

Critical Incident Policy and Management Plan

1. Policy statement

This critical incident policy and critical incident management plan were drawn up by the board of management of Abacas Kilbarrack Special School. The management and staff of the school acknowledge that the key to best managing a critical incident is forward planning. This policy intends to identify an action plan that will prepare staff as effectively as possible for dealing with a critical incident should one arise.

2. Aims of the policy

The main aims of the action plan are as follows:

- To prepare the school community to better react at the point of occurrence of a critical event should one occur.
- To help staff and management react quickly and effectively to maintain control of the situation.
- To help the school to return to normality as soon as possible and limit the effects of the incident on staff and students.

3. Guiding documents

This policy is based on the following guidelines:

- Responding to Critical Incidents: NEPS Guidelines and Resource Materials for Schools (2016)

4. Critical Incident defined

The staff and management of *ABACAS Kilbarrack Special 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.

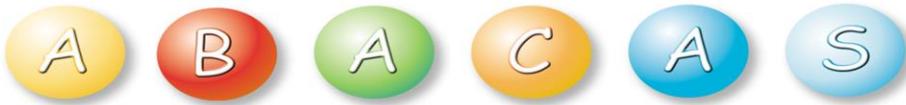
Types of critical incidents might include:

- 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.

5. Physical safety

The following measures are currently in place to protect the physical safety of our staff and students. These measures are reviewed by the Board of Management and staff on an ongoing basis.

- All of our staff are Garda-vetted prior to commencing their employment at Abacas.



- A comprehensive Health and Safety Policy is in place and all staff have been advised of their responsibilities in this regard. New staff are advised of all health and safety procedures at the start of their employment in the school.
- An evacuation plan has been formulated.
- Fire drills occur on a regular basis.
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked.
- Keypads are in place on internal doors to prevent unauthorised access and to prevent any of our more vulnerable pupils from absconding.

6. Personal safety and mental health

The management and staff of *ABACAS Kilbarrack Special 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.

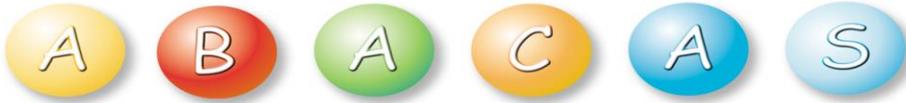
Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is integrated into the work of the school. It is addressed in the curriculum by focusing on issues such as grief and loss; communication skills; stress and anger management; resilience; conflict management; problem-solving; help-seeking; bullying; decision-making and the prevention of alcohol and drug misuse. The promotion of mental health is an integral part of this provision. In addition, the school has adopted the following measures to promote the personal safety and mental health of our staff and pupils:

- Staff have access to training for their role in SPHE.
- All staff are familiar with DES Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures.
- The school has developed links to a range of external agencies and therapists such as TUSLA, NEPS, Beechpark Services, SMH, Daughters of Charity, CRC.
- 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 (see Anti-Bullying Policy for staff and students).
- Staff are informed on how to access support for themselves (Employee Assistance Service).

7. Identifying priorities in the event of a critical incident

In the event of an on-site critical incident/accident, the following priorities have been identified in this order:

- Ensure the immediate physical safety of the school community.
- Verify the safety of all, and the communication of this to relevant parties, e.g. Gardaí, parents/guardians, Board of Management.
- Return the situation to as close to normality as possible, and as quickly as possible.
- Activate the procedures and help mechanisms outlined in the action plans detailed in Appendix 1.



8. The 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. Each member of the team has access to Aladdin where there is a copy of the policy and plan and materials particular to their role, to be used in the event of an incident.

The CIMT at ABACAS is comprised of the following members:

- School Principal
- School Director/BCBA
- Deputy Principal
- Chairperson of the Board of Management
- Parent Representative from the Board of Management
- School Secretary

8.1 Roles and Responsibilities of the CIMT

Each of the above team members will be briefed regarding their roles and responsibilities prior to ratification of this policy. These roles and responsibilities are described as follows:

Team leader/ Garda liaison: *Laura Kelly (Principal) John Dennehy (Chairperson Board of Management)*

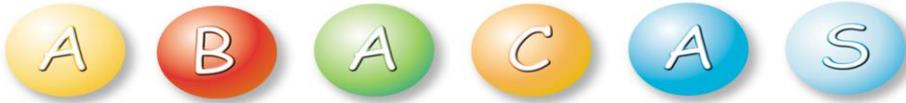
Roles and responsibilities:

- 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.
- Where applicable, liaises with the family or families directly impacted by the incident.
- Liaises with the Gardaí.
- Ensures that information about deaths or other developments is checked out for accuracy before being shared.
- Emails copy of the plan to CIMT and ensure they have access to Aladdin.

Staff liaison: *Ursula Cassidy (Deputy Principal)*

Role and responsibilities:

- Leads briefing meetings for staff on the facts as known, gives staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions, outline the routine for the day.
- 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 staff of the availability of the EAS and gives them the contact number



Pupil liaison: *Ursula Cassidy (Deputy Principal) Trish Carolan (School Director/BCBA)*

Role and responsibilities:

- Is alert to vulnerable pupils and makes contact with them/their teacher/SNA individually.
- Draws up individual programmes or plans, in consultation with each pupil's teacher, for assisting pupils following the incident.
- Provides resources to teachers/SNAs for assisting pupils following the incident.

Community/agency liaison *Trish Carolan (School Director/BCBA)*

Role and responsibilities:

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

Parent liaison *Deirdre Jambou (Parent Representative)*

Role and responsibilities:

- Visits the bereaved family with the team leader.
- Arranges parent meetings, if held.
- May facilitate such meetings, and manage 'questions and answers'.
- Manages the 'consent' issues in accordance with agreed school policy.
- Ensures that sample letters are typed up, on the school's system and ready for adaptation.
- 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 *Laura Kelly (Principal)*

Role and responsibilities:

- 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 relevant teacher unions etc.
- Will draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews (as agreed by school management)



Administrator Mandy Daly (Secretary)

Role and responsibilities:

- Maintains up-to-date telephone numbers of
 - Parents or guardians
 - Teachers
 - Emergency services
 - Critical Incident Management Team
 - Key parents, such as parent representatives from BOM
 - Emergency support services and other external contacts and resources
- Takes telephone calls and notes those that need to be responded to.
- Ensures that templates are on the school's system in advance and ready for adaptation.
- Prepares and sends out letters, e-mails and texts.
- Photocopies materials needed.
- Maintains records.

9. Communication in the event of a Critical Incident

The value of clear communication at times of crisis is vital. Instructions to staff and children should be clear and unambiguous. Immediate clarification of unclear or not understood instructions should be sought from staff representative. Concerns regarding potential safety issues should be raised calmly and with clarity. Clear lines of communication and chain of command should be followed. Unnecessary or speculative conversations are not helpful.

10. 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. The school secretary will have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters, photocopying materials, etc.

11. Contact details:

An up-to-date list of contact telephone numbers should be available at all times for:

- Parents/Guardians
- Staff members
- Members of CIMT (see Appendix 2)
- Emergency contacts (see Appendix 2)

These are available in the school office and, where relevant, stored on Aladdin.

12. Critical Incident rooms:

In the event of a critical incident, the following rooms are designated for the indicated purposes:



Critical Incident Rooms	
Room Name:	Designated Purpose:
<i>Staff Room</i>	Main room for meeting staff
<i>School Hall</i>	Meetings with parents
<i>Principal's Office</i>	Meetings with media
<i>Principal's Office</i>	Meetings with other visitors

13. Confidentiality and good name considerations:

Management and staff of *ABACAS Kilbarrack Special 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. In terms of confidentiality, the starting point is that all information regarding any incident which has been learned or gathered within the school should be regarded as confidential. Information about individual members of the school community is also confidential in these cases.

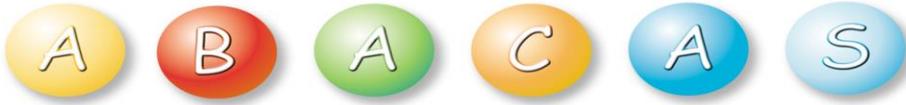
Members of school staff will bear this in mind, and seek to ensure that students (if/where relevant) do so also, e.g. the term ‘suicide’ will not be used unless there is solid information that death was due to suicide, *and* that the family involved consents to its use. The phrases ‘tragic death’ or ‘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.

In emergency situations there may be intense pressure for comment. Staff members will be instructed not to speak with media personnel. All queries for information should be referred to the designated school spokesperson – the school principal. A short formula of words should be used, for example – ‘I am sorry but all requests for information at this time must be made to the school’s spokesperson, Ms. Kelly. Thank you.’

All statements conveyed by the spokesperson to the media will be pre-planned by the CIMT.

14. Enlisting outside agency support

In an effort to free school staff for a variety of tasks and to allow the school function as normally as possible, additional support may be requested from neighbouring schools. This support will be requested, and details of possible functions outlined as part of the planning process



The school will specifically request support from the Principal of our neighbouring school, Scoil Eoin. Additional senior staff members from these schools may be called on

to supervise children and attend to other school functions. Should such support be required, these names will be forwarded to *ABACAS Kilbarrack Special School* from the principal of Scoil Eoin. In addition to this, professional support may be requested by the principal from NEPS or other support agencies.

15. Consultation and communication regarding the plan

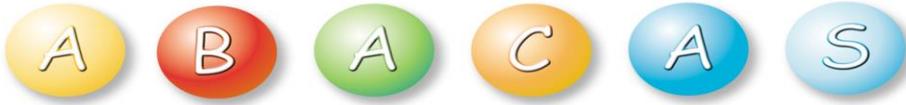
All staff were consulted and their views canvassed in the preparation of this policy and plan. Parent/guardian representatives were also consulted and asked for their comments.

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 School Principal. The plan will be reviewed annually in accordance with the checklist in Appendix 4.

This Policy Document was ratified by the Board of Management on April 13th 2021

Signed:

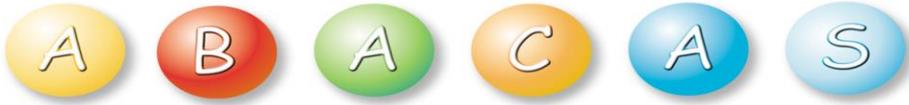
Chairperson BOM



**APPENDIX 1
ACTION PLANS**

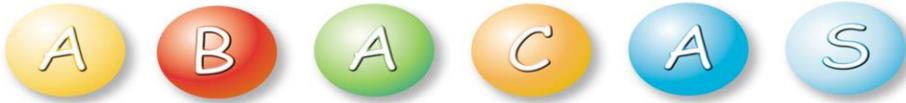
1. Short term action plan – Day 1

Task	Name
Gather accurate information	
Establish the facts - What has happened? - When it happened? - How it happened? - The number and name of staff and students involved - Any other parties involved. - The extent of the injuries. - The location of those involved.	
Convene a CIMT meeting ASAP – specify time and place clearly	
Contact external agencies A. Emergency services B. Medical services C. H.S.E. Psychology Departments/ Community Care Services D. NEPS E. BOM F. DES/Schools Inspector.	
Arrange supervision for students	
Hold staff meeting	All staff
Agree schedule for the day	
Inform students – (where appropriate)	
Prepare and agree media statement and deal with media if necessary	
Inform parents	



Hold end of day staff briefing

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2. Medium-term action plan - Day 2 and following days

Task	Name
Convene a CIMT meeting to review the events of day 1	Team leader
Meet external agencies	
Meet whole staff	
Arrange support for individual/students, staff, parents	
Visit the injured	
Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements	
Arrange school closure if required	
Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service	
Make decisions about school closure	BOM



3. Follow-up action plan – beyond 72 hours

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



APPENDIX 2

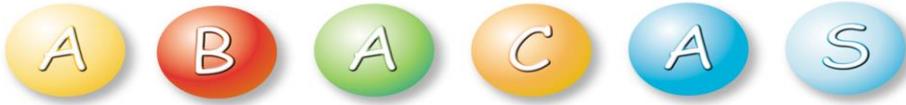
1. Emergency contact list:

AGENCY	CONTACT NUMBERS
Garda	112/999-Emergency 01-6664300 Raheny Garda Station
Hospital	112/999-Emergency 01-8092714/ 8092720 A&E Beaumont
Fire Brigade	112/999-Emergency
Local GPs	01-9031300 Hilltop Medical Centre, Raheny
HSE	1850241850/0416850300
Community Care Team	
Child and Family Agency (TUSLA)	01-870800 Tusla Agency Swords
Child and Family Mental Health Service (CAMHS)	(01) 879 6800
School Inspector	Diarmuid Dullaghan Diarmuid_Dullaghan@education.gov.ie
NEPS Psychologist	Sarah Callanan Sarah_Callanan@education.gov.ie
DES	www.education.ie
INTO	01-8047700
Employee Assistance Service	1800 411 057



2. Critical Incident Management Team (CMIT):

Critical Incident Management Team		
Role	Name	Phone
Team leader:	<i>Laura Kelly/John Dennehy</i>	0871267853
Garda liaison	<i>Laura Kelly/John Dennehy</i>	
Staff liaison	<i>Ursula Cassidy</i>	0857754430
Pupil liaison	<i>Ursula Cassidy/Trish Carolan</i>	
Community liaison	<i>Trish Carolan</i>	0868404326
Parent liaison	<i>Deirdre Jambou</i>	0879443177
Media liaison	<i>Laura Kelly/John Dennehy</i>	
Administrator	<i>Mandy Daly</i>	0879055815



APPENDIX 3

TEMPLATES

1. Sample letter to parents/guardians – sudden death / accident

Dear Parent/Guardian,

The school has experienced (*the sudden death, accidental injury, etc.*) of *Name of student(s)*. We are deeply saddened by the deaths/events. Our thoughts are with (*family name*).

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

Over the course of the coming days, please keep an eye on your child and allow him/her to express their feelings without criticism. Although school 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.

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

Principal's signature



2. Sample letter to parents/guardians – violent death

Dear Parent/ Guardian,

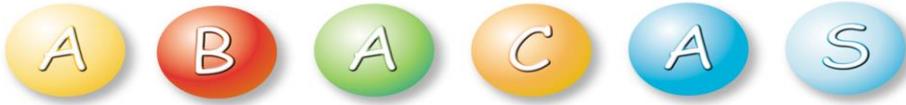
I need to inform you about a very sad event that has happened. A child/young person from the neighbourhood, the sister/ brother of (*name of student*), a student here at school, was killed as a result of (*a violent attack, violent incident in the street etc.*) earlier this week. We are all profoundly saddened by his death.

We have shared this information and had discussions with all of our students so that they know what has happened. School staff members have been available for students on an on-going basis today. Other support personnel (*including psychologists etc., according to actual arrangements*) are available to advise staff in their support of 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 the violence in our world and to accept that sometimes we do not have the power to prevent it.

Our thoughts are with (*family name*) and with each of you.

Sincerely
Principal's name



3. Sample announcement to the media:

This can be used as a template by schools to be emailed, posted on the school social media site or given to the media. It may help to decrease the number of media calls and callers to the school.

In some instances, it is not appropriate to provide names or information that might identify individuals.

This announcement will need to be changed based upon confidentiality issues, the wishes of the victim's family and the nature of the incident.

My name is *(Name)* and I am the principal of *(Name)* School. We learned this morning of the death of *(one of our students or Name of student)*. This is a terrible tragedy for *family(ies)*, our school and our community. We are deeply saddened by these events. Our sympathy and thoughts are with *(Name)* family and friends.

Name of student/students was a *(12 year old boy)* and will be greatly missed by all who knew him.

We have been in contact with his/her parents and they have requested that we all understand their need for privacy at this difficult time.

Offers of support have been pouring in and are greatly appreciated. Our school has implemented our Critical Incident Management Plan.

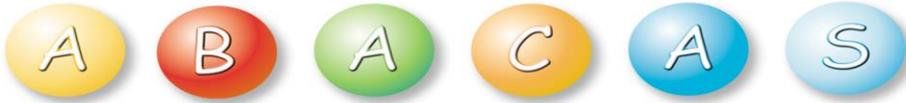
Psychologists from the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) and *(insert other information if relevant)* have been with us all day supporting and advising teachers in their efforts to assist our students at this time.

The teachers have been helping students to deal with the tragic event.

The school has been open to parents to support them and to offer them advice and guidance.

We would ask you to respect our privacy at this time.

Thank you.



APPENDIX 4

1. Checklist for reviewing the policy and plan:

The following checklist will be used by the Board of Management to review the Critical Incident Management Policy on an annual basis:

	Item	Done
a)	Has serious consideration been given to the school's approach to prevention?	
b)	Has the school defined a critical incident and given examples?	
c)	Have key roles been clearly identified and the assigned tasks outlined?	
d)	Have suitable people been nominated to each of the assigned roles/tasks?	
e)	Are telephone numbers on contact lists up-to-date?	
f)	Have all the staff been consulted about the plan/policy?	
g)	Has a date been set for a review of the plan?	
h)	Who will be given copies of the plan?	
i)	Is the Emergency Contact List (Appendix 2) appropriate and complete?	
j)	Are letters and press releases readily available on school headed paper, for adaptation to suit the particular circumstances (Appendix 3)?	
k)	Has contact been made with external agencies?	
l)	Has each member of the team compiled their emergency pack (photocopies of relevant handouts)? (Electronic Version on Aladdin)	
m)	Make sure all team members have access to pack on Aladdin	
m)	Where will copies of the plan be kept?	
n)	Have parents been consulted about the plan?	

Signed:

Date:

Chairperson BOM