Scoil Mhuire, Milford, Co. Cork.

Critical Incident Policy

This policy was devised and formulated by the staff of Scoil Mhuire, its BOM, Parents Association and NEPS psychologist Gerard Lennon in accordance with the rules of the Dept. of Education and Science and the CPSMA in 2010. Policy was reviewed and revised in March 2023.

Scoil Mhuire aims to protect the well-being of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. Scoil Mhuire is a co-educational primary school which strives to provide a well-ordered, caring, happy and secure atmosphere where the intellectual, spiritual, physical, moral and cultural needs of all pupils are identified. The Board of Management, through Mr. O'Flynn, has drawn up a Critical Incident Management Plan as one element of the school's policies and plans.

Review and Research

The CIMT have consulted resource documents available to schools on www.education.ie.

- Responding to Critical Incidents Guidelines and Resources for Schools (NEPS 2016)
- Well-Being in Primary Schools - Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion (DES, DOH, HSE 2015)

What is a 'critical incident?'

The staff and management of Scoil Mhuire 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, or members of our local community. Types of incidents might include.
- The death of a member of the school community through accident, violence, suicide or suspected suicide or other unexpected death
- An intrusion into the school
- An accident involving members of the school community
- An accident/tragedy in the wider community
- Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism, etc.
- The disappearance of a member of the school community

- Disappearance of a pupil from home or school.

- Unauthorised removal of pupils from home or school.

Aim

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

Creation of a coping supportive and caring ethos in the school

We have put systems in place to help to build resilience in both staff and students, 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.

<u>**Physical safety**</u>
- Evacuation plan formulated
- Regular fire drills occur
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
- Pre-opening supervision in the school yard (9.10-9.20)
- School doors locked during class time

Children cannot be taken from school during school hours without informing the principal or class teacher

Pupils are regularly reminded of the rules of the playground. These rules are discussed and reviewed at staff meetings.

- Fire, water and road safety are taught as part of SPHE programme

- Stay Safe is implemented

Psychological safety

The management and staff of Scoil Mhuire aim to 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) is integrated into the work of the school. It is addressed in the curriculum by addressing 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
- Staff have access to training for their role in SPHE
- Staff 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
- Information is provided on mental health in general and such specific areas as signs and symptoms of depression and anxiety
- The staff will be cognisant of the differing needs of international pupils and special educational needs pupils.
- The school has developed links with a range of external agencies – NEPS, HSE, CPSMA, INTO
- 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. See DES Circulars 0022/2010 (Primary)
- The school has a clear policy on bullying and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy
- There is a care system in place in the school using the "Continuum of Support" approach which is outlined in the NEPS documents published on 2007 for primary schools and 2010 for post primary schools. See also Student Support Teams in Post Primary Schools (2014). These documents are available on www.education.ie
- Students who are identified as being at risk are referred to the designated staff member (Danny O' Flynn), 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
- Staff are informed about how to access support for themselves.

Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)
A 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 a dedicated critical incident folder. This contains a copy of the policy and plan and materials particular to their role, to be used in the event of an incident.

Team leader: *Daniel O'Flynn*
Role: (A person who carries authority and can make decisions during a crisis (e.g. school closure, attendance at memorial services etc.)
- Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting
- Coordinates the tasks of the team
- Liaises with the Board of Management; DES; NEPS; SEC
- Liaises with the bereaved family

In the absence of the Team Leader, Lisa Healy, Deputy Principal will take the lead.

Garda liaison *John Dillon, Chairperson / Daniel O'Flynn*
Role
- Liaises with the Gardaí
- Ensures that information about deaths or other developments is checked out for accuracy before being shared

Staff liaison: Daniel O'Flynn
Role
- Leads briefing meetings for staff on the facts as known, gives staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions, outlines the routine for the day
- Advises staff on the procedures for identification of vulnerable students
- Provides materials for staff (from their critical incident folder)
- Keeps staff updated as the day progresses
- Is alert to vulnerable staff members and makes contact with them individually
- Advises them of the availability of the EAS and gives them the contact number.

Student liaison *Annemarie Deady*
Role
- Alerts other staff to vulnerable students (appropriately)
- Maintains student contact records (R1).
- Looks after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room where agreed

Community/agency liaison: Lisa Healy/Sheila Thompson
Role

- Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of
  - Key parents, such as members of the Parents Council
  - Emergency support services and other external contacts and resources
- Liaises with agencies in the community for support and onward referral
- Is alert to the need to check credentials of individuals offering support
- Coordinates the involvement of these agencies
- Reminds agency staff to wear name badges
- Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies

Parent liaison: Daniel O'Flynn / Deputy Principal
Role

- Visits the bereaved family with the team leader
- Arranges parent meetings, if held
- May facilitate such meetings, and manage 'questions and answers'
- Manages the 'consent' issues in accordance with agreed school policy
- Ensures that sample letters are typed up, on the school's system and ready for adaptation
- Sets up room for meetings with parents
- Maintains a record of parents seen
- Meets with individual parents
- Provides appropriate materials for parents (from their critical incident folder)

Media liaison *John Dillon*
Role

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

Administrator: Mary Broderick, Secretary
Role

- Maintenance of up to date telephone numbers of
  - Parents or guardians
  - Teachers
  - Emergency services
- Takes telephone calls and notes those that need to be responded to
- Ensures that templates are on the schools system in advance and ready for adaptation

- Prepares and sends out letters, emails and texts
- Photocopies materials needed
- Maintains records

Record keeping *Daniel O'Flynn*

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.

Mary Broderick, school secretary will have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters, photocopying materials, etc. Records will be kept in a folder in a locked cabinet in the office.

Confidentiality and good name considerations

Management and staff of *Scoil Mhuire* have a responsibility to protect the privacy and good name of people involved in any incident and will be sensitive to the consequences of public statements. Members of school staff will bear this in mind, and seek to ensure that students do so also, e.g. the term 'suicide' will not be used unless there is solid information that death was due to suicide, *and* that the family involved consents to its use. The phrases 'tragic death' or 'sudden death' may be used instead. Similarly, the word 'murder' should not be used until it is legally established that a murder was committed. The term 'violent death' may be used instead.

Letter to Parents:

Principal will prepare a brief, written statement to include: ¬ The sympathy of the school community for the affected/bereaved family. Positive information or comments about the deceased/injured persons(s). The facts of the incident. ¬ What has been done? ¬ What is going to be done?

Critical Incident Room:

In the event of a critical incident, the Principal's Office or the Staff room will be the main room used to meet the staff, students, parents and visitors involved depending on the needs of the meeting.

Consultation and communication regarding the plan

All staff were consulted and their views canvassed in the preparation of this policy and plan. Students and parent/guardian representatives were also consulted and asked for their comments.

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 a personal copy of the plan.

All new and temporary staff will be informed of the details of the plan by (Name of team member)

The plan will be updated annually. September 2024, next review

John Dillon

_____   30/3/23

Chairperson   Date

Danny O Flynn

_____   30/3/23

Principal   Date

Critical Incident Management Team		
Role	**Name**	**Phone**
Team leader:	*Daniel O'Flynn*	0877767460
Garda liaison	*John Dillon*	0879664811
Staff liaison	*Sheila Thompson*	0873685005
Student liaison	*Annemarie Deady*	0861921456
Community liaison	*Lisa Healy/Sheila Thompson*	0879716922
Parent liaison	*Daniel O'Flynn*	0877767460
Media liaison	*John Dillon*	0879664811
Administrator	*Daniel O'Flynn/Mary Broderick*	0874191957

Short term actions – Day 1

Task	Name
Gather accurate information	Daniel O'Flynn/ John Dillon
Who, what, when, where?	
Convene a CIMT meeting – specify time and place clearly	Daniel O' Flynn
Contact external agencies	Mary Broderick
Arrange supervision for students	Annemarie Deady
Hold staff meeting	All staff
Agree schedule for the day	All staff
Inform students – (close friends and students with learning difficulties may need to be told separately)	Annemarie Deady with class teacher.
Compile a list of vulnerable students	Annemarie Deady with class teacher.
Prepare and agree media statement and deal with media	John Dillon
Inform parents	Daniel O' Flynn

Hold end of day staff briefing	All staff

Medium term actions - (Day 2 and following days)

Task	Name
Convene a CIMT meeting to review the events of day 1	Team leader
Meet external agencies	CIMT team
Meet whole staff	All staff
Arrange support for students, staff, parents	CIMT team
Visit the injured	Daniel O' Flynn
Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements	All staff
Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service	All staff
Make decisions about school closure	BOM

Follow-up – beyond 72 hours

Task	Name
Monitor students for signs of continuing distress	Class teachers
Liaise with agencies regarding referrals	Team leader
Plan for return of bereaved student(s)	Parents and teacher.
Plan for giving of 'memory box' to bereaved family	At the discretion of the school
Decide on memorials and anniversaries	BOM/Staff, parents and students
Review response to incident and amend plan	Staff/BOM

EMERGENCY CONTACT LIST

AGENCY	CONTACT NUMBERS
Garda	063 21770
Hospital	Mallow 022 30300 C.U.H. 0214546400
Fire Brigade	999 or 112
Local GPs	Jerry Lucey063-83282 M O Donnell – 063-84004
HSE	
Community Care Team – Deirdre Madden MPHC	022 58700
Child and Family Centre	(022) 54100
Child and Family Mental Health Service (CAMHS)	CAMHS 02244970
School Inspector	Una Kingston –
NEPS Psychologist	Gerard Lennon
DES	01 8896400
INT0	01 8047700
Clergy Fr O Farrell	063 80038 0872908806
Employee Assistance Service	1800 411 057