

**GAELSCOIL INSE CHÓR**  
**CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY**

## **RATIONALE**

Gaelscoil Inse Chór aims to protect the well being of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times.

Over the past few years there has been an increase in the number of critical incidents experienced by schools. In times of tragedy, everyone needs support. This includes pupils, families, staff members, indeed the whole school community. Incidents such as accidental deaths and deaths due to violence, deaths due to illness of a family member, suicide or suspected suicide are extremely traumatic and need to be dealt with and responded to in a sensitive and timely manner.

In times of tragedy young people need support from the adults who know them best. Their teachers have invaluable experience, competence and skills in dealing with children and young people and in partnership with parents, are the best people to provide this support.

The key to managing a critical incident effectively is planning. Having a plan enables the school community to react quickly to maintain a sense of control. It also ensures that normality returns as soon as possible and that possible negative effect on students and staff are limited

This policy has been formulated in accordance with “Responding To Critical Incidents. NEPS Guidelines and Resource Materials for Schools 2016”

## **DEFINITION OF A CRITICAL INCIDENT.**

A critical incident is any incident or sequence of events which overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of the school and disrupts its usual running and which has a severe immediate impact and possible long term effect on the individuals/groups involved.

Among the types of critical incident that could affect our school are :

- Sudden death of a pupil, parent or staff member as a result of illness, accident violence or suicide
- School Bus accident
- Disappearance of a member of the school community from home or school.
- Serious damage to school through fire, flood or vandalism.
- A major accident/tragedy in the wider community

## **Aims**

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 impact on 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 strive daily to create a psychologically safe environment in our school through our vision statement and through clear statements of expected standards of behaviour being laid down in our Code of Discipline.

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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

- External doors in the school are locked during class time.
- Evacuation plan formulated
- A fire drill is conducted once each term and exit routes are listed in each room
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked.
- Training is given to staff in the use of fire extinguishers
- Rules in place for the playground as set out in the Code Of Behaviour
- Rear gate of school locked during the day
- Supervision of the children in the yard before school starts from 8.40-8.50, and also at break and lunch time.
- Staff follow clearly defined guidelines for dismissal of pupils at the end of the day
- First aid training for staff.
- Photographs of children with allergies/ illness are displayed in the staffroom , where their medication is kept. These children are also known to all staff
- All staff are familiar with the Health and Safety policy of the school

### **Psychological Safety**

The management and staff of Scoil Chearbhaill Uí Dhálaigh 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

- The Stay safe programme among others is integrated in the school's SPHE programme. Ways of addressing issues such as grief and loss, communication skills, self esteem, coping skills are given due consideration in the SPHE programme.
- A supportive, empathetic ethos which is helpful when dealing with difficulties at school is cultivated through our Anti-bullying Policy.
- The entire school population is aware of the school's Health and Safety Policy.
- Information is provided on mental health in general and such specific areas as signs and symptoms of depression and anxiety
- A system is in place whereby children with health, allergy, and home circumstances are flagged on Aladdin. Staff are informed of this information
- Staff are familiar with the Child Protection Procedures and the names of the Designated Liaison Person.
- Visiting Teachers and other visitors to Gaelscoil Inse Chór to speak to the children do so in the context of our Child Protection Policy. Information to be imparted is checked beforehand. Class teachers will be present at all times
- A copy of the Guidelines for Responding to Critical Incidents and Resource Pack in schools is available to all staff members. Notices for seminars and in-service courses will be circulated among all staff. The school psychologist will be invited to provide further staff development at staff meetings/planning days as the need arises.

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- All staff and relevant personnel will be apprised of systems and procedures for the identification of students at risk by provision of a checklist – students at risk from the resource folder
- Staff are informed about how to access support for themselves (EAS) 1800 411 057
- Books and resources on difficulties affecting the primary school student are available in the staffroom
- The school has developed links with a range of external agencies

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**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 one school year. The members of the team will meet annually to review and update the policy and plan. The team will comprise of the Principal Colm Ó Nualláin , Deputy Principal Connie Ní Chorrduibh, two members of the teaching staff, and one representative from the Board Of Management. 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

**Roles**

- Team Leader
- Garda Contact
- Staff Contact
- Student Contact
- Parent/Guardian Contact
- Community/ Agency Contact
- Media Contact
- Administrator

**Critical Incident Management Team 2017-2018**

Ról	Ainm
Team Leader	Colm Ó Nualláin- Príomhoide
Garda Contact	Colm Ó Nualláin- Príomhoide
Staff Contact	Colm Ó Nualláin- Príomhoide Connie Ní Chorrduibh – Príomhoide Tánaisteach Erin Briggs – Rúnaí
Student Contact	Oidí Ranga
Parent/ Guardian Contact	Colm Ó Nualláin - Príomhoide
Community/ Agency Contact	Ciarán Ó Raghallaigh- Príomhoide Connie Ní Chorrduibh– Príomhoide
Media Contact	Cathaoirleach an Bhoird Bainistíochta Terry Ó Máirtín/ Colm Ó Nualláin
Administrator	Rúnaí – Erin Briggs

**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

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- Liaises with the bereaved family

**Garda Contact**

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

**Staff Contact**

- Leads briefing meetings for staff on the facts 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 Employee Assistance Service EAS and gives them the contact number 1800 411057

**Student Contact**

- Alerts other staff to vulnerable students (appropriately)
- Maintains student contact records
- Provides materials for students (from their critical incident folder)
- Looks after setting up and supervision of „quiet“ room where

**Parent/ Guardian Contact**

- Visits the bereaved family with the team leader
- Arranges meeting , if held
- May facilitate such meetings and manage “questions and answers “session
- Manages the “consent” issues in accordance with agreed school policy
- Ensures that sample letters are prepared and available on the school’s IT system and ready for adaptation
- Sets up room for meetings with parents
- Maintains a record of parents seen
- Meets with individual parents
- Provides appropriate material to parents from Critical Incident folder

**Community/Agency Contact**

- 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

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- Coordinates the involvement of these agencies.
- Reminds agency staff to wear name badges
- Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies.

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**Media Contact**

- 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 INTO
- 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/guardians  
Teachers  
Emergency services

- Takes telephone calls and notes those that need a response
- Ensures that templates are available on the schools IT system and ready for adaptation
- Prepares and sends out letters, emails and texts
- Photocopies materials as needed
- Maintains records.

**Record Keeping**

- Each staff member will keep a record of phone call made/received, letters sent/received, meetings held, resources used etc
- A school-designed form will be used to record this information which will be retained securely in the principal's office for a period of two years.
- Relevant professionals and parents/guardians will have access to these records

**Confidentiality and good name considerations**

The management and staff of Gaelscoil Inse Chór 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.

**Critical incident rooms**

In the event of a critical incident,

The Staff Room- will be the main room used to meet the staff

Classrooms- for meetings with students

The school hall - for parents or Seomra Tacaíocht Foghloma for meetings of small groups of parents  
Principal's Office - for media

STF 1 - for individual sessions with students

STF 2 for other visitors

**Consultation and communication regarding the plan**

All staff were consulted and their views canvassed in the preparation of this policy and plan. Students and 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 a personal copy of the plan.
- There is a copy of The Emergency Contact List in the Principal's Office, and on Aladdin
- A copy of the Policy is on Google Drive

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- The school secretary Erin will update relevant phone numbers regularly
- All new and temporary staff will be informed of the details of the plan by Connie Ní Chorrduibh



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**Contact Details**

- All class teachers keep an up-to-date list of contact numbers for parents and guardians of pupils in their class on Aladdin Contact numbers for all parents/guardians and carers of all pupils are kept in the school office.
- Emergency contact forms for all staff members are kept by the Principal and updated each September.
- For a list of Emergency Services see Appendix 3. This List of Emergency Services is displayed on the notice board in the staff room, in the secretary's office and in the Principal's office.

**School Tours**

- The school secretary keeps a list of pupils/staff/parents attending school tours/outings along with their contact numbers.
- The teacher in charge of the tour/outing also has a copy of the list and of Emergency Contact Forms ( FoirmeachaÉigeandála) which they take with them on the tour/outing.
- Up-to-date information on pupils' medical conditions is gathered each September. Parents are requested to inform the relevant class teacher immediately of any new relevant information which comes to light during the school year.

**Review of the Plan**

This Plan will be reviewed annually during the month of November. The Deputy Principal, Connie Ní Chorrduibh will lead the review

Ratified by the Board of Management on 11/11//2019



Signed:

Date: 11/11/2019

Reviewed: 9/11/2021