



# Scoil Chlíodhna CNS



## Scoil Chlíodhna Community National School (CNS), Carrigtwohill GAA, Carrigtwohill, Co. Cork.

### *Critical Incident Policy*

#### **Introduction**

Scoil Chlíodhna Community National School (CNS) aims to protect the well being of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. The School Manager and Principal have drawn up a critical incident management plan as one element of the school's policy and plan.

The staff and management of Scoil Chlíodhna CNS have formulated a number of policies and procedures to be followed with a view to ensuring the physical and psychological safety of both staff and students, and the creation of a supportive and caring ethos in the school, in ordinary time as well as in the event of a critical incident. Such policies include the school's Enrolment Policy; the Special Education Needs Policy; the school's Child Protection Policy; the Anti-Bullying Policy; the Health and Safety Policy and the school's Code of Behaviour. The staff and management have established a Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) to steer the development and implementation of the plan.

#### **Context for developing this policy and plan:**

In drawing up this policy and plan the CIMT has consulted the following resource documents provided to schools:

- *Responding to a Critical Incident: Pack for Schools (NEPS 2003)*
- *Responding to Critical Incidents; Guidelines for Schools (NEPS 2007)*
- *Template for the development of a Critical Incident Policy and Plan (NEPS)*

#### **Definition of a 'critical incident'**

The staff and management of Scoil Chlíodhna CNS recognise a critical incident to be "an incident or sequence of events that overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school" (NEPS, 2007).

#### **Objectives**

The objectives of this plan are:

1. To create a caring and supportive ethos throughout the school.
2. To help the school to react quickly and effectively in the event of an incident
3. To plan for strategies which will return the school to normal functioning as soon as possible in the aftermath of a critical incident.
4. To ensure that appropriate support is offered to reduce the immediate and long term detrimental impact of a critical incident on pupils, staff and families.
5. To plan for strategies to cope with the immediate aftermath of a critical incident.

## 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.

### 1. Physical safety:

Some of the measures taken by the school to ensure the physical safety of the students include:

- There is a physically safe environment
- Evacuation plan formulated and clearly visible in each room
- Regular fire drills
- Fully functional and regularly serviced Fire Alarm System
- Fire exits and extinguishers regularly checked
- Health and Safety Plan (and rules)
- Supervision during all breaks
- Code of Behaviour (with behavioural expectations for the creation of a safe environment)
- Induction for new students and staff

### 2. Psychological safety

The management and staff of Scoil Chlíodhna CNS 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 issues and to provide opportunities for reflection and discussion.

Some of the measures taken by the school to ensure the psychological wellbeing of the students include:

- The GMGY, SPHE, RSE and Stay Safe programmes delivered in the school cover such areas as emotions, communicating, stress and anger management, conflict resolution, problem-solving, seeking help, decision making, substance abuse prevention and safety skills.
- Circle time is a teaching methodology used in all classes.
- The school has developed and is implementing a comprehensive anti-bullying policy.
- Staff have access to books and resources relating to coping with grief and loss and a school resource library is available to parents to help their children cope with these issues.
- The school website links to information to help parents in dealing with bereavement.
- The school aims to foster an environment where pupils and staff feel they can talk openly about problems that concern them and seek help when necessary.
- Children are allowed to choose to whom they want to talk when this is needed.
- Staff are familiar with the school's Child Protection Policy, Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures and procedures for dealing with concerns or disclosures.
- The school has a designated Care Team.
- The school has developed links with outside agencies which may be contacted in the event of a critical incident and for onward referral of pupils and staff following a critical incident.

## Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)

The CIMT is defined as “a group of individuals from the staff of a school who know the community, the students and each other well enough to make the necessary decisions called for when an incident occurs” (Mary Schoenfeld, *School Crisis: Response Teams, Lessening the Aftermath*). The team will seek the guidance of NEPS and the Department of Education and Skills press office.

Scoil Chlíodha’s CIMT may include people fulfilling the following key roles:

### Team leader - Principal

- Alerts the team members to the incident and convenes the initial meeting
- Ensures that accuracy of information about incident is checked before being shared
- Coordinates the tasks of the team
- Liaises with School Manager, DES, NEPS, Gardaí and families involved if/when necessary
- Coordinates the involvement of outside agencies
- Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies

### Staff liaison –

- Leads meetings to brief staff on the facts as known, gives staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions
- Outlines the routine for the day
- Works with staff to identify vulnerable pupils beyond classmates who may need support
- Keeps staff updated as day progresses
- Identify, make contact with individually and support vulnerable staff members. Advises them of availability of supportive agencies and gives them the contact number.

### Student liaison (if necessary) –

- May co-ordinate information from teachers about students they are concerned about
- Alerts other staff to vulnerable students (appropriately)
- Keeps records of students seen by external agency staff if/when necessary

### Parent liaison

- Visits relevant family with the team leader
- Meet with parents when deemed necessary
- May facilitate such meetings, and manage ‘questions and answers’
- Sets up room for meetings with parents
- Maintains a record of parents seen

### 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)
- Draft a press release and organise a room for the media if necessary
- Consider issues that may arise during an incident e.g. requests for pupils to be interviewed or attempts to do so without permission, photographers on the school premises etc.
- Seek support of the Communications Section of the DES or the Press Officers of the INTO, IPPN, ET or other relevant organisations
- Will coordinate the monitoring of communications relating to the incident.

Communication:

School staff will be briefed to ensure there is clear, unambiguous communication from the staff to the wider community. No individual staff member will divulge information unilaterally. It is important that the family's privacy is protected by staff members at all times.

The Critical Incident File

The base document will be *Responding to Critical Incidents: Guidelines for Schools* (NEPS, 2003). Each team member will keep a record of actions taken e.g. phone calls made, meetings held, and these records will be stored in the Critical Incident File.

Procedures to follow in the event of a critical incident:

As each incident is unique these procedures will have to be adapted to the particular circumstances pertaining at any given time.

- The Emergency Services (if necessary), DES, Chairperson of the BOM and school psychologist will be informed immediately.
- Before any calls are made an agreed script is supplied to every person making phone calls
- When using personal phones, it is important to block your number
- Teachers only phone the parents of children in their class who do not have an older sibling in the school.
- The school website and text-a-parent system may be used to assist with communication
- There is a critical incident file in the Principal's Office containing examples of letters and resources used in the school when dealing with previous incidents.
- Assistance from the following agencies may be helpful to avail of:
  - HSE Child Guidance Clinic
  - Child and Family Mental Health Services (CAMHS)
  - Cork Education and Training Board (ETB)
  - Social Services
  - National Education Psychological Services (NEPS)
  - National Council for Special Education (NCSE)
  - National Education Welfare Board (NEWB)/Túsla
  - Gerry Lennox, Special Education Needs Officer (SENO)
  - Education Welfare Officer (EWO)
  - Turas le Chéile - Bereavement counselling for children and adults
  - INTO
  - IPPN
  - CAMHS - Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service
  - DES Inspector
  - Employee Assistance Service.
  - Bernardos
  - ISPC

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

**Liam Ahern, Manager**

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**Gráinne Newton, Principal**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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