

# Scoil Mhuire, Moylagh

## CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT POLICY



Scoil Mhuire 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 *Emma Colgan, Principal*, has drawn up a Critical Incident Management Plan as one element of the school's policies and plans.

### Review and Research

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

- Responding to Critical Incidents Guidelines and Resources for Schools (NEPS 201 6)
- Suicide Prevention in Schools: Best Practice Guidelines (IAS, National Suicide Review Group (2002)
- Suicide Prevention in the Community - A Practical Guide (HSE 2011)
- Well-Being in Primary Schools - Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion (DES, DOH, HSE 201 5)

### "Critical Incident" – Our Definition

The staff and management of *Scoil Mhuire* recognise a critical incident to be "an incident or sequence of events that overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school". Critical incidents may involve one or more students or staff members, or members of our local community. Types of incidents might include:

- *The death of a member of the school community through accident, violence, suicide or suspected suicide or other unexpected death*
- *An intrusion into the school*
- *An accident involving members of the school community (e.g. 'Navan Bus Crash')*
- *An accident/tragedy in the wider community*
- *Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism, etc*
- *The disappearance of a member of the school community / Disappearance of student from home or school (e.g. Middleton incident in Cork)*
- *Death, major illness/outbreak of disease (Footh/Mouth)*
- *Criminal incidents (e.g. Dunblane shooting, Shooting at First Communion in Ballymun)*
- *Suicide*
- *Civil unrest, war (refugees may be traumatised by events that happened elsewhere)*
- *Fire, natural and technological disaster (e.g. school ceiling collapsing in Cork)*
- *Unauthorised removal of student from school or home.*

## **Aim**

The aim of our CIMP is to help school management and staff to react quickly and effectively in the event of an incident, to enable us to maintain a sense of control and to ensure that appropriate support is offered to students and staff. Our plan should also help ensure that the effects on the students and staff will be limited. It enables us to effect a return to normality as soon as possible.

## **Creation of a coping supportive and caring ethos in the school**

We have put systems in place to help to build resilience in both staff and students, thus preparing them to cope with a range of life events. These include measures to address both the physical and psychological safety of the school community.

### **Physical safety**

- Evacuation plan formulated
- Regular fire drills occur
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
- Pre-opening supervision – School pupils are supervised from 9.10 – 9.15am. They are collected by teachers then.
- School doors locked during class time
- Rules of the playground – pupils are not allowed to leave the premises without permission.

### **Psychological safety**

The management and staff of *Scoil 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.

- Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is integrated into the work of the school. It is addressed in the curriculum by addressing issues such as grief and loss; communication skills; stress and anger management; resilience; conflict management; problem solving; help-seeking; bullying; decision making and prevention of alcohol and drug misuse. Promotion of mental health is an integral part of this provision.
- Staff have access to training for their role in SPHE.
- Staff are familiar with the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures.
- Books and resources on difficulties affecting the primary school student are available.
- Information is provided on mental health in general and such specific areas as signs and symptoms of depression and anxiety.
- The school has developed links with a range of external agencies – list these agencies – NEPS, Tusla, HSE, Rainbows.
- 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. Eg Internet safety.
- The school has a clear policy on bullying and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy
- There is a care system in place in the school using the "Continuum of Support" approach.
- Students who are identified as being at risk are referred to the designated staff member, concerns are explored and the appropriate level of assistance and support is provided. Parents are informed, and where appropriate, a referral is made to an appropriate agency.
- Staff are informed about how to access support for themselves.

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

A CIMT has been established in line with best practice. The members of the team were selected on a voluntary basis and will retain their roles for at least one school year. The members of the team will meet annually to review and update the policy and plan. A dedicated critical incident folder is on file in the office. This contains a copy of the policy and plan and materials particular to each teachers' role, to be used in the event of an incident.

**Team leader:** *Emma Colgan*

#### **Role**

- Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting
- Coordinates the tasks of the team
- Liaises with the Board of Management; DES; NEPS; SEC
- Liaises with the bereaved family
- Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of
  - Key parents, such as members of the Parents Council
  - Emergency support services and other external contacts and resources
- Liaises with agencies in the community for support and onward referral
- Is alert to the need to check credentials of individuals offering support
- Coordinates the involvement of these agencies
- Reminds agency staff to wear name badges
- Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies

*(Note – Emer Nolan will take the lead in the absence of the team leader.)*

**Garda liaison** *Peter Gilsenan*

#### **Role**

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

**Staff liaison** *Emma Colgan*

#### **Role**

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

**Student liaison** *Emer Nolan*

#### **Role**

- Alerts other staff to vulnerable students (appropriately)
- Provides materials for students (from their critical incident folder)
- Maintains student contact records (R1).
- Looks after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room where agreed

**Parent liaison** *Emma Colgan & Emer Nolan*

**Role**

- Visits the bereaved family with the team leader
- Arranges parent meetings, if held
- May facilitate such meetings, and manage 'questions and answers'
- Manages the 'consent' issues in accordance with agreed school policy
- Ensures that sample letters are typed up, on the school's system and ready for adaptation
- Sets up room for meetings with parents
- Maintains a record of parents seen
- Meets with individual parents
- Provides appropriate materials for parents (from their critical incident folder)

**Media liaison** *Emer Nolan / Emma Colgan/ Chairperson of Board of Management*

**Role**

- Designate a spokesperson. (Chairperson/Peter Gilsenan)
- Prepare a brief statement
- Protect the family's privacy
- Gather accurate information
- It is important to obtain accurate information about the incident
  1. What happened, where and when?
  2. What is the extent of the injuries?
  3. How many are involved and what are their names?
  4. Is there a risk of further injury?
  5. What agencies have been contacted already?
- Contact appropriate agencies
  1. Emergency services
  2. Medical services
  3. H.S.E. services
  4. NEPS
  5. BOM
  6. DES/School Inspector
- Convene a meeting with Key Staff/Critical Management Team (8.30 a.m.)
  1. Organise a staff meeting, if appropriate (9.00 a.m.)
  2. Organise timetable/routine for the day. (Adhering to the normal school routine is important, if this is possible)
  3. Class teachers to take note of any absentees who might need to be contacted, list of friends etc, or any other relevant information and give to the Student Liaison person.
  4. Arrange supervision of students
- Liaise with the family regarding funeral arrangements/memorial service

**Administrator** *Emer Nolan / Maria Duffy*

**Role**

- Maintenance of up to date telephone numbers of
  - Parents or guardians
  - Teachers
  - Emergency services
- Takes telephone calls and notes those that need to be responded to
- Ensures that templates are on the schools system in advance and ready for adaptation

- Prepares and sends out letters, emails and texts
- Photocopies materials needed
- Maintains records

#### **Record keeping** *Emma Colgan / Emer Nolan / Maria Duffy*

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.

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

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

Management and staff of *Scoil Mhuire* have a responsibility to protect the privacy and good name of people involved in any incident and will be sensitive to the consequences of public statements. Members of school staff will bear this in mind, and seek to ensure that students do so also, e.g. the term 'suicide' will not be used unless there is solid information that death was due to suicide, *and* that the family involved consents to its use. The phrases 'tragic death' or 'sudden death' may be used instead. Similarly, the word 'murder' should not be used until it is legally established that a murder was committed. The term 'violent death' may be used instead.

<b>Critical Incident Rooms</b>	
In the event of a critical incident, the following rooms are designated for the indicated purposes	
<b>Room Name:</b>	<b>Designated Purpose:</b>
<i>Staff Room</i>	Main room for meeting staff
<i>Hall</i>	Meetings with students
<i>Hall</i>	Meetings with parents
<i>Hall / Principals office</i>	Meetings with media
<i>Learning Support Room</i>	Individual sessions with students
<i>Hall</i>	Meetings with other visitors

#### **Consultation and communication regarding the plan**

All staff were consulted and their views canvassed in the preparation of this policy and plan. The Board of Management was also consulted and asked for their comments.

Our school's final policy and plan in relation to responding to critical incidents has been presented to all staff. Each member of the critical incident team has a personal copy of the plan.

All new and temporary staff will be informed of the details of the plan by Emma Colgan.

The plan will be updated annually - September.

<b>Critical Incident Management Team</b>		
<b>Role</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Phone</b>
<b>Team leader:</b>	<i>Emma Colgan</i>	087 246 4550
<b>Garda liaison</b>	<i>Peter Gilsean</i>	087 060 1562
<b>Staff liaison</b>	<i>Emma Colgan</i>	087 246 4550
<b>Student liaison</b>	<i>Emer Nolan</i>	087 920 5076
<b>Community liaison</b>	<i>Emma Colgan</i>	087 246 4550
<b>Parent liaison</b>	<i>Catriona Egenton</i>	087 945 3344
<b>Media liaison</b>	<i>Emer Nolan / Emma Colgan</i>	
<b>Administrator</b>	<i>Maria Duffy / Emma Colgan / Emer Nolan</i>	087 238 1656

### Short term actions – Day 1

<b>Task</b>	<b>Name</b>
<b>Gather accurate information</b>	Team Leader
<b>Who, what, when, where?</b>	Team Leader
<b>Convene a CIMT meeting – specify time and place clearly</b>	Team Leader
<b>Contact external agencies</b>	Emer Nolan
<b>Arrange supervision for students</b>	Staff
<b>Hold staff meeting</b>	All staff
<b>Agree schedule for the day</b>	Team Leader
<b>Inform students – (close friends and students with learning difficulties may need to be told separately)</b>	Teachers
<b>Compile a list of vulnerable students</b>	Teachers
<b>Prepare and agree media statement and deal with media</b>	Board of Management
<b>Inform parents</b>	Board of Management / Team Leader
<b>Hold end of day staff briefing</b>	Team Leader

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

Task	Name
Convene a CIMT meeting to review the events of day 1	Team Leader
Meet external agencies	Team Leader
Meet whole staff	Team Leader
Arrange support for students, staff, parents	Team Leader
Visit the injured	Team Leader
Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements	Team Leader
Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service	Team Leader
Make decisions about school closure	BOM

## Follow-up – beyond 72 hours

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



## EMERGENCY CONTACT LIST

AGENCY	CONTACT NUMBERS
Garda	Kells Garda Station: 046 928 0820 Oldcastle Garda Station: 049 854 1102 Liason - Peter Gilsean: 087 060 1562
Hospital	Mullingar: 044 934 0221 Navan: 046 907 8500
Fire Brigade	999 or 112
Local GPs	Dr Paula McKeivitt, Oldcastle Health Centre 049 854 1118
HSE	
Community Care Team	
Tusla, Child and Family Agency	Enterprise Centre, Trim Road, Navan, Co. Meath 046 909 8560 <a href="mailto:CPWRF.LHMH@tusla.ie">CPWRF.LHMH@tusla.ie</a>
Child and Family Mental Health Service (CAMHS)	046 907 9350
School Inspector	Elizabeth Sheridan elizabeth_sheridan@education.gov.ie
NEPS Psychologist	Jo Flanagan 076 110 8635 / 087 257 8803
DES	Athlone: 0906 48 3600 Alternative - Dublin: 01 889 6400
INTO	01 804 7700 Lo Call 1850 708 708
Clergy	Fr Ray Kelly 087 225 0819
Employee Assistance Service	1800 411 057

This Critical Incident Management Policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 3/5/18

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Signed:

Colin Smith

Chairperson of the Board of Management

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Signed:

Emma Colgan

Principal/Secretary of the Board of Management