



Critical Incident Policy

Scoil Chroí Ró Naofa

Ballymurn

Introduction

Any decision to close Scoil Chroí Ró Naofa in the event of a weather alert or some other emergency, such as a major failure of an essential utility, has serious implications. The decision to close the school for these reasons is likely to be a rare occurrence. Any decision to close the school will normally be taken by the Principal in consultation with the Chairperson of the BoM, or in the absence of the Chairperson, with senior members of the teaching staff.

The decision will normally be taken before 1pm on the day preceding the school closure; the children will be told; an email will be sent to each family informing parents of the closure decision and, if possible its duration. A mobile text will also be sent to all mobile numbers given on application forms.

A sign stating that the school is closed will be placed on all main entrance doors. In periods of harsh winter weather parents should be alert for these communications. Obviously no children should attend school for the duration of the closure. Information on the reopening of the school will be sent by text message to all mobile numbers given on application forms. The local radio stations will also be informed.

When a critical incident or emergency situation occurs Scoil Chroí Ró Naofa will follow DES guidelines as sent to the school in 2016.

Scoil Chroí Ró Naofa aims to protect the wellbeing of its students by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. We have taken a number of measures to create a coping, supportive and caring ethos in the school. We have formulated a policy and procedures to be followed with a view to ensuring the physical and psychological safety of staff and students, both in ordinary time and in the event of a critical incident.

In our school Mission Statement we state that “we aim to create a school where each child achieves his/her full potential as a well-rounded, responsible member of society”.

Scoil Chroí Ró Naofa also aims to protect the well-being of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times.

A Critical Incident Policy was drawn up as one element of the school’s policies and plans. Our aim is to establish a Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) to steer the development and implementation of this plan.

Definition of a Critical Incident

The staff and management of Scoil Chroí Ró Naofa recognise a critical incident to be “an incident or sequence of events that overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of the school”.

Critical Incidents may involve one or more students, 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, sudden death or suspected sudden death or other unexpected death.
- An intrusion into the school.
- An accident involving members of the school community.
- An accident/tragedy involving the wider community.
- Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism, etc.
- The disappearance of a member of the school community.

Aim of CIMP

We recognise that the key of managing critical incidents is planning. We have developed a 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 maintain a sense of control. We have aimed to compile a policy and to return to normality as soon as possible after a potential critical incident and as soon as possible after a potential critical incident and ensure that the effects on the students and staff would be limited.

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 return to normality as soon as possible.

Creation of a Coping Supportive and Caring Ethos in the School

We have put systems into place to help to build resilience in both the 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.

Physical Safety

We have included into our Health and Safety Policy:

- Evacuation plan in the event of a fire. (See fire drill.)
- Regular fire drills occur (termly).
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked.
- Children cannot be taken from school during school hours without informing the teacher/principal or secretary.
- Pupils are regularly reminded of the rules of the playground. These rules are discussed and reviewed at staff meetings.

Psychological Safety:

The management and staff of Scoil Chroí Ró Naofa 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.

- We have created an open and encouraging environment in the school where students can talk about their difficulties and seek help.
- Our Anti-Bullying policy
- Our Vision specifies that all in our community are expected to show respect to each other and applies to adults as well as children.
- Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is integrated into the work of the school. It is addressed in the curriculum by addressing such issues 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.
- All relevant staff is informed of difficulties affecting individual students, and is aware and vigilant to their needs.
- All staff has access to books and resources on difficulties affecting the Primary School Child.
- The school has developed links with outside agencies such as the clergy, NEPS, HSE, cigire and the I.N.T.O.
- The staff will be cognisant of the differing needs of international pupils and special educational needs pupils.
- Staff are familiar with the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures.
- Information is available on mental health in general and such specific areas on signs and symptoms of depression and anxiety.
- The school has access to a counsellor should the need arise.

Critical Incident Management Team

A CIMT is a group of individuals from the staff who know the community, the students and each other well enough to make the necessary decisions for when an incident occurs. A CIMT has been established in line with best practice. The members of the team should meet once a year to review and update their 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.

Members of CIMT:

1. **Team Leader** – Principal Emer O’Gorman/Chairperson of BOM
2. **Staff Liaison** – Principal Emer O’Gorman/Deputy Principal Chloe Ormonde/ AP11 Nicola Sheehan
3. **Student Liaison** – Deputy Principal Chloe Ormonde/APII Nicola Sheehan
4. **Community Liaison** – Fr. Jim Finn/Chairperson of BOM
5. **Parent Liaison** - Parent Nominees on BOM
6. **Media Liaison** - Principal Emer O’Gorman/Chairperson of BOM
7. **Administrator** – Leanna Redmond

8. **Health and Safety** – Deputy Principal Chloe Ormonde/Community Nominee on BOM

In the event of a staff member being on leave, Acting Up Principal/DP/APII will assume the above mentioned roles.

Roles:

Team Leader: Principal Emer O’Gorman/Chairperson BOM

(A person who carries authority and can make decisions during a crisis (e.g. school closure, attendance at memorial services etc)

1. Confirms the event/critical incident has occurred
2. Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting
3. Co-ordinates tasks of the team. This may involve ensuring the safe quick exit of children and adults from the building.
4. Liaises with the BOM and DES
5. Liaises with the affected family/staff member.
6. With CIMT prepare a public statement, organise designated room to address media promptly
7. Ensure provision of ongoing support to staff and students
8. Facilitate any appropriate memorial events
9. Review plan annually

Staff Liaison – Principal Emer O’Gorman/Deputy Principal Chloe Ormonde/ AP11 Nicola Sheehan

(A staff member, known, trusted by the staff)

1. Leads meetings to brief staff on the facts as known, gives staff members an opportunity to express their feelings, ask questions and outlines the routine for the day
2. Provides materials to staff and pupils, i.e. resources from Critical Incident folder, outlines services available
3. Keeps staff updated as day progresses
4. Looks into the provision and supervision of a ‘quiet room’

Student Liaison – Deputy Principal Chloe Ormonde/APII Nicola Sheehan

(A trusted and familiar person known to the students)

1. Advises staff on the identification of vulnerable students.
2. Is alert to vulnerable students and makes contact with them individually
3. Keeps record of students seen by external agency staff

Community Liaison – Fr. Jim Finn/Chairperson of BOM

(Someone with good contacts with agencies and relevant individuals in the community).

1. Liaises with agencies in the community for support and onward referral
2. Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies
3. Co-ordinate the involvement of these agencies. Key parents such as members of the parent’s council to be involved. Emergency support services and other external contacts and resources to be liaised with
4. Co-ordinate contact with families, consult with families around involvement of the school in funeral service, if necessary.
5. Maintain up-to-date lists of contact numbers of key parents, such as members of the Parents’ Committee, Emergency Support Services and other external contacts and resources.

6. Liaise with agencies in the community for support and onward referral.

Parent Liaison - Parent Nominees on BOM

(Someone who is well-known to parents. This person should be comfortable speaking before a large group and have skills to manage emotional reactions of individual or groups of parents).

1. Facilitates “questions and answers” meeting
2. Meets with individual parents
3. Provides materials for parents from the ‘Ready-to-Go’ pack
4. Visits the bereaved family with the team leader
5. Is alert to the need to check credentials of individuals offering support, co0ordinate the involvement of these agencies
6. Assist with all communication dealing with parents of any student affected by critical incident
7. Manage the consent issues in accordance with school policy
8. Maintain records of parents and pupils seen
9. Provide appropriate materials for parents
10. Provide ongoing support to bereaved family, involve as appropriate family in memorial services
11. Update team member on the involvement of the outside agencies

Media Liaison - Principal Emer O’Gorman/Chairperson of BOM

1. In preparing for the role, she/he will consider issues that may arise during an incident and how they might be responded to (e.g. students being interviewed, photographers on the premises, etc.)
2. In the event of an incident, will liaise where necessary with the Communications Section in the DES

Administrator – Leanna Redmond

1. Maintenance of up to date lists of contact numbers of:
 - Parents or Guardians
 - Teachers
 - Emergency Support Services
2. Telephone calls need to be responded to, letters sent and materials photocopied
3. To do list:
 - Contact parents/guardians
 - Contact accident and emergency services
 - Contact Fr. Jim Finn.....life or death situation
 - Contact Principal or Deputy Principal
 - Contact Class Teacher
 - Contact First Aid Person/Health & Safety Officer
 - Contact the I.N.T.O.

Health and Safety – Deputy Principal Chloe Ormonde/Community Nominee on BOM

1. Conduct H&S audit of school premises.
2. Identify hazards and organise the making safe of same
3. Complete incident report and notify HSA if appropriate

Record Keeping:

In the event of a critical incident each member of the team will keep detailed records of phone calls made and received, letters sent and received, meeting held, persons met, interventions used, materials used etc. The school secretary will have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters, photocopying materials, etc.

Letter/Text to Parents:

Principal and Deputy Principal (Emer O’Gorman and Chloe Ormonde) 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?

A text will be sent by the school secretary to parents if they are required to attend the school urgently.

Confidentiality and good name considerations

The management and staff of Scoil Chroí Ró Naofa have 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 see to ensure that pupils do so also.

For instance, the term ‘suicide’ will not be used without the consent of the family involved or until it has been established categorically that the person’s death was a result of suicide. The phrases ‘tragic death’ or ‘sudden death’ shall be used instead.

Critical Incident Room

In the event of a critical incident, the Principal’s office and staff room shall be the main room used to meet the staff, students, parents and visitors involved.

Development and communication of this policy and plan

All staff were consulted and their views canvassed in the preparation of the draft plan. Parent representatives were also consulted and asked for their comments. Our school’s final policy and procedures in relation to responding to critical incident has been presented to all staff and Board of Management.

Each member the critical incident team has a personal copy. All new and temporary staff will be informed of the details of the plan by Principal Emer O’Gorman.

Implementation Date

This policy shall be implemented from 4th October, 2017.

Review

This policy shall be reviewed by the CIMT annually at the beginning of each school year. It will also be discussed at a whole staff level under the guidance of the Principal.

Ratification and Communication

This policy was ratified on 4th October, 2017 and distributed to all staff, Parents Committee Chairperson and BOM members.

This policy was reviewed on 19th June 2024.

Matty Kelly

19/08/2024

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Matthew Kelly

Chairperson

Board of Management

Appendices

1. Parental Consent Letter – Individual or Group Support
2. Sample Letter to Parents – Sudden Death or Accident
3. Sample Letter to Parents – Violent Death
4. Sample Announcement to the Media