



Scoil Chaitríona Junior

## **Critical Incident Policy & Management Plan**

### ***Introduction & Rationale***

A critical incident may occur at the school or offsite at another location. In some cases emergency services may have responsibility for dealing with and managing the situation. In others, the incident may be more localized. The Board of Management places no obligation on any staff member to intervene in a critical incident situation if by so doing she/he is placing her/himself or others at risk.

Each situation will require a different response. We are mindful that people respond to a critical incident in different ways according to their attitudes, experiences and beliefs.

At all times the Board of Management and the staff of Scoil Chaitríona Junior have a responsibility to protect the good name and privacy of those involved in a critical incident and will be sensitive to the consequences of any public statement.

This policy was formulated by the staff of Scoil Chaitríona Junior to help respond to a critical incident, in conjunction with best practice as outlined in *Responding to Critical Incidents-Guidelines for Schools* and *Responding to Critical Incidents-Resource materials for schools*. (NEPS 2008)

### ***Vision Statement***

Every effort will be made by all members of staff to ensure an effective response to all crisis situations. We will have effective emergency plans in place before a critical incident occurs.

### ***Aim***

The aim of this Critical Incident Policy is to ensure that the school and staff react quickly and efficiently in the event of an incident, to enable us to maintain a sense of control and to ensure that appropriate support is offered to pupils and staff. Having a good plan should also help ensure that the effects on the pupils and staff will be limited. It should enable us to return to normality as soon as possible.

### ***Definition & examples of Critical Incidents***

Critical incidents may involve pupils, staff, and other members of the school or local community.

For the purposes of this policy a critical incident is identified as any incident or sequence of events which overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of the school and disrupts the running of the school e.g.

- The death of a member of the school community through sudden death, accident, terminal illness or suicide.
- A serious accident involving pupils or staff on or off the school premises.
- A physical attack on staff member(s) or pupil(s) or intrusion into the school.
- Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism etc.
- The disappearance of a member of the school community.
- A serious accident/tragedy in the school or wider community.
- Unexpected evacuation of the school e.g bomb threat.
- Unauthorised removal of pupil from school or home.
- Closure of the school because of infectious diseases.

*As each Critical Incident will require the school to respond in a manner appropriate to that particular incident at that time, this C.I.M.P. is intended to serve as a general outline of procedures to be followed in the event of a critical incident occurring.*

### ***Critical Incident Management Team to include***

- Board of Management Chairperson: Dr Malachy Thompson
- Principal & Garda Liaison: Patricia Coleman
- Deputy Principal & Staff Liaison: Teresa Carleton
- Teacher Representative & Pupil Liaison: Class Teacher
- Chaplaincy Role / Parent Liaison: Fr Tom Brady
- HSCL: Diarmuid O Riordan
- NEPS: Geraldine Warde
- Administration Representative: Carmel Lane / Aine Ryan, Bernie Kelly
- Board of Management as a whole

### **Critical Incident Management Team**

The team leader will be the Principal, or in her absence, the deputy principal. The members of the team are 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 will have a dedicated critical incident folder containing a copy of the plan and materials particular to their role. All staff members will be given a copy of the plan. There will be an option to co-opt members onto the team if this becomes necessary.

A critical incident box containing keys of the emergency gate, contact phone numbers for parents and emergency contact numbers will be kept in the principal's office. Contact details for parents are also kept on file in the secretary's office. A copy of emergency numbers will be available on office and staffroom notice boards.

The types of responses needed in the event of an incident are outlined below. However, as each situation is different, tasks may vary from one incident to another. Critical incident management will affect all staff. Even if not directly involved in the team, staff will be making sure that normal schoolwork continues and will be providing support to pupils and colleagues.

### **Roles and Responsibilities of the Team.**

#### **Team Leader:**

- Alerts team members to the incident and convenes a meeting of the team
- Clarifies the facts surrounding the incident
- Coordinates and delegates tasks to the team members
- Liaises with the Board of Management, with the Department of Education and Skills and with any outside agencies involved as appropriate
- Contacts the Trustees in the event of damage to the building
- In cases of bereavement liaises with the family
- Acts as spokesperson to the media if necessary
- Ensures provision of ongoing support to pupils and staff
- Decides with team how news will be communicated to staff, pupils and parents
- Ensures telephone lines are available for important incoming and outgoing calls
- Maintains contact with relevant outside agencies
- Maintains up to date list of contact numbers for teachers, parents/guardians, external agencies and support services

#### **Staff Liaison Role:**

It is very important that staff is kept informed and feel secure in handling questions and comments from both pupils and parents.

- Briefing and advising staff on the facts as known and noting their feelings and concerns/questions
- Keeping staff updated on developments
- Noting which staff members are missing at update and passing on the information to them
- Providing resource material for staff from folder
- Liaising with the school chaplain
- Arranging supervision cover for class if necessary
- Maintaining a record of staff contact with external agencies
- Agreeing with staff how and what information will be given to pupils
- Maintaining links with absent staff as necessary

#### **Pupil Liaison Role:**

- Gathering information regarding child's friends, absentees and anyone who may need to be contacted.
- Disseminating information to pupils
- Gathering information regarding the needs of the class or particular students as a result of the incident

- Organizing an assembly/ prayer service or Mass for the school community to congregate
- Alerting teachers other than class teachers to vulnerable students as appropriate
- Keeping records of pupils seen by external agency staff. (e.g. NEPS)

### **Chaplaincy Role:**

- Visiting the classroom and providing support to the class
- Visiting the staff and providing support
- Conducting the funeral service if appropriate
- Conducting a prayer service/mass with the school community

### **Family Liaison Role:**

- Visiting the bereaved family with the team leader
- Arranging meeting for parents if necessary
- Maintaining a record of parents seen by external agencies as appropriate
- Providing appropriate material for parents from the incident folder
- Checking different religious beliefs about death and funeral services if relevant

### **Staff responsibilities**

At all times teaching staff have a responsibility to

- Safeguard welfare of pupils and colleagues.
- Control flow of information by pupils with mobile phones.
- Liaise with other staff to ensure safety of pupils.
- Assist in gathering information.
- Supervising their own or colleagues' classes.
- Assisting in identifying and supporting students 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 that the reception office is staffed at all times and that phone lines are available for important ingoing and outgoing calls.

### **Contact Details for Pupils and Staff.**

Contact details for parents and guardians of all pupils are kept in the office.

The principal and deputy keep contact details for all staff members principal. A copy is also held on file in the principal's office. Details for parents, guardians and staff are updated annually. Parents are asked to inform the school office should their contact details change. A list of emergency numbers is on display in both the principal's and secretary's offices and on the staff room notice board.

## **Phone Email Contacts**

There are 3 phone lines in the school. In the event of an emergency the main school line will be kept for incoming calls only. The phone number for this line is 8379745. Outgoing calls will be made from the phone in the principal's office 8367990 or from the line in the computer room 8571329. Faxes may be sent from the fax machine in the principal's office. The email address for the principal is patriciacoleman@renmorejuniorschool.com.

## **Dealing with the Media.**

A critical incident may on occasion necessitate dealing with the media. Only the Principal, Deputy Principal or Chairperson of the Board of Management will communicate with the media.

Members of the media must report to the reception office, identify themselves and state their business in the school. Members of the media will not be allowed beyond the reception office except at the invitation of the Principal or Deputy Principal. The media will not be allowed to interview or photograph pupils on the school premises.

As necessary, the principal and deputy principal will prepare a brief media statement to include the following;

- Expressing sympathy for the affected /bereaved family.
- Stating that it is a difficult time for the school community.
- Positive information or comments about the deceased/ injured parties.
- The facts about the situation (following consultation with the families.)
- The term suicide will not be used. Instead the term 'tragic death' will be used.
- Outline what is being done to support pupils and staff.

Some pointers in relation to dealing with the media are included in appendix 2.

## **Record Keeping**

All team members will keep written records of phone calls made, meetings, and interventions. Records will be compiled and kept on file in the principal's office. The school secretary will log all phone calls.

## ***Procedures to be followed in the event of critical incidents***

- The Principal should be contacted first.(If not available, the Deputy-Principal)

On notification of a critical incident the Principal will convene the Critical Incident Management Team to:

- Ascertain the facts
- Make contact with the family/families concerned
- Contact appropriate agencies (e.g. N.E.P.S., D.E.S)
- Inform Staff, B.O.M. and School Office

- Agree on a statement of the facts for staff, pupils, parents/guardians and the media and inform these parties as appropriate
- Identify high risk pupils
- Appoint one person to deal with 'phone calls
- Organise timetable/supervision rota for the day
- Organise support and rooms for counselling/assistance where appropriate
- Endeavour to maintain the regular school routine, if possible
- When appropriate arrange for representatives from the school to visit the home(s) of the person(s) concerned

#### In the event of death:

- Inform staff and pupils re funeral arrangements
  - Arrange involvement in liturgy if agreed with bereaved family
  - Facilitate staff and pupils' response e.g. book of condolence, school council's vote of sympathy, flowers
  - Support distressed pupils and staff
  - Ensure counselling service is available
  - Care of deceased person's possessions in keeping with parental/guardians' wishes
  - Facilitate return to school of siblings and close friends
  - Monitor siblings and friends of the deceased
  - Update and amend school records and inform DES
  - The Principal (*Team Leader Appendix 1*) will gather accurate information about the incident
  - Contact appropriate agencies eg NEPS, DES, HSE
  - Inform Staff, BOM and School Office
  - Emergency services
  - Medical services
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- Health Board Psychology Departments/Community Care Services
  - NEPS
  - BOM
  - DES/School Inspector
  - The Principal will convene a meeting with Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) to discuss possible topics to be covered.
  - Agreeing a statement of the facts for staff, pupils, parents and the media. If possible there should be a written version of this.
  - Delegating responsibilities to the Critical Incident Management Team ie.
  - Patricia Coleman is responsible for liaising with staff ( Staff liaison)
  - Teresa Carleton is responsible for supervision of pupils (Pupil liaison)
  - Patricia Coleman is responsible for contacting & liaising with external agencies (Community/ Agency liaison)
  - Fr Tom Brady is responsible for liaising & setting up meetings with parents (Parent Liaison)
  - Carmel Lane/ Aine Ryan / Bernie Kelly are responsible for up to-date telephone numbers, taking phone calls, sending letters & maintaining records ( Administrator)
  - Appointing Principal to handle phone enquiries and to deal with the media.
  - Ensuring that a phone line remains open and available for enquiries.
  - Organising the timetable/routine for the day. (Adhering to the normal school routine is important if this is possible).
  - Organising a staff meeting, if appropriate.

- Organising the supervision of pupils during any staff meetings.
- Deciding whether an outside professional be invited to the staff meeting.
- Staff taking incoming calls will use a statement agreed by the CIMT
- Hold Staff Meeting. – All staff should be asked to attend. The areas which should be covered are:
  - An account of facts as known.
  - Opportunity for staff members to express their views and feelings.
  - Discussion with the staff about how the facts will be shared with the pupils.
  - Outline of the routine for the day.
  - Information for staff about which outside agencies have been contacted, or are involved, and the supports that will be put in place for both pupils and staff.
  - A procedure for identifying vulnerable pupils.
  - Distribution of relevant handout materials.
  - Organise timetable for the day. **N.B.** As far as possible maintain normal routines.
  - Inform Parents/Guardians of: *Children Directly Involved*.
  - Parents/guardians should be contacted as soon as possible, and this first contact will need to be handled with great sensitivity.
  - Agree who should share information with parents and how this should be done.
  - Make a list of parents/guardians who have been contacted and those who still need to be told to avoid duplication of messages.
  - Give parents/guardians relevant and factual information.
  - The learning support classroom will be set aside for distressed pupils to meet their parents/guardians.

### ***Immediate/Short term Actions***

Every incident will require a different response. A critical incident may occur on or off site and will consequently require a different response. However the following will serve as a guide to the types of response necessary. Evacuate the building if necessary.

- Inform emergency services.
- Take emergency action to ensure safety at onsite incidents.
- Limit further injury at on site incidents.
- Account for all pupils, personnel and visitors.
- Care for the injured parties.
- Gather accurate information
- Inform Chairperson of Board of Management
- Inform solicitors and insurance company as appropriate.
- Convene a meeting of the CIMT.
- Organize a timetable for the day.
- Inform staff and update on any arrangements as necessary.
- Contact appropriate agencies and organize support.
- Arrange for supervision of pupils.
- Inform pupils and parents.
- Make contact with the affected /bereaved family.
- Respond to the media.
- Report to the health and safety authority if necessary.
- Arrange visit to the affected /bereaved family.
- Identify high-risk students.

- Designate particular areas for parents, media, friends etc. to avoid large groups congregating in particular areas and blocking entrances etc.

### ***Medium Term Actions:***

***(24-72 hours)***

- Review the events of the first 24 hours.
- Reconvene key staff/Critical Incident Management Team
- Briefly check out how each person on this team is coping
- Decide arrangements for support meetings for parents/pupils/ staff.
- Decide on mechanism for feedback from teachers re vulnerable pupils
- Have review staff meeting with all staff if necessary. Ensure all staff are kept up to date on any developments.
- Be sensitive as to how all staff is coping on a personal and professional level.
- Establish contact with absent staff and pupils.
- Update media, if necessary.
- Arrange support for individual pupils, groups of pupils and parents, if necessary.
- This support will be provided in the Learning Support room
- Hold support/information meeting for parents/pupils in order to clarify what has happened.
- Offer advice and reassurance. Inform them about support services and provide relevant handouts.
- Give any teacher who feels uncomfortable with involvement in support meetings the choice of opting out.
- Arrange, in consultation with the outside agencies, individual or group debriefings or support meetings **with** parental permission.
- Plan for the reintegration of pupils and staff. (e.g. absentees, injured, siblings, close relatives etc.)
- Plan visits to injured.
- Liaise with the family regarding funeral arrangements/memorial service.
- Organise attendance and participation at funeral/memorial service.
- Make decisions with regard to school closure.

### ***Long Term Actions:***

- Monitor pupils for signs of continuing distress. (Class teachers)
- Liaise with parents re vulnerable pupils.
- Liaise with external agencies regarding referrals.
- Arrange for school memorial service/ anniversary if relevant.
- Review plan in light of incident.
- Update and amend school records.
- Ensure new staff is aware of policy and which pupils/staff affected by an incident.
- Evaluate legal and insurance consequences.
- Written report for the DES and the Board of Management.

If, over a prolonged period of time, a pupil continues to display the following, he/she may need assistance from the Health Board:

- Uncharacteristic behaviour

- Deterioration in academic performance
- Physical symptoms – e.g. weight loss/gain, lack of concentration, tiredness, restlessness
- Inappropriate emotional reactions
- Increased absenteeism

(Liaise with agencies regarding referrals)

- Plan for return of bereaved pupil/s
- Evaluate response to incident and amend the Critical Incident Management Plan appropriately.
- Anticipate events/ anniversaries/reminders that may be difficult or upsetting in the future and plan to support staff and pupils

### **Ratification and Communication**

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management in 2008 and reviewed in 2014 / 2015 school year.

Signed on Behalf of the Board of Management:

Chairperson: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## **Summary Checklist for Principals**

- Gather the facts – Who? What? When? And Where?
- Contact appropriate agencies
- Convene the Critical Incident Management Team
- Organise for the supervision of pupils
- Inform staff
- Agree on a statement of the facts
- Identify high risk pupils
- Appoint someone to deal with phone enquiries
- Organise timetable for the day

**MAINTAIN THE NORMAL SCHOOL ROUTINE WHEN AT ALL POSSIBLE**

- Inform parents/guardians
- Inform pupils
- Make contact with the bereaved family
- Organise support
- Respond to the media

### ***Emergency Contact List***

Inform key people and seek support as appropriate:

Key Contacts	Contact Details	Done
Chairperson (BOM) Malachy Thompson	087 6873807	
Emergency Services	999 112	
Garda Station	Declan Mulligan, Community Garda 091538079  Emergencies 091 538000	
Health/Centre	091 753887	
Doctor Grace Doyle	091 755178	
Doctor Robert Canney	091 753049	
Galway General Hospital Bons Secours	091 580580 091 381900	
Clergy Fr Tom Brady	087 2904879	
NEPS Administration	091 864519	
NEPS Psychologist: Geraldine Warde	0876502052	
Ambulance	999	
Fire Service / Brigade	999	
IPPN	1890212223	
INTO Dublin	01-8047700	
INTO Galway	087 6735114	

Joe Killeen		
Galway Bay FM Radio	091 770077	
National Educational Welfare Board	01 8738700	
HSE Offices	Galway 091 523 122	

**HELPLINES:**

Barnardos 01-4530355

Samaritans 1850-609090

Irish Society for the prevention

of cruelty to children 01-6767960/01-6794944

Rainbow Counselling Ireland 01-4734175

Childline 1800-666666

Parentline 1890-927277

Aware 01-6766166 1890 303302

National Suicide Bereavement

Support Network 024-95561

The Bereavement Counselling

Service – Dublin 01-8391766

Bereavement Counselling Service 01-6767727