



Critical Incident Policy for Scoil Chiaráin Naofa

Introduction

In Scoil Chiaráin Naofa we aim to protect the well-being of our pupils and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. Ref our mission statement

We have taken a number of measures to create a coping, caring and supportive ethos in the school, which include implementing such programmes as Stay Safe , Mindfulness Matters, RSE and Web Wise and actively following the Anti-Bullying policy. Members of staff are familiar with Child Protection Guidelines and informed on how to deal with disclosure. Members of staff are aware of how to access support for themselves. The school has also formulated a number of policies and procedures to be followed with a view to ensuring the physical and psychological safety of the school community, both in ordinary time and in the event of a critical incident. These include regular fire drills, up to date first aid training, vigilant yard supervision, monitoring of entrances/exits and a regular updating of the Health and Safety policy.

What is a Critical Incident?

Scoil Chiaráin Naofa recognises a critical incident to be ‘an incident or sequence of events that overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school and disrupts the running of the school’*

Critical incidents may involve one or more pupils, staff, the school or our local community.

Examples:

- Death, major illness/outbreak of disease (e.g. Foot& mouth)
- Criminal Incidents (e.g. vandalism, intrusion into the school, a shooting)
- Major accidents /serious injury
- Suicide
- Civil unrest, war (Foreign nationals may be traumatised by events that happened in their country of origin)
- Fire, natural and technological disaster (e.g. school ceiling collapsing in Cork)
- Disappearance from student from home or school
- Unauthorised removal of student from school /home
- World events that may affect the student body/staff.

**Source: Responding to Critical Incidents in Schools- National Educational Psychological Services NEPS*

Aim

Recognising that the key to managing critical incidents is planning, Scoil Chiaráin Naofa has developed this Critical Incident Management Policy and accompanying Plan. Our hope is that, in the event of an incident, these will help staff to react quickly and effectively and to maintain a sense of control. These should also help us to achieve a return to normality as soon as possible and ensure that the ongoing health of the school community.

Creation of a coping, supportive and caring ethos in the school

We have put systems in place to lessen the probability of an occurrence of an incident. These include measures to address both the physical and psychological safety of both staff and pupils.

Physical Safety

- Our Health and Safety policy is regularly updated
- Regular fire drills occur
- Our evacuation plan is prominently displayed and practised
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
- Entrances to the school are locked during school times
- Safety rules during playtime are in place

Psychological Safety

- SPHE programmes are followed to address such issues as grief and loss, stress and anger management, conflict management, problem solving, help-seeking, decision making, and alcohol and drug prevention
- We implement our Bullying Policy
- Staff members are informed of difficulties affecting individual students and are aware and vigilant to their needs
- Staff has access to books and resources on difficulties affecting the Primary school child.
- The school has developed links with outside agencies, which may be contacted in the event of an emergency and for onward referral of students

Critical Incident Management Team

We have set up a Critical Incident Management Team in line with best practice* 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.

**A critical incident team 'is a group of individuals from the staff of the school who know the community, the students and each other well enough to make the necessary decisions called for when the incident occurs' (Mary Schoenfeldt)*

Critical Incidents Management Team

- Leadership Role..... Kieran Byrne
- Communication Role..... Ashley Cooke
- Student Liaison/Counselling Role... Nadia Wemyss

- Family Liaison Role..... Naoise O Cuinneagáin / Aisling Donovan
- Chaplaincy Role.....Fr Liam Cassin
- BOM Rep.....Jimmy Sheehan
- Parents Association Rep.....Chairperson of Parents Association

In the event of a team member's absence, his / her role will be divided among the other members.

Roles and responsibilities

Leadership Role

Intervention

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

Postvention

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

Communication Role

Intervention

- With team prepare a public statement
- Organise a designated room to address media promptly
- Designate mobile numbers for contact
- Organise list of relevant contact details
- With advise from team respond to incoming letters /texts , where appropriate

Postvention

Review and evaluate effectiveness of communication response

Ensure contact list is frequently updated

Student Liaison/Counselling role

Intervention

- Advise 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 the staff
- Provide materials for the staff from CI Pack
- Liaise with other team members to keep them updated with information and progress
- Assist with administrative tasks
- Provide information
- Provide counselling

Postvention

- Provide ongoing support to vulnerable students
- Monitor class most affected
- Refer as appropriate
- Review and evaluate plan
- Alert staff to any relevant training courses

Family liaison Role

Intervention

- Co-ordinate contact with families
- Consult with family around involvement with school in e.g. funeral service
- Assist with all communication with parents of any student affected by critical incident

Postvention

- Provide ongoing support to families affected by the incident
- Involve as appropriate the school in e.g. memorial services

- Offer to link family to community support groups
- Review and evaluate plan

Chaplain/Community Liaison

Intervention

- Visit affected families if appropriate
- Assist with prayer services
- Make contact with local clergy
- Available as personal and spiritual support to staff and students

Postvention

- Provide follow up support to families
- Work in partnership with the Critical Incident Team
- Review and evaluate plan

Staff Responsibilities

- Safeguard wellbeing of pupils and colleagues
- Control flow of information by pupils
- Liaise with other staff to ensure safety of pupils
- Assist in gathering information
- Supervising their own or colleagues classes
- Assisting or supporting pupils at risk or in distress
- Maintaining normal procedures
- Maintaining confidentiality
- Ancillary staff will also have the responsibility to maintain normal procedures. In addition the school secretary will ensure the office is staffed at all times and that phone lines are available at all times for incoming and outgoing calls.

Confidentiality and good name considerations

The school has a responsibility to protect the privacy and good name of the people involved in any incident and will be sensitive to the consequences of any public statements. The members of the school staff will bear this in mind and will seek to ensure that pupils also do so.

After consultation with the BOM only the designated person will talk to media.

No person other person will communicate with the media

Critical Incident Room

- The staff room will be the main room used to meet the staff
- Classrooms for meetings with students
- Classrooms for group parent meetings
- Principal's office for media/individual students/parents/outside agencies
- Prefab/learning support room for follow on counselling sessions

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, materials used.

Development and Communication of this policy and plan

All staff members were consulted and their views canvassed in the preparation of the draft plan. Parent representatives were also consulted. Our school's final policy and procedures in relation to responding to critical incidents has been presented to all staff. This policy will be made available to the community and parents to view

Action Plan

Short Term Actions (1st day):

- Gather accurate information
- Contact appropriate agencies
- Convene a meeting with all key staff / Critical Incident Management Team.
- If necessary, organise the reunion of students with their parents.
- Arrange supervision of students
- Organise timetable for the day
- Hold staff meeting, if deemed necessary

- Inform parents/guardians by means of Family Note/Text-a-Parent Service/School Website/blog/Facebook
- Inform students, if appropriate
- Make contact with the bereaved family (if timing is deemed appropriate)
- Chaplain and leader to liaise with family, to extend sympathy and clarify the family's wishes regarding the schools involvement in funeral/memorial service
- Arrange a home visit by two staff members if appropriate
- Deal with the media
- Designate rooms if appropriate, (a quiet room, room for meeting parents, rooms for individual and group sessions, a waiting room etc)
- Refer to the Guidelines for Schools and Resource Material for Responding to Critical Incidents

Medium Term Actions (24-72 hours):

- Review the events of the first 24 hours
- Reconvene the Critical Incident Management Team/ key staff
- Arrange support for individual students, groups of students, staff and parents, if necessary
- Plan visits to the injured, if appropriate.
- Preparation of pupils/staff if attending funeral
- Facilitation of student responses e.g. sympathy cards, book of condolences..
- Establish contact with absent staff members/pupils
- Hold appropriate meetings- staff, parents, individuals
- Liaise with the family regarding funeral arrangements/memorial service
- Attendance and participation at funeral/memorial service, if requested/appropriate to do so.
- Plan for reintegration of pupils and staff
- School closure, if deemed necessary
- Report to BOM

Long Term Actions (Past 72 hours):

- Observe pupils for signs of continuing distress. (Refer to Responding to Critical Incidents Guidelines and Resource Materials for schools)

- Support members of the school community still affected and experiencing new problems.
- Decide on appropriate ways to deal with anniversaries.
- Continue with help from external agencies where available.
- Update and amend school records.
- Evaluate response to incident and amend the Critical Incident Management Plan appropriately.

Evaluation / Review:

Arising from the experiences gained from the management of a critical incident, changes /modifications may have to be made to the plan as part of an ongoing review process.

Ratified by the Board of Management at its Meeting on 10th March 2020