

Scoil Náisiúnta Na hEaglaise.

Aglish National School. Roll No. 01395H

(Under the Patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Waterford and Lismore)
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Critical Incident Policy

Aglish N.S. aims to protect the wellbeing of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. The Board of Management, through Jennie Lynch, has drawn up a critical incident management plan as one element of the school's policies and plans.

Our aim is to establish a Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) to steer the development and implementation of the Critical Incident Management Plan.

The staff and management of Aglish N.S. 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.

These 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
- Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism etc.
- A major accident/tragedy in the wider community.

Aim

The aim of the CIMP is to help school management and 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 impact on students and staff will be limited. It should enable us to affect a return to normality 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

- Evacuation plan formulated.
- Regular fire drills occur.
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked.
- CCTV on school entrance to monitor who enters/exits the building.
- Rules of the playground: Separate areas of yard for different classes at play time.

Psychological safety

The management and staff of Aglish N.S. 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. Issues such as grief and loss; communication skills; stress and anger management; resilience; conflict management; problem solving; help-seeking; bullying; decision making and prevention of alcohol and drug misuse are addressed in the SPHE curriculum. Promotion of mental health is an integral part of this provision.
- The Stay Safe Programme is taught every year.
- Staff have access to training for their role in SPHE.
- Staff are familiar with the child protection Procedures and the name of the Designated Liaison Person and Deputy Designated Liaison Person.
- The school has a clear anti-bullying (Bí Cineálta) policy and deals with incidents of bullying in accordance with this policy.
- Zeeko Internet Safety seminars are held every second year for pupils and parents.
- Staff are informed about how to access support for themselves (information displayed on staffroom noticeboard).

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.

Team leader: *Jennie Lynch*

Role

- 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; SEC
- Liaises with the bereaved family

(Note - It is important to consider who will take the lead in the absence of the team leader – Orla Costin)

Garda liaison *Jennie Lynch*

Role

(May be seen as part of the team leader's role)

- Liaises with the Gardaí
- Ensures that information about deaths or other developments is checked out for accuracy before being shared

Staff liaison *Jennie Lynch and Orla Costin*

Role

- Leads briefing meetings for staff on the facts as known, gives staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions, outlines the routine for the day
- Advises staff on the procedures for identification of vulnerable students
- Provides materials for staff (from their critical incident folder and available on Aladdin)
- Keeps staff updated as the day progresses
- Is alert to vulnerable staff members and makes contact with them individually
- Advises them of the availability of the EAS and gives them the contact number

Student liaison *Gerardine Keating, Sarah Duffy / Helena Clancy, Fiona McCarthy / Caroline Foley.*

Role

- Alerts other staff to vulnerable students (appropriately)
- Provides materials for students (from their critical incident folder)
- Maintains student contact records (R1).
- Looks after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room where agreed

Community/agency liaison *Tracey Fennell*

Role

- Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of
 - Key parents, such as members of the Parents' Committee
 - Emergency support services and other external contacts and resources
- 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 *Tracey Fennell*

Role

- 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 *Jennie Lynch*

Role

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

Administrator *Nora Fitzgerald*

Role

- Maintenance of up-to-date telephone numbers of
 - Parents or guardians
 - Teachers
 - Emergency services
- 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, emails and texts
- Photocopies materials needed
- Maintains records

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 secretary Nora Fitzgerald, 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 Aglish N.S. 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.

Critical incident rooms

In the event of a critical incident:

Staffroom – will be the main room used to meet the staff

Relevant Classroom - for meetings with students

Halla - for parents

Principal's office - for media

SET Room (C1) - for individual sessions with students

SET Room C6 - for other visitors

Consultation and communication regarding the plan

All staff were consulted, and their views canvassed in the preparation of this policy and plan. Parents/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 plan by Ms. Lynch.

The plan will be updated annually. The latest update was in March 2025 following full staff training.

Signed: Fr. Conor Kelly Date: 12th June 2025

Chairperson BOM