

# *Critical Incident Management Policy of Scoil Chlochair Mhuire Roll No: 17103E*

Scoil Chlochair Mhuire aims to protect the well-being of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. Our commitment to this is reflected in our Mission Statement.

To enable each child to develop to her/his full potential, through the provision of a wide range of educational and personal growth experiences and to encourage each to form a personal relationship with God. This mission will be achieved in the context of close co-operation between home, school and community.

The Board of Management, through Nora Moran, Principal, has drawn up a Critical Incident Management Plan as one element of the school's policies and plans.

## **Review and Research**

The Critical Incident management Team have consulted resource documents available to schools on [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie) and [www.neps.ie](http://www.neps.ie) including:

- Responding to Critical Incidents Guidelines and Resources for Schools (NEPS 2016)
- 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 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 (Department of Education and Skills, Department of Health, HSE 2015)

## **Define what you mean by the term 'critical incident'**

The staff and management of Scoil Chlochair 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, attempted suicide, suicide or suspected suicide or other unexpected death
- An intrusion into the school
- A sudden death or illness of a member of the school community
- 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 Management Policy is to help school management and staff to react quickly and effectively in the event of an incident or natural disaster, to enable us to maintain a sense of control and to ensure that effects on the students and staff will be limited. It should enable us to effect a return to appropriate support is offered to students and staff. Having a good plan should also help ensure that the normality as soon as possible or that the new normality is catered for as best as is possible by adhering to the DES and HSE guidelines.

### **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
- Playground gate locked during school hours
- Exterior school doors locked during class time
- Rules on the playground
- Playground supervision rota
- Health & Safety Policy
- Child Protection Policy and Risk Assessment
- Closures of schools on instruction from the DES
- Re-opening of schools in accordance with the DES and HSE guidelines

## Psychological safety

The management and staff of Scoil Chlochair 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 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 Social, Personal and Health Education.
- 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 staff observe for signs and symptoms of anxiety or poor mental health.
- Staff are informed in the area of suicide awareness and if there is a concern contact is made with parents/guardians and recommendations are made as to where to source support.
- The school has developed links with a range of external agencies - GPs, NEPS, Tusla, Carrigtwohill Family Resource Centre, Meitheal, Rainbows, Pieta House and HSE, 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 holistic 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 and 2010 for post primary schools. These documents are available on [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie)
- Concerns are explored and documented, and the appropriate level of assistance and support is provided to students who are identified as being

at risk. Parents/guardians 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. Each member of the team has a dedicated critical incident folder. 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:** *(Nora Moran & Marie Crowley)*

#### **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

**Garda liaison** *(Nora Moran & Marie Crowley)*

#### **Role**

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

**Staff liaison** *(Claire O Donoghue & Greta O Sullivan)*

#### **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** (*Orla Wrenn & Maeve Tuttle*)

#### **Role**

- Leads briefing meetings for students on the facts to be passed on, gives students an
- opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions, outlines the routine for the day
- Assist in the identification of vulnerable students
- Provides materials for students (from their critical incident folder)
- Keeps students updated as the day progresses
- Is a point of contact for students.

### **Community/agency liaison** (*Joanne Griffin & Niamh Dwyer/Mary Hurley*)

#### **Role**

- Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of
  - Key parents, such as members of the Parents' Association executive committee
  - 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

### **Parent liaison** (*Orla Holm & Bríd Fahey*)

#### **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** (*Laura Mitchell & Marie Crowley*)

#### **Role**

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

### **Administrator** Rose O Driscoll

#### **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** (*Rose O Driscoll & April Ferriter*)

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.

Rose O Driscoll 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 Chlochair 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.

### **Critical Incident Rooms**

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>Halla Mhuire</i>	Meetings with students
<i>Meeting Room</i>	Meetings with parents
<i>Halla Mhuire/Meeting Room</i>	Meetings with media
<i>Meeting Room</i>	Individual sessions with students
<i>Meeting 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 Claire O Donoghue & Greta O Sullivan.

The plan will be updated annually in the month of May.

Ratified by the Board of Management on 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2020.

Chairperson of BOM: *John Fitzgerald.*

Principal/Secretary of BOM: *Nora Moran.*

Date: 22/10/2020

## COVID 19 Appendix

*This policy was reviewed on May 12<sup>th</sup> 2020 during the Pandemic of Covid19.*

*The schools closed on March 12<sup>th</sup> 2020 and will not re-open until September 2020. The policy is implemented as it presents during normal school life but in these times of uncertainty and change, the following changes may be made to the Critical Incident Policy*

- The guidelines from the DES and HSE preface and supersede the planned approach to a critical incident as outlined in this policy*
- The C.I.M.T. remain in their roles*
- They would carry out the duties as specified by means of remote communication such as Zoom meetings, What's App Groups, email, An Post, telephone, Aladdin and other online platforms that are deemed suitable.*
- Where possible, and following the guidelines for Covid19, personal contact may be made while observing Social Distancing.*

*Current Situation (COVID19 - May 2020)*

- Parents and school staff are be kept informed with regard to the on-going DES and HSE guidelines and advice regarding schools through Aladdin and the school website.*
- Care calls are made regularly to every pupil in the school by class teachers.*
- SEN pupils are supported by the SET team by email and weekly phone calls.*
- Teacher and support staff are in regular contact with the ASD pupils.*
- Schoolwork is sent home on Aladdin every week*
- Pupils may send their completed schoolwork to their teacher on Aladdin*
- Parents and teachers contact each other by email as needs arise*
- Information and advice regarding pupils' anxieties and stresses are made available to parents.*
- Care calls are made to the staff by the management group.*