



CTI Chluain Meala
CTI Clonmel



Tipperary
ETB
Post-Primary

CTI Clonmel

Raheen College & Gaelcholáiste Chéitinn

RAHEEN
COLLEGE



December 2024

Critical Incident Management Plan **Eircode; Raheen College – E91 H9P7** **Eircode; Gaelcholáiste Chéitinn – E91 K2E2**



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CTI Clonmel is a state run, multi-denominational, co-educational ETB secondary school, underpinned by the core values of

- Excellence
- Care
- Equality
- Community
- Respect



With these Core Values and Ethos in mind this Critical Incident Management Plan has been developed. CTI Clonmel aims to protect the wellbeing of all its students and staff by always providing a safe & nurturing environment. The Board of Management, through the principal, has drawn up a critical Incident management plan as one element of the school's policies and plans. This document is reviewed annually and updated to consider any recent publication and recommendations relevant to our Critical Incident Management Plan. The plan draws on following documents:

- Guidelines and Resource Materials for Schools, Responding to Critical Incidents handbook. 2016 NEPS
- Suicide Prevention in Schools: Best Practice Guideline - 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 & Suicide Prevention DES, DOH, HSE 2013
- Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2018-2023
- Junior Cycle Wellbeing Guidelines 2021

What is a Critical Incident?

The staff and management of the CTI-Clonmel 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. It may include the following:

- 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
- A physical attack or accident involving members of the school community
- The disappearance of a member of the school community
- Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism, etc.
- A serious accident involving cars, machines or equipment
- Robbery
- A phone call or notice of imminent danger
- A major accident/tragedy in the wider community or on near-by access roads.
- A serious issue involving other public or private facilities within close proximity of the school

Aim

- To help school management and staff to react quickly and effectively in the event of an incident
- To ensure that a consistent response / process is put in place.
- To facilitate students to cope with trauma that may be associated with the critical event.
- To provide support for students, staff and parents.
- To try and minimise the impact on students and staff
- To help prevent the onset of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
- To identify students at risk.
- To have a plan in place to ensure that normality returns 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

Health & Safety Policy

- Evacuation plan formulated
- Regular fire drills occur
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
- Pre-opening supervision in the school assembly area in RC and GCC
- School doors locked during class time
- Fire Evacuation plan in operation.
- CCTV cameras inside and outside the school building
- Health and Safety Policy.
- Safe place for AEN students
- Sensory Room
- Code of Behaviour.
- Front Entrance doors electronically controlled
- Visitors to the school to check in at main Office
- Vigilant staff

Psychological safety

The management and staff of CTI Clonmel 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. Senior Management have an "open door" policy for all staff. All staff members have access to the Employee Assistance Service.

The programmes and resources currently in use are

- Guidance and Counselling
- Staff have access to training for their role in SPHE
- Wellbeing
- Student Council
- Induction programme for First years
- Mentoring programme
- Lunchtime and after school programmes
- Extra-curricular activities
- Special Needs Assistants
- Child Protection / Safeguarding procedures including the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and the Deputy Designated Liaison Person (DDLDP)
- Books and resources on difficulties affecting the post primary school student are available.
- Information is provided on mental health in general and such specific areas as signs and symptoms of depression and anxiety.
- Staff are informed around suicide awareness, and some have attended specialist training such as ASIST provided by the HSE
- The school has developed links with a range of external agencies – NEPS, CAMHS, Barnardo's, Pieta House, Local GPs, Social Workers, Garda Síochána
- 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
- There is a care system in place in the school using the "Continuum of Support" approach which is outlined in the NEPS document published in 2010 for post primary schools. See also Student Support Teams in Post Primary Schools (2014).
- 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/guardians are informed, and where appropriate, a referral is made to an appropriate agency.
- Staff are informed about how to access support for themselves.
- The school has a highly effective pastoral care policy which underpins all interacting and responses to students.

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 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.

All staff will be involved in the management of a Critical Incident but to implement a management plan it is essential to have a dedicated team in place in the school. In CTI Clonmel, the CIMT is comprised of the following

- Principal
- Deputy Principal
- Múinteoir i bhFeighil
- Home School Community Liaison
- Guidance Counsellor
- School Completion Programme
- Secretary/Administrator
- Caretakers

This team will:

- Meet annually
- Maintain an up-to-date list of contact numbers for Staff, Parents/Guardians of students and Emergency Services – **Appendix 1**
- Establish a system of communication among staff so that information can be conveyed one to another should a critical incident happen outside of school hours.

Immediate Response to a Critical Incident

Following an incident deemed to be of a critical nature, the CIMT will be contacted by the principal to meet at a designated location. The notification will inform them of the type of incident and the exact location of the incident. When the CIMT arrive at the scene they need to:

- Manage the incident scene where appropriate
- Remove people at risk
- Call the emergency services and alert first aiders etc...
- Follow the instruction of competent personnel – Gardaí, Fire Personnel, etc...
- Cooperate with the external services if they assume control of the incident
- Liaise with the media.

If an incident happens during the night or at the weekends or during holiday periods, the CIMT needs to respond to it in an appropriate manner. A judgement needs to be made of how best to deal with the event at the school and in the wider community. The Team Members may be contacted on mobile phone, etc... The CIMT may need to initiate actions to allow the school carry on its work. A decision will be made by management in conjunction with the CIMT as to which protocols / procedures to implement depending on the critical incident

Critical incident rooms

In the event of a critical incident, the following rooms will be used

Staff	Staff Room in Raheen College or Gaelcholáiste Chéitinn
Students	Assembly Hall/Area - for meeting with a large number of students, Base classroom for Gaelcholáiste Chéitinn students Class Tutor base rooms in Raheen College
Individual sessions with students	Designated Offices
Quiet Rooms	Green room and Dún Chéitinn
Parents	HSCL Room 320
Media	as appropriate
Other visitors	as appropriate

Critical Incident Short Term Response – Up to 12 hours

Once a critical incident comes to the attention of a member of the school s/he should, where possible and practical, inform the senior management of the school. However, where it is apparent that an emergency exists, it may be necessary to call one or other of the emergency services in the first instance.

Before taking any action, it is crucial that the school has the correct information regarding the crisis. Therefore, it is important that senior and involved staff gather to establish the facts - this may involve contacting hospitals, Garda Síochána, emergency/ medical services, parents etc...

Summary Checklist – Appendix 2

- The Principal/Senior Management Team has overall responsibility in the event of a critical incident and will facilitate the operation of the critical incident management plan
- It is crucial that the school has the correct information regarding the crisis
- Consult appropriate agencies e.g., TETB, NEPS, Garda Síochána, emergency services (**Appendix 1**) TETB, DES, SEC, etc...
- Gather the CIMT
- Inform staff and students and where feasible, staff should be informed in the first instance
- Identify high-risk students and staff
- Organise the supervision of students

- Convene a staff meeting and inform attendees of the immediate plan; decide whether or not an outside professional will be invited to that meeting; where students are going to be in the school, it is critical that appropriate supervision be put in place for all students whose teachers/tutors/supervisors may be involved in the meetings
- Inform the Director of Schools in Tipperary ETB who will then inform the CE and TETB Senior Management team
- Have administrative staff photocopy appropriate literature
- Appoint someone to deal with phone queries and /or to deal with the media
- Organise a timetable for the school to respond to the crisis, wherever possible adhering to normal timetables and routines while avoiding any signs of insensitivity to those touched most intimately by the crisis
- Inform students' parents/carers
- If a bereavement has occurred, make contact with bereaved family, including a visit to the family
 - Withdraw siblings
 - Organise support
- Prepare a statement/respond to the media
- Draft a letter for parents/carers
- Meet with CIMT & SST to review the day

It is important that all those needing to be informed of the critical incident receive necessary information as soon as is practicable.

Staff Meeting:

All school staff should be invited to the meeting. The following matters should be addressed by the meeting:

- A sensitive account of the facts as known, having regard for the privacy of those involved in the incident. Information needs to be provided on a need-to-know basis
- The views and feelings of staff
- How, by whom and in what setting students and other members of the school should be informed of the incident
- An outline of the timetable that the CIMT has drawn up for responding to the critical incident; the timetable may, if necessary and feasible, be amended at this meeting
- Details regarding the external agencies that have been contacted and the support programme that will be put in place for staff/ students and other members of the school/community
- The identification of vulnerable students.

Guidelines for Funeral arrangements / procedures:

- In consultation with the family/carers, inform families/carers of the school policy in relation to arrangements
- In the event of a sudden death, including a death by suicide, it is recommended by NEPS that the school does not host a guard of honour or in any way give undue attention to the cause as this may initiate copycat suicides and glamorise the tragedy
- The school in consultation with the family may participate in the service e.g., choir, reading, etc...
- In the event of the death of a staff member, the school Management/Senior Management may decide to close the school for the funeral
- In the event of a death of a student it is recommended that the school remains open as normal routines assist students to cope
- Other students under the age of 18 who wish to attend may attend accompanied by their parents/guardians. The parents/ guardians should accompany the student under the age of 18 to and from the funeral. The parents/guardians will have to sign the student who is under the age of 18, in and out according to school rules
- In the event of the school taking a few representative students, staff will brief students in advance, in consultation with parents/ guardians, about the funeral plan and the appropriate etiquette required.
- Students and parents/guardians may be invited to come back to the school after the funeral to debrief if necessary.

Procedures – Agenda for First Meeting with CIMT

The first meeting with the CIMT and other key staff members will be convened and chaired by Principal/Senior Manager and facilitated by the coordinator. The agenda should include the following:

- Provide clarity on the critical incident to ensure that all in attendance have accurate information. In the case of sudden death of a student, the information must not make reference to the cause
- Agree a statement of facts for staff, students, parents and the media
- Delegate responsibilities of the CIMT as per designated roles and responsibilities
- Discuss what support services to contact
- Prepare address to staff – **Appendix 4**
- Prepare address to students – **Appendix 5**
- Prepare a statement/ letter/ text/ notice for social media for parents/guardians of students who are under 18 years. In the case of vulnerable adults, carers/guardians may be contacted where appropriate either by phone or through usual means letters – **Appendix 6**
- Arranges a letter for parents requesting consent for involvement of outside professionals – **Appendix 7**
- Prepare statement for media. Only the Team leader and/or media liaison member of the CIMT will talk to the media at a pre-arranged time and place – **Appendix 8**

- Decide on school closure
- Organise the schedule/timetable for the day
- Ensure that a phone line remains open for the day and is available for enquiries
- Appoint someone to handle phone enquiries and to deal with the media
- Organise a staff meeting
- Organise the supervision of students during any staff meetings
- Arrange for the copying and printing of letters for parents/guardians (where appropriate)
- Decide which external agencies should be involved
- Allocate time for students to reflect/talk about the critical incident with key staff and arrange for staff to have handout on managing a class after a critical incident – **Appendix 9**
- Allow for any member of staff to be given the opportunity to withdraw from the process if they feel unable to offer support at this time
- Ensure that the TETB Director is briefed, and advice and guidance sought, where necessary
- Notify other relevant TETB Staff as appropriate – see contact list

Critical Incident Medium Term Response – 24 – 72 hours

Summary Checklist for Principal/Coordinator/the CIMT – Appendix 3

- Review events of the first 24 hours
- Arrange support for individual students, groups of students /parents/ guardians etc...
- Plan for the reintegration of students and staff
- Liaise with family regarding arrangements/ participation at the service, and with their consent arrange a place in the school, with a photograph and book of condolences for students and staff to pay their respects
- In consultation with parents/guardians, arrange attendance and participation at service
- Decide on school closure
- The CIMT will establish the need for outside services and contact them as required
- The timetable will operate as normal to maintain routine and re-integrate students who had been absent

Critical Incident Long Term Response

Summary Checklist for Principal/Coordinator/the CIMT

- Monitor students
- If the critical incident relates to the death of a student, remove the name of the deceased from the school's communication systems including those used for text messaging
- Evaluate the response to the CI and amend the plan appropriately
- Formalise the critical incident plan for the future
- Keep new staff, students, parents/carers informed about CIMT policy

- Decide appropriate ways to deal with anniversaries
- Ensure that the CIMT meet to review the response to the critical incident and to process this response accordingly
- Assess the need for any additional counselling by consulting the ETB's counselling service and, where appropriate, maintain contact with those affected by the critical incident
- Assess the need for any additional support from outside agencies or services
- Assess the need for and organise debriefing sessions for all those involved in the incident including, if appropriate, the wider ETB community
- Organise debriefing sessions depending on circumstances and need including:
 - technical debriefing e.g., of security or emergency staff, etc...
 - critical incident stress debriefing and/or initial defusing conducted by professional counsellors trained in critical incident stress debriefing for those affected by the critical incident and/or CIMT debriefing
- Ensure a copy of the review findings is placed on the file for the relevant critical incident

Role of Team Leader

The principal will act as team leader or in his absence the deputy principal.

- The team leader alerts team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting of the team.
- Co-ordinates/delegates tasks of the other team members.
- Liaises with The Board of Management and the Department of Education.
- In case of bereavement, liaises with the bereaved family.

Other responsibilities, which may be delegated by the team leader to other members of the team include:

- Contacting Emergency support services
- Briefing and advising the staff and noting their feelings and concerns
- Organizing the supervision of students in the school
- Keeping staff updated on information/developments /progress
- Meeting students to brief them on the situation
- Taking care of "Vulnerable students/vulnerable teachers"
- Liaising with external agencies for support or referrals such as NEPS
- Liaising with school organizations such as Parents Association, Prefects and the Students' Council
- Meeting with individual parents or groups of parents
- Visiting bereaved families or families closely associated with the incident
- Preparing a Press release and liaising with the media
- Preparation of an Incident Room.

Role of the Staff Liaison

- Leads briefing of staff on the facts as they are known. Takes questions from staff and outlines the routine for the day – **Appendix 4**
- Helps teachers/tutors to prepare for questions from students
- Outlines possible reactions and distributes handouts on handling a class/group after a critical incident – **Appendix 9**
- Advises staff on the procedures for identifying high-risk students and outlines what supports are available
- Distributes appropriate material for staff
- Meets staff again later in the day to update information, to offer support and to further identify high-risk students and act as required
- Ensures quiet locations are made available in the school
- Identifies support services within the school
- Establishes the need for outside services and provides contacts
- Contacts all staff including those who are absent / on leave
- Identifies vulnerable staff members and advises them regarding counselling and supports as appropriate
- In the event of an evacuation, ensures, in consultation with the Health & Safety Officer, that the first aid kit and the Emergency bag is ready (which includes a copy of the emergency plan, high vis vests for CIMT, back up of all persons' contact details, map of school, log sheets, etc...)

Role of the Student Liaison

- Prepares a statement of facts to be read out to all students – **Appendix 5**
- Arranges access to student records
- Maintains links between staff and students (takes updates from the Year heads/ supervisors on vulnerable students)
- Observes vulnerable students
- Alerts other staff to vulnerable students
- Advises and recommends counselling as required
- Provides material as appropriate to students
- Provides material as appropriate to colleagues
- Sets up a 'quiet room' to share reactions and feelings
- Advises students on possible reactions to the critical incident
- Keeps a record of students seen internally and referrals made to external agencies
- Liaises with principal on an on-going basis
- Where appropriate, has access arranged to a 'buddy' establishment

Role of the Parent/Guardian Liaison

- Arranges a letter for parents – **Appendix 6**
- Arranges a letter for parents requesting consent for involvement of outside professionals – **Appendix 7**
- Visits bereaved family with the principal
- Identifies him/herself as the named contact for parents
- Is available to support the principal/deputy principal to meet with parents and to take phone calls
- Facilitates meetings with parents/guardians and manages 'questions and answers'
- Distributes literature on potential reactions, coping with loss recommended by NEPS
- Distributes support information, contacts etc... to parents/guardians
- Sets up room for meeting parents/ guardians
- Meets with individual parents/ guardians or coordinates support for parents/carers who arrive at the school unannounced
- Keeps a record of parents/ guardians seen

Role of the Media Liaison

- Prepares a draft press statement for delivery by principal – Appendix 8
- Assists the principal in contacting relevant agencies
- Makes contacts list readily available to staff, CIMT, administrative staff, parents/guardians
- Delivers press statement with the principal
- Supports the principal in all enquiries from the media and identifies a room to contain media if they arrive on campus
- Supports the principal in contact with the communication section of the DES
- Liaises with community agencies for support and onward referral
- Updates the CIMT and staff on external agencies

Role of the Administrator

- 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
- Photocopies materials as needed
- Maintains records.

Role of the Caretaker

- Opens and closes school
- Maintains security and safety of school
- Decides on Parking Restrictions
- Allows exit and entrance of 'authorised' vehicles
- Informs Team of unaccompanied students outside the school building

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 secretaries 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 the CTI Clonmel 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. As per our existing policy, interaction with the media is the preserve of the principal only.

Policy on Confidentiality

School personnel will treat in confidence all information about students including name, address, biographical details and other descriptions of the student's life and circumstance which might result in identification of the student/learner except as outlined hereunder where such matters should be discussed with the principal:

- to protect the interests of the student
 - to protect the interests of society
 - to safeguard the welfare of another student or individual
-
- a) A staff member should always respect the nature of a relationship occasioned by the sharing with him/her by a student of personal information
 - b) Consent of the student and/or of the parent/guardian to disclose personal information should usually be sought where possible

- c) Personal details about the lives of students that either they themselves or their families have confided in a staff member will not be discussed among staff or shared with others unless to promote the safety of the person concerned. In this instance, this will occur after the student has been informed of the reasons for doing so. However, it is essential that this information is only shared on a need-to-know basis. The test is whether or not the person to whom the information is being passed on has any legitimate involvement or role in dealing with the issue. This does not include conferring with or reporting to a superior or passing to a colleague, on a need-to-know basis, information relating to the personal circumstance of a student, in the interest of that student
- d) Access to personal information will be available to designated school personnel only
- e) Staff should be clearly informed about the policy and procedures regarding when they can share information and with whom they can discuss their concerns i.e., the reporting procedures for their school
- f) Staff should make it clear to the students that they cannot promise to keep information confidential. Students need to know that any information they share with staff regarding anything illegal will be passed on in a sensitive way to the appropriate person(s). If a staff member suspects that a student under the age of 18 is at risk, this information will be passed on to the designated liaison person. If the student is over 18 years and discloses abuse identifying an alleged abuser, this must be reported as it becomes a child protection issue. If they do not reveal a name then the member of staff who receives the disclosure should encourage them to identify this person, especially if the alleged abuser has access to children
- g) The legal principle that the welfare of the child/student is paramount means that considerations of confidentiality should not be allowed to override the rights of the students to be protected from harm. In other words, protection of the student is more important than confidentiality. Information should therefore be shared on any concerns about a child's or an adult's behaviour.
- h) It should be clearly understood that information, which is gathered for one purpose, must not be used for another without consulting the person who provided the information.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on _____ [date]

Signed: _____

Chairperson of the Board of Management

Date

Signed: _____

Principal

Date

Date of next review: _____

Appendix 1 – Emergency Contact Details

Agency	Contact Numbers
Garda	052 6177640
Hospital	052 6177000
Fire Brigade	112 / 999
Local GPs	
HSE	1850 241850
Community Care Team / Resource officer for Suicide – Tracy Nugent	051 874013
Board of Management Chairperson	
Parents Association Chairperson	
Child & Family Mental Health Service (CAMHS)	052 6189204
School Inspector	01 8896553
NEPS Psychologist	Head Office 01 8650797
DES	01 8896400
TUI	01 4922588
SEC	090 6442700
Employee Assistance Service	1800 411 057

Appendix 2 - Short term actions – Day 1

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

Appendix 3 - Medium term actions – Day 2 and following days

Task	Name	Complete
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 if appropriate		
Decide on memorials and anniversaries	BOM/Staff, parents and students	
Review response to incident and amend plan	Staff/BOM	

Appendix 4 – Address to staff

This morning, we heard the extremely sad news that _____ who is in _____ class, died last night. We are all shocked and saddened by this tragic news and would like to express our sincere sympathy to all _____ friends, class members and family.

Death is a difficult issue for all of us to deal with and causes a lot of emotional reactions including disbelief, tears and anger. At the moment, we do not have the funeral arrangements, but we will keep you informed over the course of the day.

We will over the course of the day arrange a special assembly where you can have the opportunity to remember _____ in a special way.

The following are some guidelines that all teachers should follow;

- Teachers go to staff room on arrival at school
- Teachers briefed on the facts as they are known by the Principal or Deputy Principal
- Funeral arrangement given if known
- Be prepared to undertake supervision, for example, CIMT, Class tutors
- Be prepared for the possibility of emotional reaction
- Given information on schedule for the day as far as known
- Made aware that some students will not be affected by the incident
- Made aware of what provision is in place for one-to-one counselling if required
- Outline role of CIMT

Guidelines for breaking news to students

- a) The class of the student who has been involved in the accident/death should be told first with the Counsellor and Year Head present. Only tell the facts as you have them. Class teachers of the other classes should inform them, again only with the facts.
- b) Acknowledge to the class the news is upsetting and that they may feel shock, anger or be traumatised. Acknowledge their feelings and allow them to share their feelings amongst one another.
- c) Be attentive to identify those who are not coping well.
- d) Identify who else is available to support them especially the names of the CIMT and where they will be located.
- e) Allow students to talk to and support one another, keeping them in the classroom. Do not allow anyone leave the classroom in a distressed state.
- f) Some may have to go home but only allow this if parents or guardians come to collect them

Appendix 5 – Address to students

This morning, we heard the extremely sad news that _____ who is in _____ class, died last night. We are all shocked and saddened by this tragic news and would like to express our sincere sympathy to all _____ friends, class members and family.

Death is a difficult issue for all of us to deal with and causes a lot of emotional reactions including disbelief, tears and anger. At the moment, we do not have the funeral arrangements, but we will keep you informed over the course of the day.

If any of you feel that you need to talk to someone or talk through things with an adult, just ask your teacher or tutor for help.

We will over the course of the day arrange a special assembly where you can have the opportunity to remember _____ in a special way.

We will now have a short prayer of reflection

Guidelines for breaking news to students

- a) The class of the student who has been involved in the accident/death should be told first with the Counsellor and Year Head present. Only tell the facts as you have them. Class teachers of the other classes should inform them, again only with the facts.
- b) Acknowledge to the class the news is upsetting and that they may feel shock, anger or be traumatised. Acknowledge their feelings and allow them to share their feelings amongst one another.
- c) Be attentive to identify those who are not coping well.
- d) Identify who else is available to support them especially the names of the CIMT and where they will be located.
- e) Allow students to talk to and support one another, keeping them in the classroom. Do not allow anyone leave the classroom in a distressed state.
- f) Some may have to go home but only allow this if parents or guardians come to collect them.

Appendix 6 – Letter to parents

Dear Parents/Guardians,

The school has experienced (the sudden death, accidental injury, etc) of (Name of student(s)).

We are deeply saddened by the death/event. (Brief details of the incident, and in the event of a death, perhaps some positive remembrance of the person lost). Our thoughts are with (family name).

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 and questions that he/she may like to discuss with you. It is important to give factual information that is appropriate to their age. Although classes will continue as usual, I anticipate that the next few days will be difficult for everyone.

If you would like assistance / advice you are welcome to contact Raheen College at 052-21450 or Gaelcholáiste Chéitinn at 052-6126269

Yours Sincerely,

Principal

Appendix 7 – Letter to parents requesting consent for involvement of outside professionals

Dear Parents,

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

If you would like your son/daughter to receive this support, please sign the attached permission slip and return it to the school by _____. If you would like further information on the above, please indicate this on the slip or telephone the school.

Yours Sincerely,

.....
I/We consent to having our son/daughter avail of the support provided by the Department of Education and Skills. I/We understand that my son/daughter may avail of the support being offered in an individual or group session depending on the arrangements which are thought to be most appropriate.

Name of student: _____

Class/Year: _____

Date of Birth: _____

I would like my son/ daughter _____ to avail of the support being offered.

Signed _____

Appendix 8 – Suggested text for the Media

It is with profound sadness that the Management, staff and students of CTI Clonmel have learned of the tragic death of _____.

On behalf of the entire school community, I would like to extend our sympathy to.....
on their / his / her sad loss. We are all deeply shocked by this event and like everyone else are trying to come to terms with it.

.....was a student at CTI Clonmel / Raheen College / Gaelcholáiste Chéitinn for the past
(number).....of years and during his / her time here we got to know..... very well.

If appropriate, mention a point or two about his / her personality or involvement in school life or achievements.

On hearing the news, the Critical Incident Policy was put into immediate operation. The Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) convened a meeting to ensure that students affected by this loss were cared for adequately.

Procedures are in place to ensure that all in the school community affected by this loss are given all the help they need to cope at this time. The school is offering counselling and support for students, parents and staff affected by this tragedy. Our support and prayers are with everyone affected by this tragedy.

I would also like students and parents to know that the school is open and that we have a number of staff and counselling personnel (if appropriate) present to talk to any students or parent, either in groups or individually, if anyone wishes to avail of this service.

We are presently in touch with the family regarding funeral arrangements.
(With family's permission, can give these out)

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Appendix 9 – Student Reflection Time (NEPS document)

Normally, the class teacher, class tutor or other teacher who knows the students should be the person to inform them of the events and lead the classroom session. Students generally feel safe and secure with someone they know. If the teacher feels uncomfortable with this role another staff member or the psychologist may work with them and share the task. Teachers should have the opportunity to opt out of this work if they feel unable to handle it and other arrangements should be made for that class group.

The aim of the session is to break the news to give the students an opportunity to discuss what has happened and to express their thoughts and feelings in a secure environment. The teacher needs to listen and be empathic.

The session needs to be tailored to the age and developmental level of the class group.

The outline of the session is as follows:

Step 1: Giving the facts and dispelling rumours

Step 2: Sharing stories and allowing and encouraging the sharing of thoughts and the expression of feelings

Step 3: Normalising the reactions

Step 4: Worries (for younger children)

Step 5: Empowerment

Step 6: Closure

Step 7: Free Time

Step 8: Recovery

Step 1: Giving the facts and dispelling rumours.

Tell the students in a calm, low key and factual voice

- What has happened
- Who was involved
- When it happened
- The plan for the day

Sample Script

I have something very sad I want to share with you. The factual information agreed upon by the staff e.g. (Name of student), who attends our school and was missing, has been found. He is dead. Yesterday, the Gardaí found his body. They are investigating what has happened and will let us know as soon as they find out more information.

I am feeling very sad about what's happened. Let's spend some time together now helping each other to talk about how we feel about what has happened.

Step 2: Sharing stories

Take some time for discussion. Students may wish to tell their story of the event. As a result they will feel less alone because of their common shared experiences. Assisting them to verbalise their experiences helps their recovery. For those students who find it difficult to verbalise their experiences, or for students with learning difficulties, it may be helpful to allow them to express their feelings and recount their experiences in other ways. Writing stories or using art can be particularly helpful, especially for younger students. A number of materials that can be used are suggested in 'Resources for Schools' pg 45. Give the students a choice as to how they want to represent their experiences. Have a box of tissues at hand.

Sample script

To help us today, we are going to make a memory box for (name of deceased). You can draw a picture of a time you remember with (name of the deceased) or write a poem or a letter to him. If you like we can put these in a nice box and give it to (name of deceased) family sometime soon. This will help them to see how important (name of deceased) was.

Step 3: Normalising the reactions

Tell the children that they will all react differently to what has happened and that there is no right or wrong way. List some possible feelings and reactions, (see R11). Explain that their reactions are normal responses to abnormal circumstances. Let the students know that the reactions or symptoms will go away in time. Tell them that if the symptoms haven't gone after a few weeks, they should let you or their parents know. They may need to talk to someone about how they are feeling. Depending on the incident and the age of the students distribute handouts R9, R10, R11, R12.

Step 4: Worries (for younger children)

Sample script

You may be worried about (name of the deceased) - that they might be sad or lonely or hungry or cold. When someone dies they don't feel cold or hungry or feelings like that anymore.

You may be worried that the same thing could happen to you or someone in your family. What happened to (name of deceased) doesn't happen very often.

If the classmate has been ill, you could say. He was very sick and the chances of this happening to someone else you know are low.

Step 5: Empowerment

Help the students to identify strategies that they might use to help manage their reactions. For example, talking to family and friends, getting enough sleep, exercise may all help. If appropriate, students can share strategies that worked for them in other stressful situations or brainstorm ideas as to what might help. Overall, it is important to help the students regain a sense of control.

Step 6: Closure

End the session by focussing on the future. Depending on the nature of the incident, help the class/group decide what they would like to do about various issues, e.g., what to do about the person's empty chair, about writing cards or letters. Reiterate the message that their reactions are normal responses to abnormal circumstances.

Step 7: Free Time

After the discussion the teacher may want to allow the student's some play time in the play ground or free time in the classroom or an agreed area, depending on the age.

Step 8: Recovery

It may be useful to continue to do these activities at intervals during the days following and to intersperse them throughout the curriculum in the coming days.

Normal routines should generally be returned to as soon as possible.

- Students should be encouraged to resume sports and other extra-curricular activities
- Help students to identify or establish some supports; help them to identify who they go to for different kinds of help
- It is appropriate that the class curriculum is adjusted or adapted. For example, teachers should avoid presenting new learning material for a while following an incident as concentration may be impaired
- Use opportunities which arise within ordinary class work, where coping and support can be reinforced
- Students could be encouraged to discuss how to avoid future crises and lessons learnt from their experiences. There will also be opportunities for structured discussion within the school's social, personal, and health education programmes. Where Circle Time is in use, this is an ideal context in which to offer support