

POLASAÍ  
I GCOMHAIR  
MOR-EIGEANDALAÍ

*Whole School Policy for Responding to Critical  
Incidents*

**Scoil Uí Riada**

Meán Fómhair 2016.  
(Rev 02)

# Whole School Policy for responding to Critical Incidents

**Name of School:** Scoil Uí Riada

**Roll Number:** 19897I

## **Aim**

The aim of the Critical Incidence Management Plan (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. This plan should enable us to return to normality as soon as possible and also ensure that the effects on the students and staff will be limited.

## **Definition of a critical incident**

The staff and management of Scoil Uí Riada recognise a critical incident to be “an incident or sequence of events which overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of the school”.

Critical incidences 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

## **Physical Safety**

As is outlined in the school ethos; ‘SONAS- spreagaimis onóir, neamhspleáchas, aonarachas agus sábháilteacht’, the school strives to ensure both physical and psychological safety of the school community. There is a detailed account of how the school is managing the physical safety of both staff and students available in the health and safety policy, here are a few examples;

- Regular fire drills
- Fire exits and extinguishers are checked regularly
- Pre-school yard supervision
- Lunch-time supervision
- Buzz-in system upon entering the school.

## **Psychological safety**

The management and staff of SCOIL UI RIADA 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 be integrated into the work of the school. It is addressed in the curriculum by addressing issues such as communication skills; stress and anger management; conflict management; problem solving; help-seeking; bullying; decision making and prevention of substance abuse
- Books and resources on difficulties affecting the primary school student are available
- The school has a clear policy on bullying and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy
- Students who are identified with psychological issues are identified and assessed.

## **Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)**

A CIMT has been established that follows best practice. The members of the team will retain their role 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 the role, to be used in the event of an incident.

The current team members are as follows:

Team leader and Garda liaison	Séamus Ó Muirthe
Staff liaison	Caitríona Nic Pháidín
Parent and student liaison	Elaine Uí Néill & Eimear de Faoite
Community/agency liaison	Seosamh Ó hEarcáin
Media Liaison & Administrator	Pól de Brochtúin
Baill Eile an Choiste	Eimear Uí Ghaoithín

<b>Role</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Telephone number</b>
Team Leader	Seamus O Muirthe	087- 2477903
Garda Liaison	Seamus O Muirthe	087- 2477903
Staff Liaison	Caitriona Nic Pháidin	086-3595256
Student Liaison	Elaine Uí Néill	087- 6978005
Parent Liaison	Eimear de Faoite	086 - 8305648
Community Liaison	Seosamh O hEarcain	087- 6184714
Media Liaison	Pól de Brochtúin	087- 9936243
Administrator	Pól de Brochtúin	087- 9936243

<b>Task</b>	<b>Name</b>
Gather accurate information Who, what, when, where?	Seamus O Muirthe
Convene a CIMT meeting – specify time and place clearly	Seamus O Muirthe
Contact external agencies	Seamus O Muirthe
Arrange supervision for students	Seosamh O hEarcain
Hold staff meeting	Seamus O Muirthe All staff
Agree schedule for the day	CIMT
Inform students – (close friends and students with learning Difficulties may need to be told separately)	Elaine Uí Néill
Compile a list of vulnerable students	Elaine Uí Néill
Contact/visit the bereaved family	Elaine Uí Néill
Prepare and agree media statement and deal with the media	Pól de Brochtúin
Inform parents	Seamus O Muirthe
Hold end of day staff briefing	Seamus O Muirthe

## **ACTION PLAN for Principal/Team Leader**

### **Short term actions: *Day 1***

#### **Initial Assessment of the incident**

##### **Step 1: What type of response is needed?**

- **Response Level 1:** the death of a student or staff member who was terminally ill; the death of parent/sibling; a fire in school not resulting in serious injury; serious damage to school property
- **Response Level 2:** the sudden death of a student or staff member
- **Response Level 3:** incident: an accident/event involving a number of students; a violent death; an incident with a high media profile or involving a number of schools.

##### **Step 2: Should a psychologist be involved?**

- Consider the nature of the event and how you school is coping. What support do you need from NEPS and/or other agencies?

##### **Step 3: How are the needs of the school assessed?**

- Is there a feeling of being overwhelmed by this event?
- If the school has experienced previous incident/s, how has the school coped?
- Is there a critical incident plan/team in place?

##### **Step 4: What action do I take?**

- For an incident requiring a **Level 1 response** it may be sufficient to talk to the psychologist on the phone.
- In the case of an incident requiring a Level 2 and Level 3 response, make contact with NEPS. Depending on the incident at least one psychologist will visit the school. **Exchange mobile numbers with the psychologist so that immediate contact will be possible at all times.**

#### **INITIAL ACTION PLAN**

- Establish the facts
- Contact appropriate agencies: Emergency services; NEPS; Board of Management; Clergy
- Convene a meeting with key staff/Critical Incident Management Team  
.Depending on the incident it is advisable to arrange an evening or early morning meeting to ensure that the team is well prepared and has a plan in place for the school day ahead.

## **AGENDA FOR MEETING WITH CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT STAFF**

- Share full details of the event
- Agree on the facts.
- Discuss what agencies have been contacted.
- Plan procedures for the day
- Discuss issues relating to school routine. **It is important to maintain a normal routine when at all possible.** This will provide a sense of safety and structure. However if necessary temporarily shelve all academic activities.
- Plan a whole school briefing
- Discuss how to deal with the media.
- Discuss the issue of consent for student who may need to be seen by the psychologist and arrange for the consent forms to be photocopied and sent to parents.
- If a general letter was sent out by the school to parents, check whether any parents sent a negative reply.

### **ACTION PLAN FOR PRINCIPALS: MEDIUM-TERM ACTIONS**

#### **Day 2 and following days**

It is advisable that the CIMT continues to meet each day until the school returns to normal functioning.

### **MEETING WITH CIMT AND OTHER AGENCIES**

*The Principal or critical incident management team leader normally conducts the meeting.*

#### **Suggested agenda:**

- Revise what has been done to date.
- List tasks for the day and assign roles – contact with the bereaved family; attendance and participation in the funeral services
- List items to be addressed by the Principal at the staff meeting
- Go through the list of students and staff who may be vulnerable and review how they are doing
- Develop a plan for monitoring students over the next few weeks, especially those identified as vulnerable

## **MEETING WITH WHOLE STAFF**

- The Principal outlines the schedule for the day and updates staff on any information from the family, funeral arrangements etc
- A representative from another agency may address the staff if appropriate.

### **ACTION PLAN for Principals: Follow-up**

Follow –up is the work carried out in the weeks, months and years following a critical incident. The goal of follow-up is to help the school community cope with the impact of the event in the longer term and to monitor those individuals with ongoing difficulties.

- Meet with the appropriate staff to review the list of affected staff and students. Identify who will be responsible for follow-up
- Discuss referral procedures and when an onward referral may be indicated. (If students continue to show significant signs of distress a number of weeks after the incident, they may need to be referred on.)
- Prepare for the return of bereaved student(s)
- Mark the school calendar in advance with the anniversary date. Anniversaries may trigger emotional responses in students or staff and they may need additional support
- Be sensitive to significant days like birthdays, Christmas, Mother’s Day and Father’s Day
- Evaluate the school’s response to the incident.

### **Roles:**

*The key roles are as follows:*

#### **Team leader**

- 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
- Will make decisions regarding such issues as school closure, attendance at memorial service, etc.

The team leader will appoint a deputy to take over the role of leader in the event of his absence.

#### **Garda liaison**

(This will be part of the team leader’s role)

- Liaises with the Gardaí

- Ensures that information about deaths or other developments is checked out for accuracy before being shared

### **Staff liaison**

- 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**

- Alerts other staff to vulnerable students (appropriately)
- Provides materials for students (from their critical incident folder)
- Keeps records of students seen by external agency staff

### **Community/agency liaison**

- 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 Personnel liaison**

- 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**

- 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**

- 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 faxes
- Photocopies materials needed
- Maintains records

### **Parents Association**

- The parents association under the guidance of the principal and NEPS counsellors help in the dissemination of factual to the school stake holders.

## **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 Scoil Ui Riada secretary will have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters, photocopying materials etc.

## **Confidentiality and good name considerations**

The management and staff of Scoil Ui Riada 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 keep this in mind and will seek to ensure that students do so also. For instance, 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.

### **Critical incident rooms**

*In the event of a critical incident:*

*Seomra Foirne* will be the main room to meet the staff

*Seomraí Ranga* for meetings with students

*Seomra Ríomhairí* for meeting with parents

*Halla* for meeting with media

*Seomra Denise* for individual sessions with students

*Seomra Ríomhairí* for other visitors.

### **Consultation and communication regarding the plan**

Members of staff were consulted and their views canvassed in the preparation of this policy.

The Board of Management were also be consulted. The Bord Bainistíocht discussed the contents in a review of the policy at their monthly meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2015. The views and opinions of BB members have been included in this document.

The Parents Association have been given copies of the plan with a view to making copies available to different parent groups within the school.

A copy of the plan is on public display in the corridor with all other school policies.

A copy is available to all school partners on request.

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 Donncha.

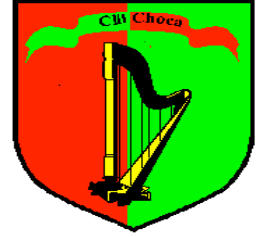
The plan will be updated annually in April.

*Meán Fómhair 2016*

**Appendix 1**  
**Emergency Contact Numbers**

<b>AGENCY</b>	<b>CONTACT NUMBERS</b>
<b>GARDA</b>	<b>01-628 7202</b>
<b>HOSPITAL</b>	<b>045-897 221</b>
<b>FIRE BRIGADE</b>	<b>01-610 6100</b>
<b>LOCAL GPS</b>	<b>01-628 7270</b> <b>01-610 3148</b>
<b>HSE/Community Care Team/Child and Family Centre</b>	<b>045 880 400</b> <b>01- 635 2600</b>
<b>SCHOOL INSPECTOR Ms Karina Holton</b>	<b>045-848 520</b>
<b>NEPS PSYCHOLOGIST Ms Brenda Hughes</b>	<b>045-848 506</b>
<b>DES</b>	<b>01-889 6400</b>
<b>INTO</b>	<b>01- 804 7700</b>
<b>PARISH PRIEST</b>	<b>01-628 7448</b>
<b>EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE SERVICE</b>	<b>1800 4111 057</b>

# *Scoil Uí Riada*



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## **APPENDIX 2**

### **A Thuismitheoir, a Chara,**

Táimid ag scríobh chugat mar gheall ar tubaiste ufásach a thara le déanaí. Téann ár gcomhbhrón go léir chuig clann ..... ag an am seo.

We are writing to let you know of the sad death, tragedy of ..... Our thoughts and heartfelt sympathies are with the ..... Family at this very difficult time for them.

We are putting supports in place to help our pupils at this very difficult time. Teachers & counsellors will be available to provide support.

It is possible that your son/daughter 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 son/daughter by taking time to listen and by encouraging them to express their feelings. All young people are different and will express their feelings in different ways. It is not uncommon to have difficulty concentrating or to be fearful, anxious and irritable.. You may see a change in sleeping or eating patterns that are generally short term reactions. Over the course of the days to come, please keep an eye on your son/daughter and allow him/her to express their feelings without criticism. Although classes will continue as usual, the next few days may be difficult for some of our pupils.

We have enclosed some information which you may find useful in helping them through this difficult time. In addition to this we would advise that you keep a close eye on your son/daughter and encourage them to meet in safe places such as your home.

If you would like advise you may contact the following people at the school. If you have immediate and serious concerns contact your GP and keep the school informed.

Séamus Ó Muirithe    Príomhoide  
Elaine Uí Néill      Leas Príomhoide  
Brenda Hughes      Neps Counsellor

**Is mise, le meas,  
Séamus Ó Muirithe**

### APPENDIX 3

Young people do not need to be taught how to grieve. They will do it naturally in healthy ways if we allow them and if we provide a safe atmosphere, permission and example to do so.

- ✓ Listen carefully. Let them tell their story. Tell them that the reactions they have are normal.
- ✓ Pay extra attention. Spend extra time with them, be more nurturing and comforting.
- ✓ Reassure them that they are safe.
- ✓ Don't tell them that they are 'lucky it wasn't worse' People are not consoled by such statements, Instead tell them that you are sorry such an event has occurred and you want to understand and help them.
- ✓ Do not be surprised by changes in behaviour or personality. They will return to their usual self in time.
- ✓ Don't take their anger or other feelings personally. Help them to understand the relationship between anger and trauma. Help them find safe ways to express their feelings e.g. by drawing, exercise or talking.
- ✓ Help them to understand that defiance, aggression and risk behaviour is a way to avoid feeling the pain, hurt and or fear they are feeling.
- ✓ When going out, let them know where you are going and when you will be back.
- ✓ If you are out for along time telephone and reassure them.
- ✓ Tolerate regressive behaviour such as nail biting, thumb sucking, or the need for a night light.
- ✓ Share your own experiences of being frightened of something and getting through it.
- ✓ If they are feeling guilt or shame, emphasise that they did not choose for this to happen and that they are not to blame. Even if they were angry with the person that died, or had been mean to them, this did not make it happen.
- ✓ Work with the school support services and other available services.