

Critical Incident Management Policy & Plan

Gaelscoil Bhun Cranncha



1. Introduction

Traumatic incidents can happen in schools at anytime. 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 Bhun Cranncha 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 Bhun Cranncha 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.
- 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
- Staff 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

The team leader will:

- alert the team members to the crisis and convene 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

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

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

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

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

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

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 Bhun Cranncha 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
- School hall for meeting with parent body or staff room for smaller groups
- Principal’s office for meeting with the media
- SET room for meeting with individual pupils
- Staff 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.

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

Príomhoide

Dáta: ___/___/___

Gaelscoil Bhun Cranncha
Critical Incident Policy & Plan
Appendices

Appendix 1:	Critical Incident Management Team
Appendix 2:	Critical Incident Action Plan
Appendix 3:	Emergency Contacts
Appendix 4:	Contact Details – Staff, BoM, Parents’ Association
Appendix 5:	Resource Materials

Appendix 1
Critical Incident Management Team

Role	Name
Team Leader	Pól Mac Daibhéid
Garda Liaison	Annette Mhic Cheallabhuí
Staff Liaison	Líosa Ní Dhuchair
Student Liaison	Piaras Ó Donghaile
Parent/Guardian Liaison	Pól Mac Daibhéid
Community Liaison	Annette Mhic Cheallabhuí
Media Liaison	Pól Mac Daibhéid
Administrator	Annette Mhic Cheallabhuí

Appendix 2
Critical Incident Action Plan

Short-Term Actions – Day 1

Task	Name
Gather accurate information	Pól
Who, what, when where?	Pól
Convene a CIMT meeting	Pól
Contact external agencies	Pól
Arrange for supervision of pupils	Annette
Hold staff meeting	Líosa
Agree schedule for the day	All Staff
Inform students (<i>close friends and student with learning difficulties may need to be told separately</i>)	Class teachers
Compile a list of vulnerable students	Piaras
Contact/visit the bereaved family	Pól
Prepare and agree media statement and deal with the media	Pól
Inform parents/guardians	Pól
Hold end-of-day staff briefing	Líosa

Medium-Term Actions – Day 2 and Following Days

Task	Name
Convene CIMT meeting to review the events of Day 1	Pól
Meet external agencies	Pól
Meet whole staff	Critical Incident Management Team
Arrange support for students, staff, parents / guardians	Critical Incident Management Team
Visit the injured	Piaras
Liaise with the bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements	Pól
Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service	Pól
Make decisions about school closure	Board of Management

Follow-Up Actions – Beyond 72 hours

Task	Name
Monitor students for signs of continuing distress	Class teachers
Liaise with agencies regarding referrals	Pól
Plan for return of bereaved students	Pól
Plan for giving of “memory box” to bereaved family	Pól
Decide on memorials and anniversaries	Board of Management / Staff / Parents / Pupils
Review response to incident and amend plan if necessary	Board of Management / Staff

Appendix 3
Emergency Contacts (as per internal document as Gaeilge)

GNÍOMHAIREACHT	UIMHREACHA TEAGMHÁLA
Gardaí	
Ospidéal	
Briogáid Dóiteáin	112
Dochtúirí áitiúla	
Community Care Team	
Cigire Scoile	
Siceolaí NEPS	
Roinn Oideachais	
INTO	
Riarthóir Paróiste	
Seirbhís Chabhrach d'Oibrithe: Inspire Wellbeing	

Appendix 4
Contact Details: Board of Management & Parents Association

Ról & Ainm	Ríomhphost	Uimhir Ghutháin
Chairperson <i>Colm ó Tuathaláin</i>	c.otuathalain@live.ie	0868042886
Principal <i>Pól Mac Daibhéid</i>	gsbc1999@gmail.com	00447835660625
Patron Representative <i>Deirdre Ní Theimhneáin</i>	deirdre_ni_theimhneain@yahoo.co.uk	0863773068
Teacher Representative <i>Líosa Ní Dhúchair</i>	muinteoirliosagsbc@gmail.com	00447853061345
Parent Representative <i>Marie Robb</i>	marieandkieran@hotmail.com	0872996874
Parent Representative <i>Stephen Cuffe</i>	cuffestephen@gmail.com	0863615898
Community Representative <i>Stiofán Ó Dochartaigh</i>	stephendoherty@donegaletb.ie	
Community Representative		

Coiste na dTuismitheoirí

Ainm & ról	Ríomhphost	Uimhir Ghutháin
<i>Cathaoirleach</i>		
<i>Rúnaí</i>		
<i>Eile</i>		

SAMPLE CONSENT LETTER - INDIVIDUAL OR GROUP SUPPORT SESSION

Resource for schools: R2

This letter can be used as a template for the school when we are seeking parental consent for a child to be seen in a group or individually by a NEPS psychologist.

Dear Parents,

You may already know that our teachers and staff have been providing support to our students following _____.

Additional support is also being provided to our school by psychologist/s from the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS).

The psychologist will be available, where necessary, to meet with individuals or with groups of students to help them during this difficult time.

The aim of such sessions will be to:

- a) Provide information about dealing with grief and loss in a healthy way
- b) Allow students the opportunity to express their thoughts and feelings in a safe environment
- c) Allow students time to comfort and support each other, under the guidance of experienced staff from _____
- d) Help students resume their normal routines as soon as possible

If you would like for your son/daughter to participate in such a session and any follow-up meetings that might be scheduled, please give your consent by signing below.

You should return it to the school immediately.

If you have any questions, please contact _____

I give my consent for _____ to participate in a Group/Individual Session
Student Name

Parent or Legal Guardian

Date

Is mise le meas,

Pól Mac Daibhéid
Príomhoide

SAMPLE LETTER - SEEKING ADVANCE PARENTAL AGREEMENT TO CHILD BEING SEEN (PRIOR)
Resource for schools: R3

This letter can be used as a template for the school if we decide to seek advance parental consent so that a child may be seen by a NEPS psychologist (in a group or individually) in the aftermath of a critical incident. It is to cater for the situation where parents cannot be immediately contacted.

Dear Parent,

Gaelscoil _____ has developed a plan for responding when a tragedy occurs.

When such an event happens, schools are offered support by psychologists from the National

Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), an agency of the Department of Education and Science.

If we feel it is necessary, we would like to be in a position to have your child seen by the psychologist who can offer advice and support.

Before any child is seen by a NEPS psychologist parental consent is usually required. We will make every effort to obtain this. However, in the unlikely event of being unable to contact you, we are writing to seek your consent to your child being seen by a member of NEPS as part of our school's immediate response. This is to allow us to support your child in the best way possible.

Your child may be seen individually, in a small group or as part of a class group.

If you wish to discuss this, please contact me at your convenience.

Is mise le meas,

Pól Mac Daibhéid
Príomhoide

Please fill in the form below confirming that you have read this letter and stating whether **you wish** or **do not wish** to have your child seen by a NEPS psychologist and return to the class teacher.

I have read this letter and:

I wish to have _____ seen by the NEPS psychologist.

I do not wish to have _____ seen by the NEPS psychologist.

Parents/carers: _____

Date: _____

SAMPLE LETTER TO PARENTS – SUDDEN DEATH/ACCIDENT

Resource for schools: R4

This letter can be used as a template by the school when we are informing parents of a tragedy, offering some advice and outlining what the schools response involves.

Dear Parents,

The school has experienced (the sudden death, accidental injury, etc.) of Name of student(s). We are deeply saddened by the deaths/events.

(Brief details of the incident, and in the event of a death, perhaps some positive remembrances of the person lost).

Our thoughts are with (family name).

We have support structures in place to help your child cope with this tragedy. (Elaborate).

It is possible that your child may have some feelings and questions that he/she may like to discuss with you. It is important to give factual information that is appropriate to their age.

You can help your child by taking time to listen and by encouraging them to express their feelings. All children are different and will express their feelings in different ways. It is not uncommon for children to have difficulty concentrating or to be fearful, anxious, or irritable. They may become withdrawn, cry, complain of physical aches and pains, have difficulty sleeping or have nightmares. Some may not want to eat. These are generally short term reactions. Over the course of the days to come, please keep an eye on your child and allow him/her to express their feelings without criticism.

Although classes will continue as usual, I anticipate that the next few days will be difficult for everyone.

(Optional) An information night for parents is planned for (date, time and place). At that time, further information about how to help children in grief will be given.

We have enclosed some information which you may find useful in helping your child through this difficult time.

If you would like advice you may contact the following people at the school. **(Details).**

Is mise le meas,

Pól Mac Daibhéid
Príomhoide

SAMPLE LETTER TO PARENTS - VIOLENT DEATH

Resource for Schools: R5

This letter can be used as a template for the schools if we are informing parents of a violent death, offering some advice and outlining what the schools response involves.

Dear Parents,

I need to inform you about a very sad event that has happened.

(Give accurate information about the incident, but avoid using the word murder as this will not be established until the court case is completed).

A child/young person from the neighbourhood, who is the brother of _____, a student here at school, was killed as a result of (a violent attack, violent incident in the street etc.) earlier this week. We are all profoundly saddened by his death.

We have shared this information and have had discussions with all of our students so that they know what has happened. School staff members have been available for students on an on-going basis today. Other support personnel (including psychologists etc, according to actual arrangements) are available to advise staff and, where necessary, to talk to students. This support will continue to be available for (if appropriate insert how long).

The death of any young person is tragic, but a violent death is even more difficult. It is hard to have to teach our children about the violence in our world and to accept that sometimes we do not have the power to prevent it.

This death may cause a variety of reactions in your child. Some children/young people may be afraid for their own life and for the lives of those they love. Take time to listen to their fears and reassure them that what has happened is rare.

We have enclosed some additional information that may be useful during this time.

The media are in the vicinity of the school and may approach you or your children. You need not respond to their questions if you are approached. We will not allow the media to interview your child at school and our general advice is that you should not let your children be interviewed. They are not mature enough to judge what to say and may say something they will regret later.

(If planned) A support meeting for parents is planned for (date, time and place). At that time we can talk further about how to help ourselves and our children.

Our thoughts are with (family name) and with each of you.

Is mise le meas,

Pól Mac Daibhéid
Príomhoide

SAMPLE ANNOUNCEMENT TO THE MEDIA

Resource for schools: R6

This can be used as a template by the school to be e-mailed, faxed or given to the media. It may help to decrease the number of media calls and callers to the school. In some instances it is not appropriate to provide names or information that might identify individuals. This announcement will need to be changed based upon confidentiality issues, the wishes of the victim's family and the nature of the incident.

My name is Pól Mac Daibhéid and I am the Principal of Gaelscoil _____. We learned this morning of the death of (one of our students or Name of student). This is a terrible tragedy for _____ family(ies), our school and our community. We are deeply saddened by these events. Our sympathy and thoughts are with (Name) family and friends.

Name of student/students was a (5th class boy) and will be greatly missed by all who knew him.

We have been in contact with his/her parents and they have requested that we all understand their need for privacy at this difficult time.

Offers of support have been pouring in and are greatly appreciated. Our school have implemented our Critical Incident Management Plan.

Psychologists from the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) and (insert other information if relevant) have been with us all day supporting and advising teachers in their efforts to assist our students at this time.

The teachers have been helping students to deal with the tragic event.

The school has been open to parents, to support them and to offer them advice and guidance.

We would ask you to respect our privacy at this time.

Thank you.

CHECKLIST - STUDENTS AT RISK

Handout for schools: R16

This checklist may be used by the psychologist or may be offered as an aid to school staff who are concerned about a student. It should be remembered that the checking of a number of items for any one student may point to other problems. Indication of a number of these factors in any one student should always be followed up.

Unexpected reduction of academic performance	
Talking about suicide	
Ideas and themes of depression, death and suicide in their work	
Making statements about hopelessness, helplessness or worthlessness	
Change in mood and marked emotionally instability	
Significant grief or stress	
Withdrawal from relationships	
Break up of an important relationship	
Discipline problems, being in trouble in school	
Withdrawal from extra-curricular activities	
Giving personal belongings away	
Loss of interest in things one cares about	
Neglect of physical appearance	
Physical symptoms with emotional cause	
High risk behaviours	
Alcohol or drug abuse	
Bullying or victimization	
History of suicidal behaviour e.g. cutting or overdose risk behaviours	
Family history of suicide/attempted suicide	

School Resources for Dealing with Critical Incidents

Books for Children

1. Rosie: Coming to Terms with the Death of a Sibling (Aois 4-7) Stephanie Jeffs, Sue Doggett & Jacqui Thomas (2005)
2. Josh: Coming to Terms with the Death of a friend (Aois 4-7) Stephamie Jeffs & Jacqui Thomas (2006)
3. Gentle Willow. A Story for Children about Dying (Aois 4-7) J.C.Mills (1993)
4. Remembering Mum (Aois 4-11) Ginny Perkins & Leon Morris (1996)
5. What on Earth do you do when Someone Dies? (Aois 7-11) Trevor Romain & Elizabeth Verdick (1999)
6. The Little Flower Bulb- helping children bereaved by suicide Eleanor Gormally (2011)

Workbooks for Children

1. When Someone very special dies: Children can learn to cope with grief (Aois 6-12) Marge Heegard (1991)
2. Talking with Children and Young People about Death & Dying: A Workbook Mary Turner (1998)
3. Good Grief: Exploring Feelings, Loss and Death with Under Elevens. A Holistic Approach Barbara Ward & Associates (1996)

Resources for Parents

1. How do we tell the Children: A Step-by-Step Guide for Helping Children Cope when Someone Dies Dan Schafer & Christine Lyons (2002)
2. When Parents Separate: Helping your Children Cope Sharry, John & Reid, Peter & Donoghue, Eugene (2001)
3. The resolving Bereavement-Grief with your child book Fiona McAuslan & Peter Nicholson(2010)

School Resources

1. Wise before the Event: Coping with Crises in Schools Anne Gold, William Yule (1993)

Resources for Psychologists etc.

1. Helping Children cope with Separation and Loss Claudia L. Jewitt (1997)
2. The Forgotten Mourners: Guidelines for working with Bereaved Children Susan C. Smith (1999)
3. Someone Very Important has just Died: Immediate Help for People Caring for Children of all ages at the time of a close Bereavement Mary Turner (2005)