

Scoil Mhuire gan Smál, Cill Choirle

Critical Incident Policy



Policy Details

Name of Policy: Critical Incident Policy

Date Developed:

Signed by

Date Reviewed:

Chairperson: *Geraldine Kirk*

Ref Code:

Principal: *Dona Kirby*

Edition:

Date commenced: *23rd June 2020*

1. Policy Statement

- 1.1 Scoil Mhuire gan Smál is committed to protecting the well being of our pupils and staff by providing a safe, tolerant and well catered for environment as outlined in our school philosophy statement.
- 1.2 The BoM through the Principal, the Staff and the Parents Association has drawn up a Critical Incident Management Plan (CIMP). They have established a Critical Incidents Management Team to steer the development and implementation of the plan.

2. Policy Purpose

- 2.1 The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance on the CIMP.
- 2.2 The aim of the CIMP is to help school management and staff to react quickly and effectively in the event of an incident.
- 2.3 To enable us to maintain a sense of control and to ensure that appropriate support is offered to students and staff.
- 2.4 Having a good plan should also help ensure that the impact on students and staff will be limited. It should enable us to effect a return to normality as soon as possible.

3. Policy Scope

The policy applies to all students and staff, parents and persons associated with the school.

4. Definition

- 4.1 A critical incident is any incident or sequence of events which overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school and disrupts the running of the school.

Examples include:

- Death, major illness/outbreak of disease
- Criminal incidents
- Major accidents, serious injury
- Suicide (level 2)
- Civil unrest, war (level 1)
- Fire, natural and technological disaster (level 3)
- Disappearance of student from home or school (level 3)
- Unauthorised removal of student from school or home (level 1)
- World events that may affect the student body and/or staff. May be a need for provision of discussion and involvement in ceremonies e.g. 9/11, tsunami (level 1)

4.2 Response Levels

4.2.1 Level 1

The death of a student or staff member who was terminally ill; the death of parent/sibling; a fire in school not resulting in serious injury; serious damage to school property

4.2.2 Level 2

The sudden death of a student or staff member.

4.2.3 Level 3

An accident/event involving a number of students; a violent death; an incident with a high media profile or involving a number of schools.

5. Current Supportive Practice

5.1 Physical Safety:

- 5.1.1 Regular fire drills and evacuation plan
- 5.1.2 First Aid and AED
- 5.1.3 Upkeep of fire exits and fire extinguishers
- 5.1.4 Policy of supervision of students
- 5.1.5 CPD by staff e.g. asthma, epilepsy training, first aid, Code of Discipline and Behaviour, Anti-Bullying Policy

5.2 Psychological Safety:

- 5.2.1 The management and staff of Scoil Mhuire gan Smál 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.
 - 5.2.1.1 Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is integrated into the work of the school. Issues such as grief and loss; communication skills; stress and anger management; resilience; conflict management; problem solving; help-seeking; bullying; decision making and prevention of alcohol and drug misuse are addressed in the SPHE curriculum. Promotion of mental health is an integral part of this provision.
 - 5.2.1.2 Staff have access to training for their role in SPHE.
 - 5.2.1.3 Staff are familiar with the Child Protection Procedures and the name of the Designated Liaison Person.
 - 5.2.1.4 Books and resources on difficulties affecting the primary school student are available.

- 5.2.1.5 Information is provided on mental health in general and such specific areas as signs and symptoms of depression and anxiety.
- 5.2.1.6 The school has developed links with a range of external agencies – NEPS, Tusla and HSE.
- 5.2.1.7 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.
- 5.2.1.8 The school has a clear Anti-Bullying Policy and deals with incidents of bullying in accordance with this policy.
- 5.2.1.9 There is a care system in place in the school using the “Continuum of Support” approach which is outlined in the HEPS documents published on 2007 for primary schools, available on www.education.ie
- 5.2.1.10 Students who are identified as being at risk are referred to the designated staff member (e.g. support teacher), concerns are explored and the appropriate level of assistance and support is provided. Parents/guardians are informed, and where appropriate, a referral is made to an appropriate agency.
- 5.2.1.11 Staff are informed about how to access support for themselves.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

The Critical Incident Management Team and their roles are as follows:

Role	Name
Leadership Role	Donna Kirby (Principal)
Staff Liaison Role	Aisling Fahy (Deputy Principal)
Student Liaison/Pastoral Role	Catherine Donnelly
Parent/Family Liaison Role	Donna Kirby, Geraldine Kirk
Community Agency Liaison Role	SET, Aisling Fahy
Media Role	Donna Kirby
Administration Role	Ciara McCabe
Chaplaincy Role	Fr. Brian MacRaois
B.O.M. Representative	Geraldine Kirk

Table 1: Roles and Responsibilities

6.1 Leadership Role

Team Leader: A person who carries authority and can make decisions during a crisis (e.g. school closure, attendance at memorial services, etc.)

The Team Leader will:

- 6.1.1 Confirm the event
- 6.1.2 Activate the Critical Incident Response Team and co-ordinate tasks of the team
- 6.1.3 Liaise with the Gardaí/Emergency services in conjunction with the Community Liaison person
- 6.1.4 Liaise with Board of Management, Department of Education and/or NEPS as appropriate
- 6.1.5 Lead briefing meetings for staff on the facts as known, give staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions, outline the routine for the day
- 6.1.6 Liaise with the affected family/families
- 6.1.7 Clarify facts surrounding event
- 6.1.8 Decide how news will be communicated to different groups (staff, pupils, outside school)
- 6.1.9 Ensure provision of ongoing support to staff and students
- 6.1.10 Facilitate any appropriate memorial events
- 6.1.11 Review plan

Note: In the absence of the Team Leader, the Staff Liaison Officer will assume the Team Leader role.

6.2 Staff Liaison Role

Staff Liaison: A staff member known and trusted by staff

The Staff Liaison person:

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

6.3 Student Liaison Role

Student Liaison: A trusted and familiar figure to the students. A bigger school may need a number of such people.

The Student Liaison person:

- 6.3.1 Liaises with other staff and/or vulnerable students (appropriately)
- 6.3.2 Provides materials for students (from their critical incident folder)
- 6.3.3 Maintains student contact records
- 6.3.4 Looks after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room where agreed

6.4 Family Liaison Role

Family Liaison: Someone known to parent/guardians. This person should be comfortable speaking before a large group and have skills to manage emotional reactions of individual or groups of parents.

The Family Liaison person:

- 6.4.1 Visits the bereaved family with the team leader
- 6.4.2 Arranges meetings, if held
- 6.4.3 May facilitate such meetings, and manage 'questions and answers' sessions
- 6.4.4 Manages the 'consent' issues in accordance with agreed school policy
- 6.4.5 Ensures that sample letters are prepared and available on the school's IT system ready for adaptation
- 6.4.6 Sets up room for meetings with parents
- 6.4.7 Maintains a record of parents seen
- 6.4.8 Meets with individual parents
- 6.4.9 Provides appropriate materials for parents (from their critical incident folder).

6.5 Community Agency Liaison

Community Agency Liaison: Someone with good contacts with agencies and relevant individuals in the community.

The Community Liaison person:

- 6.5.1 Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of
 - Key parents, such as members of the Parents Association
 - Emergency support services and other external contacts and resources
- 6.5.2 Liaises with agencies in the community for support and onward referral
- 6.5.3 Is alert to the need to check credentials of individuals offering support
- 6.5.4 Coordinates the involvement of these agencies
- 6.5.5 Reminds agency staff to wear name badges when attending the school or meetings
- 6.5.6 Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies

6.6 Media Liaison

Media Liaison: Someone with good interpersonal skills who would be comfortable talking to the media by phone or in person. A person who is able to set limits without being offensive.

The Media Liaison person:

- 6.6.1 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.)
- 6.6.2 In the event of an incident, will liaise where necessary with relevant teacher unions etc.
- 6.6.3 Will draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews (as agreed by school management)

6.7 Administration Role

- 6.7.1 Maintenance of up to date telephone numbers of
 - Parents/Guardians
 - Teachers
 - Emergency services
- 6.7.2 Takes telephone calls and notes those that need a response
- 6.7.3 Ensures that templates are available on the schools IT system and ready for adaptation
- 6.7.4 Prepares and send out letters, emails and texts
- 6.7.5 Photocopies materials as needed
- 6.7.6 Maintains records

6.8 Chaplaincy Role

- 6.8.1 Be available as personal and spiritual support to staff, parents and students as appropriate
- 6.8.2 Visit home(s), if appropriate
- 6.8.3 Assist with prayer services
- 6.8.4 Make contact with other local clergy as required

7. Procedure

- 7.1 The Principal, in consultation with the CIMT will carry out an initial assessment of the incident/event to determine the level of response.
- 7.2 The CIMT will meet to agree and implement the CIMP in line with the short, medium and long term actions.
- 7.3 For an incident requiring a level 1 response, it may be sufficient to talk to NEPS by phone and refer to the Responding to Critical Incidents Guidelines and Resource Manual.
- 7.4 The incidents requiring levels 2 and 3 responses, contact NEPS. Depending on the incident, a psychologist will visit the school.
- 7.5 The Principal will follow up with CIMT regularly throughout each day, in line with the agreed action plans.
- 7.6 The Principal will ensure all the necessary records are completed and up to date.
- 7.7 The Staff Liaison person will ensure that any absent staff members are kept informed.
- 7.8 The Student Liaison person will check with class teachers to note any absentees who may need to be contacted.
- 7.9 In making all plans and in all communication, Scoil Mhuire gan Smál will have regard for different religious traditions, faiths and beliefs of the people involved.
- 7.10 The Staff Liaison person will endeavour to provide the necessary supports to staff involved i.e. parents/family meetings.

8. Actions

8.1 SHORT-TERM ACTIONS (DAY 1)

Task (to be completed as appropriate to the incident)	Name
Gather accurate information (who, what, when, where?)	Donna Kirby
Convene a CIMT meeting	Donna Kirby
Contact external agencies	Donna Kirby Aisling Fahy
Arrange supervision for students/alternative room if necessary	Aisling Fahy
Send text to parents if school must remain closed	Donna Kirby, Ciara McCabe
Hold staff meeting	Donna Kirby
Arrange schedule for the day	All staff
Inform students (close friends and students with learning difficulties may need to be told separately)	Class Teachers , Catherine Donnelly
Compile a list of vulnerable students	Catherine Donnelly
Ensure that a quiet place can be made for students	Catherine Donnelly
Contact/visit the bereaved/affected family	Donna Kirby/Class Teacher/Geraldine Kirk, Fr. Brian MacRaois
Prepare and agree media statement and deal with the media	Donna Kirby, Geraldine Kirk
Inform parents/guardians	Donna Kirby, Ciara McCabe
Hold end of the day staff briefing – Create action plan for the next few days eg. Alternative accommodation, school closures, staffing etc.	Donna Kirby Aisling Fahy

Table 2: Short-Term Actions

8.2 MEDIUM-TERM ACTIONS (DAY 2 AND FOLLOWING DAYS)

Task	Name
Convene a CIMT meeting to review the events of day 1 etc.	Donna Kirby
Meet external agencies	Donna Kirby
Meet whole staff as needed	Donna Kirby
Review school schedule as appropriate, and consider school closure if necessary, in consultation with school management	All staff
Arrange support for students, staff, parents/ guardians as needed	Donna Kirby / Aisling Fahy / Catherine Donnelly / Geraldine Kirk
Visit the injured as appropriate	Donna Kirby / Class Teacher
Liaise with affected/bereaved family regarding ongoing support/funeral arrangements as needed	Donna Kirby Fr. Brian Mac Ráois
Agree an attendance and participation at funeral service, where appropriate	Donna Kirby / Aisling Fahy / Catherine Donnelly
Preparation of students attending the funeral	Catherine Donnelly / Class Teacher
Facilitation of students/staffs responses, e.g. Sympathy cards, Flowers, Book of Condolences, etc.	Catherine Donnelly
Agree process for ongoing feedback on vulnerable students	Catherine Donnelly
Ensure continued communication with absent staff and pupils	Aisling Fahy / Catherine Donnelly
Plan for re-integration of students/staff affected by the incident	Aisling Fahy / Catherine Donnelly
Review plan from Day 1 re: actions to be completed and implemented	CIMT

Table 3: Medium-Term Actions

8.3 LONGER TERM ACTIONS (BEYOND 72 HOURS)

Task	Name
Review action plan from previous days: Any outstanding actions or communications.	CIMT
Monitor students for signs of continuing distress	Class Teachers Catherine Donnelly
Liaise with agencies regarding referrals	Donna Kirby
Plan for return of bereaved/affected student(s)/staff members	Donna Kirby / Aisling Fahy / Catherine Donnelly / Class Teacher
Plan for giving of memory box or book of condolences to bereaved family	Donna Kirby / Aisling Fahy / Catherine Donnelly
Decide on memorials and anniversaries	BOM / Staff, Parents and Students
Ensure staff members are aware of which pupils were affected, and in what way	Donna Kirby / Aisling Fahy / Class Teachers
Review response to incident and amend the plan	Staff / BOM

Table 4: Longer Term Actions

References

- Responding to Critical Incidents Guidelines and Resources for Schools (NEPS 2016)
- Suicide Prevention in Schools: Best Practice Guidelines (IAS, National Suicide Review Group (2002)
- Well-Being in Post-Primary School Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention (DES, DOH, HSE 2013)
- Well-Being in Primary Schools – Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion (DES, DOH, HSE 2015)

Emergency Contact List

Agency:	Address/Contact:	Number:
Garda Station	Dundalk	042 – 938 8400
Community Guard	Frank Noonan (<i>Hackballscross</i>)	087 – 832 3737
Hospital	Lourdes Hospital Drogheda	041 – 983 7601
	Louth County Hospital	042 – 933 4701
Fire Brigade	Dundalk	042 – 933 4666
Local G.P.	Shane Gleeson (<i>Lis na Dara</i>)	042 – 932 0038
NEPS Regional Office	Donore Rd. Industrial Estate, Drogheda, Co. Louth, A92EC85	041 – 987 6940
CAMHS	Child Care Unit, St. Mary's Hospital, Drogheda	041 – 983 0990
HSE – Community Care Services	Dublin Rd, Dundalk, Co. Louth	042 – 933 2287
Parish Priest	Fr. Gerry Campbell	087 – 648 3919
BOM Chairperson	Geraldine Kirk	086 – 340 9353
DES (Dept Education & Skills)	Marlborough St, Dublin 1, D01RC96	01 – 889 6400
DES Inspectorate	Marlborough St, Dublin 1, D01RC96	01 – 889 6553
INTO	35 Parnell Square, D01ET35	01 – 804 7700
Tusla Child & Family Agency	Navan	046-9098560 <i>Out of hours 6pm-6am 0818-776315</i>
Employee Assistance Service		1800 411 057

School Eircode:

A91A596