



**SCOIL
MHUIRE**
G.N.S. | SANDYMOUNT

Roll No: 11894 I

Critical Incident Policy

Introductory Statement

In Scoil Mhuire GNS we aim to protect the well-being of our pupils and staff by providing a safe, tolerant and well cared for environment. This Critical Incident Policy was devised and formulated by the school community, involving the Board of Management, parents and staff of Scoil Mhuire, in accordance with the Rules and Regulations of the Department of Education. This policy is informed by the “Responding to Critical Incidents – National Educational Psychological Service Guidelines and Resource Materials for Schools” (2016)

Depending on the nature of the Critical Incident, the Critical Incident Management Team will follow guidelines/directions from the appropriate Agencies; NEPS, HSE, DES etc.

What is a Critical Incident?

‘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’ (NEPS/DES 2008). Critical Incidents may involve one or more pupils, staff, the school or the local community

Examples may include:

- Death of a member of school community through sudden death, accident, terminal illness or suicide
- Major illness/outbreak of disease
- A physical attack on staff member(s) or pupil(s) or staff member(s)
- Disappearance of student from home or school
- Unauthorised removal of student from school or home
- An intrusion into the school

- Serious damage to the school through fire, natural or technological disasters
- Criminal incidents
- Major accidents, serious injury
- National/global events may also affect the student and staff body.

Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)

Scoil Mhuire GNS has established a Critical Incident Management Team and will maintain this team in future. 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 once a year to review and update the plan.

Key roles have been identified and assigned as follows:

1. Leadership Role: Donncha Cleary (Principal)
2. Communication Role: Donncha Cleary/Breda Nugent /Jenni Giles (School Secretary)
3. Family Liaison Role: Donncha Cleary (Principal)
4. Student Liaison/ Counselling Role:
 - Breda Nugent
 - Amy McGuirk
 - Leona Martley
5. Chaplaincy Role: School Chaplain: Fr John
6. Parents Association Rep: Chairperson of PA
7. B.O.M. Rep: Amy McGuirk
8. NEPS Rep: Breda Nugent to liaise

The first-named person has the responsibility as defined. Any second-named person assists and only assumes responsibility in the absence of the first-named.

Note: The team will consult with relevant support agencies as

necessary. **Roles and Responsibilities**

1. Leadership Role: Donncha Cleary

- Intervention
- Confirm the event
- Activate the Critical Incident Management Team

- Liaise with the Gardaí/Emergency services
- Lead briefing meetings for staff on the facts as known, give staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions, outlines the routine for the day
- Express sympathy to family
- Clarify facts surrounding event
- Make contact with other relevant agencies
- Decide how news will be communicated to different groups (staff, pupils, outside school) as necessary.

Postvention

- Ensure provision of ongoing support to staff and students
- Facilitate any appropriate memorial events
- Evaluate and update plan

2. Communication Role: Donncha Cleary, Breda Nugent, Jenni Giles (School Secretary)

Intervention

- With team, prepare a public statement (if required) in consultation with support agencies including Communications Section in Dept of Education
- Prepare an FAQs document (if required) (DE)
- Agree how statement if prepared will be disseminated (e.g. press release issued to relevant media and/or on school website and/or via School social media channels) in consultation with Communications Section in DE
- Organise a designated room, or a room at another location to address media promptly (if required)
- Ensure telephone lines are free for outgoing and important incoming calls
- Designate mobile numbers for contact
- Continue to liaise with relevant outside support agencies

Postvention

- Evaluate effectiveness of communication response and update plan

3. Family Liaison Role: Donncha Cleary (Principal)

Intervention

- Co-ordinate contact with and families (following first contact by Principal)
- Consult with the family around involvement of school in e.g. funeral service
- Assist with all communication dealing with parents of any student affected by critical incident

Postvention

- Provide ongoing support to families affected by the incident
- Involve as appropriate the /family in school liturgies/memorial services
- Offer to link family with community support groups
- Evaluate and Update the plan.

4. Student Liaison/ Counselling Role: Breda Nugent, Amy McGuirk and Leona Martley
Intervention

- Advise the staff on the procedures for identification of vulnerable pupils
- Alert staff to vulnerable pupils
- Outline specific services available in the school
- Put in place clear referral procedures
- Address immediate needs of staff
- Provide materials for staff (from Critical Incident Folder)
- Provide information
- Provide counselling

Postvention

- Provide ongoing support to vulnerable students
- Monitor class most affected
- Refer as appropriate
- Evaluate and update plan

5. Chaplaincy Role: Fr John

Intervention

- Visit home(s), if appropriate
- Assist with prayer services
- Make contact with other local clergy
- Be available as personal and spiritual support to staff

Postvention

- Provide follow-up support to families in conjunction with Home School Community Liaison
- Work in partnership with Critical Incident team
- Evaluate and update plan

Confidentiality

Scoil Mhuire GNS is conscious of its responsibility to protect the privacy and good name

of people involved in any incident and will be sensitive to the consequences of any public statements.

Implementation and Communication

This revised policy was ratified by the Board of Management in January 2024 and shared with the school community. It will be reviewed every 4 years and/or as changes arise that suggest the need for review.

Signed: 

Josephine Henry, Chairperson

Signed: 

Donncha Cleary, Principal

Date: 3/2/2024

SHORT-TERM ACTIONS (Day 1)

- Immediate contact with staff/family/families
- Consult with the family regarding appropriate support from the school, e.g. funeral service
- Ensure that a quiet place can be made for students/staff

Contact appropriate agencies

1. Emergency services
2. Medical services
3. H.S.E. Psychology Departments/Community Care Services
4. NEPS
5. BOM
6. DoE/Schools Inspector

- Convene a meeting with Key Staff/Critical Incident Management Team
- Organise a staff meeting, if appropriate
- Ensure any absent staff members are kept informed
- Organise timetable/routine for the day. (Adhering to the normal school routine is important, if this is possible)
- Class teachers to take note of any absentees who might need to be contacted, list of friends etc, or any other relevant information. This is to be given to the Student Liaison person
- Arrange supervision of students
- Liaise with the family regarding funeral arrangements/memorial service
- The Chaplain/Principal will liaise with the family, to extend sympathy and clarify the family's wishes regarding the school's involvement in funeral/memorial service
- Arrange a home visit by two staff representatives within 24 hours, if appropriate. (Student Liaison person + Class teacher)
- Have regard for different religious traditions and faiths

Prepare a Media Briefing (if appropriate)

- Designate a spokesperson (Principal/ Chairperson)
- Gather accurate information
- Prepare a brief statement (team) and disseminate as appropriate
- Consult with Communications Section DoE and other support agencies as necessary
- Protect privacy

Note: 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?

Indicate if and when another statement will be issued and how/where it will be disseminated/made available

Provide contact details of designated spokesperson

MEDIUM-TERM ACTIONS (24-72 HOURS)

- Preparation of students/staff attending funeral
- Involvement of students/staff in liturgy if agreed by bereaved family
- Facilitation of students/staff responses, e.g. Sympathy cards, flowers, Book of Condolences, etc.
- Ritual within the school
- Review the events of the first 24 hours
- Reconvene Key Staff/Critical Incident Management Team
- Decide arrangements for support meetings for parents/students/staff
- Decide on mechanism for feedback from teachers on vulnerable students
- Have review of Critical Incident Management Team meeting
- Establish contact with absent staff and pupils
- Arrange support for individual students, groups of students, and parents, if necessary
- Hold support/information meeting for parents/students, if necessary, 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 the re-integration of students and staff e.g. absentees, injured, siblings, close relative etc)
- Student Liaison person to liaise with above on their return to school.
- Plan visits to injured
 - Family Liaison person + Class Teacher + Principal to visit home/hospital
 - Attendance and participation at funeral/memorial service (To be decided)
 - Decide this in accordance with parent's wishes, school management decisions and in consultation with close school friends
- School closure (if appropriate)
- Request a decision on this from school management

LONGER TERM ACTIONS

Monitor students for signs of continuing distress

If over a prolonged period of time, a student continues to display the following, he/she may need assistance from the Health Board. Constant communication with family is essential.

- 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 Critical Incident Management Plan 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?

Formalise the Critical Incident Plan for the future

- Consult with NEPS Psychologist
- Inform new staff/new school pupils affected by Critical Incidents where appropriate
- Ensure that new staffs are aware of the 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, the Principal should brief the Principal of the new school

Decide on appropriate ways to deal with anniversaries (Be sensitive to special days and events)

- Anniversaries may trigger emotional responses in students/staff and they may need additional support at this time
- Acknowledge the anniversary with the family
- Need to be sensitive to significant days like Birthdays, Christmas, Mother's Day, and Father's Day
- Plan a school memorial service
- Care of deceased person's possessions. What are the parent's wishes?
- Update and amend school records

APPENDIX B: Useful Contact Numbers

Irishtown Garda Station 01 666 9600
Community Garda – Katie Salmon 01 666 9600
Barnardos 01 450355
The Samaritans 1850 609090
Childline 1800 666666
AWARE 01 6766166 1890 303302
National Suicide Bereavement Counselling Service www.nsbsn.org
What Matters Most (Tara)

APPENDIX C: SUPPORT/ADDITIONAL MATERIAL

Reference Section

- Responding to Critical Incidents – Guidelines for Schools and Resource Materials for Schools, NEPS, 2007
- Responding to Critical Incidents – Resource Materials for Schools, NEPS, 2007 ●
- When Tragedy strikes - Guidelines for Effective Critical Incident Management in Schools, INTO
- CPSMA Management Board Members’ Handbook, 2019-2023

Websites

DoE – NEPS www.education.ie
Health and Safety Authority www.hsa.ie/osh
INTO www.into.ie