



Policy on Critical Incidents

Introduction

The key to managing a critical incident is planning. Schools are strongly advised to develop a policy in relation to critical incident response.

Scoil Bhríde aims to protect the well-being of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times.

Creation of a coping supportive and caring ethos in the school

At Scoil Bhríde, 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.

1. *Physical safety:*

Some of the measures taken by the school to ensure the physical safety of the students include:

- There is a physically safe environment
- Evacuation plan formulated and clearly visible in each room
- Regular fire drills
- Fully functional and regularly serviced Fire Alarm System
- Fire exits and extinguishers regularly checked
- Health and Safety Plan (and rules)
- Supervision during all breaks
- Code of Behaviour
- Induction for new students and staff

2. *Psychological safety*

The management and staff of Scoil Bhríde 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 issues and to provide opportunities for reflection and discussion.



Some of the measures taken by the school to ensure the psychological wellbeing of the students include:

- The SPHE, RSE and Stay Safe programmes delivered in the school cover such areas as emotions, communicating, stress and anger management, conflict resolution, problem- solving, seeking help, decision making, substance abuse prevention and safety skills.
- Circle time is a teaching methodology used in classes.
- The school has developed and is implementing a comprehensive anti-bullying policy.
- The school aims to foster an environment where pupils and staff feel they can talk openly about problems that concern them and seek help when necessary.
- Children are allowed to choose to whom they want to talk when this is needed.
- Staff are familiar with the school's Child Safeguarding Policy, Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures and procedures for dealing with concerns or disclosures.
- The school has a designated and deputy liaison person.
- The school has developed links with outside agencies which may be contacted in the event of a critical incident and for onward referral of pupils and staff following a critical incident.
- NEPS links and support for wellbeing and wellbeing seminars issued to staff.

Review and Research

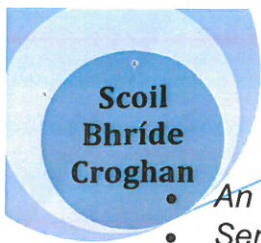
We have consulted resource documents available to schools on www.education.ie and www.nosp.ie including:

- Responding to Critical Incidents Guidelines and Resources for Schools (NEPS 2016)
- Well-Being in Post-Primary Schools 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)

Define what you mean by the term 'critical incident'

The staff and management of *Scoil Bhríde* 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*



- *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*

Aim

The aim of the Critical Incident Policy 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. Having a good plan should also help ensure that the effects on the students and staff will be limited. It should enable us to affect 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 in the school yard (9.10-9.20 a.m.)
- School doors locked during class time
- Rules of the playground

Psychological safety

The management and staff of *Scoil Bhríde* 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 S.P.H.E.
- Staff are familiar with the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures.
- The school has developed links with a range of external agencies – e.g. NEPS/ CAMHS etc.



- 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 Circulars 0022/2010 (Primary).
- 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 which is outlined in the NEPS documents published on 2007 for primary schools. These documents are available on www.education.ie
- Students who are identified as being at risk are referred to the designated staff member (e.g. guidance counsellor or support teacher), 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. This contains a copy of the policy and plan and materials particular to their role, to be used in the event of an incident.

Team leader: Caroline Reynolds/ Ethan Byrne

Role: Principal

- 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
- Liaises with the bereaved family

Garda liaison: Ruth Hogan

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

Staff liaison: Karen Lynch

- 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
- 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 EAS and gives them the contact number.



Student liaison: Ruth Hogan

- Co-ordinate information from class teachers about students they are concerned about
- Alerts other staff to vulnerable students (appropriately)
- Provides materials for students
- Maintains student contact records.
- Looks after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room where agreed

Community/agency liaison: Taylor Wilson

- 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
- 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

Parent liaison: Caroline Reynolds/ Ethan Byrne

- Visits the bereaved family
- 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

Media liaison: *Caroline Reynolds*

- 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)
- Will draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews (as agreed by school management)
- Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies



Administrator: *Caroline Reynolds/ Ethan Byrne*

- 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 school's system in advance and ready for adaptation
- Prepares and sends out letters, emails and texts
- Photocopies materials needed
- Maintains records

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.

Caroline Reynolds 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 Bhríde 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.

Critical Incident Rooms

In the event of a critical incident, the following rooms are designated for the indicated purposes

Room Name:	Designated Purpose:
<i>Staff Room</i>	Main room for meeting staff
<i>Hall</i>	Meetings with students
<i>Office</i>	Meetings with parents
<i>Office</i>	Meetings with media
<i>Special Education Room</i>	Individual sessions with students
<i>Principal Office/Staff Room</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. Students and parent/guardian representatives were 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 the Principal.

The plan will be updated annually.



Critical Incident Management Team		
Role	Name	Phone
Team leader:	<i>Caroline Reynolds/ Ethan Byrne</i>	046 9737465
Garda liaison	<i>Ruth Hogan</i>	046 9737465
Staff liaison	<i>Karen Lynch</i>	046 9737465
Student liaison	<i>Ruth Hogan</i>	046 9737465
Community liaison	<i>Taylor Wilson</i>	046 9737465
Parent liaison	<i>Caroline Reynolds/ Ethan Byrne</i>	046 9737465
Media liaison	<i>Caroline Reynolds/ Ethan Byrne</i>	046 9737465
Administrator	<i>Caroline Reynolds/ Ethan Byrne</i>	046 9737465

Short term actions – Day 1

Task	Name
Gather accurate information	Principal
Who, what, when, where?	All staff
Convene a CIMT meeting – specify time and place clearly	Principal
Contact external agencies	Principal
Arrange supervision for students	All staff
Hold staff meeting	All staff
Agree schedule for the day	All staff



Inform students – (close friends and students with learning difficulties may need to be told separately)	Principal
Compile a list of vulnerable students	All Staff
Prepare and agree media statement and deal with media	Principal
Inform parents	Principal
Hold end of day staff briefing	All staff

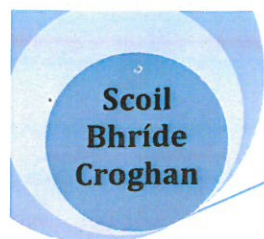
Medium term actions - (Day 2 and following days)

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



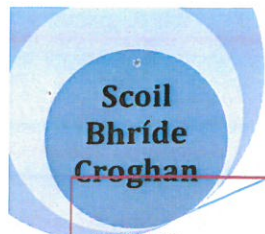
Follow-up – beyond 72 hours

Task	Name
Monitor students for signs of continuing distress	Class teachers
Liaise with agencies regarding referrals	Principal/Family/Pupil Liaison
Plan for return of bereaved student(s)	Principal/ Family/Pupil Liaison
Plan for giving of 'memory box' to bereaved family	Principal/ Family/Pupil Liaison
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	Edenderry (046) 9731290 Tullamore (057) 9327600 Rhode (046) 9737002
Hospital	Tullamore (057) 9321501 Mullingar (044) 9394126
Fire Brigade	Tullamore (057) 9327410 Mullingar 999/112
Local GPs	Dr Sheehan (Rhode) (046) 9737003/ (086) 8031072 Tullamore Medical Centre (Sullivan House) (057) 9351225 Dr Paul Fahy, Edenderry (046) 9731355
HSE	Edenderry (046) 9733523 Rhode (046) 9737955 Tullamore (057) 9319599
Community Care Team	Tullamore (057) 9341301
Child and Family Mental Health Service (CAMHS)	(057) 9319400
School Inspector	
NEPS Psychologist	Mary Sherwin 087-9054923
DES	Tullamore (057) 9324300



SENO	Olivia Ridgeway (01) 6033434
INTO/ASTI/TUI	01 804 7700
Employee Assistance Service	1800 411 057

Roles Explained.

Parent/Community Liaison

Liaise with the family regarding funeral arrangements/ memorial service

- The principal/ Family Liaison Person (FLP) will liaise with the family to extend sympathy and clarify the family's wishes regarding the school's involvement in the funeral/ memorial service.
- Arrange a home visit by two staff representatives within 24 hours, if appropriate. The FLP and class teacher might be the most appropriate.
- Be mindful of different belief traditions and cultures around death.
- Preparation of pupils/staff attending the funeral/memorial service
- Involvement of pupils and staff in the service if agreed by bereaved family.
- Facilitation of students/staffs' responses e.g. sympathy cards, flowers, book of condolences.
- Review of the first 24 hours: Reconvene CIMT, Decide arrangements for support meetings for parents/pupils/staff, Decide on mechanism for feedback from teachers on vulnerable pupils, Establish contact with absent staff and pupils.

Student Liaison

Arrange support for individual pupils, groups of pupils, parents and staff if necessary

- Hold support/information meeting for parents/pupils/staff in order to clarify what has happened.
- Give any teacher who feels uncomfortable with involvement in support meetings the choice of opting out
- Arrange, in consultation with outside agencies, individual or group debriefings or support meetings with parental permission.



Plan for re-integration of pupils and staff e.g. absentees, injuring, siblings, close relative

- FLP to liaise with individual/s on their return to school
- Plan visits to the injured.
- FLP/ class teacher/ principal to visit home/hospital.
- School closure: request a decision on this from school management.

Longer Term Communication

- Monitor pupils for signs of continued distress
- If, over a prolonged period of time, a pupil continues to display the following, he/she may need assistance from NEPS.
 - Uncharacteristic behaviour
 - Deterioration in academic performance
- Physical symptoms – e.g. weight loss/gain, lack of attention to appearance, tiredness, restlessness
- Inappropriate emotional reactions
- Increased absenteeism

Evaluate response to incident and amend CIMP appropriately

- What went well?
- Where were the gaps?
- What was most/least helpful?
- Have all necessary onward referrals to support services been made?
- Is there any unfinished business?

Inform new staff members about the CIP

- Ensure that new staff are aware of school policy and procedures in this area.
- Ensure they are aware of which pupils were affected in any recent incident and in what way.
- When individual pupils or a class of pupils affected by an incident are transferring to a new school, it would be useful to brief the principal of the new school.



Decide on appropriate ways to deal with anniversaries (be sensitive to special days/events)

- Anniversaries may trigger emotional responses in pupils/staff and they may need additional support at this time.
- Acknowledge the anniversary with the family
- Be sensitive to significant days like birthdays, Christmas, Mother's Day and Father's Day.
- Plan something in the school to mark the passing of the pupil/staff member
- Care of the deceased person's possessions. What are the parent's wishes?
- Update and amend school records.

Additional Supports Available:

- HSE Child Guidance Clinic
- Child and Family Mental Health Services (CAMHS)
- Social Services
- National Education Psychological Services (NEPS)
- National Council for Special Education (NCSE)
- National Education Welfare Board (NEWB)/Túsla
- Olivia Ridgeway, Special Education Needs Officer (SENO)
- Education Welfare Officer (EWO)
- Turas le Chéile - Bereavement counselling for children and adults
- INTO
- IPPN
- CAMHS - Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service
- DES Inspector
- Employee Assistance Service.
- Bernardos
- ISPCC



All sharing of information and storage of information at Scoil Bhríde will be in line with all legislation including GDPR.

This policy is subject to annual review by the Board of Management

Signed: P. Watters

Date: 5.10.22

This policy is subject to annual review by the Principal

Signed: Caroline Reynolds

Date: 5th October 2022