

## **Critical Incident Policy Gaelscoil Uí Choimín**

### **Introduction:**

In Gaelscoil Uí Choimín we aim to protect the well-being of our pupils and staff by providing a safe, tolerant and well catered for environment as outlined in our school philosophy statement.

The Board of Management through the Principal and Staff has drawn up a critical incident management plan. They have established a Critical Incidents Management Team to steer the development and implementation of the plan.

### **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’.

### **Examples:**

- Death, major illness/outbreak of disease
- Criminal incidents
- Major accidents, serious injury (e.g. car/ bus crash)
- Suicide
- Fire, natural and technological disaster
- Disappearance of student from home or school
- Unauthorised removal of student from school or home.
- World events that may affect the student body and/or staff. May be a need for provision of discussion and involvement in ceremonies

### **Critical Incidents Management Team:**

Leadership Role:	Bríd Ní Chomhraí, Máirín Ní Chiardha
Communication Role:	Bríd Ní Theibhlín, Clodagh Ní Éalaithe Mhurchú
Student Liaison/Counselling Role:	Mairín Ní Chiardha, Bríd Ní Theibhlín
Chaplaincy Role:	Gearóidín Uí Mhaoldhomhnaigh, An tAthair Ó Lorcáin
Family Liaison Role:	Clodagh Ní Éalaithe Mhurchú, Bríd Ní Chomhraí
B.O.M. Rep:	Máire Uí Fhloinn, Chairperson, Board of Management

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

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

### **1. Leadership Role:**

#### **Intervention**

- Confirm the event
- Activate the Critical Incident response 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, outline the routine for the day
- Express sympathy to family
- Clarify facts surrounding event
- Make contact with other relevant agencies e.g. NEPS
- 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

### **2. Communication Role:**

#### **Intervention**

- With Team, prepare a public statement
- Organise a designated room to address media promptly
- Designate mobile numbers to contact
- Liaise with relevant outside support agencies

#### **Postvention**

- Review and evaluate effectiveness of communication response

### **3. Student Liaison / Counselling Role:**

#### **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 (if necessary) as required

#### **Postvention**

- Provide ongoing support to vulnerable students
- Monitor class most affected
- Maintain contact with family of child/children
- Review and evaluate Plan

### **4. Chaplaincy Role:**

#### **Intervention**

- Assist with prayer services
- Make contact with local clergy

#### **Postvention**

- Work in partnership with Critical Incident team
- Review and evaluate Plan

### **5. Family Liaison Role:**

#### **Intervention**

- Co-ordinate contact with families (following first contact by Principal)
- Consult with 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

- Review and evaluate plan

### **Action plan**

#### **SHORT-TERM ACTIONS (Day 1 following incident)**

- 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
- Media Briefing (if appropriate)
- Designate a spokesperson (Leader)
- Gather accurate information
- Prepare a brief statement (Team)
- Protect the family's privacy
- 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?
- Contact appropriate agencies
  1. Emergency services
  2. Medical services
  3. H.S.E. Psychology Departments/Community Care Services
  4. NEPS
  5. Board of Management
  6. DES / School Inspector
- Convene a meeting with Key Staff/Critical 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 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
- 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 parents' 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
- Plan visits to injured
  - Family Liaison person and Class Teacher and Principal to visit home/hospital
  - Attendance and participation at funeral/memorial service (to be decided)
  - Decide this in accordance with parents' wishes, school management decisions and in consultation with close 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 outside agencies. 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 if deemed appropriate
- Care of deceased person's possessions. What are the parents' wishes?
- Update and amend school records

**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 ensure that pupils do so also.

Ratified by the Board of Management of Gaelscoil Uí Choimín on 15/02/2023

Review Date: 2024

*Maire Mí Fhloinn*