



Critical Incident Policy

Scoil Eoin Baiste aims to protect the wellbeing of its students by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times.

Our Board of Management has, through consultation with the parents and staff, drawn up a Critical Incident Management Plan. They have established a Critical Incidents Management Team to steer the development and implementation of the plan.

What is a Critical Incident?

Scoil Eoin Baiste recognises a critical incident to be 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 our local community. Types of incidents may include:

- The death of a member of the school community through sudden death, accident, terminal illness or suicide.
- An intrusion into the school which has an adverse impact on school community.
- An accident/tragedy in the wider school community.
- A child protection issue.
- Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism etc.
- The disappearance of a member of the school community.
- An accident involving members of the school community.
- A physical attack on staff member(s) or student(s).
- An accident or tragedy outside the school community which impacts on school community.

Rationale

Recognising that the key of managing critical incidents is planning, Scoil Eoin Baiste has developed this 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 and to maintain a sense of control. They should also help us to achieve a return to normality as soon as possible and ensure that the effects on the students and staff will be limited.

Creation of a Coping Supportive and Caring Ethos in the School.

We have put a system in place to lessen the probability of the occurrence of an incident. These include measures to address both physical and psychological safety of both staff and students.

Physical Safety.

The following policies and strategies have been put in place in order to maintain the physical safety of all members of the school community.

- Health & Safety Statement.
- Regular fire drills occur.
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked.
- The Fire Alarm is serviced regularly, at least once a year.
- Pupils leaving early will only be released by a member of teaching staff when an authorised adult arrives to accompany the child from the premises. Such departures are recorded in the 'Sign Out' book.
- Pupils are not released into the care of persons not on the collection list by school staff without checking with a parent/ guardian.
- Pupils are reminded of playground rules by staff at regular intervals in the context of our School Code of Behaviour.
- Pupils are adequately supervised at all times, during break and lunch time and from 09.10am in the morning.
- First Aid box maintained and kept in: Secretary's office

Psychological Safety.

Scoil Eoin Baiste aims to create an open and encouraging environment in the school where students can talk about their difficulties and seek help for them.

- SPHE programmes are included in the curriculum to address issues such as grief and loss, communication skills, stress and anger management, conflict management, problem solving, help-seeking, decision making and alcohol and drug prevention.
- Scoil Eoin Baiste has an Anti-Bullying policy.
- Substance / Alcohol Misuse Policy.
- Child Protection Policy; Child Safeguarding Statement March 2018
- Staff have completed 'Introduction to Children First' programme and 'Child Protection Procedures for all School Personnel' PDST (March 2018)
- Staff are informed on a need to know basis of difficulties affecting individual students and are aware and vigilant to their needs, respecting individual privacy.
- Staff have access to books and resources on difficulties affecting the primary school child.
- The school has developed links with outside agencies, including :
NEPS
Tusla Child and Family Agency
CAMHS
Milford Garda Station
Dr Mee & Dr. Lannon- Carrigart Medical Centre

They may be contacted in the event of an emergency and for onward referral of students.

Critical Incident Management Team

Scoil Eoin Baiste has set up a Critical Incident Management Team in line with best practice and will maintain this team in future. 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 once a year to review and update the plan. Each member of the team has a "Ready-to-Go-Pack" with relevant materials to be used in the event of a critical incident.

| Critical Incident Management Team | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Role | Name |
| Team leader: | BREDA MC GEEVER |
| Garda liaison | SEAMUS GALLAGHER |
| Staff liaison | SEAMUS CONNOR |
| Student liaison | BREDA MC GEEVER & SEAMUS CONNOR |
| Community liaison | MICHELLE DOHERTY |
| Parent liaison | SARAH MC GRODGY |
| Media liaison | FR. CHARLIE BYRNE |
| Administrator | JAMES MC HUGH. |

Roles

Key Roles have been identified and assigned. In the event of a critical incident the responsibilities of each role-holder will be as follows:-

Team Leader

- Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting
- Co-ordinates the tasks of the team
- Liaises with the Board of Management , NEPS, Department of Education & Skills, CPSMA, INTO
- Liaise with the Gardaí/Emergency services
- Liaises with the bereaved/affected family.

Staff Liaison

- 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.
- Provides materials to staff from "Ready-to-Go-Pack"

Community Liaison

- Liaises with agencies in the community for support and onward referral
- Up-dates team members on the involvement of external agencies
- Co-ordinates the involvement of these agencies
- Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of
 - Key parents such as members of the parents council etc.
 - Emergency support services and other external contacts and resources

Parent Liaison

- Facilitates 'questions and answers' meetings.
- Meets with individual parents.
- Provides materials for parents from the Ready to Go Pack.
- Visits the bereaved family with the team leader.

Media Liaison

In preparing for the role, she/he will consider issues that may arise during the incident and how they might be responded to (e.g. students being interviewed, photographers on premises etc.). Guidance information from NEPS Responding to Critical Incidents will be included in the READY TO GO Pack.

In the event of an incident, will liaise where necessary with the Communications Section in the DES.

Administrative Tasks

- Maintenance of up to date lists of contact numbers of:
 - Parents or guardians
 - Teachers
 - Emergency support services- displayed in school office & staff room
- Telephone calls needing to be responded to, letters sent and materials photocopied
- The school secretary may be requested to work during holidays where critical incidents occur.

ACTION PLAN

SHORT-TERM ACTIONS (DAY ONE)

- **Contact Appropriate Agencies**

- Emergency services
- Medical services
- NEPS
- BOM
- Priest
- DES/Schools Inspector

- **Gather accurate information**

- What happened, where and when?
 - What is the extent of the injuries?
 - How many are involved and what are their names?
 - Is there a risk of further injury?
 - What agencies have been contacted already
- Having determined that a Critical Incident *has* occurred (defined by Principal / Chairperson), the Chairperson/Principal will call a CIT meeting of all members and a staff meeting if appropriate.

- **Critical Incident Team Meeting**

Agenda:

- Agree a statement of facts
- Delegate responsibilities
- Keep phone line open
- Preparation of what to say at a staff meeting
- Preparation of what to say to students
- Initial timetable/routine for the day
- Preparation fo a letter to parents/guardians
- Discussion of support services/agencies whose support may be needed and agreement about who will contact them

- Preparation of a media statement, if appropriate.

- **Staff Meeting**

- Give an account of the facts as known
- Opportunity for staff to express their views and feelings
- Discussion with staff regarding the sharing of facts with students with a view to agreed approach
- Outline daily routine
- Information regarding the supports to be put in place for students and staff
- A procedure for identifying vulnerable students
- Distribute supporting materials (Section 4 – NEPS pack)
- Class teachers to take note of any absentees who might need to be contacted, list of friends etc, or any other relevant information and give to the Staff Liaison person
- End of school day meeting.

- **Inform parents & guardians**

- Parents of children directly involved
 - Contact parents systematically
 - Give relevant and factual information
 - Make a room available for parents / students
 - Support parents as they arrive at the school
- Parents of children not directly involved
 - Inform parents of the incident and outline that their child may be upset
 - A letter to parents stating the facts and brief details of the incident is a good way

- **Inform students**

- Careful preparation is recommended
- Consider age of pupils / optimum group sizes
- Suitability of messenger is important
- Give facts and avoid speculation. This helps to dispel rumours.
- Allow pupils to ask questions, tell their story and express feelings
- Help students realize that overwhelming emotions are natural and normal

- Recognize that students will react in a variety of ways
- **Make contact with the bereaved family**
- **Deal with the Media**
 - The CIT will prepare a brief statement.
 - Protect the family's privacy.
- **Organise the reunion of students with their parents if necessary.**

MEDIUM-TERM ACTIONS (24-72 HOURS)

- Reconvene CIT members
 - Check how well members are coping
 - Update all staff on factual developments
 - Be sensitive to how staff are coping personally and professionally
 - Update staff on arrangements for supporting students / parents / staff
 - Consider need for media update
- Arrange support for individual students, groups of students, and parents, if necessary.
 - Provide a suitable room
 - Hold support/information meeting for parents/students, if necessary, in order to clarify what has happened.
 - Give any teacher who feels uncomfortable with involvement in support meetings the choice of opting out.
 - Arrange, in consultation, with outside agencies, individual or group debriefings or support meetings with parental permission
 - Plan for the re-integration of students and staff e.g. absentees, injured, siblings, close relative etc. Student Liaison person to liaise with above on their return to school.
- Plan visits to injured
- Attendance and participation at funeral/memorial service. Decide this in accordance with parents' wishes and school management decisions and in consultation with close school friends.
- School closure – request a decision on this from BOM.

LONGER TERM ACTIONS

- Monitor students for signs of continuing distress. If, over a prolonged period of time, a student continues to display the following, he/she may need assistance:
 - Uncharacteristic behaviour
 - Deterioration in academic performance
 - Physical symptoms — e.g. weight loss/gain, lack of attention to appearance, tiredness, restlessness
 - Inappropriate emotional reactions
 - Increased absenteeism.
- Evaluate response to incident and amend Critical Incident Management Plan appropriately.
 - What went well?
 - Where were the gaps?
 - What was most/least helpful?
 - Have all necessary onward referrals to support services been made?
 - Is there any unfinished business?
- Amend the Critical Incident Plan for the future if necessary.
 - Consult with NEPS Psychologist
- Inform new staff/new school pupils affected by Critical Incidents where appropriate
 - Ensure that new staff is aware of the school policy and procedures in this area.
 - Ensure they are aware of which pupils were affected in any recent incident and in what way.
 - When individual pupils or a class of pupils affected by an incident are transferring to a new school, it would be useful to brief the Principal of the new school.
- Decide on appropriate ways to deal with anniversaries (Be sensitive to special days and events)
 - Anniversaries may trigger emotional responses in students/staff and they may need additional support at this time.
 - Acknowledge the anniversary with the family

- Be sensitive to significant days like Birthdays, Christmas, Mother's Day, and Father's Day.
- Plan a school memorial service.
- Care of deceased person's possessions. What are the parent's wishes?
- Update and amend school records.

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, material used etc.

The school secretary will have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters, photocopying materials, etc.

Each member of the team will have a Critical Incident Folder to keep records and have a record of this policy.

Letter to Parents

The 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 person(s)
- The facts of the incident
- What has been done
- What is going to be done

Confidentiality and good name considerations

The school has 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 also.

Critical Incident Room

In the event of a critical incident, the Staff Room will be the main room used to meet the staff, students, parents and visitors involved. In the event of a need to accommodate a second group, the school library will be used. In the event of needing to cater for a larger group, the school hall will be used.

Consultation and communication regarding the plan

All staff were consulted and their view canvassed in the preparation of this policy. Parent representatives were also consulted and asked for their comments. Our school's final policy and procedures in relation to responding to critical incidents has been presented to all staff.

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 the Staff Liaison co-ordinator.



It was ratified by the Board of Management on 15/6/2020
and will be implemented from 26/8/2020

The plan will be reviewed regularly and up-dated as required.