**Scoil Mhuire agus Íde**

**Newcastlewest, Co. Limerick**

Critical Incident Policy 2018/19

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What is a Critical Incident?

The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) define a critical incident as “any incident or sequence of events which overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of the school (NEPS, 2007). The Critical Incident team will meet to decide whether it's a critical incident or not.

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Overview and Aims of a Critical Incident Policy

The goal of the Critical Incident Management Policy (CIMP) FOR Scoil Mhuire agus Ide is to provide a caring, safe and supportive environment, which respect the whole school community, so that all those involved will emerge from any critical incident knowing that there are structures in place that will help them deal appropriately with the event.

The aim of the CIMP is to help the 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 to ensure that the effects on the students and staff will be limited. It should enable us to affect a return to normality as soon as possible.

Though the Principal obviously exercises a pivotal role in the school's response to a critical incident, Best Practise recommends the formations of a Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) composed of key school personnel, in providing a supportive role. The role of NEPS is to support schools in supporting students and staff.

The rationale for this plan is to enable the school to identify risks and to have a communication plan in place that can be effectively put into action when an accident occurs in the school. It will be used in conjunction with all other policies and procedures in promoting positive mental health and in creating effective care systems in Scoil Mhure agus

Ide.

The aim of a Critical Incident Policy is to help school management and staff to react quickly and effectively in the event of an incident. It helps us to maintain a sense of order and to ensure that appropriate support is offered to students, staff and families.

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To ensure that the effects on the students and staff will be minimised. To facilitate a return to normality as soon as possible. To provide support to students from the teachers, in partnership with

parents/guardians.

To provide clear guidelines to all staff to ensure that they feel supported and part of a

team.

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Prevention

Scoil Mhure agus Ide is committed to the welfare of its students. This is currently evident in the relationship between staff and students. Our School curriculum addresses issues such as grief and loss, communication skills, preventions of alcohol and drug misuse, self-esteem and bullying. All staff have been made aware of the Children First Guidelines and Procedures' and the Principal is the designated Liaison person. Staff have undergone online training on child welfare and know how to react to any incident of suspected neglect. School polices are regularly reviewed and our Pastoral care team meet regularly. All staff attend continuous professional development at regular intervals, thereby ensuring recent developments, in education and in health and safety, are complied with.

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Objectives

1. A Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) exists in Scoil Mhure agus Ide. The

members of the team will meet annually to review and update the Critical Incident Policy and Plan. Each member of the team has a dedicated critical incident folder. This will contain a copy of the policy and plan and materials particular to his/her role

to be used in the event of an incident. 2. Scoil Mhure agus Ide will endeavour to communicate clearly and appropriately with

all the relevant stakeholders to its Critical Incident Policy and Procedures. 3. The management and staff of Scoil Mhure agus Ide have a responsibility to protect the

privacy and name(s) of the person(s) involved in any incident and will be sensitive

around the dissemination of any information. 4. Scoil Mhuire agus Ide will develop a good working relationship with the local media

based on respect for all parties involved in the communication of events and crisis situations.

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The Critical Incident Management Team

**Team Leader**

Sheilagh O'Mahoney Kennedy, (Principal)

Sean Lane, (Deputy Principal)

**Garda Liaison**

Sheilagh O'Mahoney Kennedy, (Principal)

Sean Lane, (Deputy Principal)

**Staff Liaison**

Sheilagh O'Mahoney Kennedy, (Principal)

Sean Lane, (Deputy Principal)

**Student Liaison**

Relevant Years Heads

\_(Career Guidance)

(PastoralCareCo-ordinator/Chaplain)

**Parent Liaison**

Sheilagh O'Mahoney Kennedy,

**Community Liaison**

\_(Career Guidance)

**Media Liaison**

Sheilagh O'Mahoney Kennedy,

**Administrator**

(Career Guidance) (Office Staff)

**| Relevant year head**

As appropriate

The following staff*/*agencies may be involved as the CIM team see fit:

Student Support Team, NEPS, School Secretary and Caretaker, Health and Safety Officer

Other staff members may be asked to be part of the team as deemed appropriate.

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Roles and Responsibilities of the Critical Incident Management Team

**Team**

**Responsibility**

**Team Leader – She**ilagh

**O'Mahoney Kennedy**

Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting informing them of all relevant facts. Delegates and co-ordinates the tasks of the team. Informs and liaises with the Board of Management, NEPS, HSE, DES and with the local Gardaí, (where appropriate).

**Staff Liaison -**

**Sheilagh**

**Kennedy**

Briefs staff at the earliest opportunity. Students will be supervised at these times. The facts, as known, will be disclosed to the staff members who will be given an opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions. Staff will be briefed on the procedures for identification of vulnerable students. Materials for staff (from critical incident folder) will be provided. Staff will be updated as appropriate.

**Sean Lane**

**Student Liaison -** Inform students of the facts of the incident, co-ordinate information from **Careere Guidanc**e/ subject teachers regarding students whom they are concerned about, alert **Pastoral Care Team***/* | other staff to vulnerable students, provide materials for students from critical **Deputy Principal, Year** incident folder and keep records of students seen by external agencies. **Heads**

**Parent Liaison -**

Liaise with the family, may arrange a meeting of parents/guardians, manages

**Sheilagh**

the 'consent' issues in accordance with agreed school policy, ensures that the **Kennedy**

sample letters are typed up and stored on the school system ready for adaptation, sets up room for meeting with parents/guardians, maintains a record of parents/guardians seen, meets with individual parents/guardians, provides appropriate materials for parents/guardians (from their critical incident folder).

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Procedures to be followed in the event of a Critical Incident - Day One:

Principal and Deputy Principal

1. Gather the facts of the incident (who, what, when, where). 2. Contact appropriate agencies, if necessary (Emergency services, Health Service

Executive, Community Care Services, NEPS, DES, Board of Management). 3. Convene a meeting of the Critical Incident Management Team (Library) - 8am. 4. Debriefing at the end of day for Critical Managament Team at 3.45pm

**Critical Incident Management Team**

**Full details of the agenda page 20 & *21 of Re****sponding to Critical Incidents Guidelines for*

***schools.***

1. Agree a statement of facts for staff, students, parents/guardians and media. 2. Inform all staff of incident - Staff communication via short memo which includes

detail of staff meeting outside school hours (8:30am or 1:00pm or 3:35pm). 3. Delegate responsibilities to the CIMT members.

**All Staff**

1. Decide on how, and what facts will be shared with students. 2. Inform staff of what outside agencies have been contacted and distribute Staff

Information Packs.

3. All staff share factual information with student population. 4. Maintain the normal routine as far as possible for classes not immediately affected. 5. Identify high risk students. Relatives and close friends informed separately.

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Procedures to be followed in the event of a Critical Incident - Day Two*/*Three:

Principal and Deputy Principal

1. Convene Critical Incident Management Team 2. Convene staff meeting. 3. Supervision of Pupils

**Critical Incident Management Team**

1. Review the events of the first 24 hours 2. Check how everyone is coping 3. Member of CIMT to hold information meeting with year head, chaplain and class

teachers to clarify what has happened 4. Arrange support for students, (pg 27 Guidelines) providing a suitable room for

this to happen - subject teacher makes referrals 5. CIMT to ensure there is a male and female teacher on supervision on corridors

**All Staff**

1. Look for feedback from teachers on vulnerable students 2. Keep all staff up to date on developments 3. Contact absent staff- friend of absent staff member to make personal contact 4. Designated staff member to liaise with family/families involved in incident. In the

case of bereavement arrange with the family the school's involvement in the

funeral/memorial service. 5. Teachers who are uncomfortable with providing support will not be required to do so.

(Chaplain, Career Guidance Counsellor) 6. Seek parental approval for support meetings with outside agencies.

Follow-up - beyond 72 hours

| Class teachers

Monitor students for signs of continuing distress Liaise with agencies regarding referrals Plan for return of bereaved student(s)(R13 Guidelines) Plan for giving of ‘memory box' to bereaved family Decide on memorials and anniversaries

Principal, Deputy Principal, Religion Teacher Religion Teacher, Principal, Care Team

Religion Teacher, Principal, Year Head

BOM*/*Staff, Parents/Guardians and students

Review response to incident and amend plan

Staff/BOM

Plan for the return of absent students and staff. Plan for reintegration of siblings, close

relatives, injured students etc, involved in the incident.

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Suggested Step by Step Guidelines to follow

**Management**

• Confirm the incident has occurred. Get accurate information.

. In a case where the incident has occurred within the school day or during school activities, it is vital that accurate accounts of what happened are recorded immediately or at the earliest possible opportunity. Where appropriate, witness accounts should be taken and kept.

•If tragedy occurs over a weekend / holidays a system of informing staff needs to be in place.

. If it is the death of a colleague, the Principal or Deputy Principal should contact all

members of staff.

•If it is the death of a student, the Critical Incident Team and Chairperson of the Board need to be informed immediately by the Principal/ Deputy Principal. Other staff can be informed later.

• Ensure family knows who the contact person within the school is. Critical Incident Policy

. Consult with family on school involvement with funeral in case of death. (Family wishes to

be respected)

**•** Prepare an announcement for staff */* students.

•Plan a staff meeting if required.

• Prepare statement

•Designate office staff for dealing with telephone enquiries from anxious parents. Office staff will work from a prepared statement.

Prepare media statement.

• Discourage any student, staff or board members from dealing with the media.

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**School's internal response to student's needs**

1. Set up Critical Incident room in the school.

2. Outline services available to affected students during the first hours (access to counselling and pastoral support). Where it is considered necessary, additional counselling resources may be requested from the Guidance Counsellors. 3. Principal or Deputy Principal to assist Class teacher of the class affected in breaking the

news.

4. Have guidelines for staff in dealing with students in distress: i.e. information on grief responses, identifying those in need of counselling and support. 5. Take time with the most affected students. 6. Critical Incident members to organise a Year Group prayer service for mid-morning, once all students have been notified. 7. Office staff to contact parents where some students request to go home. 8. Class teachers encourage those who feel able to return to class. 9. Principal/ Deputy Principal to meet and support any distressed parents and staff. 10. In the case of a death, Principal and Deputy Principal to liaise with family re any possible school involvement in the funeral arrangements. 11. Principal to liaise with Chairperson of the Board during the day.

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**On hearing of an incident**

Step by Step

· The Principal, having confirmed the incident, makes contact with the family.

· Critical Incident Team meets as early as possible to plan strategy, keeping in mind the guidelines above.

· Key tasks are distributed as per management and pastoral responsibilities.

· Have all guidelines for teachers ready. Have all written and oral statements ready for

communication within the school; Staff Notice, Student Notice, text to be sent to parents,

telephone enquiry response.

· Have a notice at entrances to the school for staff to report to the staff room at

8:45 a.m.

· Meet staff (Bring staff roll to meeting and note any absences or late arrivals to ensure that all members of staff hear the news)

· Critical Incident Team outlines to staff the plan for the day and the support available.

· Decide on location of Critical Incident Room (Library)

· Class Teachers break news to classes as per written guidelines. Appendix 2.

· Deputy Principal to make sure that Guidance Counsellors and members of Critical Incident Team are freed from classes.

· Plan another update staff meeting later.

· Clarify funeral arrangements for staff where appropriate and if available.

· Critical Incident Team and Year Heads meet to plan procedures for school involvement in removal and funeral, where appropriate and in accordance with the wishes of the family.

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**Media Arrangements**

•Principal will take the role of media liaison.

• With the assistance of the Critical Incident Policy (Template in Apendix) the Principal will prepare a short statement to address the following -

•The facts as known at that time. Reference to sorrow of staff and students.

Schools sympathy for the bereaved family.

Outline the supports that are in place for students.

•The above statement should be held by the secretary and emailed to press on request; if a media briefing has been scheduled they may also send details of when and where this will be held.

• In the event of a media briefing, staff and students should be made aware of the following - Only the Principal (acting as the Media Liason) will be interviewed.

•The interview will consist of the prepared statement and any pre-agreed questions only;

quotes by others will not be responded to.

Staff and students will be asked to respect the privacy of the bereaved family by not engaging with the press or referencing the situation on social media or by any other public

means.

**School Access**

•Caretaker will stand at front gate and only allow in accredited personal i.e. teachers, parents

Identification must be checked.

• Assigned Teachers at Front Entrance of School

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Evaluation

Evaluation is a vital part of the process of maintaining a viable critical Incident Strategy. Crisis management can only develop with analysis of past incidents, feedback in the light of past responses and systematic evaluation of all protocols in place.

Issues to be aware of in light of effective evaluation include:

The confidence of the Crisis Management Team in their roles in the event of an incident. Was internal communication effective between staff and the public?

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Were all staff furnished with accurate facts and kept updated on a consistent basis*?*

• Was the overall communication strategy successful?

• Was information disseminated quickly to avoid speculation and rumour?

• Was there adequate and effective communication with the family involved?

• What lessons could be learned from an analysis of this strategy?

• Was feedback obtained from staff as to whether they felt sufficiently equipped to deal

emotionally and physically with the incident?

• Was there sufficient guidance and support to individual teachers, staff and students?

• Were students adequately supervised during the Crisis Meeting?

• Was there sufficient Pastoral Care provided to deal with the incident?

• Was communication with the media effective*?*

• Have all necessary referrals to support services been made?

Were external support agencies met with for feedback in the aftermath of the

incident?

Were all expenses incurred met and dealt with in a timely manner*?* What amendments need to be made to any further crisis management incidents in light of the review of this incident?

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Implementation and Review

The policy will be reviewed and evaluated from time to time. On-going review and evaluation will take cognisance of changing information or guidelines, national management bodies, legislation and feedback from parents/guardians, students, staff and others.

The date from which the policy will apply is the date of adoption by the Board of

Management.

Signet D

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Signed. Shelbel denna

(Chairperson of BOM)

(Principal)

Date*: 2411.*19

Date: 0411119

Date of next review:

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Sample Letters/ Text Messages

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**Sample Announcement to the Media-Student Death**

NO INT**ERVIEWS WITH MEDIA**

My name is ----------- and I am the Principal of S*coil Mhure agus Ide.* We learned this morning of the death of -----------. This is a terrible tragedy for the ----------- family(ies), our school and our community. We are deeply saddened by these events. Our sympathy and thoughts are with the ----------- family and friends.

--- was a -----------year student and will be greatly missed by all who knew him/her.

We have been in contact with his/her parents and they have requested that we all understand their need for privacy at this difficult time.

Offers of support have been pouring in and are greatly appreciated. Our school have implemented our Critical Incident Management Plan.

Psychologists from the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) and --------- have been with us all day supporting and advising teachers in their efforts to assist our students at this time.

The teachers have been helping students to deal with the tragic event.

The school has been open to parents, to support them and to offer them advice and guidance. We would ask you to respect our privacy at this time.

Thank you.

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**Sample Letter to Parents- Student Death**

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Dear Parents*/*Guardians,

The school has experienced *(\*EDIT\* the sudden death, accidental injury, etc.) of Name of student(s).* We are deeply saddened by the death/event.

*(\*EDIT\* Brief details of the incident, and in the event of a death, perhaps some positive remembrances of the person lost).*

Our thoughts are with *(\*EDIT\* family name).*

We have support structures in place to help your child cope with this tragedy. *(\*EDIT\* Elaborate).*

It is possible that your child may have some feelings and questions that he/she may like to discuss with you. It is important to give factual information that is appropriate to their age.

You can help your child by taking time to listen and by encouraging her/him to express her/his feelings. All children are different and will express their feelings in different ways. It is not uncommon for children to have difficulty concentrating or to be fearful, anxious, or irritable. They may become withdrawn, cry, complain of physical aches and pains, have difficulty sleeping or have nightmares. Some may not want to eat. These are generally short term reactions. Over the course of the days to come, please keep an eye on your child and allow him/her to express her/his feelings without criticism. Although classes will continue as usual, I anticipate that the next few days will be difficult for everyone.

*(\*EDIT\* Optional)* An information night for parents is planned for *(\*EDIT\* date, time and place).* At that time, further information about how to help children in grief will be given.

We have enclosed some information which you may find useful in helping your child through this difficult time.

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Young people frequently turn to social media to see what others are saying, or to find out more. At these times it is important that you monitor their use and engage with them about what they read. We urge you to emphasise and reinforce the need to be extremely sensitive and careful about what they post.

If you would like advice you may contact the following people at the school*. (\*EDIT\* Details).* Principal's signature

Sincerely

*Principals Signature*

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**Sample Letter to Parents- Violent Death**

Dear Parents/Guardians,

I need to inform you about a very sad event that has happened.

*(\*EDIT\*Give accurate information about the incident, but avoid using the word murder as this will not be established until the court case is completed).*

We have shared this information and had discussions with all of our students so that they know what has happened. School staff members have been available for students on an on going basis today. Other support personnel (\**EDIT\*including psychologists etc, according to actual arrangement*s) are available to advise staff. This support will continue to be available to advise staff in their support of students*(\*EDIT\*if appropriate insert how long).*

The death of any young person is tragic, but a violent death is even more difficult. It is hard to have to teach our children about the violence in our world and to accept that sometimes we do not have the power to prevent it.

This death may cause a variety of reactions in your child. Some children/young people may be afraid for their own life and for the lives of those they love. Take time to listen to their

fears and reassure them that what has happened is rare.

We have enclosed some additional information that may be useful during this time.

The media are in the vicinity of the school and may approach you or your children. You need not respond to their questions if you are approached. We will not allow the media to interview your child at school and our general advice is that you should not let your children be interviewed. They are not mature enough to judge what to say and may say something they will regret later.

Young people frequently turn to social media to see what others are saying, or to find out more. At these times it is important that you monitor their use and engage with them about what they read. We urge you to emphasise and reinforce the need to be extremely sensitive and careful about what they post.

(If planned) A support meeting for parents is planned for (date, time and place). At that time we can talk further about how to help ourselves and our children.

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Our thoughts are with *(\*EDIT\* family name)* and with each of you.

Sincerely

*\*EDIT\* Principal Name*

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**Sample Teacher Communication Text Message**

**Student Death**

Dear Staff,

in

It is with great sorrow that I inform you of the death of one of our students class

\_, due to

\_. This is a huge loss for \_ \_'s family, our school and the community. The School's Critical Incident Management Team has met to plan our response.

Principal

**Sample Teacher Communication Text Message**

**Teachers Death**

Dear Staff,

It is with great sorrow that I inform you of the death of one of our teachers

due to

. This is a huge loss for 's family, our school and the community. The School's Critical Incident Management Team has met to plan our response.

Principal

**Sample Parent Communication Text Message**

**Student Death**

Today, with great sadness we learned of the death of

one of our year students. Our thought and prayers are with

's family and friends during this difficult time. Further communications will follow in due course.

Principal

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**Sample Letter to Parents- requesting consent for Involvement of outside Professionals**

Dear Parents*/*Guardians,

Following the recent (tragedy), we have arranged specialist support for students in the school who need particular help. -------------- is available to help us with this work. The support will usually consist of talking to the students, either in small group or on a one to one basis, and offering reassurance and advice as appropriate.

Your son/daughter has been identified as one of the students who would benefit from meeting with--------------. If you would not like your son/daughter to receive this support, please sign the attached slip and return it to the school by -----------.

If you would like further information on the above ot if you would like to talk to the psychologist, please indicate on the slip, or contact the School.

Principal

**G**

**-**

**-**

**-**

**-**

I*/*We do not wish my/our son/daughter meet with ------------

I*/*We understand that my/our son/daughter may meet------------in an indivisual/group session,

depending on the arrangements that are thought most appropriate.

Name of Student:

Class:

Date of Birth:

Signed:

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Emergency Telephone Numbers

GARDAI

069 20650

HOSPITAL – LIMERICK REGIONAL

061 301111

FIRE BRIGADE

| 069 62499

LOCAL GP'S

DR. LOUGHNANE/DR. KELLY

069 61220

069 77040

DR. LEONARD/DR. MIRIAM MURPHY

069 62800

DR. MEL FULLAM

069 *77*166

DR. MARGARET MURPHY

069 69402

DR. ROGER HAYES

1850 212 999

SHANNON DOC

061 483388

HSE/PRIMARY CARE

TEAM*/*CAMHS/RESOURCE OFFICER FOR SUICIDE PREVENTION

069 66684

NEPS PSYCHOLOGIST

087 77907*37*

CRITICAL INCIDENT - LIMERICK

076 118561

TUSLA CHILD SERVICES

069 66653

069 62155

NEWCASTLE WEST HEALTH CENTRE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS

090 6474621

090 6442781, 6442783

STATE EXAM COMMISSION

ASTI

Tel: 01-6040160 / 1850 - 418400

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CLERGY

087 6380299 069 62141

FR. FRANK DUHIG P.P. - NEWCASTLE WEST

086 2342242

FR. JOHN MOCKLER C.C. - NEWCASTLE WEST

087 7810960 069 77090 086 36*97*735 069 60126

FR. JOE CUSSEN C.C. - NEWCASTLE WEST

087 2443106 087 6*796217*

FR. TIM CURTIN P.P. - KILCOLEMAN*/*COOLCAPPA

087 6322212

FR. FRANK O'DEA P.P. - DROMCOLLOGHER/BROADFORD

087 254*77*07 069 839*72*

FR. MICHAEL NOONAN P.P. - ARDAGH/CARRICKERRY

087 6322212 069 85014 087 254*7707* 069 839*7*2

FR. JOHN KEATING P.P. - KILLEEDY

FR. ED. IRWIN P.P. KNOCKADERRY*/*CLOUNCAGH

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE SERVICE 1800 411 057

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