



ALEXANDRA COLLEGE DUBLIN

Critical Incident Management Policy

1. Introduction

Alexandra College aims to protect the wellbeing of its students by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. The College has formulated a number of policies and procedures to be followed with a view to ensuring the physical and psychological safety of both staff and students during the normal course of the school day including:

- Bí Cineálta Policy to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour
- Code of Behaviour
- Health and Safety Policy
- Relationships and Sexuality Policy
- Guidance and Counselling Plan
- Device, Internet and Social Media Policy

The College has drawn up this Critical Incident Management Policy as one element of the College's policy and plans, in consultation with the resource documents available to schools.

2. Definition of a Critical Incident

In a school context, the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) suggests the following definition:

"A critical incident is any incident or sequence of events which overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms 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 but are not limited to the following:

- The death of a member of the school community, through sudden death, accident, terminal illness, suicide, or suspected suicide
- An intrusion into the school
- A physical attack on a staff member or student
- An accident involving members of the school community
- Serious damage to the school building by fire, flood, vandalism etc.
- The disappearance of a member of the school community
- An accident/tragedy in the wider community

3. Rationale

The aim of this policy is to help College 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.

4. Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)

At the time of a crisis there are a large number of tasks to be carried out. By identifying key roles in advance of an incident, there is a clear statement of **who will do what, when and how**. It is important that no one individual is over-burdened and that important elements in the response are not forgotten. Generally the Principal/ Head of Junior School will play a key role. Staff members such as the guidance counsellor, chaplain and a member of the SEN or student support teams will have an important contribution to make when an incident occurs because of their particular training and expertise.

The Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) includes the following:

- The Principal/Head of Junior School
- The Deputy Principal
- The Assistant Deputy Principal
- The Head of Residence
- The Chaplain
- The Guidance Counsellor
- The Year Heads

In the absence of the Principal/Head of the Junior School, the Deputy Principal will assume the role of team leader.

5. Role of the Team Leader (Usually the Principal/Head of the Junior School)

- Gathers accurate information about the incident
- Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting
- Co-ordinates the tasks of the team
- Liaises with the Board of Management, the Department of Education, the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), the State Examinations Commission (SEC), as appropriate
- In cases of bereavement, liaises with the bereaved family
- Manages response to events on the basis of an agreed plan
- Liaises with the Gardaí, emergency services, the College's insurance provider, and the Health and Safety Authority (HSA) as appropriate
- Ensures that information is checked for accuracy and is verified before being shared

6. Critical Incident Management Team Duties

The following are key personnel relating to the CIMT. The team leader may delegate the responsibilities to other members as she deems appropriate.

7. Areas of Responsibility

The following are areas of responsibility that may be dealt with by members of the CIMT during a critical incident, as directed by the Team Leader:

a. Staff Liaison

- Care of and communication with staff including ancillary staff
- Leads briefing meetings for staff on the facts as known, gives staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions, outlines the proposed routine for the day
- Advises staff on the procedures for identification of vulnerable students
- Keeps staff updated as the day progresses
- Ensures that she is aware of staff members who may be vulnerable and makes contact with them individually
- Informs them of the services of the Employee Assistance Support service

b. Student Liaison

- Care of and communication with students
- Liaises with Student Council
- Organises and assists with the supervision of students in school
- Provides support material for students
- Identifies and monitor students at risk and informs relevant staff
- Keeps records of students seen by external agency staff
- Looks after setting up and supervision of a “quiet” room where agreed
- Coordinates information from Tutors and Year Heads about students of concern

c. Community/Agency Liaison

- Maintains up-to-date lists of contact numbers of the Alexandra College Association (ACA) parent representatives
- Is a resource for emergency support services and external contacts/resources
- Liaises with outside agencies for support and onward referral
- Checks credentials of all individuals offering support
- Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies

d. Parent Liaison

- Arranges parent meetings, if appropriate
- Facilitates and manages the above meetings
- Maintains a record of parents in attendance
- Meet with individual parents, if appropriate

e. Media Liaison

The Principal of the College is responsible for all and any communication with the Media.

- Hypothetical situations will be discussed by the Principal with the CMT/Board of Management/ ACA as appropriate in order to highlight issues that may arise and how they will be responded to (e.g. Media interviewing students, photographers on site etc.). These will be coordinated by the Principal only
- In the event of an incident, the Principal will liaise where necessary with the relevant outside agencies
- The Principal will draw up a press statement in conjunction with the Board of Management and give media briefings and interviews

f. Secretarial/Admin Staff

- Ensure the office is manned at all times
- Ensure that all relevant contact numbers are kept up to date at all times on the College's management information software:
 - Parents and guardians
 - Teachers
 - Emergency Services
- Take telephone calls and keep record of them, and note those that require a response
- Ensures that template letters are on the school system in advance and ready for adapting, if and when required
- Prepares and sends out letters and emails, once approved by the Team Leader
- Keeps records of all activities

g. Emergency Service Liaison

- Liaise with Gardaí and emergency services
- Ensure that **information is accurate and verified** before being shared

h. SEN

- Liaises with Year Heads in relation to students who might be particularly affected
- Liaises with relevant agencies such as the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), where appropriate
- Keeps records of all meetings with students and or parents

i. Pastoral Care Team

- Leads briefing meetings for staff on the facts as known, gives staff an opportunity to ask questions and articulate concerns, outlines the routine/plan for the day
- Advises staff on the procedures for identifying vulnerable students
- Is alert to vulnerable staff members and contacts them individually
- Advises staff on the availability of the Employee Assistance Support service
- Liaises with outside agencies for onward referral and support
- Updates team on involvement of external agencies
- In case of bereavement, will contact bereaved family with Team Leader

j. Chaplain

- Liaises with the Deputy Principal/Head of Junior School and Guidance Counsellor regarding support for students
- Organises a service for staff and/or students, if appropriate

8. General Regulations Associated with a Critical Incident

a. Record Keeping

In the event of an incident, each member of the team will document all phone calls made and received, all meetings held and interventions used. The school admin staff will have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls and queries, sending letters and photocopying necessary materials.

b. Confidentiality

The management and staff of Alexandra College have a responsibility to protect the privacy and good name of the parties involved in any incident and must be sensitive to the consequences of any public statements.

All staff members must bear this in mind, and try as far as possible to ensure that students also do this. For instance, the term “suicide” will NOT be used unless there is solid information that a death was due to suicide, and that the family involved consent to its use. The phrase ‘tragic death’ or ‘sudden death’ may be more appropriate. Similarly, the phrase ‘murder’ should not be used, until it is legally established that a murder was committed. The term ‘violent death’ may be used instead. Emotive language is best avoided.

c. Critical Incident Rooms

In the event of a critical incident occurring, there should be a room available for use exclusively as the ‘control centre’. Should the need arise, further rooms may need to be allocated.

- The Staff Room will be the main room used to meet the staff
- The Concourse or the Lecture Theatre will be used for meetings with students
- The Career Guidance office or the Year Head classrooms rooms will be used for individual meetings with students
- The Principal's Office will be used for possible media briefings

8. Consultation and Communication Regarding the Critical Incident Policy

The plan will be reviewed and updated annually. When this document has been agreed and approved, copies will be disseminated to the CIMT, the Board of Management, the Council and members of the ACA. A copy of this policy will also be made available on the College website.

The Critical Incident Management Policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 9 September 2025.

Date of next review: September 2026

Appendices

- A. Critical Incident Management Team
- B. Short Term Action – Day 1
- C. Medium Term Action – Day 2
- D. Follow Up – Beyond 72 Hours
- E. Student Contact Record
- F. Dealing with the Media/Sample Announcement
- G. Glossary of Terms

Appendix A: Critical Incident Management Team

TEAM LEADER:	The Principal/Head of the Junior School
STAFF LIAISON:	The Guidance Counsellor/Head of the Junior School
STUDENT LIAISON:	Deputy Principal of Senior School/ Deputy Head of Junior School
COMMUNITY/AGENCY LIAISON:	The Principal
PARENT LIAISON:	The Deputy Principal/ Head of the Junior School
ADMINISTRATOR:	PA to the Principal / School Secretary
EMERGENCY SERVICES LIAISON:	The SEN Coordinator

Appendix B: Short Term Actions – Day 1

Task	Name
Gather accurate information	Principal/Head of Junior School/ Guidance Counsellor
Convene a CIMT meeting - specify time and place clearly	Principal/Head of Junior School
Contact external agencies	Guidance Counsellor

Arrange supervision for students	Deputy Principal of Senior School/Deputy Principal of the Junior School/Year Heads in the Senior School
Hold staff meeting	Principal/Head of Junior School
Agree a schedule for the day	All members of the CIMT
Inform students (close friends may need to be told separately)	Principal/Head of Junior School/ Guidance Counsellor
Compile a list of vulnerable students	Guidance Counsellor, Year Heads, SEN Coordinator
Prepare and agree media statement and deal with media	The College Principal and the Board of Management
Inform parents and guardians	Principal/Head of Junior School with the support of the Admin Team
Hold end of day staff briefing	Principal/Head of Junior School

Appendix C: Medium Term Actions – Day 2

Task	Name
Convene a CIMT meeting to review the events of day 1	Principal/Head of Junior School/ Guidance Counsellor
Meet external agencies	Guidance Counsellor/Deputy Head of JS
Meet whole staff	Principal/Head of Junior School/ Guidance Counsellor
Arrange support for students, staff parents/guardians	Principal/Head of Junior School/ Guidance Counsellor
Visit the injured, if appropriate	Principal/Head of Junior School/ Guidance Counsellor/Year Heads
Liaise with the bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements if appropriate	College Principal/Head of Junior School
Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service	College Principal/Head of Junior School
Make decisions about school closure	College Principal and the Board of Management

Appendix D: Follow-up - Beyond 72 Hours

Task	Name
Monitor students	All staff
Liaise with agencies regarding referrals	Guidance Counsellor, Head of Junior School
Plan for return of bereaved student(s)	Year Head
Decide on memorials and anniversaries, if appropriate	Principal/Head of Junior School and Chaplain
Review response to incident and amend plan, as appropriate	College Principal, Board of Management

Appendix E: Student Contact Record

This form can be used by school staff to record the details of students supported following a critical incident. This information should be collated centrally.

Name of staff member:

DATE	STUDENT'S NAME	CLASS / YEAR	OUTCOME (include need for follow-up)

Appendix F: Dealing with the Media - Sample Announcement

This can be used as a template to be emailed, posted via the College's social media platforms, 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 family/families of those involved, 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 **(5th year girl)** and will be greatly missed by all who knew her. We have been in contact with 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 G: Glossary of Terms

National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)	The National Educational Psychological Service in Ireland. It is the psychological service of the Department of Education and provides support to primary, post-primary, and special schools. NEPS psychologists work with the school community, including teachers, parents, and children, to identify educational needs and offer a range of services to meet those needs.
State Examinations Commission (SEC)	The State Examinations Commission is responsible for the development, assessment, accreditation and certification of the second-level examinations of the Irish state: the Junior Certificate and the Leaving Certificate.
Employee Assistance Support Service (EAS)	The Employee Assistance Support Service provides teachers and immediate family members with access to confidential counselling and assists in coping with the effect of personal and work-related issues.
SEN	Special Educational Needs. Students have SEN if their ability to take part in, and benefit from, education is restricted, due to a continued physical, sensory, mental health or learning disability.