



www.gaelscoilnamara.ie

**Gaelscoil
na Mara**

Domhnach Bat
Co Átha Cliath
K36WT02
Uimhir Rolla: 20530R

Uimhir Guthán: 01 8435197
oifig@gaelscoilnamara.ie

Critical Incident Management Policy & Plan Gaelscoil na Mara

1. Introduction

Traumatic incidents can happen in schools at any time. Because of this, we have established a Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) which takes responsibility for developing a policy and putting a Critical Incident Management Plan (CIMP) in place. Gaelscoil na Mara aims to protect the wellbeing of all its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. The Board of Management, through the Principal, has drawn up this Critical Incident Management Plan (CIMP) as one element of the school's policies and plans. Our Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) steers the development and implementation of this plan.

2. Definition

We recognise a critical incident as an incident or sequence of events which overwhelms the normal coping mechanism and disrupts the running of the school. Critical incidents may involve one or more students or staff members, or members of our local community. The plan to be put in place will depend on the type of critical incident in question. The following are examples:

- Death of a member of school community through unexpected death, violence, accident or suicide
- An intrusion into the school
- An accident involving a member(s) of the school community
- Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood or vandalism
- The disappearance of a member of the school community
- An accident/tragedy in the wider community

3. Aim

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 an effective plan should also help ensure that the impact on students and staff will be limited. It should enable us to effect a return to normality as soon as possible.

4. Creation of a coping supportive & caring ethos in the school

We have put systems in place to help 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.

5. Physical Safety

As a school, we endeavour to provide a school environment where each member of staff and students are kept as safe as possible. All procedures relating to Health & Safety are outlined in our *Health and Safety Statement* and the following are the most pertinent in the case of Critical Incidents.

- Evacuation plan formulated
- Emergency Evacuation drill carried out at least once a term according to Health and Safety Policy
- Fire exits and extinguishers checked regularly
- Main doors closed during school hours
- General school rules under the school's behaviour policy to ensure all schools have a safe environment. See *Behaviour Policy* for further details.

6. Psychological Safety

The management and staff of Gaelscoil na Mara also 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. It is addressed in the curriculum by including issues such 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
- Staffs have access to training for their role in SPHE
- Staffs are familiar with the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures and the name of the Designated Person (DP)
- Books and resources on difficulties affecting the primary school student are available
- Information is provided on mental health in general and such specific areas as signs and symptoms of depression and anxiety. Some members of staff have completed *Friends for Life* training in relation to this.
- The school has developed links with a range of external agencies e.g. HSE/Community Care/NEPS/CAMHS/Tusla

- 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
- The school has a clear anti-bullying policy and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy
- There is a care system in place in the school using the “Continuum of Support” approach
- Students who are identified as being at risk are referred to the designated staff member (e.g. support teacher). Concerns are explored and the appropriate level of assistance and support is provided. Parents/guardians are informed, and where appropriate, a referral is made to an appropriate agency
- Staffs are informed about how to access support themselves e.g. Carecall

7. Critical Incident Management Team

A CIMT has been established in line with best practice. 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 annually to review and update the policy and plan. Each member of the team has a dedicated Critical Incident Management Folder which includes all of the following: a copy of the critical incident policy, suitable plans and resources suitable to their roles and a list of relevant contacts.

8. Roles

- Team Leader
- Garda liaison
- Staff liaison
- Student liaison
- Community/agency liaison
- Parent/guardian liaison
- Media liaison
- Administrator

a. Team Leader

This is a person who carries authority and can make decisions during a crisis e.g. school closure, attendance at memorial service etc.

The team leader will:

- alert the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting
- co-ordinate the tasks of the team
- liaise with the Board of Management; DES; NEPS;FSS
- liaise with the bereaved family.

The Deputy Principal will adopt this role if the Principal is unavailable.

b. Garda Liaison

This may be seen as part of the team leader’s role.

The Garda liaison will:

- liaise with the Gardaí
- ensure that information about deaths or other developments is checked out for accuracy before being shared

c. Staff Liaison

This will be a staff member known and trusted by all.

The staff liaison:

- leads briefing meetings for staff on facts as known, give staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions and outline 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 throughout the day
- is alert to vulnerable staff members and makes contact with them individually
- advises staff of the availability of the EAS (Employee Assistance Service) and gives them the contact details

d. Student Liaison

This is a trusted and familiar figure to the students.

The Student Liaison will:

- alert staff to vulnerable pupils
- provide materials to students (from their Critical Incident Folder)
- maintain Student Contact Records (R1)
- look after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room where agreed

e. Community/Agency Liaison

This is someone with good contacts with agencies and relevant individual in the community.

The Community Liaison will:

- maintain up to date lists of contact numbers - members of the Parents Council, emergency support services and other external contacts and resources
- liaise with agencies in the community for support and onward referral
- be alert to the need to check credentials of individuals offering support
- co-ordinate the involvement of these agencies
- remind agency staff to wear name badges and verify Garda Vetting
- update CIMT members on the involvement of external agencies

f. Parent/Guardian Liaison

Someone who is known to parents, this person should be comfortable speaking before a large group and have skills to manage emotional reactions of individuals or groups of parents.

The Parent/Guardian Liaison will:

- visit the bereaved family with the team leader
- arrange parent meetings if held
- facilitate such meetings, and manage 'questions and answers' sessions
- manage the 'consent' issues in accordance with agreed school policy
- ensure that sample letters are prepared and available on the school's system and ready for adaptation
- set up room for meetings with parents
- maintain a record of parents seen
- meet with individual parents
- provide appropriate materials for parents (from their Critical Incident Folder)

g. Media Liaison

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 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 relevant teacher unions etc.
- will draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews (as agreed by school management)

h. Administrator

The administrator is responsible for:

● maintenance up to date telephone numbers of:

- Parents or guardians
- Teachers
- Emergency services

● taking telephone calls and note those that need to be responded to

● ensuring that templates are available on the school's IT system and ready for adaptation

● preparing and sending out letters, emails and faxes

● photocopying materials needed

● maintaining records

9. 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.

10. Confidentiality & Good Name

The management and staff of Gaelscoil na Mara 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 students do so also. For instance, the term "suicide" will not be used unless there is confirmed 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. The term 'violent death' may be used instead.

11. Critical Incident Rooms

In the event of a critical incident the following rooms will be used:

- Staff room for meeting with staff
- Classrooms for meeting with pupils
- Rang a Dó meeting with parent body or staffroom for smaller groups
- Principal's office for meeting with the media
- Learning Support room for meeting with individual pupils
- Resource room for other visitors.

12. Consultation & Communication regarding the Plan

All staff were consulted and their views sought in the preparation of this policy and plan. Parent/guardian representatives were also consulted and asked for their comments.

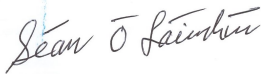
Our school's final policy and plan in relation to responding to critical incidents has been presented to all staff.

Each member of the Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) has a personal copy of the plan.

All new and temporary staff will be informed of the plan by the Principal.

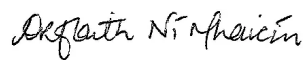
This plan will be updated annually and ratified by the Board of Management.

Signed:



Cathaoirleach

Dáta: 24/10/2023



Príomhoide

24/10/2023