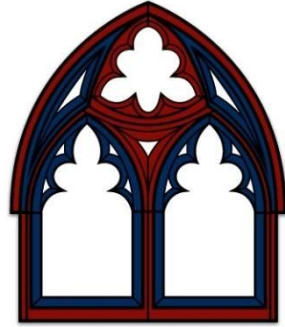


# DESMOND COLLEGE



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COLLEGE

- 1. STUDENT SUPPORT POLICY**
- 2. CRITICAL INCIDENT  
POLICY**

# Student Support Policy

## **Aim of the Policy**

Desmond College 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, through the Principal and teaching staff, has established a student support team (SST) who is responsible for the prevention, intervention and post-vention in relation to students whose welfare is deemed to be 'at risk' and in the event of a critical incident. A critical incident management plan is included in this document.

Our School Mission Statement states that:-

*We in Desmond College strive to support and encourage each individual within the school community to reach his/her full potential in a caring environment.*

*Bimis go leir ag obair le cheile.*

The school has taken a number of measures to create a coping, supportive and caring ethos in the school. The school has also formulated a number of policies and procedures to be followed with a view to ensuring the physical and psychological safety of both students and staff during the normal course of the school day and in the event of a critical incident.

Such policies include

- Student Support/Critical Incident Policy and Plan
- Health and Safety Policy and Procedures
- Pastoral Care Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Code of Behaviour
- Guidance and Counselling Policy and Plan
- S.P.H.E Programme
- Child Protection Policy and Procedures
- Substance Misuse Policy

- Campus Security Policy
- Signing Out Policy
- Day Trips and Sports Outings Policy
- Special Education Needs Policy
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### **Underpinning Principles and Goals to promote School Wellbeing**

- Personal attention to the value and development of every student
- Acknowledgement of and support for, each person's role in the school community
- Promoting an environment which meets student physical, social and emotional needs
- Use of Restorative Problem Solving
- Priority given to the nurturing of teaching and learning relationships
- Recognition of talents and abilities
- Clear values that promote a student centred ethos
- Strong collaborative leaderships between students and staff.
- Clarity of policies, roles, responsibilities and tasks
- Support for an engaging curriculum
- On-going monitoring of progress at every level for the student
- Accountability, support and evaluation at every level
- Involving all concerned in the life of the school

In relation to responding to crisis, the school will seek to:

- Provide a range of supports for members of the school community to call upon in a time of crisis and in the longer term.
- Have in place a policy for dealing with critical incidents in the context of the school
- Regularly review the structures of support and referral available in the school

### **Creation of a Coping, Supportive and Caring Ethos in the School**

Systems are 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**

Measures to address the physical safety of the school community include the following:

- We have an active Health and Safety Committee.

- The school has a Health and Safety Policy in place.
- Mr Tom Byrne is the Fire Safety Officer.
- Fire drills are held at least once a term.
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly inspected.
- A number of staff have been trained in First Aid and in Defibrillator use. Their names are listed beside the First Aid Box in reception and in the Staff Room and beside the Defibrillator in reception. All staff have been offered training in these areas.
- Ms Aisling Ryan is the First Aid Officer
- Parents are informed of the pre-opening supervision arrangements, whereby pupils can gain access to the school building from 8.15am.
- Expectations of general student behaviour, as laid out in the Code of Behaviour which encourage positive relations and promote the wellbeing of the whole school community and prohibit bullying in any form.
- The school has an Anti-Bullying Policy and Pastoral Care Policy

### **Psychological safety**

- The management and staff of Desmond College 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.
- Guidance and Counselling is a key resource available to all students in the school
- Wellbeing 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 and decision making. Promotion of mental health is an integral part of this provision.
- Staffs have received training for the teaching of Wellbeing SPHE and Wellbeing SPHE is timetabled for all Junior Cycle Students.
- Wellbeing Tutor Time is timetabled for all students.
- A Student Support Team and Care Team is in place to respond to day to day challenges of a psychological nature
- Relationships and Sexuality Education is timetabled for all Junior and Senior Cycle Students
- Staffs receive annual training on the Child Protection Procedures. The Designated Liaison Person (DLP) is Vourneen Gavin Barry and the Deputy Designated Liaison Person (DDLDP) is Elizabeth Cregan.
- Students who are identified as being at increased risk are referred to the Designated Liaison Person and/or to the Student Support Team, where 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.

- The school has a clear policy on bullying and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy.
- Staff members accept their role in the pastoral care of pupils and colleagues.
- Six Staff members have received Mind Out Training to help promote and support positive mental health.
- Six staff have received Friends For Life Training.
- The school has in place a staff wellbeing policy and plan which recognises that staff is a key resource in promoting our ethos.

### **Definition of a Student Support Team:**

A Student Support team is a group of staff who have volunteered to:

- Develop a school structure to work in a preventative way with students experiencing intense stress including child welfare/protection, self-harm, suicide, mental health, substance misuse etc.
- Lead the response of the school to a critical incident e.g. attempted suicide, sudden death, major event, fire, crash etc.

The SST is comprised of members with prior expertise and interest in student wellbeing and welfare. Each member of the team has a dedicated role and is responsible for the development and maintenance of an up to date SST folder.

The Team receive training and CPD each year.

### **The Members of the Student Support Team are:-**

Vourneen Gavin Barry  
Elizabeth Cregan  
Kerrie Collins  
Damien Carey  
Bernadine Enright  
Damien Culhane  
Jude Keane

### **The Critical Incident Team also include:-**

Donal Enright  
Trish Mc Ginnis/Claire Sheahan

### **The Purpose, Role and Responsibility of the SST:**

- To provide in-school support to students experiencing critical stress.

- To act a second tier referral within the school to the Care Team, the Guidance Counsellor and other key front line staff engaged in student support matters.
- To conduct evidence based planned observations and risk assessments on critical student support issues.
- To design, implement and review a plan of intervention to direct work with students in difficulty.
- To recommend that all interventions are carried out. This may include partnership with students, parents, school community and external support agencies.
- To maintain records of all intervention which have clear indicators and outcome data.
- To liaise with in-school management ( Year Heads, Tutors, Deputy and Principal) on an ongoing basis.
- To engage in team supervision once a term as a means of tracking plans and providing support to the team on its work.

### **Role of the Principal/Deputy**

- The Principal /Deputy oversee the remit of the team. It is recommended that one member of the Senior Management Team attends weekly meetings.

### **Function of the Student Support Team Coordinator: (Kerrie Collins, Guidance Counsellor.)**

- Liaises with the Principal/Deputy on the outcome of each meeting and on an ongoing basis to review the Critical Incident Plan, in the absence of Management from the meeting.
- Liaise with Principal to ensure that all students and staff profiles is up to date e.g. current telephone numbers, next of kin, parent/guardians contact details etc. on an annual basis.
- Responsible for the organisation of the SST meeting on a weekly basis.
- Agrees the agenda and ensures all minutes of team meetings are recorded
- Follow up with team members to support any actions
- Liaise at an interagency level with the ETB and other agencies as required.
- Facilitates annual induction and review of the SST and the Critical Incident Management Plan
- Prepares Annual Report for the ETB

- In the event of an unforeseen significant student at risk e.g. a student is missing from the school and neither the Principal nor Deputy Principal are available for the consultations, the coordinator is able to convene a Student Support Team meeting. It is recommended that a minimum of three members are available to attend. Other team members may be released throughout the day if required. A review meeting is convened at the end and a full report will be made available to the Principal/Deputy on the event, plan and outcome.

## **CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY**

### **Role and Responsibility of the Critical Incident Team**

#### **Function of Student Liaison in general (Kerrie Collins)**

- Liaise with Coordinator/Principal/Year Head to ensure student records up to date annually, mobile numbers, addresses etc.
- Maintain link between staff and students (take updates from Year heads on vulnerable students)
- Observes vulnerable students
- Alerts other staff to vulnerable students observing confidentiality boundaries
- Recommend referrals to Guidance Counsellor as appropriate
- Have student hand-outs ready in the event of critical incident
- Provides material as appropriate to colleagues
- Liaise with Principal

#### **Function of Staff Liaison in General (Damien Culhane & Jude Keane)**

- Ensure staff records up to date annually, mobile numbers, addresses etc
- Have staff hand-outs ready on handling a classroom session and common reactions after an incident
- Prepare a sample statement for Administrative staff for use when answering phone calls.
- Advises staff on the procedures for identifying high-risk students and outline what supports are available
- Outline relevant contacts/supports available to staff, including details of Employee Assistance Programme
- Liaise with Principal

### **Function of Parent Liaison in General (Bernadine Enright)**

- Identifies him/her self as the named contact for parents (groups)
- Is available to meet with parents (groups)
- Ensures that sample letters are typed up on the school's system and ready to for adaptation
- Have literature on potential reactions, coping with loss etc.
- Compile support information, contacts etc. to parents
- Have room designated for meeting parents in a critical incident
- Meets with individual parents as required
- Keeps a record of parents seen
- Liaise with Principal

### **Function of Media/Community Liaison (Damien Carey and Donal Enright)**

- Sets up annual meeting and maintains an up-to-date list of contacts including (NEPS, Garda Siochána, emergency services, See Emergency contacts list, ETB, Duty Social Worker, CAMHS, local GPs)
- Makes contacts list readily available to staff, SST, administrative staff, parents
- Maintains an up-to-date list of Parents' Council members
- Prepares a sample press statement on system
- Updates SST and staff on external agencies
- Liaise with Principal

### **Team Supervision**

Supervision is a process whereby an external supervisor is available daily by telephone and to visit the school if required to support the SST in fulfilling its role and responsibility. The Supervisor will meet with the SST once a term to review the student plans including the assessment of risk, referral pathways, records and team support. Individual supervision is available on request to any member of the STT.

Aim of supervision:

To equip team members with the knowledge and skills to intervene effectively with students on a range of critical student support matters.

- To assist the team to identify signs of risk.
- To develop and implement evidence based plans of intervention using reflective practice and problem-solving techniques.
- To attend to individual and/or team support and development issues.
- To clarify the SST roles and responsibilities
- To ensure accountability for the work undertaken by the team



- To provide regular and constructive feedback and review to the team on its assessments, student support plans and outcome of intervention.
- To ensure that records are maintained as per Limerick and Clare ETB standards.
- To review the supervision contract annually

***Teresa Crawford (Limerick and Clare ETB) and Gerard Dore (NEPS) are available for Team Supervision and support.***

### **The Critical Incident Management Plan (CIMP):**

#### **Aim:**

The aim of the CIMP is to help school management and staff to respond 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.

#### **Definition of a Critical Incident:**

The staff and management of Desmond College consider a critical incident to be:

***‘An incident or sequence of events which overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school and disrupts the running of the school.’***

Critical incidents may involve one or more students or staff members, or members of the school community. For example:

- 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
- An accident/tragedy in the wider community
- A physical attack on a staff member, student or school community
- Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism, etc
- The disappearance of a member of the school community

## **Critical Incident (CI) Procedures**

### **Immediate Response: Short Term up to 12 hours**

#### **Summary Checklist for Principal/Deputy and Coordinator**

- The Principal has overall responsibility in the event of a critical incident and will facilitate the operation of the CI plan
- Gather the facts – what has happened? When? Where? How? Who is injured or dead?
- Consult appropriate agencies (e.g. ETB, NEPS, Garda Síochána, emergency services, See Emergency contacts list, ETB, DES, SEC)
- Gather together the SST
- Organise the supervision of students
- Have administrative staff photocopy appropriate literature.
- Convene a staff meeting and inform of immediate plan
- Identify high-risk students and staff
- Appoint someone to deal with phone queries
- Organise timetable for the day
- Maintain the normal school routine when at all possible
- Inform students
- Inform parents/guardians
- Make contact with bereaved family, including a visit to the family
- Withdraw siblings
- Organise support
- Prepare a statement/respond to the media
- Draft a letter for parents
- Meet with SST to review the day
- In the event of a sudden death, including a death by suicide it is not recommended that the school host a guard of honour or in any way gives undue attention which may glamorise the tragedy

#### **Role of Principal/Coordinator in a CI**

#### **Agenda for the first meeting with the CIT, chaired by Principal and facilitated on an ongoing basis by the Coordinator**

- Agree a statement of facts for staff, students, parents and the media.
- Delegation of responsibilities of the SST
- Discussion of what support services to contact
- Preparation (possibly written) of what to say to staff
- Preparation (possibly written) of what to say to students
- Preparation (possibly written) of what to say to media
- Make a decision about school closure
- Organise the schedule/timetable for the day

- Ensure that a phone line remains open for the day and available for enquiries
- Appoint someone to handle phone enquiries and deal with the media
- Organise a staff meeting
- Organise the supervision of students during any staff meetings
- Preparation of a letter for parents
- Copying and printing of letters for parents
- Deciding which external agencies should be involved

### **Medium Term Actions 24-72 hours**

- Review events of first 24 hours
- Arrange support for individual students/learner, groups of students parents/guardians etc.
- Plan for the reintegration of students and staff
- Liaise with family regarding arrangements
- In consultation with parents/guardians arrange attendance and participation at service
- Decide on School closure

### **Longer Term Actions**

- Monitor students, remove the deceased students name from school systems including text messaging
- Evaluate response to incident and amend plan appropriately
- Formalise the critical incident plan for the future
- Keep new staff, students, parents informed about SST policy
- Decide appropriate way to deal with anniversaries
- To ensure that the SST meet to review the response to the CI and to process this response accordingly

### **Role of Student Liaison in a CI (Kerrie Collins)**

- Arrange access to student records
- Maintain link between staff and students (take updates from Year heads on vulnerable students)
- Observes vulnerable students
- Alerts other staff to vulnerable students
- Advise and recommends counselling as required
- Provides material as appropriate to students
- Provides material as appropriate to colleagues
- Set up a 'quiet room' to share reactions and feelings
- Advise students on possible reactions
- Keep a record of students seen internally and referrals made to external agencies

- Liaise with Principal on an on-going basis

### **Role of Staff Liaison in a CI (Damien Culhane & Jude Keane)**

- Leads briefing of staff on the facts as they are known. Take questions from staff and outline the routine for the day.
- Help teachers to prepare for questions from students. Outline possible reactions and distribute handouts on handling a class post a CI.
- Prepare a statement of facts to be read out to all students.
- Advises staff on the procedures for identifying high-risk students and outline what supports are available.
- Distribute appropriate material for staff.
- Meet staff again later in the day to update information, to offer support and to further identify high-risk students and act as required
- Ensure quiet locations are made available in school
- Identify support services within the school
- Establish the need for outside services and provide contacts
- Makes contact with all staff including those who are absent on Maternity or Sick Leave etc.
- Be aware of vulnerable staff members and advise them re counselling and support as appropriate
- Liaise with Principal on an on-going basis

### **Role of Parent Liaison in CI (Bernadine Enright)**

- Visits bereaved family with Principal
- Identifies him/her self as the named contact for parents (groups)
- Is available to support the Principal/Deputy to meet with parents (groups) and or take phone calls.
- Facilitates meetings with parents and manages ‘questions and answers’
- Get letters typed and organise volunteers to help envelope and post
- Distributes literature on potential reactions, coping with loss recommended by NEPS
- Distributes support information, contacts etc. to parents
- Sets up room for meeting parents
- Meets with individual parents or coordinates support for parents who arrive at the school unannounced
- Keeps a record of parents seen
- Liaise with Principal on an on-going basis

## **Role of Media/Community Liaison in a CI (Damien Carey and Donal Enright)**

- Assists Principal in contacting relevant agencies
- Makes contacts list readily available to staff, SST, administrative staff, parents
- Prepares a draft press statement for delivery by Principal
- Delivers press statement with Principal
- Support Principal in all enquiries from the media and identify a room to contain media if they arrive on campus.
- Supports Principal in contact with Communication section of the DES
- Liaises with community agencies for support and onward referral
- Updates SST and staff on external agencies
- Liaise with Principal on an on-going basis

## **Administrative Staff (Claire Sheahan and Trish McGinnis)**

- Maintains up-to-date telephone records of parents, teachers, emergency services
- With coordinator of SST has prepared statement ready for telephone calls from parents and takes telephone calls recording any significant interaction.
- Ensures that templates of letters etc are on the school's system in advance and ready for adaptation
- Organises photocopying of materials needed
- Prepares and sends out letters, texts, e-mails and faxes with support from staff. ***Be careful not to send text to bereaved family***
- Liaise with Principal on an on-going basis

## **Funeral Arrangements**

The Principal and Deputy will call to the home of the deceased to sympathise with the family on behalf of the school community.

They will liaise with the family on any funeral arrangements. Each situation is to be taken as a unique case – on some occasions a class or a year group or whole school may attend a funeral- each situation is different and will be decided on in consultation with the family

The school will remain open for all students if the deceased is a student of the school.

If the deceased is a staff member, the school will close on the day of the funeral to allow all staff to attend.

### **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 school secretary will have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters, photocopying materials, etc.

### **Confidentiality**

The management and staff of Desmond College 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 as in the absence of an autopsy and without the consent of the parents/carers. The phrases 'tragic death' or 'sudden death' may be used instead. Similarly, the word 'murder' will not be used until it is legally established that a murder was committed.

