

Ardscoil Mhuire

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Ardscoil Mhuire App



Critical Incident Management Policy

Ardscoil Mhuire



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1 INTRODUCTION

The school's mission statement lies at the heart of how we respond to critical incidents which affect the life of the school.

Ardcoil Mhuire School Mission Statement

In the tradition of the Sisters of Mercy we in Ardcoil Mhuire strive to build our school on the values of a Christian community. We aim to treat each member of our school community with dignity and Christian love. In this atmosphere students are encouraged to realise their full potential.

1.1 The Critical Incident Management Policy (CIMP)

The Ardcoil Mhuire critical incident policy is to respond to a critical incident quickly and effectively, minimise the potential negative effects of the incident, care for those affected and effect a return to normal school life as soon as possible. The policy provides a framework within which a critical incident plan is developed for each critical incident as it arises.

1.1.1 The aim of the critical incident management policy (CIMP)

The aim of the CIMP is to help school management and staff to react quickly and effectively in the event of an incident, to help maintain a sense of order and to ensure that appropriate support is offered to students and staff. The policy enables the development of a critical incident management plan appropriate to each specific critical incident.

1.1.2 The critical incident plan

The critical incident plan is the set of actions the school community takes to ensure that the critical incident is managed as well as possible. The plan is developed by the Critical Incident Management Team, led by the team leader, the principal.

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Having a good plan should also ensure that the effects of any incident on the students and staff will be minimised. It should help us to effect a return to normality as soon as possible.

Many of these incidents may require an inter-agency response involving the Gardai and the emergency services.

1.2 Contents of this Document

This document contains:

- The definition the critical incidents to which this policy guides the school's response
- The principles behind our creating a coping supportive and caring ethos, providing a foundation to our response to any critical incident
- The definition of the Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) roles
- The key responsibilities for each role
- A template for the management of a critical incident including
 - creation of the initial incident plan in response to an incident
 - managing the critical incident to its conclusion
 - a post critical incident review
- Consultation and communications principles behind this document

There are a number of appendices:

Appendix 1 provides contact details required for a critical incident.

Appendix 2 guidelines for staff in response to a critical incident.

Appendices 3 and 4 provide guidelines where critical incidents involve students.

Appendix 5 consists of a list from the NEPS guidelines of 2016. These are available from the NEPS website and are made available to the CIMT members.

Appendix 6 is an annual checklist for the school management to ensure the policy is current for the school year.

1.3 Development and Maintenance of the CIMP

This Critical Incident Management Policy provides the framework for the response of the school community should such an incident occur. It has been developed based on feedback from the staff, students and parents of Ardscoil Mhuire and NEPS.

In drawing up this policy and plan the CIMT has consulted the following resource documents provided to schools:

Responding to Critical Incidents NEPS Guidelines and Resource Materials for Schools (NEPS 2016)

Responding to Critical Incidents resource materials for schools (Dept. of Ed. 2015)

Responding to a Critical Incident Pack for Schools (NEPS 2003)

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Responding to Critical Incidents Resource Material for Schools (NEPS 2007)

Guidance on Social Media Use and Critical Incidents (2014)

ASTI Guidelines for Schools on how to respond to sudden unexpected death of a student (2005)

The Well-being in Schools Guidelines (2013, 2015)

Student Support Teams in Post-Primary Schools (2014)

Note: although the 2016 NEPS guidelines focus on critical incidents involving students, this document considers a wider range of events that would constitute a critical incident for Ardscoil Mhuire.

1.4 CIMP Policy Document Review and Update

This policy is subject to review every two years by the Board of Management.

In addition, the policy will be reviewed and updated on foot of any incidents or events which give rise to invoking the policy.

The appendices to this document provide information, procedures and guidelines which support the policy. These appendices should be updated to reflect:

- Changes in names/contact details for the CIMT and third parties
- Changes/developments in support provision in line with best practices.

Any such changes should be notified to the Board, recognising that updating the appendices does not require re-approval of the policy by the Board.

2 DEFINITION OF A CRITICAL INCIDENT

The staff and management of Ardscoil Mhuire recognise a critical incident to be an incident or sequence of events which overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school and disrupts the normal running of the school. Critical incidents may involve one or more students or staff members, or members of our local community.

Examples of Incidents that could affect schools

- The death of a pupil/pupils or a member/members of staff through natural causes such as illness, an accident, by a deliberate act of violence or by suicide.
- A fire, flood, explosion or other event that would prevent the normal usage of the school.
- Outbreak of communicable illness or disease.
- Threat of harm to students, personnel or facilities.
- Use of weapons or explosives in or near the school.
- Deaths or injuries on school outings.
- Incidents involving children and staff from our school/other schools.
- Civil disturbances including terrorism.
- An accident or tragedy in the wider community.

3 FOUNDATION: THE CREATION OF A COPING, SUPPORTIVE AND CARING ETHOS IN THE SCHOOL

Systems are put in place to help 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. These systems will therefore form part of the school's response to any critical incident which should arise.

3.1 Physical Safety

Examples include:

- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked and dated.
- Regular fire drills occur.
- Evacuation plan has been formulated.
- School grounds are supervised.
- Well maintained building.

3.2 Psychological Safety

The management and staff of Ardscoil Mhuire 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.

Examples include:

- Pastoral/Tutor Teacher and Student Support Team in place.
- Anti-bullying policy.
- Links are developed with a range of external agencies.
- Staff attend CPD.
- Inputs to students by external providers are carefully considered.
- All school staff are encouraged to identify students at risk and to refer them to receive appropriate support.
- Involvement in Healthy Schools Promotion.
- SPHE classes.
- SEN policy.
- Child protection guidelines -clear procedures on how to proceed with disclosures.
- Provision of support for staff (Employee Assistance service).
- The Student Council facilitate the student voice and leadership in the school.

4 CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM (CIMT) MEMBERS

The school has a standing Critical Incident Management Team CIMT in line with best practice. The members of the team are agreed annually, listed in Appendix 1, and the Board of Management notified of the relevant members. This team meets annually, at the beginning of the school year, to review and update the policy and plan.

The members of the CIMT for any particular incident will vary, in some respects, dependant on the incident.

Team Leader	Principal – Pauric Hanlon
Team Co-ordinator	Deputy Principal – Lilian Hynes
Garda Liaison	
Staff Liaison	
Student Liaison	
Community/Agency Contact/Church	
Parent Liaison	
Media Liaison	
Administration	
School Site Manager	

4.1 Critical Incident Folder

Each member of the critical incident management team has a folder with the relevant supporting documents. These include this policy and relevant templates for the critical incident (NEPS, 2016).

The folder(s) are on the school server for each member of the CIMT. The folders are reviewed and updated annually by the Team Coordinator.

5 CIMT KEY RESPONSIBILITIES OF EACH ROLES

6 5.1 Team Leader-The Principal

- Determines there is a critical incident and invokes the Critical Incident Management policy.
- Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting.
- Reviews the tasks and roles with the team and develops the initial critical incident management plan.
- Liaises with the Board of Management; DES, NEPS, SEC.
- Liaises with the bereaved family (if appropriate).
- Determines the end of a critical incident and the return to normal school routine.

In the absence of the team leader the Deputy Principal/Chairperson of the Board of Management will become the team leader.

5.2 Team Co-ordinator

- Completes the annual CIMP checklist and briefs CIMT members and school staff.
- Reviews and updates the CIMT Critical Incident Folders.
- Ensures that sample letters are typed up, on the school's system and ready for adaptation.
- Supports the Team Leader.
- Acts as a point of contact for the different team members.
- Allocates rooms as required during the critical incident.
- Coordinates the tasks of the team as allocated by the Team Leader.
- Monitors record keeping during the critical incident.
- Drafts a report on the critical incident for the post incident review.

5.3 Garda Liaison

- Liaises with the Gardaí.
- Ensures that information about a death/deaths or other developments are checked out for accuracy before being shared.

5.4 Staff Liaison

- Leads briefing meetings for staff on the facts as known, gives staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions, and 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.

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- Is alert to vulnerable staff members and makes contact with them individually.
- Advises them of the availability of the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) and gives them the contact number.

5.5 Student Liaison

- Co-ordinate information from Tutors and Year Heads about students they are concerned about.
- Alerts other staff to vulnerable students where appropriate.
- Provides materials for students (from their critical incident folder).
- Maintains student contact records during the critical incident (R1 NEPS).
- Looks after the setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room where agreed.

5.6 Community/Agency Liaison

- 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 supports.
- Co-ordinates the involvement of these agencies.
- Reminds agency staff to wear name badges/ID cards.
- Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies.

5.7 Parent Liaison

- Visits the bereaved family/families with the team leader (if appropriate).
- Arranges meetings with parents (if appropriate).
- Liaises with the Parents' Council.
- May facilitate such meetings, and manage 'questions and answers'.
- Manages the 'consent' issues in accordance with agreed school policy.
- 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.

5.8 Media Liaison

- 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.)

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- In the event of an incident, will liaise where necessary with the State Examinations Commissions, relevant teacher unions etc.
- Will draw up a press statement and give media briefings and interviews as agreed by school management.

5.9 Administrator

- Maintenance of up to date telephone numbers of
 - Parents or guardians
 - Teachers
 - Emergency services
- Ensures that relevant templates are on the school's system and ready for adaptation.
- Identifies a dedicated telephone line/mobile phone (as appropriate), which will be kept free for important outgoing and incoming calls. School website and school app may be used as appropriate.
- Takes telephone calls and notes those that need to be responded to.
- Designate a point where a log of events and telephone calls made and received will be kept.
- All offers of help should be logged – the name of the agency, what they are offering, a contact name and number. These agencies may be contacted later if appropriate.
- Agree arrangements for dealing with normal school business.
- Prepares and sends out letters, emails and texts.
- Photocopies materials needed.

5.10 School Site Manager

- Manages access and use of building during any incident.
- Helps to assess health and safety implications and may assist in contacting relevant services.
- Leads briefing meetings for relevant staff on the facts as known, gives staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions, and outlines the routine for the day.
- Provides materials for staff from their critical incident folder.

5.11 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.

Record keeping will be monitored by the CIMT Co-ordinator and retained at the end of the critical incident for the post incident review.

5.12 Confidentiality and Good Name Considerations

The management and staff of Ardscoil Mhuire 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 solid information that death was due to suicide, and that the family involved consent 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.

5.13 Critical Incident Rooms

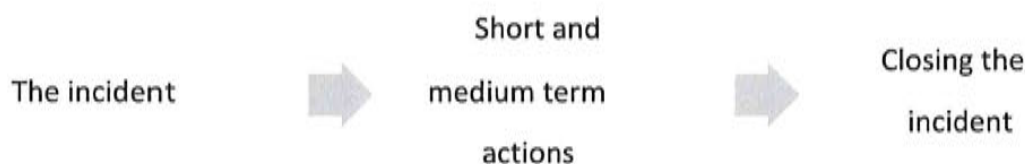
In the event of a critical incident, rooms will be allocated for:

- Staff
- Students
- Parents
- Media
- Individual consultations with students
- Visitors
- Quiet rooms

These rooms are allocated by Team Co-ordinator. An initial allocation list is available in the appendices.

6 MANAGING THE CRITICAL INCIDENT

This section outlines the approach to managing a critical incident. There are a number of stages.



6.1 Forming the Critical Incident Management Team and creating the initial action plan

The team leader deems an incident to be critical and assembles the Critical Incident Management Team and reviews tasks and allocation of roles.

The CIMT then works to gather facts and accurate information:

- What has happened?
- When it happened?
- How it happened?
- Where did it take place? Is it onsite or offsite?
- Does the incident require the evacuation of the school?
- What is the number and names of students and staff involved?
- Are there other schools involved?
- What is the extent of any injuries?
- What is the location of the incident?

Contact appropriate agencies (see school's Emergency Contact List).

The initial action plan is agreed:

- Allocation of rooms as required.
- Communication to staff, students and parents. The CIMT for a given incident should be made known to the school community as soon as it is formed.
- Record keeping.
- Communication with the media (if required).
- Meetings of the CIMT.

6.2 Implementing the CI Action Plan – short and medium term actions

The CIMT meets daily to review the situation and the implementation of the Action Plan. Additional staff may be involved as required. Support is arranged for students and staff. Decisions about school closure are made in conjunction with the Board of Management.

6.3 Conclusion of the critical incident

The team leader determines when the critical incident is closed. The CIMT stands down and normal school life resumes.

7 POST INCIDENT REVIEW

A review will take place by the school's management of all incidents in relation to which the Critical Incident Management Policy is invoked. This review will take place when the incident is closed but close enough to the incident for the lessons learned still to be fresh. The review is led by the team leader.

The team coordinator completes the first step. This is to document the critical incident, what happened, where and who was involved. Then the actions of the CIMT including any records are noted and the roll out of the incident to the conclusion is summarised.

The purpose of such a review is to learn the lessons of the incident itself, to review the effectiveness of this policy, to review the effectiveness of our response to the incident as measured in relation to the aims set out in section 1 above, and to review the effectiveness of the supports, information, guidelines and procedures available to the school community in relation to dealing with the incident.

The outputs of the review, including any recommendations, will be presented to the Board of Management as soon as available.

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8 CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION REGARDING THE PLAN

Each member of the standing critical incident team has a personal copy of the plan.

All staff will be informed of the details of the plan on a regular basis.

The plan will be updated annually in September and the Board of Management informed.

The plan will be published on the school website.

Ratification of Policy

This policy was ratified, following consultation with staff, students and their parents at a Board of Management meeting on 21/05/21.

Signed: 

Date: 21/9/2021

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Appendices

Appendix 1– INFORMATION - TO BE KEPT IN SCHOOL OFFICE AND PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE

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APPENDIX 1 – INFORMATION - TO BE KEPT IN SCHOOL OFFICE AND PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE

1.1 Critical Incident Management Team 2020-2021

Pauric Hynes
Lilian Hynes
Damien Johnston
Teresa Fletcher
Yvonne McGlynn
Sandra Hughes
Fr. John Garvey

List of Roles

Role		Name	See staff address list for contact details.
Team Leader	Principal	Pauric Hanlon	
Garda Liaison	Principal/Deputy Principal		
Staff Liaison	BOM Staff Representatives		
Student Liaison	GC/Year Heads/Chaplain		
Parent Liaison	GC/Year Heads/Chaplain		
Community/Agency Contact/Church	Principal/Deputy Principal		
Media Liaison	Principal/Deputy Principal		
Administration	Office Staff		
School Site Manager / Ancillary Staff Liaison			

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1.2 School Management and Administration Team 2020-2021

Principal	Pauric Hanlon
Deputy Principals	Lilian Hynes
Guidance Counsellors	Damian Johnston
Chaplain	Fr John Garvey
BOM Staff Representatives	Thelma Joyce, Angie Cusack
Office Staff	Sandra Hughes, Tina Kelly

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1.3 Emergency Services

Ambulance	999 or 112
Fire Brigade	999 or 112
Garda Station,	0909631890
Ballinasloe Health Centre	0909642447
Hospital,	0909648200
Department of Education	0906483600
N.E.P.S. Psychologist	0761108831
Local GP:	
Marina House	0909643777
Dunlo Medical Centre	0909643900
Resource Officer for Suicide	
Education Welfare Board	
Bereavement Counselling	
Rape Crisis Centre	1800778888
State Examinations Commission	0906442700

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1.4 Room allocations for a critical incident

The Team Coordinator of the CIMT team reviews and confirms the allocation below for any given critical incident.

	Room Allocated
Staff	
Students	
Parents	
Media	
Individual consultations with students	
Visitors	

APPENDIX 2 – PROCEDURE FOR STAFF AT A CRITICAL INCIDENT

Immediate Procedures for Staff at the scene:

STEP ONE:

- Assess the situation – What has happened?

STEP TWO:

- Notify the **Principal or Deputy Principal**, who will come to the scene and manage the school's response to the incident
- The Principal will ensure that the relevant personnel will contact the emergency services, parents, and any other relevant persons. If the Principal or Deputy Principal are not available, the Assistant Principal Team will take on this role.

STEP THREE:

- While waiting for assistance:
 - Remain calm
 - Clear the area of unnecessary personnel but do not remain on your own if possible
- If there is an injury
 - Avoid moving an injured person until a medical assessment has been made. However in some situations you may need to move them
 - Do not give anything to eat or drink

STEP FOUR:

- Fill in an accident report as soon as possible. The accident report form is available from the School Office.

Sensitivity regarding critical incidents is of the utmost importance. All staff members are asked to refrain from discussing details of any critical incident other than with the CIMT until there is a plan in place. Any contact with the media should be communicated by the designated media liaison officer.

APPENDIX 3 – PROPOSED PROCEDURE - STUDENT DEATH - ARDSCOIL MHUIRE CIMT STEP BY STEP

3.1 Day 1:

1. Gather accurate information and facts.
2. Contact NEPS.
3. The Principal and another staff member, having confirmed the death, make contact with the family. They will see how the family want the death represented.
4. Critical Incident Management Team meets to plan strategy, keeping in mind the guidelines above.
5. Key Tasks are distributed. (JMB can offer assistance and may recommend a PR company)
6. Have all guidelines for teachers ready.
7. Have written and verbal statements ready for all communication with the school.
8. Staff should be notified to report to the staff room upon arrival.
9. Meet staff (note any absences or late arrivals to ensure that all staff are given the news).
10. Critical Incident Management Team outline to staff the plan for the day and support available.
11. Location of Critical Incident Response Room announced (base classroom).
12. Classes are informed of the incident (handouts given on guidelines).
13. Deputy Principal to make alternative arrangements for classes normally using base room.
14. Principal to ensure that RE staff and Guidance Counsellor are free from all other commitments for the day.
15. Plan another update staff meeting later in the day.
16. Clarify funeral arrangements for staff later.
17. Critical Incident Response Team meets to plan procedures for school involvement in removal and funeral.

3.2 Day 2:

- Students who are not coping are referred to Counsellor on an individual basis. It is important for the school to run as normally as possible.

3.3 Day 3:

- Crisis Team meets to plan response after the funeral in the next few days. (Involve Class Tutor and / or Year Head at this stage).

APPENDIX 4 – GUIDELINES - STUDENT INCIDENT - ARDSCOIL MHUIRE PROCEDURE FOR CIMT

4.1 Liaising With Family/Families Involved:

1. Appoint two staff members to visit the family within 24 hours.
2. Offer school's support, giving the name of the school contact person.
3. Make decisions on who should attend the funeral (if a death has occurred).
4. Offer help with funeral arrangements (if appropriate).
5. Liaise with local clergy.
6. Decide if the school should be closed on day of funeral. (Notify parents/guardians/visitors/bus companies of closure.)

APPENDIX 5 – GUIDELINES - FROM THE NEPS GUIDELINES 2016

The NEPS 2016 guidelines are published at <https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/National-Educational-Psychological-Service-NEPS-/Responding%20to%20Critical%20Incidents.pdf>
NEPS Guidelines on responding to critical incidents
W:\Carmel

This link is made available on the school website on the policy page at ...

Copies of these guidelines are available in ...

5.1 NEPS Resource References – Useful Resources Available

- R1 STUDENT CONTACT RECORD
- R2 SAMPLE LETTER TO PARENTS/GUARDIANS - SUDDEN DEATH/ACCIDENT
- R3 SAMPLE LETTER TO PARENTS/GUARDIANS - VIOLENT DEATH
- R4 SAMPLE ANNOUNCEMENT TO THE MEDIA
- R5 A CLASSROOM SESSION FOLLOWING NEWS OF A CRITICAL INCIDENT
- R6 CHILDREN'S UNDERSTANDING AND REACTION TO DEATH ACCORDING TO AGE
- R7 STAGES OF GRIEF
- R8 HOW TO COPE WHEN SOMETHING TERRIBLE HAPPENS
- R9 REACTIONS TO A CRITICAL INCIDENT
- R10 GRIEF AFTER SUICIDE OR SUSPECTED SUICIDE
- R11 REINTEGRATION OF THE BEREAVED CHILD IN SCHOOL
- R12 WAYS TO HELP YOUR CHILD THROUGH THIS DIFFICULT TIME
- R13 A GENERAL INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR GUIDANCE COUNSELLORS, CHAPLAINS, OTHER DESIGNATED STAFF
- R14 CHECKLIST - STUDENTS AT RISK
- R15 EXPLORING SUICIDE RISK
- R16 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS - PRINCIPALS
- R17 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS - TEACHERS
- R18 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS - PARENTS
- R19 CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY & PLAN - FRAMEWORK

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R20 CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEMPLATE FOR SCHOOL PLAN

R21 EMERGENCY CONTACT LIST

R22 GUIDANCE ON SOCIAL MEDIA USE AND CRITICAL INCIDENTS

R23 TEACHERS HELPING STUDENTS IN TIMES OF CRISIS OR EMERGENCY

Issues that may arise when a student dies by suicide/suspected suicide p39-40 NEPS Guidelines 2016

Road traffic accidents/violent deaths p.41 to 44 NEPS Guidelines 2016

Critical incidents during exams p.49-50 NEPS Guidelines 2016

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APPENDIX 6 – CIMP ANNUAL CHECKLIST

School Year :		
Action	Person	Date completed
Review of critical incidents in previous school year: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number and type • Post- Incident reviews completed • Brief report prepared for CIMT and Board of Management. 	Team Coordinator	
Critical Incident Management Policy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical Incident Management Policy published on school website. • Appendices updated for current school year. • Critical incident folders reviewed and contents updated • Allocation of rooms for a critical incident reviewed and updated for current year 	Team Coordinator	
Critical incident Administration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up to date telephone numbers available of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Parents, guardians ○ Teachers ○ Emergency services support services and other external contacts and resources • Critical incident folders available for CIMT. • CI templates are available on school system. 	Administrator	
Critical Incident Management Team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical incident management team reviewed and team membership, roles and responsibilities confirmed 	Team Leader	
CIMT team review meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review critical incident plan and contents of critical incident folders 	Team Leader	
Annual staff briefing	Team Leader/ Team Coordinator	
Board of Management briefed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical incidents for previous school year • CIMT for current year • Any amendments to current policy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Updated appendices 	Team Leader	