



Coláiste an Eachréidh's Crisis Response Policy

Policy statement on the College's plan to respond to a critical incident or to a crisis.

1. Foreword

- 1.1 Recognising that parents/guardians, teachers, non-teaching staff as well as students comprise the College Community, it is the aim of the College to create an environment which contributes to the self-respect and the personal well-being of every member of the community.
- 1.2 Taking into account that crises and traumas do take place and that members of the College Community will need support in such an event, the College authorities will make every effort to create an environment in which people are valued and supported.
- 1.3 It is the responsibility of the College authorities to ensure that members of the College Community are prepared for any crisis or trauma that may occur and that people are supported in every way possible when a crisis or trauma occurs.
- 1.4 As every case is different, the College authorities recognise that it is not possible to have a process and response fully prepared for unexpected crises, tragedies or critical incidents.
- 1.5 However, the Board have decided in bringing this policy to the attention of all members of the College Community:
 - that the preparatory elements which are in place are generally suitable
 - that every individual working in the school is aware of the general suite of responses and/or procedures that are in place.
 - that the role of the College is recognised as one aspect of the response to an emergency, and
 - that the support role of the College is recognised and, if appropriate, its partnership with other organisations.

2. Mission Statement

Every effort is made in Coláiste an Eachréidh to provide a pleasant, safe and secure environment in which education through the medium of the Irish language is provided. Attention is focused on the academic, social and cultural development of the students in the expectation of attaining their full potential. Recognition is given to the students' unique characteristics and every effort is made to educate them to be respectful, reasonable and decent citizens.

3. Context

The impact of a crisis on the College Community can be substantial. The following are examples of incidents that would be included in the context of this policy statement:

- The death of a pupil or a member of staff
- The suicide of a pupil or a member of staff
- Family bereavement
- A fire, explosion or violent incident which involved students or staff or which affected students or staff;
- A serious accident involving a member or members of the College Community;
- Serious violence or the threat of violence which affects a member or members of the College Community.
- Post-traumatic stress.

4. Crisis Management Team

4.1 Coláiste an Eachréidh's Head Teacher will set up a Crisis Management Team in the school comprising the following members:

- The Head Teacher
- A Teacher trained in Home-School Liaison
- A Teacher trained in communications
- A staff member or members trained in bereavement counselling
- Other teachers who are representative of the various year groups
- A representative of the Board of Management (optional)
- Other individuals who staff think might be useful may be appointed

4.2 The membership of the Crisis Management Team will be renewed at the start of every school year and the membership will be communicated to all members of staff.

4.3 If appropriate, in-service training will be provided to the Crisis Management Team.

4.4 The Crisis Management Team will prepare and agree the general outline of a Response Plan for an Emergency.

4.5 The Crisis Management Team will meet at least once a year to review the Team's role and the general outline of the Response Plan for an Emergency. The meetings will be chaired by the Head Teacher or by a person named by him/her.

5. CRISIS PROCEDURES

5.1 When a crisis comes to light, the Head Teacher will inform the Chairman of the Board of Management and a meeting of the Crisis Management Team will be called as soon as possible.

5.2 The staff, under the direction of the Head Teacher, will assemble the facts relating to the case. It is possible that contact will need to be made with the Gardaí or with other reliable information sources such as hospitals or parents.

5.3 Staff members will prepare and agree on a written report which will contain the detailed facts relating to the case and it will be circulated to the interested parties as soon as possible. The College authorities are concerned to avoid rumour and/or speculation in difficult cases of this kind.

5.4 The Crisis Management Team will set out a plan or a programme to be followed under the following headings:

- The provision of support, comfort and assistance to those affected by the case, dealing with the impact of the crisis on the College Community.

This plan will be drafted clearly and all relevant persons will be informed as to its contents. The following are some of the responsibilities that may devolve to the Emergency Response Team:

- Make contact with the parents/guardians or with particular students
- Pay a visit to the home/the homes of the person/persons who are affected
- Inform the students and staff
- Organise a staff meeting and a student and staff assembly
- Agree a statement for the media
- Coordinate tasks for members of staff
- Co-opt specialists such as counsellors onto the Staff as necessary
- Organise the participation of the College in ceremonies

5.5 The members of the Crisis Management Team will undertake the responsibilities and the tasks that have been agreed upon and they will meet regularly to receive updated information.

5.6 One person, the Head Teacher if possible but not necessarily, will be in charge of all communication with the media concerning the crisis.

5.7 The Head Teacher will report to the insurers as appropriate.

5.8 The Crisis Management Team will continue to monitor the well-being of the students and the staff for a period of time after the crisis.

5.9 The Team will set out a programme to review all the implications of the trauma at an appropriate time.

6. The Role of the Crisis Management Team

6.1 In Relation to Staff

- The staff of the College will be informed as soon as the facts concerning the matter are established and clarified, and when a statement has been agreed by the Team members.
- If possible, staff members will receive a copy of the agreed statement.
- The support, participation and cooperation of all the staff members will be sought to deal with the crisis.
- Staff members will have the option to release themselves from direct participation in dealing with traumatic incidents.

- Staff members will be informed as to what is expected of them in the College's strategy for dealing with a crisis.
- Staff members will be informed about the support services that are available to them.
- The Crisis Management Team will ensure that teachers are not left on their own or without support when dealing with a crisis.

6.2 In Relation to Students

- Priority will be given to those who are directly affected by the crisis.
- The students will be informed of the crisis as soon as possible.
- The information will be provided in a sensitive, understanding manner.
- The teachers will express their concern, and they will confirm to the students that they will be kept informed, that they will be involved and be supported as members of the College Community.
- As far as possible, all students will be informed at the same time.
- The students will meet with their teachers in class groups or, if that is not feasible, in year groups. A member of the Crisis Management Team will visit each group, and he/she may support the teachers by answering the students' questions or relieving them of their concerns.
- The students will be kept informed concerning the College's plans for their participation in services or ceremonies.
- The students will have the choice to absent themselves from ceremonies if they feel they could be too upsetting.
- Students are requested to support their colleagues whom the crisis has affected. They may be encouraged to send a card or to participate in services.
- Students will be informed about the support services that are available to them and about ways to access support for themselves or for others.
- The teachers will carry out a review of the facts of the case along with the students to ensure accuracy.

6.3 In Relation to Parents/Guardians or Relations

- The Crisis Management Team will set out a plan to inform parents/guardians or relations in the event of a crisis involving students, and agreement will also be reached on the supports that can be provided to those affected by the crisis.
- The Team may decide, depending on the type of crisis, that personal contact needs to be made, even though there will be cases in which the information may be given over the phone or to groups.
- Priority will be given to those who are directly affected by the crisis.
- Every staff member will use the same prepared statement when informing parents/guardians.

- As far as possible, all parents/guardians will be informed at the same time and this will be done in a sensitive way.
- Staff members will ascertain whether a parent/guardian is on his/her own or if he or she is vulnerable and they will recommend the appropriate support to him/her.
- In the event that a child has not yet arrived home, staff members will endeavour to help the parents/guardians to deal appropriately with the child when he/she returns home.
- Parents/guardians will be informed of the support that is available to them and to their children.
- Practical help will be made available, such as transport, help lines, phone numbers.
- The names and numbers of two staff members will be given to the parents/guardians (a member of the Crisis Response Team and a teacher who they know, if possible) who will be available to take calls and to listen to their concerns in relation to the crisis.
- Staff members will carry out a review of the facts of the case with the person/the people who received the news to ensure accuracy.

6.4 In Relation to Dealing with the Media

- The Staff will agree on the person/persons who will function as the College contact/contacts as far as the media is concerned. This role will normally be fulfilled by the Head Teacher and/or by his/her deputy. He or she may request another staff member to help him/her ensure that the media are treated with courtesy, and that the interests of the College are not compromised as a result of the involvement of the media.
- It is accepted that the members of the media are professional people who provide a service. Every effort will be made to ensure that they do not add to the trauma of the College Community, who are already upset, by their reportage of the crisis.
- Information will be made available to the media sensitively. No names, addresses or contact details will be released without getting the permission of those concerned.
- If individual members of the media request a visit to the College, the College will arrange a time and place to meet with the media. They will not have access to the whole College.
- Statements containing the facts will be prepared beforehand to submit to the media.
- There will be no speculation or rumours in reports given to the media.

6.5 Post-Crisis Monitoring and Support

- The Crisis Reponse Team will come together in the aftermath of the crisis:
 - To monitor the responses of the students and staff
 - To review the procedures in use for dealing with a crisis.
- Specific attention will be paid to those bereaved, their friends and their classmates.
- Support will be provided to the students and to the staff as appropriate.
- It may be appropriate to make an arrangement for a member of the Crisis Reponse Team to visit homes during the months after a trauma.

7. Review of the Policy relating to Crises Response

The Board of Management of Coláiste an Eachréidh, in consultation with the appropriate parties, will carry out a review of this policy from time to time as appropriate, but this will normally be done at the beginning of the term of a new Board of Management. During such a review, any part of this policy statement may be amended.

Approved and Ratified by the Board of Management on ____
15 December 2009