



CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY 2026

Ardcroney NS aims to protect the well-being of its students by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. Ardcroney NS 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 staff and students, both in ordinary time and in the event of a critical incident.

What is a Critical Incident?

Ardcroney NS recognises a critical incident to be “an incident or sequence of events that overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school and disrupts the running of the school”.¹

Critical incidents may involve one or more pupils, staff, the school, or our local community. Types of incidents might include:

- *The death of a member of the school community through sudden death, accident, terminal illness or suicide*
- *An intrusion into the school*
- *An accident/tragedy in the wider school community*
- *Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism, etc*
- *The disappearance of a member of the school community*
- *An accident involving members of the school community*

Aim

Recognising that the key to managing critical incidents is planning, Ardcroney NS has developed this Critical Incident Management Policy and accompanying Plan. Our hope is that, in the event of an incident, these will help staff to react quickly and effectively and to maintain a sense of control. They should also help us to achieve a return to normality as soon as possible and ensure that the effects on the students and staff will be limited.

Creation of a coping supportive and caring ethos in the school

¹ Source: Responding to Critical Incidents in Schools – National Educational Psychological Services NEPS.

We have put systems in place to lessen the probability of the occurrence of an incident. These include measure to address both the physical and psychological safety of both staff and students.

Physical safety:

- *Evacuation plan formulated*
- *Regular fire drills occur (Emergency Evacuation)*
- *Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked*
- *School gates closed during play time*
- *Policy on yard duty developed outlining procedures to follow when an accident occurs or when children have to leave the school*
- *Signing out book for children leaving school early*

Psychological safety

Ardcroney NS aims to create an open and encouraging environment in the school where students can talk about their difficulties and seek help for same.

- *SPHE programmes are included in the curriculum to address issues such as grief and loss, communication skills, stress and anger management, conflict management, problem solving, help-seeking, decision making, and alcohol and drug prevention.*
- *Our Code of Behaviour Policy includes an approach to bullying.*
- *Staff are informed of difficulties affecting individual students and are aware and vigilant to their needs.*
- *Staff have access to books and resources on difficulties affecting the primary school child.*
- *The school has developed links with outside agencies, (NEPS, GARDA SIOCHÁNA, Tusla) which may be contacted in the event of an emergency and for onward referral of students.*

Critical Incident Management Team

Ardcroney NS has set up a CI Management Team in line with best practice and will maintain this team in future. 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 once a year to review and update the plan.

Roles

Key roles have been identified and assigned as follows:

- Team Leader*Damien Cunningham Principal Teacher*
- Staff Liaison*Damien Cunningham Principal Teacher*
- Student Liaison*Breda Conroy Deputy Principal*
- Parent Liaison*Damien Cunningham Principal Teacher*.....
- Community Liaison *Catherine Ryan Assistant Principal*
- Media Liaison*Brid Kirby Assistant Principal*

In the event of a critical incident the responsibilities of each role-holder will be as follows.

Team Leader

- Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting.

- Coordinates the tasks of the team.
- Liaises with the Board of Management and Department of Education and Skills.
- Liaises with the bereaved family.

Staff Liaison

- Leads meetings to brief staff on the facts as known, gives staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and outlines the routine for the day.
- Advises staff on the identification of vulnerable students.
- Is alert to vulnerable staff members and makes contact with them individually.

Student Liaison

- Liaises with other team members to keep them up-dated with information and progress.
- Alerts staff to vulnerable students.

Community Liaison

- Liaises with agencies in the community for support and onward referral.
- Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies.
- Coordinates the involvement of these agencies .
- Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of
 - Key parents, such as members of the parents council
 - Emergency support services and other external contacts and resources.

Parent Liaison

- Facilitates 'questions and answers' meetings.
- Meets with individual parents.
- Provides materials for parents from the Ready go Go Pack.
- Visits the bereaved family with the team leader.

Media Liaison

- In preparing for the role, s/he will consider issues that may arise during an incident 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 Communications Section in the DES.

Record Keeping

In the event of an incident each member of the team will keep detailed records of phone calls made and received, letters 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.

Letter to Parents

Parent Liaison will prepare a brief, written statement to include:

- The sympathy of the school community for the affected/bereaved family
- Positive information or comments about the deceased/injured persons(s)
- The facts of the incident
- What has been done
- What is going to be done

Confidentiality and good name considerations

The school has 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 see to ensure that pupils do so also. [For instance, the term 'suicide' will not be used without the consent of the family involved or until it has been established categorically that the person's death was a result of suicide. The phrases 'tragic death' or 'sudden death' may be used instead.]

Critical Incident Room

In the event of a critical incident, the staff room will be the main room used to meet the staff, students, parents and visitors involved.

Development and communication of this policy and plan

All staff were consulted and their views canvassed in the preparation of the draft plan. NEPS psychologist assisted with the drafting during a planning meeting in the school. Parent representatives were also consulted and asked for their comments. Our school's final policy and procedures in relation to responding to critical incidents has been presented to all staff.

Each member of the critical incident team has a personal copy.

All new and temporary staff will be informed of the details of the plan by staff liaison officer.

This plan was ratified by the Board of Management on

18/2/26

Chairperson : John Mulcahy

Signature: 

Principal/Secretary BOM: Damien Cunningham

Signature: 

CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT PLAN 2026

CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM

Key Roles Assigned

TASK	NAME
OVERALL MANAGEMENT OF RESPONSE	Damien Cunningham
COMMUNICATION	Damien Cunningham
ADMINISTRATION TASKS	Catherine Ryan
SUPERVISION	Post Holders
MEDIA LIASION	Brid Kirby
PARENT LIASION	Damien Cunningham
COMMUNITY LIASION	Catherine Ryan
STUDENT LIASION	Breda Conroy
STAFF LIASION	Damien Cunningham

Emergency Contact List

OUTSIDE AGENCY	CONTACT NUMBERS
GARDA	067 50450
HOSPITAL	067 31491
FIRE BRIGADE	067 38400
LOCAL GPS	067 31513
INSPECTORATE	090 6483600
NEPS PSYCHOLOGIST	0861740623 Eoin Hassett
DES COMMUNICATIONS	01 8734700
INTO	01 8047700

PREVENTATIVE APPROACHES

- **CURRICULUM**
 - **ANTI BULLYING POLICY**
 - **Code of Good BEHAVIOUR POLICY**
 - **CIRCLE TIME**
 - **WALK TALL/STAY SAFE PROGRAMME**
 - **SPHE POLICY**
 - **STAFF ALERT TO STUDENTS WITH DIFFICULTIES (e.g. bereaved students, self harming, eating difficulties etc)**

- **SUPPORT**
 - **NEPS**
 - **PARISH PRIEST/CLERGY**
 - **CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES, Tusla etc**

- **PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT**
 - **FIRE DRILL – EVACULATION OF PUPILS**
 - **MAINTAIN FIRE EXTINGUISHERS**
 - **STAFF ABLE TO USE FIRE EXTINGUISHERS**
 - **HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY**
 - **PLAYGROUND SUPERVISION**

SHORT TERM ACTIONS AND ROLES ASSIGNED

1ST DAY

TASK	NAME
GATHER ACCURATE INFORMATION	Relevant Staff and Witnesses (accidents)
CONTACT APPROPRIATE AGENCIES	Damien Cunningham
CONVENE A MEETING WITH KEY STAFF	Damien Cunningham
ARRANGE SUPERVISION OF STUDENTS	Breda Conroy
HOLD STAFF MEETING	ALL STAFF
ORGANISE TIMETABLE FOR THE DAY	Damien Cunningham
INFORM PARENTS	Damien Cunningham
INFORM STUDENTS	All Staffd

MAKE CONTACT WITH THE BEREAVED FAMILY	Damien Cunningham
DEALING WITH MEDIA	Brid Kirby

MEDIUM TERM ACTIONS AND ROLES ASSIGNED

24 -72 HOURS

TASK	NAME/GROUP
REVIEW THE EVENTS OF THE FIRST 24 HOURS	STAFF
ARRANGE SUPPORT FOR INDIVIDUAL/GROUPS OF STUDENTS, PARENTS ETC.	Damien Cunningham
PLAN THE REINTEGRATION OF STUDENTS AND STAFF	All Staff
PLAN VISITS TO INJURED	All Staff
LIAISE WITH FAMILY RE FUNERAL ARRANGEMENTS/MEMORIAL SERVICE	Damien Cunningham
ATTENDANCE/PARTICIPATION AT FUNERAL SERVICE ETC	STAFF
SCHOOL CLOSURE	BOM

LONGER TERM ACTIONS AND ROLES ASSIGNED

BEYOND 72 HOURS

TASK	NAME/GROUP
MONITOR STUDENTS FOR SIGNS OF CONTINUING STRESS	CLASS TEACHERS
EVALUATE RESPONSE TO INCIDENT AND AMEND CI PLAN APPROPRIATELY	STAFF/BOM
FORMALISE PLAN FOR FUTURE	STAFF/BOM
INFORM NEW STAFF/PUPILS	Damien Cunningham
DECIDE ON APPROPRIATE WAYS TO DEAL WITH ANNIVERSARIES	BOM AND PARENTS

USEFUL CONTACT NUMBERS

BARNARDOS	450355
THE SAMARITANS	1850 609090
CHILDLINE	1800 666666
PARENTLINE	1890 927277
AWARE	6766166 1890 303302
NATIONAL SUICIDE BEAREAVEMENT SUPPORT	024 95561
RAINBOWS	4734175
THE BEREAVEMENT COUNSELLING SERVICE	8391766
BEREAVEMENT COUNSELLING	6767727

SAMPLE LETTER TO PARENTS

Dear Parents,

The school has experienced (the sudden death, accidental injury) of one of our students. We are deeply saddened by the deaths/events.

(Brief details of the incident, and in the event of a death, perhaps some positive remembrances of the person lost)

We have support structures in place to help your child cope with this tragedy.
(Elaborate)

It is possible that your child may have some feelings that he/she may like to discuss with you. You can help your child by taking time to listen and encouraging them to express their feelings. It is important to give truthful information that is appropriate to their age.

If you would like advice you may contact the following people at the school.
(Details).

Principal

**SAMPLE LETTER REQUESTING CONSENT FOR INVOLVEMENT
OF OUTSIDE PROFESSIONALS**

Dear Parents,

Following the recent (tragedy, death of x) we have arranged professional support or students in school who need particular help. (x...) is available to help us with this work. The support will usually consist of talking to children, either in small groups or on a one-to-one basis and offering reassurance and advice as appropriate.

Your son/daughter has been identified as one of the students who would benefit from meeting with the x..... If you would like your child to receive this support please sign the attached permission slip and return to the school by

If you would like further information on the above or to talk to the psychologist, please indicate this on the slip or telephone the school.

Principal

.....
I consent to having our daughter/son met by

I understand that my daughter/son may meet x..... in a individual or group session depending on the arrangements which are thought to be most appropriate.

Name of Student: _____

Class: _____

Date of Birth: _____

I would like my daughter/sonto avail of the support being offered by x.....

Signed: _____