

CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT POLICY



Scoil Ursula aims to protect the well-being of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. The Board of Management, through the School Principal, Tony Gallagher), has drawn up a Critical Incident Management Policy (CIMP) as one element of the school's policies and plans.

Review and Research

The Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) has consulted resource documents available to schools on www.education.ie including:

- Responding to Critical Incidents Guidelines and Resources for Schools (NEPS 2016)
- 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 Primary Schools - Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion (DES, DOH, HSE 2015)

Definition of 'critical incident'

The staff and management of Scoil Ursula recognise a critical incident to be "an incident or sequence of events that overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school". Critical incidents 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*

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

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

- A fire evacuation plan has been formulated (see Appendix 1)
- Fire drills are arranged by the Deputy Principal once a term.
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked.
- School doors are locked during class time but can be opened from the inside without a key in the event of an emergency.
- Appropriate playground rules and adequate supervision is in place.

Psychological safety

The management and staff of Scoil Ursula 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. It is addressed in the curriculum by addressing 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.
- Staff members have access to training for their role in SPHE.
- Staff members are familiar with the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures.
- The school has developed links with a range of external agencies including HSE, NEPS, SESS & Health Promoting Schools.
- 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 policy on bullying 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 School Principal, 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 members are informed about how to access support for themselves.

Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)

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 four school years. 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 their role, to be used in the event of an incident.

Team leader: *Tony Gallagher (Principal)*

Role

- 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.
- Liaises with the bereaved family

(Note – The Deputy Principal will act as Team Leader in the absence of the Principal)

Garda liaison *Tony Gallagher (Principal)*

Role

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

Staff liaison *Therese Thompson (Deputy Principal)*

Role

- 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.

Community/agency liaison *Pat Conway (BOM)*

Role

- 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 liaison *Sharon Carleton (BOM)*

Role

- 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 *Tony Gallagher (Principal)*

Role

- 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 *Mary Meehan (Secretary)*

Role

- 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 texts
- Photocopies materials needed
- Maintains records

Record keeping *Mary Meehan (Secretary)*

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.

Mary Meehan will have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters, photocopying materials, etc.

Confidentiality and good name considerations

Management and staff of Scoil Ursula have a responsibility to protect the privacy and good name of people involved in any incident and will be sensitive to the consequences of public statements.

Members of school staff will bear this in mind, and seek to ensure that students do so also, e.g. 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. The term 'violent death' may be used instead.

Critical Incident Rooms

In the event of a critical incident, the following rooms are designated for the indicated purposes

Room Name:	Designated Purpose:
<i>Staffroom</i>	Main room for meeting staff
<i>Principal's Office</i>	Meetings with students
<i>Principal's Office</i>	Meetings with parents
<i>Principal's Office</i>	Meetings with media
<i>Principal's Office</i>	Individual sessions with students
<i>Principal's Office</i>	Meetings with other visitors

Consultation and communication regarding the plan

All staff members were consulted and their views canvassed 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 team has access to the plan.

All new and temporary staff will be given access to the plan.

The plan will be updated every four years when the new Board of Management is elected.

Critical Incident Management Team		
Role	Name	Phone
Team leader:	<i>Tony Gallagher</i>	0872348274
Garda liaison	<i>Tony Gallagher</i>	0872348274
Staff liaison	<i>Therese Thompson</i>	0872356574
Community liaison	<i>Pat Conway</i>	0878161955
Parent liaison	<i>Sharon Carleton</i>	0872468143
Media liaison	<i>Tony Gallagher</i>	0872348274
Administrator	<i>Mary Meehan</i>	0719162835

Short term actions – Day 1

Task	Name
Gather accurate information	Tony Gallagher
Convene a CIMT meeting – specify time and place clearly	Tony Gallagher
Contact external agencies	Tony Gallagher
Arrange supervision for students	Therese Thompson
Hold staff meeting	All staff
Agree schedule for the day	CIMT
Inform students – (close friends and students with learning difficulties may need to be told separately)	Tony Gallagher
Compile a list of vulnerable students	Tony Gallagher & Therese Thompson
Prepare and agree media statement and deal with media	Tony Gallagher & Pat Conway
Inform parents	Tony Gallagher & Mary Meehan
Hold end of day staff briefing	Therese Thompson

Medium term actions - (Day 2 and following days)

Task	Name
Convene a CIMT meeting to review the events of day 1	Tony Gallagher
Meet external agencies	Tony Gallagher
Meet whole staff	Tony Gallagher & Therese Thompson
Arrange support for students, staff, parents	CIMT
Visit the injured	Tony Gallagher & Sharon Carleton
Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements	Pat Conway
Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service	Whole Staff
Make decisions about school closure	BOM

Follow-up – beyond 72 hours

Task	Name
Monitor students for signs of continuing distress	Class teachers
Liaise with agencies regarding referrals	Tony Gallagher & Therese Thompson
Plan for return of bereaved student(s)	Tony Gallagher & Sharon Carleton
Plan for giving of 'memory box' to bereaved family	Tony Gallagher & Mary Meehan
Decide on memorials and anniversaries	BOM/Staff, parents and students
Review response to incident and amend plan	Staff/BOM

EMERGENCY CONTACT LIST

AGENCY	CONTACT NUMBERS
Gardaí	915 7000
Hospital	917 1111
Fire Brigade	911 1403
Local GP: Jane Dorman	9142254
HSE Markiewicz House	915 5100
St. Michael's Family Life Centre	917 0329
Sligo Family Resource Centre	914 6315
Child and Family Mental Health Service (CAMHS) Patrick Elwood	9174775 0868150735
School Inspector	0761108697
NEPS Psychologist	0761108690
DES	0906483600
INTO	1850708708
St. Mary's Presbytery Fr. Victor Samugana	9162670 0899436512
Employee Assistance Service	1800 411 057

Appendix 1

Scoil Ursula Fire Evacuation Instructions

1. When the fire alarm is sounded your teacher will tell you to line up quickly and quietly at the door of your classroom.
2. When everyone is lined up the teacher will lead the class out to their assigned assembly point as show in the Fire Evacuation Plan ensuring that all of the class leave the building quickly.
3. **Do not run or panic while leaving the building.**
4. The teacher will call the roll and ensure that all children are present at the assembly point. It is important to note any people who are missing from the assembly point.
5. **Do not go back into the building for any reason.**
6. The person in charge will go to each assembly point checking the names and number of all those at assembly points.
7. If there is anyone missing from an assembly point their names need to be given to the person in charge as soon as possible.
8. The Principal will be the person in charge for the senior block and the Deputy Principal will be the person in charge for the junior block. In the event of either or both being absent, next most senior leadership and management personnel will act for them.
9. **Stay calm. Stay alert. When you are told it is safe to do so you may re-enter the building.**

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 28th of November, 2017.

Signed:

Chairperson

Date:
