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# **Columba College**

## **Critical Incident Management Plan**

### **2023 – 2024**

Date Ratified: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Chairperson of the Board

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Principal

Date of Review: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Mission Statement:**

Columba College, as a Post Primary School, aims to provide a learning environment which will allow all pupils to achieve their full potential and enable them to develop into caring and responsible adults/citizens capable of contributing to and fulfilling their roles in the Community/Society.

## **Rationale and aims:**

Columba College strives to create a safe working environment for the whole school community. The College has formulated the Critical Incident Management Plan (CIMP) with a view to ensuring the physical and psychological safety of both staff and students during the school day and in the case of a more serious critical incident.

A CIMP is necessary because it:

- Avoids panic and keeps people calm in the event of an emergency.
- Sets agreed procedures in motion.
- Reduces tension.
- Creates normalisation.

In summary, the CIMP aims to help the College 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 CIMP will also help ensure that the effects on the students and staff will be limited. It should also enable us to affect a return to normality as soon as possible. Columba College recognises a critical incident to be “an incident or sequence of events that overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of the College”. Critical incidents may involve one or more students or staff members, or members of the local community.

A critical incident may be defined as a single incident or sequence of incidents which:

- Are sudden and unexpected.
- Contain real or imagined threats to a person.
- Overwhelm usual coping mechanisms.
- Cause severe disruption.
- Are traumatic to anyone.

Examples of a critical incident may include but are not limited to:

- the death of a student or a member of staff, through sudden death, accident, suicide or terminal illness.
- severe physical violence in the school on staff, students, parents or any of the stakeholders involved in the school community.
- accident on a school trip.
- school fire or explosion.
- disappearance of a member of the school community.
- a serious tragedy within the school community.

- Poisoning.
- Siege of the school.

It is important to have a team in place to deal with such incidents with a clear response to any of these critical incidents. The trauma caused by critical incidents challenges individuals mentally, physically, emotionally and spiritually.

Although it is not possible to predict when and where a disaster will strike, there is much that schools can do to be prepared should the ‘worst’ happen. Foremost, in this, is the development of a CIMP so that in the event of a disaster, on whatever scale, staff can act quickly to cope with the distress and confusion and begin to regain a sense of control. Mullingar Community College’s plan will have prepared procedures and responses that can be put into action in the immediate aftermath of a critical incident.

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

The purpose of the CIMT is to deal with any significant trauma that may occur in the life of the College. The members of the team will meet annually to review and update the policy and the plan. It is recommended that this team be in place on an ongoing basis. It is important to clearly outline the roles and responsibilities of the team members and to provide appropriate training and resources, so that the team is prepared to offer a prompt and effective response. To fulfil this, each member of the team will have dedicated Critical Incident Management Folder. This contains a copy of the policy and materials particular to their role should they be required in the event of an incident.

The membership of the team comprises the following personnel:

Principal  
Deputy Principal  
Assistant Principals  
Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) Teacher  
Guidance Counsellor  
Special Educational Needs (SEN) Coordinator  
Caretaker  
School Secretary  
Health and Safety Coordinator  
Other relevant people if appropriate for certain incident (e.g., relevant Year Head)

The Principal of Columba College will act as Team leader in the CIMT. In the event of a critical incident they will be responsible for:

### **Role of Team Leader:**

- The team leader alerts team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting of the team.
- Co-ordinates/delegates tasks of the other team members.
- Liaises with The Board of Management; the Department of Education and Skills and other relevant agencies.
- In case of bereavement, liaises with the bereaved family.

Other areas of responsibilities, which may be delegated by the Team Leader to other members of the team would include:

- Contacting Emergency support services.
- Briefing and advising the staff and being empathic their feelings and concerns.
- Organising the supervision of students in the school where necessary.

- Keeping staff updated on information/developments/progress.
- Meeting students to brief them on the situation.
- Taking care of “vulnerable students and/or vulnerable teachers”.
- Liaising with external agencies for support or referrals.
- Liaising with school organisations such as Parents’ Council and the Students’ Council.
- Meeting with individual parents or groups of parents.
- Visiting bereaved families or families closely associated with the incident in conjunction with the Home School Community Liaison teacher.
- Preparing a Press release and liaising with the media where necessary and appropriate.

### **Role and Responsibilities’ of the CIMT:**

<b>Name:</b>	<b>Role:</b>	<b>Responsibility:</b>
Dermot Brady	Team Leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alerts team members and convenes a CIMT Meeting.</li> <li>• Coordinates the tasks of the team.</li> <li>• Liaises with the Board of Management and all other relevant agencies.</li> <li>• Liaises with the bereaved family.</li> <li>• Acts as Media Liaison.</li> <li>• Visits home as appropriate.</li> </ul>
Margaret Coady	Deputy Principal	<p>Key duties that will be delegated by the Team Leader. This list is not exhaustive.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acts as Team Leader in the absence of the Principal.</li> <li>• Acts as Staff Liaison in consultation with the Team Leader.</li> <li>• 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</li> <li>• Advises staff on the procedures for identification of vulnerable students.</li> <li>• Keeps staff updated as the day progresses</li> <li>• Is alert to vulnerable staff members and contacts them individually.</li> <li>• Organises personal support for staff.</li> <li>• Provides materials for staff from Critical Incident Management Folder (CIMF).</li> <li>• Visits home as appropriate.</li> <li>• Any relevant duties as determined by the Team Leader.</li> </ul>
Ann Marie Kiernan	Guidance Counsellor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acts as Student Liaison in consultation with the Team Leader.</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Liaises with students and offers counselling.</li> <li>• Alerts staff to vulnerable students.</li> <li>• Organises personal support for students.</li> <li>• Provides material for students from CIMF.</li> <li>• Any relevant duties as determined by the Team Leader.</li> </ul>
Breege Smith	Home School Community Liaison (HSCL)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acts as Parent liaison in consultation with the Team Leader.</li> <li>• Liaise with parents and keep them informed</li> <li>• Any relevant duties as determined by the Team Leader.</li> </ul>
Thomas Dinnegan/Thomas Sheerin/Michelle Quinn	SEN Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any relevant duties as determined by the Team Leader.</li> </ul>
Joe Beatty/ Tony Finnerty	Caretaker & AP1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any relevant duties as determined by the Team Leader.</li> </ul>
Fiona Cully/Denise Scally	Secretary & AP1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any relevant duties as determined by the Team Leader.</li> </ul>
Jonathan Conroy	Health and Safety Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any relevant duties as determined by the Team Leader.</li> </ul>

**Confidentiality:** All team members should be conscious of their responsibility to protect the privacy and good names of people involved in any incident and will be sensitive to the consequences of any public statements

**Record Keeping:** The above team will all be responsible for keeping records of phone calls, texts, letters, meetings, general communications and any interventions that took place throughout the critical incident. The team must decide upon a Chairperson and Secretary at the beginning of each academic year.

Chairperson: Dermot Brady

Secretary: Margaret Coady

### **Critical Incident Rooms:**

<b>In the event of the CIMF being instigated; the following rooms will be used throughout the Critical Incident Response.</b>	
<b>Room Name:</b>	<b>Purpose:</b>
Deputy Principal Office	Meeting room for CIMT
Staff Room	Meeting room for staff
Assembly Hall	Meetings with students
Principal's Office	Meetings with parents
Reception Area	Meetings with media
Guidance Office Deputy Principal's Office Year Head's Office	Individual meetings with students
Principals' Office	Meeting with other relevant visitors

MS Teams	In extraordinary circumstances; and to satisfy social distancing requirements; this may be required for some meetings. This will be used as a last resort.
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### **Actions to deal with a Critical Incident:**

<b>Short term actions:</b>	<b>Long term actions:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A meeting needs to take place with members of the critical incident team where a clear and accurate account of the incident should be recorded</li> <li>• The team will be responsible for contacting the appropriate agencies for support.</li> <li>• Normal routine must be sustained where possible ensuring an atmosphere whereby it is acceptable to talk about the experience if it is deemed appropriate</li> <li>• Supervision needs to be organised for pupils who are not deemed fit to return to class</li> <li>• Contact with the stakeholders of the school should be maintained throughout – parents, Board of Management, school staff and students</li> <li>• Teachers and staff need to be briefed on the situation, a plan for the day and guidelines need to be distributed to all staff members</li> <li>• Reminders should be given to students of all the supports and services that are available to them and students and staff should be monitored</li> <li>• The media should be dealt with by the Team Leader in conjunction with</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitor students for signs of continuing distress, constant communication with family is essential</li> <li>• Check students for uncharacteristic behaviour, deterioration in academic performance, physical symptoms, inappropriate emotional reactions or increased absenteeism.</li> <li>• Evaluate response to incident and amend CIMP appropriately. What went well? Where were the gaps? What was most/least helpful? Have all the necessary onward referrals to support services been made? Is there any unfinished business?</li> <li>• Formalise the CIMP for the future</li> <li>• Consult with necessary agencies to evaluate and inform for future incidents.</li> <li>• Inform new staff/ new school pupils affected by Critical Incidents where appropriate.</li> <li>• Ensure new staff are aware of the school policy and procedures in this area</li> <li>• Ensure they are aware of which pupils were affected in any recent incident and in what way.</li> <li>• Decide on appropriate ways to deal with anniversaries/ special days or events.</li> </ul>

the patron, Longford and Westmeath Education and Training Board (LWETB) and the schools' Board of Management.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update and amend school records as appropriate.</li> </ul>
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### **Critical Incident During State Exams:**

In the event of the death of someone close to a student sitting state exams, the following procedures should be put into action:

- In the event of the death of a parent/family member, staff may visit the student's family to determine if it is appropriate for the student to be encouraged to finish their exams. Alternative repeat arrangements can be availed of for Leaving Cert students.
- If desired by the affected student, a separate exam centre should be assigned with staff to manage it. With the agreement of the SEC and other relevant Examinations Authorities, a student may be given extra time during their exams.
- If the student would prefer to return to the main exam centre, the students should be informed of her return and given support and advice on how best to support their classmate.
- In the event of the death of a student before or during their state exams, normal procedures should be put in place regarding response to a death during term time.
- If it is deemed necessary, and with the permission of the SEC, a separate exam centre can be set up to accommodate students who have been particularly affected by the loss of a close friend.

Students who are particularly affected by any of the above may be spoken to separately after exams (with the agreement of parents). Remaining students could be addressed in a group after the exams.

### **Task Management:**

The following may be necessary tasks to undertake and the Team Leader and CMIT will oversee the following:

<b>Task:</b>	<b>Relevant Information:</b>
Obtain verification, clarification of events. For example, confirm the death has occurred. Get accurate information from family or Gardai. <b>Remember that a violent death may require special considerations. Media reactions may follow very quickly.</b>	Team Leader or his/her delegate.  See, Appendix 1
Contact the family/families involved. Express sympathy to the family, assure school's support. Ascertain if name is in the public domain. Ensure family know who the contact person is in the school.	Team Leader or his/her delegate.
If news is received during the day make immediate arrangements to escort involved students/family members home from school.	Team Leader or his/her delegate.
Notify the Chief Executive LWETB, Director of Schools LWETB; Chairperson of Board of Management as a matter of urgency and the other members of the Board of Management as soon as possible thereafter.	Team Leader or his/her delegate.
Contact National Educational Psychological Services (NEPS).	Team Leader or his/her delegate.
Inform CIMIT and organise meeting of members.	Team Leader or his/her delegate.
Inform all other staff members, especially those immediately involved. Inform Parent's Association.	Team Leader or his/her delegate.
Prepare an announcement for staff/students.	Team Leader or his/her delegate.
Plan a staff meeting where necessary (teaching and nonteaching staff).	Team Leader or his/her delegate.
Prepare statement and distribute procedures to class teachers in breaking the news.	Team Leader or his/her delegate.
Devise a process for dealing with telephone enquiries from anxious parents/students. Name of any victims or individuals	Team Leader or his/her delegate.



involved are not to be divulged. Have a dedicated extension with a teacher/staff member to answer questions.	
Have written and/or oral response to enquiries prepared.	Team Leader or his/her delegate.
Where necessary prepare a media statement. <b>The Team Leader, or the person designated by the Team Leader, should be the only person to communicate with the media. Discourage any staff or student from dealing with media.</b>	Team Leader or his/her delegate. See, Appendix 2.
Draft a communication to parents on the issue: Explain what has happened, give information about the school response and the support available, highlight the needs of students at this time. Parents should feel free to contact the school with their concerns but by means of telephone or small meetings, not large group meetings.	Team Leader or his/her delegate.
If there is a religion/non-religious ceremony; should the school stay open on that day? If possible, the school should stay opened (notification to parents etc. of any closure). Consult with family on school involvement in any religious/non-religious ceremony (family wishes to be respected).	Team Leader or his/her delegate in consultation with LWETB & Board of Management
Liaise with leaders in local organisations and management in other schools in the vicinity of Columba College as appropriate and necessary.	Team Leader or his/her delegate.
Contact and liaise with NEPS and the DES on the critical incident. Organise student support-counselling, in school crisis/care stations etc., supervised by CIMT	Team Leader or his/her delegate.
It is important to retain a semblance of normality. Maintain the school routine within reason but where possible postpone stressful activities such as examinations.	Team Leader or his/her delegate.
As a general rule avoid the gathering of large group assemblies within the school in the immediate aftermath.	Team Leader or his/her delegate.
Avoid memorial activities that might contribute to contagion, especially with respect to suicide, violent death etc.	Team Leader or his/her delegate. See, Appendix 1.

### **Responsibilities of CMIT:**

<b>Task:</b>	<b>Relevant Information:</b>
Set up CMIT Rooms in the college.	Caretaker or his/her delegate.
Outline services available to affected students during the first hours.	Guidance Counsellor BFL.
Open the school if tragedy happens on weekend or during holidays.	Team Leader or his/her delegate.
Have guidelines for staff in dealing with distressed students i.e. information on grief responses, identifying those with need of counselling and support.	Deputy Team Leader or his/her delegate. Note – this will be in CIMF.
Take time with most affected students in crisis response room create rota so that an individual teacher is not overwhelmed.	Guidance Counsellor.

Contact parents where some students request to go home - rota of teachers and a log of students allowed home. Students only released into direct care of parent/guardian.	Relevant Year Head. HSCL.
Encourage students who feel able to return to class-where students supported out of class it should be for a defined period.	Relevant Year Head. Guidance Counsellor.
Meet and support any distressed parents and staff. Parents should only be met in small groups	HSCL. Team Leader or his/her delegate.

### **CMIT: Step by Step**

<b>Task</b>	<b>Relevant Information</b>
Having confirmed what has happened the Team Leader contacts the family/families of students involved.	Team Leader or his/her delegate.
CIMT meet to plan strategy, keeping in mind the guidelines outlined above.	CIMT Room.
Key tasks are distributed. Prepare list of tasks.	CIMT.
Have all guidelines for teachers ready.	Team Leader or his/her delegate.
Have written and oral statements ready for all communication with the school.	See, Appendix 2.
Send text for staff to report to the staff room when they arrive.	Team Leader or his/her delegate.
Meet staff (note any absences or late arrivals to ensure that all staff know the news).	Team Leader or his/her delegate.
CIMT outline to staff the plan for the day and the support available.	CIMT.
Location of crisis response room/s announced.	Staff Room.
Inform students in small groups: It is best that students be informed and reassured by class teachers. Members of the CIMT will be present when the news is broken to the classmates of the student.	
Inform absent students of what has happened.	Class Teachers. Members of CIMT.
Deputy Principal to ensure that Guidance Counsellor, relevant personnel, etc. are free from all other timetabled commitments for the duration of the school day.	Deputy Principal or his/her delegate.
Plan another update staff meeting later in the day.	Team Leader or his/her delegate.
If a death has occurred communicate funeral arrangements to staff when known.	Team Leader or his/her delegate.
CIMT meet in CIMT Room to plan procedures for school involvement in religious / non-religious ceremonies.	CIMT Room.

<b>Day 2:</b> Students who are not coping are referred to Counsellor/Chaplain on an individual basis. Important for the school to run as normally as possible.	Year Heads. Class Tutors. Class Teachers.
<b>Day 3 &amp; Beyond:</b> CIMT meet to plan CISM (critical incident stress debriefing) response after the funeral in the next few days (involve Year Head/Tutors at this stage if not already involved).	CIMT Room.
Provide additional support for specific groups: For those closely associated with the incident or those already suffering trauma or bereavement. In case of a suicide: Focus on at risk or troubled students. Provide support for staff members. Plan for return of bereaved student(s).	Team Leader or his/her delegate.
Contact additional counsellors should the need arise. Provide longer term support after the immediate emergency or period of grieving is over and pay attention to significant occasions (anniversary, graduation etc.).	CIMT.
Hold end of day briefing on all days.	Team Leader or his/her delegate.
Review CIMP after each incident and amend plan if necessary.	CIMT

### **Guidelines for teachers: How to inform students**

<b>Task:</b>	<b>Relevant Information:</b>
If the Critical Incident involves the death of a student, his/her classmates should be informed first, with Counsellor, Tutor/s and Year Head present.	CIMT.
Other classes may be told by their Tutors or class teachers.	
Not every class may be traumatised, some students may not know the deceased, but it is important to acknowledge the loss for the whole school community.	
Tell the class you have sad news and it is difficult for you to do this.	
Let them know the name of the person the news is about.	Staff Meeting.
Begin pre-planned discussion. Let them know the facts, as you have them. (it is important to prevent rumours through misinformation)	Staff Meeting.
It is also important that teachers and students know that it is not appropriate to speak to the media about what has happened. If they are asked, they should say that they have nothing to say.	
Only if the tragedy is confirmed as a suicide by the family, can it be relayed as such to students.	Consult with CIMT.
Encourage and address relevant questions.	
Be aware of possible reactions and let the class know of common reactions to tragic news.	See end of Appendix 3
The most common reaction is shock. Expect tears and outbursts.	
Inform students that support will be available during the day, give information on student support, crisis care stations etc. Inform them of locations of these care stations and give names at this stage of supporting staff/personnel.	CIMT.

Only release students from class according to pre-planned system of referral. Don't allow a student to leave the class alone in a distressed state.	CIMT.
Students must be supervised within the building while in a distressed state.	All staff.
Let them know that you will support them.	
Let them know who else is available to support them.	CIMT.
If a student is suspected as being at risk, the Principal (DLP), or in his absence the Deputy Principal (DDL) should be notified immediately.	Notify DLP or DDL immediately.
Be attentive in identifying those who are not coping well with the news- Referral of students for individual attention.	
Let them know where the CIMT will be.	Staff Meeting.
Don't be afraid to let them know that you are also upset by the news.	
Allow them time (limited) to mingle and talk to one another.	
You may need to remind students again who is there to help, as little information is assimilated once in shock.	
Inform students that their Year Head will keep them up to date.	
Some students may be able to continue and go to class.	
Some will need to stay with the CIMT for the morning.	
Encourage students to stay in school to support their friends.	
Some students, who may need to go home, may do so in consultation with the Year Head and only if parents/guardians come and collect them. Students must sign out in the office.	Relevant Year Head. HSCL.
Those who go to class may not be able to concentrate on the work of the class. Subject teachers will need to make allowances for them to talk in groups as the need arises.	
If school are first to gain knowledge of an incident, parents/guardians will be contacted as soon as possible.	Team Leader or his/her delegate. HSCL.
<b>Special Considerations when Responding to a Violent Death.</b> It will be emphasised to everyone in the school community that nobody should talk to the media except the Team Leader.	See, Appendix 1

### **Emergency Staff Meeting:**

An Emergency Staff Meeting may be called to include all staff and student members. The Agenda will be as follows:

1. Inform staff members of all relevant facts relating to the incident.
2. Allow time for staff reaction.
3. Make a list of all students associated with the incident or close to the individual/s involved.
4. Where the incident relates to a suicide, address the issue of contagion: update/compile a list of students at risk of suicide ideation.
5. Plan/review the school response strategy for the following days and weeks including where necessary, the policy with respect to media contact (only the Team Leader or his delegate is to talk to the media).
6. Discuss the method of disclosing relevant facts to students: small groups (in-class disclosure by class teachers and pre-planned discussion).

7. Outline the system for referring students from classes to support personnel / rooms.

**Implementation:**

This policy will be implemented by the Board of Management of Columba College. The Board of Management have the right to make the final decision regarding the interpretation and application of the policy.

**Ratification and Review:**

This policy was accepted and ratified by the Board of Management of Columba College on \_\_\_\_\_.

This policy will be made available to all school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Parents Association. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department of Education and Skills and to Longford and Westmeath Education and Training Board (LWETB) if requested.

The CIMP will be subject to regular review and update.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Chairperson, Board of Management)

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Principal)

## **Appendix 1 – Special Considerations when Responding to a Violent Death:**

In the event of a violent death within the school community it is our policy to follow the procedures for managing a critical incident. What follows are several special considerations that might be borne in mind in this type of situation.

- 1. Media Response Plan:** This type of death tends to attract much attention from the media. It is useful therefore to be prepared: nominated spokesperson (Team Leader or person nominated by the Team Leader), media statements etc. When dealing with the media it is our policy to stick to the facts, avoid speculation and focus on the needs of the students, families involved and the school community. It is important to know the media will probably seek to interview friends of the victim and those associated with any alleged perpetrator. It will be emphasised to everyone in the school community that nobody should talk to the media except the Team Leader or his/her nominee.
- 2. Repercussions for the School Community:** In planning the school's response we will recognise that an event of this nature is likely to have various repercussions beyond the immediate shock and grief it causes. The school community will experience a range of emotions that may include fear, anger and disbelief. If the incident involves an alleged perpetrator, who is known to the students, there is a possibility of side taking or retaliation.
- 3. Long Term Effects:** We will also be aware of the long-term impact on the general school body and those involved. Where a violent crime has taken place, special consideration may be required with respect to the family and friends of a victim or alleged perpetrator. A trial will usually reactivate the crisis, and this can take place a long time after the event.
- 4. Providing Additional Support for Specific Groups:** Extra support may be required for high-risk groups and those most deeply affected. If there were witnesses to the event, they are likely to need special attention.
- 5. Guiding Parental Response:** Parental response can be a major factor in how students deal with what has happened. The school can help by providing information on how best to cope with the situation; this might include sending information home, arranging for small group meetings in the school and/or counselling as deemed appropriate and necessary.

- 6. Supporting Staff:** Staff are also likely to be deeply affected by such an event. It is important to provide specific support in this respect. Staff are much better equipped to help their students when their own personal needs have been addressed.

## **Appendix 2 - Media Statements:**

### **Sample Media Statement 1:**

It is with profound sadness that the Board of Management, staff and students of Columba College, have learned of the tragic death of \_\_\_\_\_. Our sincerest sympathy is extended to the family of \_\_\_\_\_. On hearing the tragic news, the Critical Incident Management Plan was put into immediate operation. The Critical Incident Management Team convened a meeting to ensure that students affected by the loss are cared for adequately. Procedures are in place to ensure that all in the school community affected by the loss are given all the help they need to cope at this time. The school is offering counselling and support for students and parents affected by this tragedy. Our thoughts and support are with everyone affected by this tragedy.

### **Sample Media Statement 2:**

It is with profound sadness that Columba College has learnt of the tragic death of one of our students. Our sincerest sympathy is extended to the bereaved family. On hearing the news, the schools Critical Incident Management Plan was put into immediate operation. The Critical Incident Management Team met to ensure that members of the school community affected by the loss received the help they need to cope at this time. Classes upset by the tragedy have received support and this will continue to be offered by trained personnel. Our thoughts and support are with the loved ones and friends of the deceased student.

### **Sample Media Statement 3:**

It is with profound sadness that the Board of Management, staff and students of Columba College have heard of the tragic news of \_\_\_\_\_. On hearing the news, the schools Critical Incident Management Plan was put into immediate operation. The Critical Incident Management Team met to ensure that students and staff affected by the crisis are cared for adequately. Procedures have been put in place to ensure that all in the school community affected by the crisis are given all the help they need to cope at this time.



### **Appendix 3 - General Letter/Communication to Parents/Guardians:**

Dear Parent/Guardian;

It is with profound sadness that Columba College have learnt of the tragic death of \_\_\_\_\_. Our sincerest sympathies is extended to the family and friends of \_\_\_\_\_. On hearing the news, the college's Critical Incident Management Plan was put into immediate operation. The Critical Incident Management Team met to ensure that student affected by the loss are cared for adequately. Procedures are in place to ensure that all in the school community, affected by the loss, are given all the help they need to cope at this time.

As you are the natural support for your child, he/she will want to discuss some feelings and thoughts with you. You can help by listening carefully, restating what you hear them say so they know you are really listening. You should tell them that it is okay to feel the way they do; that people react in different ways and that they should talk rather than bottle things up. You may also find that your child will look for comfort and support from their friends. This is a natural reaction from an adolescent. Grief can affect one physically as well as emotionally and these, and other symptoms, may be part of a grief reaction. If they persist, consult a doctor for a check-up. The length of the grieving period varies from individual to individual. If your child remains very distressed after six weeks or so, he/she may need additional support.

The following table highlights some of the reactions that your child may experience:

<b>Emotional and Physical</b>		<b>Mental and Behavioural</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Shock</li><li>• Fear</li><li>• Guilt</li><li>• Grief</li><li>• Tears</li><li>• Panic</li><li>• Denial</li><li>• Anxiety</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Emotional Outbursts</li><li>• Overwhelmed</li><li>• Nausea</li><li>• Fainting</li><li>• Pain</li><li>• Dizziness</li><li>• Weakness</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Confusion</li><li>• Blame</li><li>• Poor Concentration</li><li>• Disorientation</li><li>• Withdrawn</li><li>• Restlessness</li><li>• Let down</li><li>• Uncertainty</li></ul>



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Depression</li> <li>• Anger</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Palpitations</li> <li>• Breathing difficulties</li> </ul>	
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The College have extensive in-school supports and personnel that can support you and your child. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you require support and assistance.

Yours sincerely,

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Principal, Columba College

### **Emergency Contact List:**

<b>Agency</b>	<b>Contact Number</b>
Garda; Ambulance; Fire Brigade (if urgent)	999/112
Mullingar Garda Station	0449384000
Mullingar Hospital	0449340221
Mullingar Fire Brigade	0449332101
Local GP: Dr. D Brennan / Dr T Moore	0449374120
Local GP:	0449374120
Tusla Mullingar	0449353999
Child and Family Mental Health Service (CAMHS)	0449394219
National Educational and Psychological Services (NEPS): Dr. Sandra Delaney O’Gorman	044933 7023 Mobile with CIMT
Department of Education and Skills (DES)	018896400
State Examinations Commissions (SEC)	0906442700
Employee Assistance and Wellbeing Programme (EAWP)	1800411057
ESB Emergencies	1850372999
Bord Gais Emergencies	1850205050
Longford Westmeath Education and Training Board (LWETB)	0449348389
<b>Useful Numbers:</b>	
The Samaritans (Athlone & The Midlands)	090473133
Banardos	0449335282
Parentline – Helpline for Parents	1890927277
Pieta House Midlands	0906424111

**\*\*In the event of a Critical Incident involving a staff member, staff contact numbers and next of kin details are stored in a secure location that Principal, Deputy Principal and Secretary have access to\*\***