



## Scoil Éanna Critical Incident Management Plan

Scoil Éanna aims to protect the well-being of its students by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times.

We have taken a number of measures to create a coping, caring and supportive ethos in the school, which include implementing such programmes as *Stay Safe* and *Weaving Wellbeing* and actively following the Anti Bullying policy. All teachers take seriously their role as pastoral carers of the children and communicate any concerns they have with senior management. The school has also formulated a number of policies and procedures to be followed with a view to ensuring the physical and psychological safety of the school community, both in ordinary times and in the event of a critical incident. These include regular fire drills, vigilant yard supervision and monitoring of entrances/exits.

### What is a Critical Incident?

In line with the National Educational Psychological Services [NEPS] publication "Responding to Critical Incidents in Schools", Scoil Éanna recognises a critical incident to be as follows:

"... an incident or sequence of events that overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school and disrupts the running of the school."

Critical incidents may involve one or more pupils, staff, the school or the local community. Types of incidents might include:

- *The death of a member of the school community through sudden unexpected death, accident, terminal illness, suicide or suspected suicide;*
- *An intrusion into the school;*
- *An accident/tragedy involving members of the school community;*
- *An accident/tragedy in the wider school community;*
- *Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism etc.*



- *The disappearance of a member of the school community;*
- *Any other unforeseen accident/tragedy which may befall the school community and for which Management & Staff must be prepared in terms of safe handling with a view to optimum wellbeing of all concerns in the outfall.*

## **Aim**

The aim of the CIMP (critical incident management plan) is to provide a framework for dealing with any significant trauma or crisis which may occur in the life of the school. Sudden or traumatic death of students or staff through accidental means can have a major effect. A tragedy outside the school community may impact on school life and incidents not involving death may also have considerable impact.

## **Objective**

The objective of this plan is to be prepared should such an incident arise

- To have in place a quick and effective reaction
- To establish a sense of control
- To return to normality as soon as possible
- To limit the effects on students and staff

## **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.

## **Physical Safety**

- Regular fire drills



- Evacuation plan formulated
- Fire exits and extinguishers are checked regularly
- Supervision entering and exiting the school
- Code of behaviour
- Safety rules during playtime are in place

## Psychological Safety

The management and staff of Scoil Éanna 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. Programmes are followed to address such issues as grief and loss, stress and anger management, conflict management, problem solving, help-seeking, decision making and alcohol and drug prevention.
- Staff members 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. Our DLP is Mrs Diane Murphy (Principal) and DDLP Ms Deirdre McDonald (Deputy Principal)
- The school has established links with a range of external agencies, which may be contacted in the event of an emergency and for onward referral of pupils e.g. NEPS, CAMHS, TUSLA, NCSE
- There is a care system in place in the school which uses the "Continuum of Support" approach outlined in the NEPS documents.
- Books and resources on difficulties affecting the primary school pupil are available in the SEN department
- 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.
- Scoil Éanna has a clear policy on bullying and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy. The school follows the Seán Fallon Anti-Bullying Programme from 2<sup>nd</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> Class.



- Students who are identified as being at risk are referred to the designated staff member (e.g. SET), 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.

## Prevention

Scoil Éanna attends to prevention by having systems in place which help to promote emotional health and wellbeing and which build resilience in both staff and students, thus preparing them to cope with a range of life events. Mental health promotion is a vital element of this work.

One of the key means available to schools in their work of supporting healthy development for all students is Social, Personal and Health Education.

SPHE is a key element of a school's prevention work. It is a required element of the curriculum at Primary School level. SPHE supports the physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual development, and wellbeing of all members of the school community.

## CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM (CIMT):

A Critical Incident Management Team has been established in line with best practice. The members of the team will meet once a year to review and update the plan.

\*A critical incident team is '... a group of individuals from the staff of the school who know the community, the students and each other well enough to make the necessary decisions called for when the incident occurs' (Mary Schoenfeldt)

Our Critical Incident Team will exercise a leadership role providing direction, guidance, containment and support when a critical incident occurs. The Response Team will consist of the Chairperson of the Board of Management, Principal,



Deputy Principal, In School Management Team and all members of staff as appropriate.

The key to managing a critical incident is:

- Planning
- Quick and effective reaction/sense of control is required
- Normality returns as soon as possible
- Effects on students and staff are limited
- Avoids “helicopter or paratrooper syndrome”
- You want to have a sense of “we are managing” “we are in control”

### Roles and Responsibilities

- **Chairperson BOM:** Dr Fiona McGrath
- **Team Leader:** Diane Murphy
- **Staff Liaison:** Diane Murphy/Deirdre McDonald
- **Student Liaison:** Diane Murphy/Deirdre McDonald
- **Parent/Community/Garda Liaison:** Diane Murphy
- **NEPS representative:** Ann Finn  
*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.*

### Team Leader: Diane Murphy (Principal)

- Alerts team members of a crisis
- Convenes meeting
- Coordinates tasks for team
- Keeps in touch with all members
- Communicates with BoM, DES, NEPS, Gardaí, Emergency Services and Hospitals etc.
- Liaises with bereaved family
- Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of
  - Key parents such as members of the Parents’ Association to be involved.
  - Emergency support services and other external contacts and resources to be liaised with

*Deirdre McDonald (Deputy Principal) will take the lead in the absence of the team leader*



### **Staff Liaison: Diane Murphy & Deirdre McDonald**

- Leads meetings to brief staff on the facts as known, gives staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and outlines the routine of the day.
- Advises staff on the identification of vulnerable students.
- Is alert to vulnerable staff members and makes contact with them individually.
- Advises staff of the availability of EAS and provides contact number
- Provides materials to staff
- Keeps staff updated as the day progresses
- Give support to staff

### **Student Liaison: Diane Murphy & Deirdre McDonald**

- Liaises with other team members to keep them updated with information and progress.
- Alerts staff to vulnerable students.
- Provides materials for students
- May prepare a short statement for classes, including a short prayer
- Helps to identify vulnerable students
- Designates a room(s) for traumatised students

### **Community Liaison: Diane Murphy**

- Liaises with agencies in the community for support and onward referral.
- Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies.
- Co-ordinates the involvement of these agencies.
- Contacts local priest
- Is available as personal and spiritual support to staff and students

### **Parent Liaison: Diane Murphy**

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

If a death/serious accident occurs this person expresses sympathy to the family and assures them of the support of the school and the principal and liaises with the family and the principal;

- Visits the bereaved family with another member of CIMT
- Arranges/facilitates parent meetings (if necessary)
- Identifies a suitable room for meeting with parents and family.
- Meets with individual parents
- Provides materials for parents
- Assists in drafting appropriate letter to parents regarding the death/ incident and school arrangements;
- Considers school involvement in the funeral respecting family wishes, e.g. guard of honour etc



- At time of inquest, anniversary or significant dates, recognise the support needs of the family and school friends, e.g. arrange family visit a few days prior.

### Media Liaison: Diane Murphy

(Someone with good interpersonal skills who would be comfortable talking to the media, by phone, or in person. A person who is able to set limits without being offensive.)

**\*\*The Press Office in the DES will give advice: 01 8896400 / [press@education.gov.ie](mailto:press@education.gov.ie)**

1. In the event of an incident to speak to the media.
2. The Chairperson of the BOM may advise the principal on how to speak to the media and may speak to the media on the principal's behalf, if required.
3. In the event of an incident, will liaise where necessary with the Communications Section in the DES.
4. Prepare a media statement and plan a response to requests for information: In preparing for the role, she will consider issues that may arise during the incident and how they might be responded to (e.g. students being interviewed, photographers on the premises, etc)

### Administrative Tasks: Gráinne Mc Atavie (Secretary)

- Maintenance of up to date lists of contact numbers of:
  - > Parents or Guardians
  - > Teachers
  - > Emergency Support Services
- Takes telephone calls and notes those that need to be responded to
- Sends letters, emails and texts
- Photocopies any necessary materials
- Maintains records

### 5.1 The Teaching Staff

- Read announcement devised by the Response Team, using the deceased person's name;
- Acknowledge the deceased in that class. Have a moment's silence or say a short prayer;
- Do not speculate about the death with students. Give honest answers. All questions put by the students should be acknowledged.
- Be alert to any mention of 'copy-cat' tendencies or mention of similar incidents from the recent past and bring such matters to the attention of the Principal;
- Don't use 'I know how you feel' statements;
- Encourage students to be supportive of each other;





- The teacher should feel free to express his/her own feelings appropriately;
- Advise students of teachers who are available to them to help them deal with their fears and worries;
- Identify and notify the Response Team of vulnerable students or students who are distressed. These students may need individual support;
- Parents/guardians of distressed students should be contacted by the teacher and advised of the situation before the end of the school day.

## 6. Critical Incident during School Holidays

If a critical incident occurs during a holiday period, the school will contact the Response Team members and carry out the following: -

- express sympathy to family and assure them of the support of the school
- prepare a statement for the media if appropriate
- try and arrange for key members of staff to attend the funeral
- consider the involvement of other students as appropriate, e.g. guard of honour.
- prepare a plan for the support of vulnerable students on the return to school.

**END OF DAY:** At the end of the day the critical incident response team regroup and identify what went well and “what we are going to do tomorrow?”

### Record Keeping:

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, 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:

Deputy Principal Deirdre McDonald 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 secretary to parents if they are required urgently to attend the school.

### Confidentiality and good name considerations:

Management and staff of Scoil Éanna 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 seek to ensure that pupils do so also.

### Development and Communication of this Plan:

All staff were consulted and their views canvassed in the preparation of this plan. Our school's final plan in relation to responding to critical incidents has been made available to all staff. The CIMP is available on the school website. All new and temporary staff will be made aware of the availability of plans and policies on the school website.

## 7. Policy Evaluation

This Policy will be reviewed and amended as deemed necessary, in the aftermath of a critical incident.

Plan ratified by the Board of Management on 9<sup>th</sup> June 2021

Signed Fiona M Galt  
Chairperson BoM

Signed Diane Murphy  
Principal

Date 9/6/2021



<b>Critical Incident Rooms</b>	
In the event of a critical incident, the following rooms are designated for the indicated purposes	
<b>Room Name:</b>	<b>Designated Purpose:</b>
<i>Staff Room</i>	Main room for meeting staff (Covid times – Main Hall)
<i>Classroom/SEN room</i>	Meetings with students
<i>Hall/Staffroom</i>	Meetings with parents (Covid times- Main Hall)
<i>Classroom/SEN rooms</i>	Individual sessions with students
<i>Staffroom/Office</i>	Meetings with other visitors

<b>Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)</b>		
<b>Role</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Phone</b>
<b>Team leader:</b>	<i>Diane Murphy</i> <i>Deirdre McDonald (in the absence of Diane)</i>	
<b>Staff liaison</b>	<i>Diane Murphy</i> <i>Deirdre McDonald</i>	
<b>Student liaison</b>	<i>Diane Murphy</i> <i>Deirdre McDonald</i>	
<b>Community liaison</b>	<i>Diane Murphy</i>	
<b>Parent liaison</b>	<i>Diane Murphy</i>	
<b>Garda liaison</b>	<i>Diane Murphy</i>	
<b>Media liaison</b>	<i>Diane Murphy</i>	
<b>Administrator</b>	<i>Gráinne Mc Atavie</i>	



## Actions

### Short Term Actions – Day 1

Task	Name
<b>Gather accurate information</b>	Diane Murphy
<b>Who, what, when, where?</b>	Diane Murphy
<b>Convene a CIMT meeting – specify time and place clearly</b>	Diane Murphy Deirdre Mc Donald
<b>Contact external agencies</b>	Diane Murphy
<b>Arrange supervision for students</b>	Deirdre McDonald ISM Team
<b>Hold staff meeting</b>	<b>All staff</b>
<b>Agree schedule for the day</b>	Diane Murphy Deirdre Mc Donald
<b>Inform students – (close friends and students with learning difficulties may need to be told separately)</b>	Diane Murphy Deirdre Mc Donald Teaching Staff
<b>Compile a list of vulnerable students</b>	Diane Murphy Deirdre Mc Donald
<b>Prepare and agree media statement and deal with media</b>	Diane Murphy
<b>Inform parents</b>	Diane Murphy Deirdre Mc Donald
<b>Hold end of day staff briefing</b>	Diane Murphy Deirdre Mc Donald



### Medium term actions - (Day 2 and following days)

Task	Name
Convene a CIMT meeting to review the events of day 1	Diane Murphy
Meet external agencies	Diane Murphy
Meet whole staff	Diane Murphy Deirdre Mc Donald
Arrange support for students, staff, parents	Deirdre Mc Donald
Visit the injured	Team Leader/Class Teacher
Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements	Diane Murphy
Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service	Diane Murphy
Make decisions about school closure, if required	Board of Management

### Follow-up – beyond 72 hours

Task	Name
Monitor students for signs of continuing distress	Class teachers/SET
Liaise with agencies regarding referrals	Diane Murphy Deirdre Mc Donald
Plan for return of bereaved student(s)	Diane Murphy
Plan for giving of 'memory box' to bereaved family	Staff
Decide on memorials and anniversaries	BOM/Staff, parents and students



Review response to incident and amend plan

Staff/BOM

## EMERGENCY CONTACT LIST

*(to be displayed in staffroom, Principal's office)*

AGENCY	CONTACT NUMBERS
Garda: Ballybay	042 9741002
Hospital – Cavan General Drogheda Monaghan	049 4376000 041 9937601 047 81811
Ambulance	<b>999 or 112</b>
Fire Brigade	<b>999 or 112</b>
GP Ballybay	042 9741095
Ballybay Health Centre	042 9741157
HSE	Relevant Departments
Child and Family Mental Health Service (CAMHS), Rooskey	047 95444
NEPS Psychologist – Local Office Cavan/Monaghan	076 110 8780
Ann Finn – Scoil Éanna School Psychologist	087 9678160
Inspectorate – Fiona Rushe	087 9812877
DES Communications - Athlone	0906 474621
INTO - Adrian Kelly	087 7436024
Parish Priest - Canon Owen Joe Mc Eneaney	087 3494844
Employee Assistance Service	1800 411057
The Samaritans	<b>116 or 123</b>



Pieta House 24hr FREEFONE	1800 247 247
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### Useful Resources

Additional guidance is contained in Responding to Critical Incidents Guidelines and Resource Materials for Schools (2016) R19-21 P.79-90, including: -

- Guidance on Social Media Use and Critical Incidents
- Suicide/Suspected Suicide
- Suicide Prevention in Schools: Best Practice Guidelines (IAS, National Suicide Review Group, (2002)
- Suicide Prevention in the Community - A Practical Guide (HSE 2011)
- Well-Being in Post-Primary Schools Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention (DES, DOH, HSE 2013)
- Well-Being in Primary Schools - Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion (DES, DOH, HSE 2015) <https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/National-Educational-Psychological-Service-NEPS-/responding-to-critical-incidents-covid19.pdf>
- Responding to Critical Incidents NEPS Advice and Information Packs for Schools
- When Tragedy Strikes Guidelines for Effective Critical Incident Management in Schools INTO