



Gaelscoil na Cruaiche

(Bunaithe: 1995. Príomhoide: Mairéad Ní Ruáin)

Cathair na Mart, Contae Mhaighéo

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Critical Incident Policy & Plan

At all times, Gaelscoil na Cruaiche aims to protect the wellbeing of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment as defined in our Mission Statement. This policy has been formulated by the Board of Management, through the Principal Mairéad Ní Ruáin and the Vice-Principal Caroline Nic Dhonncha.

Aim

The aim of the Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) is “to help school management and staff to react quickly and effectively in the event of an incident, to enable them to maintain a sense of control and to ensure that appropriate support is offered to students and staff”. Having a good plan will also help ensure that the effects on the students and staff will be limited. It will enable the school to return to normality as soon as possible.

Definition of Critical Incident

The staff and management of Gaelscoil na Cruaiche 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, their family members or members of the local community e.g.

- The death of anyone in the school community through accident, violence, suicide or any other sudden death.
- Major accidents, serious injury (e.g. bus crash).
- Major illness/disease (e.g. Swine Flu).
- Unauthorized removal of student from school.
- A break-in at the school (robbery).
- Accident or tragic occurrence to a member of the school community or the local community.
- Major damage to the school building through fire, flood etc.
- Disappearance of a member of the school community.
- War or world events that may affect the student body and/or staff (e.g. 9/11 or tsunami)

Creation of a Coping Supportive and Caring Ethos in the School

Gaelscoil na Cruaiche has put systems in place to help to build resilience in both staff and students through our SPHE/RSE programmes, 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

All efforts are made in our school to create a safe environment for the staff and pupils alike. If a child is taken from school before the end of the school day, they must go through the office. In our health and Safety policy it is stated that:

- No cars can drive into the school car park during school hours.

- Dangerous items are forbidden.
- Children should wait in the office if their parents are late collecting them.

In the area of physical safety, the school has also put in place the following:

- Regular fire drills occur.
- Fire exits are always lit and visible.
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked.
- Supervision is provided in the school yard from 8.45 am.
- The main school doors are kept closed during school hours.

At the start of each school year the rules of the yard are explained to each class. We ensure that:

- The main school gates are closed during school time. The side gates remain open to cater for pedestrians.
- No child leaves the school yard without informing the teacher on duty.
- That only sixth class pupils retrieve balls.
- That all children are polite and well-behaved during breaks.
- The yard rules are enforced every day.

Psychological safety

The management and staff of Gaelscoil na Cruaiche also 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)

- It is integrated into the work of the school. It is addressed in the curriculum by including 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.
- Staffs have access to training for their role in SPHE.
- Staffs 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.
- The school has developed links with a range of external agencies e.g. HSE/Community Care/NEPS.
- 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.
- The school has a clear policy on bullying and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy.
- Students who are identified as being at risk are referred to the designated staff member (e.g. 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
- Staffs are informed about how to access support themselves.

Staff Development

- A copy of Responding to Critical Incidents; Guidelines for School (NEPS 2007) and the resource pack is available to staff. Staff are made aware of seminars and in-service training. The NEPS school psychologists is invited to staff meetings/planning days for staff development purposes as required.
- The Staff are made aware of children with specific needs.
- The Staff is informed about how to access support available from external agencies.
- The Staff has access to information in relation to SPHE.
- The Staff is familiar with the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures
- Books / resources on difficulties affecting the primary school student are available.
- The school has developed links with a range of external agencies e.g. HSE/TUSLA/Community Care /NEPS /Garda Síochána.

Consultation and Communication Regarding the Plan

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 access to a personal copy of the plan. All new and temporary staff will be informed of the details of the plan.

Contact Numbers

- All contact numbers for Parents/Guardians are available to all staff members on Aladdin.
- The principal has all the contact details of staff members. This is updated every September.
- A list of emergency services is hanging in the staff room, the Oifig and the Principal's office.

Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)

The 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 access to the schools Critical Incident Management Pack which include all the following:

- A copy of the Critical Incident Management Team/and the Key Roles
- An emergency contact list/school staff contact list
- A copy of the duties of each team member
- A copy of the Board of Management members & contacts
- An Action Plan Template.

Resources

- The Critical Incident Pack, as outlined above, is available to all members of the Critical Incident Management Team from the Principal's office.
- An electronic version of pre-prepared letters for parents and a media template are available to the Secretary, Principal and Deputy Principal.
- Lists of all emergency services numbers are available to the Secretary and Principal.
- A floor plan of the school is hung in every classroom.
- A fire drill is held each term and all emergency exits are identified and hung on each class door.
- A room is reserved in the school or in the area that can be used in cases of critical incidences. The location of this room will be revealed as soon as possible after the critical incidence.

Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)

Roles

Key Roles and Responsibilities of the CIMT

- Team Leader
- Garda liaison
- Staff liaison
- Student liaison
- Parent liaison
- Community liaison
- Media liaison
- Administrator.

The Following are the Key Responsibilities of Each Role

Team Leader

- Alert the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting
- Co-ordinate the tasks of the team
- Liaise with the Board of Management; DES; NEPS;SEC
- Liaise with the bereaved family.

The Deputy Principal will assure this role in the absence of the team leader.

Garda Liaison

- Liaise with the Gardaí
- Ensure that information about deaths or other developments is checked out for accuracy before being shared.

Staff Liaison

- Lead briefing meetings for staff on facts as known, give staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions and outline the routine for the day
- Advise staff on the procedures for identification of vulnerable students
- Provide materials for staff (from the Critical Incident Folder)
- Keeps staff updated with accurate information throughout the day.
- Informs substitute teachers of the plan.
- Tends to vulnerable staff members and makes attempts to speak to them.
- Provides staff with contact details for the Employee Assist Service (1800 411 057) if needed.

Student Liaison

- Alerts staff to vulnerable students.
- Provides materials for students from the Critical Incident Pack.
- Keep records of students seen by external agency staff.
- Lookafter setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room where agreed.
- Informs students of the incident if necessary.
- Liaises with other team members to keep them up-dated with information and progress.

Community/Agency liaison

- Maintain up to date lists of contact numbers - members of the Parents Council, emergency support services and other external contacts and resources
- Liaise with agencies in the community for support and onward referral.
- Check credentials of individuals offering support

- Co-ordinate the involvement of these agencies
- Remind agency staff to wear name badges
- Update team members on the involvement of external agencies

Parent Liaison

- Visit the bereaved family with the team leader
- Arrange parent meetings if held - Facilitate such meetings, and manage 'questions and answers'
- Set up room for meetings with parents
- Meet with individual parents
- Maintain a record of parents seen
- Manage the 'consent' issues in accordance with agreed school policy
- Ensure that sample letters are typed up, on the school's system and ready for adaptation
- Provide appropriate materials for parents (from their Critical Incident Folder)

Media Liaison

- 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 relevant teacher unions etc
- Will draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews (as agreed by school management)

Administrator

- Maintenance up to date telephone numbers of:
 - Parents or guardians
 - Teachers
 - Emergency services
- Take telephone calls and note those that need to be responded to
- Ensure that templates are on the school's system in advance and ready for adaptation
- Prepare and send out letters, emails and faxes
- Photocopies materials needed
- Maintains records

Information regarding School Tours

The school secretary collates lists of contact numbers for pupils/staff members/parents involved in the school tour.

The same lists are given to the teachers, which they then take on the school tour.

All medical information regarding pupils is collected each September. Parents are asked to send any relevant additional information to the school throughout the school year.

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. The school secretary will have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters, photocopying materials, etc

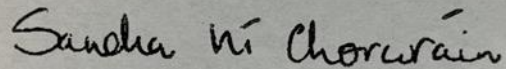
REVIEW AND RESEARCH

The CIMT consulted the following resource documents in the formulation of this plan.

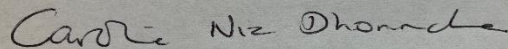
- Responding to Critical Incidents; Guidelines for School (NEPS 2007)

This policy was approved at a meeting with the Acting Principal, Caroline Nic Dhonncha, and the Board of Management on 5th May, 2022.

Chairperson:

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sandha Ní Chocráin".

Principal:

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Caroline Nic Dhonncha".

Date: 5/5/2022

CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM

- Team Leader: Caroline Nic Dhonncha (Acting Principal)
- Garda liaison
- Staff liaison
- Student liaison
- Parent liaison
- Community liaison
- Media liaison
- Administrator.

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

ACTION PLAN

SHORT-TERM ACTIONS (DAY 1)

- Immediate contact with 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.
- Rooms will be made available as follows:
 - ✓ Prayer room
 - ✓ Individual Meetings
 - ✓ Parents

MEDIA BRIEFING (IF APPROPRIATE)

- Designate a spokesperson (leader).
- Prepare a brief statement.
- Protect the family's privacy.
- Gather accurate information.

It is important to obtain accurate information about the incident;

- ✓ What happened, where and when?
- ✓ What is the extent of the injuries?
- ✓ How many are involved and what are their names?
- ✓ Is there a risk of further injuries?
- ✓ What agencies have been contacted already?
- Consult appropriate agencies
 - ✓ Emergency services.
 - ✓ Medical services.
 - ✓ H.S.E. Psychology Departments/Community Care Services.
 - ✓ N.E.P.S.
 - ✓ B.O.M.
 - ✓ D.E.S/ School Inspector
- Convene a meeting with Key Staff/ Critical Management Team (8.30am)
 - ✓ Organize a staff meeting, if appropriate (9.00am)
 - ✓ Ensure any absent staff members are kept informed.
 - ✓ Organize 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 and give to the Student Liaison person.
 - ✓ Arrange supervision of students.

Liaise with 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 and class teacher).
- ✓ Have regard for different religious traditions and faiths.

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'/staffs' 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 (8.30am)
 - ✓ Decide arrangements for support meetings for parents/staff.
 - ✓ Decide on mechanism for feedback from teachers on vulnerable students.
 - ✓ Have review of C.I.M.T (3.00pm)
 - ✓ Establish contact with absent staff and pupils.
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- 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 relatives etc.
 - ✓ Student liaison person to liaise with above on their return to school.
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- Plan visits to injured.
 - ✓ Family liaison person, class teacher & Principal to visit home/hospital.
 - ✓ Attendance and participation at funeral/ memorial service.
 - ✓ Decide this in accordance with parent's wishes and school management decisions.
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- 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, she/he may need assistance from the HSE. Constant communication with the family is essential.

- Uncharacteristic Behaviour
- Deterioration in academic behaviour.
- 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.

Questions to be answered

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

- Formalize the Critical Incident Plan for the future.
 - ✓ Consult with the NEPS Psychologist.

- Inform new staff/ new school pupils affected by Critical Incidents where appropriate.
 - ✓ Ensure that new staff is 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 the 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.
 - ✓ 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.

Cathaoirleach an Bhoird Bainistíochta: _____

Príomhoide: _____

Dáta Athbhreithnithe: _____