

**Belgrove Senior Girls' School**  
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Clontarf  
Dublin 3  
D03 T803  
Telephone: 01 833 1888



**Scoil Eoin Baiste Cailíní Sinsear**  
Bóthar Ghort na Mara Thiar  
Cluain Tarbh  
Baile Átha Cliath 3  
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Guthán: 01 833 1888

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## **CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT POLICY**

Belgrove Senior Girls' School aims to protect the well-being of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. The Board of Management, and staff, has drawn up a Critical Incident Management Policy as one element of the school's policies and plans.

### **Review and Research**

The CIMT have consulted resource documents available to schools on [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie) and [www.ncse.ie](http://www.ncse.ie) including:

- Responding to Critical Incidents Guidelines and Resources for Schools (NEPS 2016)
- Suicide Prevention in Schools: Best Practice Guidelines (IAS, National Suicide Review Group (2002))
- Suicide Prevention in the Community - A Practical Guide (HSE 2011)
- Well-Being in Primary Schools - Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion (DES, DOH, HSE 2015)

### **Define what you mean by the term 'critical incident'**

The staff and management of Belgrove Senior Girls' 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 incidents might include

- *The death of a member of the school community through illness, 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*

### **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 effects on the students and staff will be limited. It should enable us to effect 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
- Supervision in the school yard (see Supervision Policy)
- Side gate closed during school hours
- School doors closed during class time
- Main school door with key pad only access/bell for visitors
- Rules of the playground – Rules and Safety Procedures and also Yard Policy

**Psychological safety**

The management and staff of Belgrove Senior Girls' 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. These include measures to address both the physical and psychological safety of the school community.

- Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is integrated into the work of the school. It is addressed in the curriculum by addressing 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. Promotion of mental health is an integral part of this provision
- Staff have access to training for their role in SPHE
- Staff are familiar with the Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessments and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures
- Books and resources on difficulties affecting the primary school student are available
- The School has developed links with a range of external agencies e.g NEPS, HSE, CAHMS....
- Information is provided on mental health in general and such specific areas as signs and symptoms of depression and anxiety e.g. [www.aware.ie](http://www.aware.ie)
- 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 0022/2010 (Primary) SPHE Best Practice Guidelines for Primary Schools
- The school has a clear policy on bullying and deals with 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 documents published on 2007 for primary schools.
- Students who are identified as being at risk are referred to the designated support teacher/Principal/if applicable DLP, concerns are explored and the appropriate level of assistance and support is provided. Parents are informed, and where appropriate, a referral is made to an appropriate agency.
- Staff are informed about how to access support for themselves.

### **Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)**

A CIMT has been established in line with best practice. 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.

Please note **Appendix 2: COMMUNICATIONS GUIDELINES** outlines in detail the roles of the different school personnel along with the importance and preparation of a statement in relation to a designated incident.

#### **Team leader: Principal**

##### **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 & other Belgrove Schools.
- Liaises with the bereaved family

#### **Garda liaison: Principal /DP**

##### **Role**

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

#### **Staff liaison: Principal /DP**

##### **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)
- 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 : Principal /DP**

##### **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 : Principal /DP**

##### **Role**

- Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of
  - Key parents, such as members of the Parents Council
  - 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 : Principal /DP**

**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: Chairperson Board of Management / Patron representative**

**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)
- Campus will be secured by caretaker who will not allow media on the school campus. Media must remain outside the school gate.
- Phone calls to the school will be screened by secretary. The school secretary will take caller details & questions only unless agreement has been made with the secretary to read from a prepared script / statement.
- 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 : Secretary**

**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 schools 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 sent and received, meetings held, persons met, interventions used, material used etc.

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

### **Confidentiality and good name considerations**

Management and staff of Belgrove Senior Girls' 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. Members of school staff will bear this in mind, and seek to ensure that students 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.

<b>Critical Incident Rooms</b>	
In the event of a critical incident, the following rooms are designated for the indicated purposes	
<b>Room Name:</b>	<b>Designated Purpose:</b>
Library	Main room for meeting all staff
Principal's Office Classroom	Meetings with small group of students Meetings with large group of students
Principal's Office Library Hall	Meetings with small group of parents Meetings with large group of parents Meeting with whole school parent body
Principal's Office/ Library	Meetings with media (office to be screened for visible posters / notices information before letting media in to office)
SEN Room	Individual sessions with students
Principal's Office Library	Meetings with other visitors Meetings with large group of other visitors

### **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 (PA) were also consulted and the Board of Management.

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 or Deputy Principal

The plan will be updated annually in **November**.

This Policy was ratified on **16-11-22**

Signed:  Date: 16-11-22

**Chairperson Board of Management**

Signed:  Date: 16-11-22

**Principal**

Critical Incident Management Team *Two office phone lines are available		
Role	Name	Phone
<b>Team leader:</b>	Principal (Mr. Conor Dilleen)	8331888
<b>Garda liaison</b>	Principal/DP (Mr Conor Dilleen / Mrs. Katie Stokes)	8331888
<b>Staff liaison</b>	Principal/DP ISM Team Members	8331888
<b>Student liaison</b>	Principal/DP Relevant Class Teacher	8331888
<b>Community liaison</b>	Chairperson Board of Management (Dr. PJ Sexton)	
<b>Parent liaison</b>	Principal/DP	8331888
<b>Media liaison</b>	Chairperson Board of Management	
<b>Administrator</b>	Secretary (Ms. Kate Cody)	8331888

#### Short term actions – Day 1

Task	Name
<b>Gather accurate information</b>	Principal/DP Staff where relevant
<b>Who, what, when, where?</b>	Principal in conjunction with DP and ISM Team
<b>Convene a CIMT meeting – specify time and place clearly</b>	Principal
<b>Contact NEPS &amp; if appropriate external agencies</b>	Principal
<b>Arrange supervision for students</b>	Principal/DP
<b>Hold staff meeting</b>	<b>All staff</b>
<b>Agree schedule for the day</b>	Principal/DP and if necessary Chairperson Board of Management
<b>Inform students – (close friends and students with learning difficulties may need to be told separately)</b>	Class Teacher/SEN Team
<b>Compile a list of vulnerable students</b>	Class Teacher/SEN Team
<b>Prepare and agree media statement and deal with media</b>	Chairperson Board of Management in conjunction with Principal
<b>Inform parents</b>	Principal/DP
<b>Hold end of day staff briefing</b>	Principal/DP



**Medium term actions - (Day 2 and following days)**

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

**Follow-up – beyond 72 hours**

<b>Task</b>	<b>Name</b>
Monitor students for signs of continuing distress	Class teachers/SNA/SEN Team
Liaise with agencies regarding referrals	SEN Team/Class Teacher/Principal
Plan for return of bereaved student(s)	Principal/Class Teacher/SEN Team
Plan for giving of 'memory box' to bereaved family	Principal
Decide on memorials and anniversaries	Staff/ Parents & students/BOM
Review response to incident and amend plan	Staff/BOM/Parents



**Appendix 1 EMERGENCY CONTACT LIST**

<b>AGENCY</b>	<b>CONTACT NUMBERS</b>
Garda Clontarf Station	01 666 4800
Hospital Temple Street	01 878 4200
Hospital Beaumont	01 809 3000
Hospital Mater	01 803 2000
Fire Brigade	112 OR 999
Local GPs Dr Mary Ward	01 853 20 70
HSE Vernon Avenue	01 853 95 00
Community Care Team	(01) 853 9500 Vernon Avenue Health Centre
Child and Family Centre	Tus Nua Artane/Coolock Family Resource Centre, 55 Gracefield Road, Artane, Dublin 5. 01 8512289
Child and Family Mental Health Service (CAMHS)	01 879 6800 North East City Team
School Inspector	As assigned by DES to the school : Mr. John Fitzgerald
NEPS Psychologist	As assigned by NEPS to the school: Ms. Aisling Campion
DES	090 648 3600
INTO	01 804 7700
Clergy: Fr Larry White	01 8333459 / 0868238353
Mason Hayes & Curran (legal representatives)	(01) 614 5000
Employee Assistance Service	1800 411 057

Local Public Representatives (as of November 2022)

TDs			
Cian O'Callaghan	Social Democrats	<a href="mailto:Cian.ocallaghan@oireachtas.ie">Cian.ocallaghan@oireachtas.ie</a>	016883057
Richard Bruton	Fine Gael	<a href="mailto:Richard.bruton@oireachtas.ie">Richard.bruton@oireachtas.ie</a>	01 8892167
Sean Haughey	Fianna Fail	<a href="mailto:Sean.haughey@oireachtas.ie">Sean.haughey@oireachtas.ie</a>	<b>(01) 6184369</b> <b>Mobile: 087 3494888</b>
Aodhán O Riordain	Labour	<a href="mailto:Aodhan.oriordain@oireachtas.ie">Aodhan.oriordain@oireachtas.ie</a>	<b>016183209</b>
Denise Mitchell	Sinn Fein	<a href="mailto:Denise.mitchell@oireachtas.ie">Denise.mitchell@oireachtas.ie</a>	<b>016183457</b>
Councillors			
Donna Cooney	Green Party	<a href="mailto:Donna.cooney@dublincity.ie">Donna.cooney@dublincity.ie</a>	<b>0833317190</b>
Deirdre Heney	Fianna Fail	<a href="mailto:heneydm@gmail.com">heneydm@gmail.com</a>	<b>086 8118072</b>
Jane Horgan-Jones	Labour	<a href="mailto:Horganjones.jane@gmail.com">Horganjones.jane@gmail.com</a>	<b>086 8375219</b>
Damian O'Farrell	Independent	<a href="mailto:damianofarrell@gmail.com">damianofarrell@gmail.com</a>	<b>086 2128177</b>
Naoise O'Muire	Fine Gael	<a href="mailto:Naoise.omuire@dublincity.ie">Naoise.omuire@dublincity.ie</a>	<b>086 8270408</b>
Catherine Stocker	Soc Dem	<a href="mailto:Catherine.stocker@dublincity.ie">Catherine.stocker@dublincity.ie</a>	<b>086 8397227</b>

## **Appendix 2: COMMUNICATIONS GUIDELINES - Belgrove Senior Girls' N.S.**

This document is intended as a communication guideline in the event of a Critical Incident [as defined by NEPS] occurring at BSGNS or in the event of any other incident occurring which requires communication to either the parent body or outside agencies that are over and above the normal established channels and could be of media interest.

The guidelines should be reviewed in the event of any incidents taking place, in order to ensure best practice is always recorded and any lessons learned are noted.

As with all communications, the first consideration must be given to ensuring that the school follows procedure with regard to safeguarding; health & safety; privacy of pupils and staff and with regard to any legal procedures.

The purpose of engaging with media needs to be to:

- Provide clear and concise information
- Dispel any rumors
- Correct any inaccurate information
- Protect the reputation of the school

### **When this policy might be required:**

The type of incident that these guidelines may be required for will include but not be limited to:

1. Unexpected death / serious injury of a pupil (e.g. in an accident / of a sudden illness either). This could be either on or off the school premises and each scenario requires a different response.
2. Serious fire / requirement to evacuate the school at sudden notice
3. In the event of a safeguarding issue or health and safety issue becoming of interest to media

In the event of any incident, swiftness of accurate communication is paramount to appearing in control and to preventing a vacuum which can be filled with speculation. If details are not known, then it is advisable to provide a brief statement and to finish it by saying...

**'... we are not in a position to make any further comment.'**

4. Any communication to parents should be assumed to be passed on to the media
5. Any communications to staff and the other Belgrove schools could also be passed on to media
6. Media could turn up outside the school gates and talk to parents. They can be prevented from stepping on to the school grounds but not from being outside.
7. Media need to fill space. If the school doesn't provide information or a spokesperson, they will go elsewhere – parents / local priests / community associations / councilors.

### **Recommended approach:**

1. As a first step:
  - a. Establish facts of any incident
  - b. Establish what is unknown
  - c. Identify any legal / investigative requirements that will influence what can and cannot be said
  - d. Identify any parties involved who need to be kept informed ahead of or as a result of any media queries.
2. As swiftly as possible a media statement should be prepared in the event of queries being received. A decision can be made, depending on the type of incident as to whether this will be issued proactively to media or in the event of a direct request. A spokesperson should be agreed, to be named in any statement and in the event of any interviews taking place. This statement could also be posted on the school website / social media.
3. A clear channel of communication should be set up to deal with any media queries. Initially, it is most likely that calls would go to the School Secretary or to the main email address. In the event of a call coming in, unless otherwise agreed, the recommended response is:
  - Take name, telephone number, email address and name of publication that person is calling from
  - Say that the message that the person called will be passed on to the School Principal / Chair of the Board of Management.
  - If there are specific questions being asked, request that they are put in writing and emailed in. Do not provide any confirmation or response to any comment made as they may be speculative.

(Whilst we may not plan to provide a response, it is often useful to find out what questions are being asked, particularly if they expose misinformation which could be corrected.)

8. If a designated media point of contact has been confirmed, there is no need to do anything other than to pass that person's contact details directly on to the caller.
9. Do not pass on mobile numbers of spokespersons, instead, ask for the journalist's number and say that the spokesperson will call them back.
10. There is no such thing as 'off the record'. If it is said, it can be printed.

In the event of any incident, swiftness of accurate communication is paramount to appearing in control and to preventing a vacuum which can be filled with speculation. If details are not known, then it is advisable to provide a brief statement and to finish it by saying...

**'...until more details are available, we are not in a position to make any further comment.'**

**Potential responses:**

It may be that the decision is made to provide no statement to media in the event of queries. In this situation, it will be recorded as either 'no response' or 'no comment' in any articles.

In the event of any investigations or legal proceedings having already been confirmed by an external party for example, there will be a need for discretion and regard for due process. A potential line to provide at the end of the media statement could be:

*"BSGNS is unable to comment further on XXXXXX due to an investigation being underway."*

In the event of an incident involving the death of a pupil, the response will depend on the circumstances and whether or not this took place on or off school premises. Any statement must have regard to the privacy of the family.

*"The Principal, staff and pupils of BSGNS are deeply saddened to hear of the untimely death of X. As a pupil in X, X was [insert description]. Our prayers are with X's parents, family and friends."*

If the incident takes place on the school premises, then any statement must be prepared with regard to ensuring that firstly all family have been informed and then also to understanding what happened, how and if there is a health and safety issue. It may be that all that can be said is:

*"BSGNS confirms that a serious incident involving a pupil took place [today / yesterday]. The incident resulted in [injury / death] of a pupil and is currently the subject of an investigation by the school and by [insert any third party body name]. As a pupil in X, X was [insert description]. Our prayers are with X's parents, family and friends."*

If appropriate add in details of any counselling / support services being provided to other pupils / teachers etc.

**Spokespersons**

Each scenario should be weighed up to decide whether or not a spokesperson is to be named in a statement or provided for interview. In a critical incident, the appropriate spokesperson for the school will be either the Principal or Chair of the Board. We should also expect local priests (either Father Larry or Father John as head of the parish) to be approached and local councilors. It's therefore key to keep them aware of facts if possible.

