate School

## CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY September 2025

Monaghan Collegiate School aims to protect the well-being of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. Our motto of “Working together so that we may flourish as individuals” is derived from our mission statement introduction. “Monaghan Collegiate School is dedicated to providing a quality education service, within a caring Christian environment, in which all work together to create a cohesive milieu within which the individual can develop and fulfil their full potential”.

### Review and Research

The CIMT have consulted resource documents available to schools on [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie) and [www.nosp.ie](http://www.nosp.ie) including:

- Responding to Critical Incidents Guidelines and Resources for Schools (NEPS 201 6)
- Suicide Prevention in Schools: Best Practice Guidelines (IAS, National Suicide Review Group (2002)
- Suicide Prevention in the Community - A Practical Guide (HSE 2011)
- Well-Being in Post-Primary Schools Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention (DES, DOH, HSE 2013)
- Well-Being in Primary Schools - Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion (DES, DOH, HSE 201 5)

### Definition of a Critical Incident

The staff and management of Monaghan Collegiate 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. Types of incidents might include:

- 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

### Aim

The aim of this policy 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 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**

The school takes the welfare of its staff and students very seriously, with a fully operational Health & Safety policy including:

- Evacuation plan
- Regular fire drills
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
- Full supervision of students

### **Psychological safety**

The management and staff of Monaghan Collegiate 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.

- Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is integrated into the work of the school. It is addressed in the curriculum by addressing issues such as 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. Promotion of mental health is an integral part of this provision
- 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
- Information is provided on mental health in general and such specific areas as signs and symptoms of depression and anxiety
- Staff are informed in the area of suicide awareness and some are trained in interventions for suicidal students
- The school has developed links with a range of external agencies
- 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.
- The school has a clear policy on bullying and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy
- There is a care system in place in the school using the "Continuum of Support" approach.
- Students who are identified as being at risk are referred to the designated staff member (e.g. guidance counsellor or support teacher), concerns are explored and the appropriate level of assistance and support is provided. Parents are informed, and where appropriate, a referral is made to an appropriate agency.
- Staff are informed about how to access support for themselves.

### **Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)**

A CIMT has been established in line with best practice. The members of the team will meet annually to review and update the policy and plan

### **Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)**

List is interchangeable depending on the Incident.

- Principal
- Deputy Principal
- Year Head
- Office staff
- Caretaker
- Guidance Counsellor/Pastoral Care
- Clergy (representatives nominated by Board)

The following groups may be co-opted as required

- Board of Governors/Board of Management
- Parents Association
- Student Council
- Other Professionals
- Relevant teachers with expertise e. g. First aid

Critical Incident team members will liaise with staff members directly involved in the Critical Incident.

**Team leader:** Tara Cowan

**Role**

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

**Garda liaison** Tara Cowan

**Role**

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

**Staff liaison** George Dugdale

**Role**

- 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
- 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 Employee Assistance Scheme and gives them the contact number.

**Student liaison** George Dugdale

**Role**

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

### **Parent liaison George Dugdale**

#### **Role**

- Arranges parent meetings, as appropriate
- May facilitate such meetings, and manage 'questions and answers'
- 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

### **Media liaison Tara Cowan**

#### **Role**

- 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)
- In the event of an incident, will liaise where necessary with the SEC; relevant teacher unions etc.
- Will draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews (as agreed by school management)

### **Office Staff Role Sarah Reid, Yvonne Deery**

- Maintenance of up to date telephone numbers of
  - Parents or guardians
  - Teachers
  - Emergency services
- Takes telephone calls and notes those that need to be responded to
- Prepares and sends out letters, emails and texts
- Photocopies materials 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 sent and received, meetings held, persons met, interventions used, material used etc.

Office staff will have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters, photocopying materials, etc.

### **Confidentiality and Sensitivity**

Management and staff of Monaghan Collegiate School have a responsibility to protect the privacy and good name 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 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.

### **Consultation and communication regarding the plan**

All staff were consulted and their views canvassed in the initial 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 George Dugdale. The plan will be updated annually.

## Appendix

Critical Incident Rooms		
In the event of a critical incident, the following rooms are designated for the indicated purposes		
Room Name:	Designated Purpose:	
Board Room	Main room for meeting staff	
Study hall/Sport’s hall	Meetings with students	
Study Hall	Meetings with parents	
Board Room	Meetings with media	
Board Room	Individual sessions with students	
Board Room	Meetings with other visitors	
Critical Incident Management Team		
Role	Name	Phone
Team leader:	Tara Cowan	0838444124
Garda liaison	Tara Cowan	0838444124
Staff liaison	George Dugdale	0879108556
Student liaison	George Dugdale	0879108556
Parent liaison	George Dugdale	0861686388
Media liaison	Tara Cowan	0838444124
Administrator	Sarah Reid Yvonne Deery	00447756286227 0871413758

### Short term actions – Day 1

<b>Task</b>	<b>Name</b>
<b>Gather accurate information</b>	George Dugdale
<b>Who, what, when, where?</b>	George Dugdale
<b>Convene a CIMT meeting – specify time and place clearly</b>	Tara Cowan
<b>Contact external agencies</b>	Tara Cowan
<b>Arrange supervision for students</b>	George Dugdale
<b>Hold staff meeting</b>	<b>All staff</b>
<b>Agree schedule for the day</b>	All involved
<b>Inform students – (close friends and students with learning difficulties may need to be told separately)</b>	Tara Cowan
<b>Compile a list of vulnerable students</b>	George Dugdale
<b>Prepare and agree media statement and deal with media</b>	Tara Cowan
<b>Inform parents</b>	Tara Cowan
<b>Hold end of day staff briefing</b>	Tara Cowan

**Medium term actions - (Day 2 and following days)**

Task	Name
Convene a CIMT meeting to review the events of day 1	Tara Cowan
Meet external agencies	Tara Cowan
Meet whole staff	Tara Cowan
Arrange support for students, staff, parents	George Dugdale
Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements	Tara Cowan
Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service	All of CIMT
Make decisions about school closure	BoM

**Follow-up – beyond 72 hours**

Task	Name
Monitor students for signs of continuing distress	Class teachers
Liaise with agencies regarding referrals	Tara Cowan, George Dugdale
Plan for return of bereaved student(s)	Tara Cowan
Plan for giving of 'memory box' to bereaved family	Tara Cowan
Decide on memorials and anniversaries	BOM/Staff, parents and students
Review response to incident and amend plan	Staff/BOM

EMERGENCY CONTACT LIST		
AGENCY		CONTACT NUMBERS
Garda		112/999
Hospital		04781811
Fire Brigade		112/999
Local GPs	Swan Park Practice 30714 Castle Meadow Practice 81466	
HSE		04730400
Community Care Team		04730400
Child and Family Centre		04771398
Child and Family Mental Health Service (CAMHS)		04730400
School Inspector		018896553
NEPS Psychologist		018650780
DES - Dublin		018896400
DES - Athlone		0906483600
State Exams Commission		096442700
JMB		012838255
ASTI		016040160
Employee Assistance Service		1800 411 057
Clergy	Bishop Ellis	04889522461
	Rev McQuade	0858236490

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Chair of the Board of Management