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Registered Charity Number (RCN): 20201529

Critical Incident Policy

1.0 Introduction

At all times, SN Colmcill Naofa aims to protect the well-being of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment. The Board of Management has drawn up the following Critical Incident Management Plan as one element of the school's policies and plans.

2.0 The Aim

The aim of the policy and plan is to help school management and staff to react quickly and effectively in the event of an incident, to enable them to maintain a sense of control and to ensure that appropriate support is offered to students and staff. Having a good plan will also help ensure that the effects on the students and staff will be limited. It will enable the school to return to normality as soon as possible. The aim is also to establish a Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) to steer the development and implementation of the plan.

3.0 Review and Research

The CIMT have consulted resource documents available to schools on www.education.ie and www.nosp.ie including:

- Responding to Critical Incidents: Guidelines and Resource Materials for Schools – National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), 2016.
- Guidance for Primary School Staff – Using Psychological First Aid – National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS).
- Critical Incident Preparation and Planning – Department of Education.
- Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2018–2023 (Revised October 2019) – Department of Education.
- Wellbeing Information for School Staff – Primary – Department of Education.
- Catalogue of Wellbeing Resources for Primary Schools – Department of Education.
- Understanding Behaviours of Concern and Responding to Crisis Situations – Guidelines for Schools in Supporting Students – Department of Education, 2024.)

4.0 Definition of Critical Incident

The staff and management of SN Colmcill Naofa 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, their family members, of members of the local community.

4.1 Examples of Critical Incidents

- The death of a member of the school community through accident, violence, suicide or suspected suicide or other unexpected death
- An accident/tragedy involving members of the school community
- An accident/tragedy in the wider community
- The disappearance of a member of the school community.
- Unauthorised removal of student from school or home.
- A threatening or violent intrusion into the school.
- Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism, etc.
- Outbreak of disease or major illness in school or community.

- World events that may affect the student body and/or staff.

5.0 A Coping Supporting & Caring Ethos: Psychological Safety

The BOM and staff of this Primary School 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. We have put systems in place to lessen the probability of the occurrence of an incident. These include measures to address both the physical and psychological safety of both staff and students.

5.1 Physical Safety:

The following policies and strategies have been put in place in order to maintain the physical safety of all members of the school community:

- Health, Safety & Statement
- Child Safeguarding Statement.
- First Aid box maintained and kept in two locations: The Front and Back Doors.
- Regular Fire Drills
- Evacuation plan formulated and floor plan displayed
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked.
- The Fire Alarm is serviced regularly, at least once a year.
- Databiz used to communicate urgent messages to parents
- Access note in the case of custody issues
- Pupils are adequately supervised at all times especially during physical activity and breaktimes. Two or three members of the teaching staff supervise the children on yards during break times.
- Code of Behaviour which includes rules for yard play.
- Pupils leaving early will only be released by a member of teaching staff when an authorised adult arrives to accompany the child from the premises.
- Pupils are not released into the care of persons' unknown to school staff without checking with a parent/ guardian.
- Basic maintenance of the building as far as practicable subject to DEY grants.

5.2 Psychological Safety

This Primary School aims to create an open and encouraging environment in the school where students can talk about their difficulties and seek help for same. The following strategies aim to support and ensure the psychological well-being of our pupils:

- SPHE is an integral part of the school curriculum and addresses issues such as grief and loss, communication skills, stress and anger management, conflict management, problem solving, help-seeking, decision making, and alcohol and drug prevention.
- Child Safeguarding Statement is updated annually in January.
- Staff are familiar with the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures.
- Staff view the PowerPoint 'Responding to Critical Incidents: A guide for primary and post-primary school staff' biannually in September/October.
- The school has a clear policy on bullying and deals with bullying in accordance with the Bí Cineáltas policy
- Staff are regularly informed about how to access support themselves i.e. *Spectrum Life.*
- The *Stay Safe Programme* is taught biannually in all classes.
- Staff are informed of difficulties effecting individual students and are aware of and vigilant in identifying their needs.
- The school has developed links with outside agencies, which may be contacted in the event of an emergency and for onward referral of students. These include: the school's NEPS Psychologist; Túsla Child and Family Agency; CAMHS; Community Garda, Local Garda Station
- Training from the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)
- Wellbeing Promotion Review within the school community (2022-2025)
- School wide delivery of lessons on Cyber Bullying (Be Safe-Be Web wise, Web wise Primary teachers' resources).

- Delivery of the Garda SPHE Programmes at primary level. These lessons, delivered by Community Gardaí, cover issues around personal safety and cyber-bullying

6.0 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 biannually to review and update the policy and plan. Each member of the team has access to the schools Critical Incident Management Folder available in the Principal's office and in the Secretary's office. It includes all of the following:

- A copy of the Critical Incident Management Team/and the Key Roles
- An emergency contact list
- Other external contacts and resources
- A copy of the roles of each team member
- A copy of the Board of Management members & contacts
- An Action Plan Template

6.1 Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) Members and their roles

6.1.1 Team Leader: Principal

Deputy Principal will assume this role in the absence of the Principal

- Confirm the event
- Clarify facts surrounding event
- Decide the response level
- Activate the Critical Incident Response Team
- Alert the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting
- Co-ordinate the tasks of the team
- Liaise with the Board of Management; Department of Education and Youth; National Educational Psychological Services
- Liaise with the bereaved family.
- Express sympathy to family
- Decide how news will be communicated to different groups (staff, pupils, outside school)
- Maintain up to date lists of contact number ie Parents Council, emergency support services and other external contacts and resources
- Liaise with agencies in the community for support and onward referral
- Check credentials of individuals offering support
- Co-ordinate the involvement of these agencies
- Remind agency staff to wear name badges as supplied at school office.
- Update team members on the involvement of external agencies
- Make contact with other relevant agencies
- Liaise with the Gardaí/Emergency services
- Ensure that information about deaths or other developments is checked out for accuracy before being shared.
- Liaise with Chairperson of Board of Management
- Lead 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
- Advise staff on the procedures for identification of vulnerable students
- Provide materials for staff
- Keep records of students seen by external agency staff
- Look after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room where agreed.
- Databiz app text where appropriate
- Visit the bereaved family with the team leader
- Arrange parent/guardian meetings if held.
- Facilitate such meetings, manage 'questions and answers'. Set up room for meetings
- Meet with individual parents/guardians
- Maintain a record of parents/guardians seen
- Ensure that sample letters are uploaded on Databiz, ready for adaptation.
- Provide appropriate materials for parents/guardians (from their Critical Incident Folder)

- 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)

6.1.2 Deputy Principal:

- Liaise with Team Leader and CIMT
- Alerts other staff to vulnerable students (appropriately)
- Provides materials for students.
- Maintains student contact records (R1).
- Looks after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room where agreed

6.1.3 School Secretary/Deputy Principal

- Maintenance up to date telephone numbers of:
  - Parents/Guardians (responsibility of all parents/guardians to ensure up-to-date contact numbers provided)
  - Teachers
  - Emergency services
  - To be checked twice yearly
- Take telephone calls and note those that need to be responded to
- Ensure that templates are on the school's system in advance and ready for adaptation
- Prepare and send out letters, emails and faxes in consultation with the CIMT
- Photocopies of materials needed
- Maintains records

6.1.4 Other

- In School Management Team to assist where necessary/appropriate

6.2 Record Keeping: School Secretary/Deputy Principal

In the event of an incident, each member of the team will keep records of phone calls made and received, letters/emails sent and received, meetings held, persons met, interventions used, material used etc. The Administrator in conjunction with the School Secretary, will have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters, photocopying materials, etc.

6.3 Confidentiality and Good Name Considerations

The management and staff of SN Colmcill Naofa 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. Use of social media by parent/guardian and pupils in discussing any critical incident(s) is strongly discouraged. Parents/guardians will be reminded of this by text in the event of a critical incident. 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 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

6.4 Critical Incident Rooms

In the event of a critical incident:

- The Hall will be the main room used to meet the staff
- The Hall for meetings with students
- The Hall for parents/guardians
- The Hall for media
- The Staff Room for other visitors
- The Sensory Room for individual sessions or a safe space for students

- The Local Hall/ Centre to be used in the event of the school building being inaccessible.

6.5 CIMT Meetings

The Critical Incident Response Team will meet every year to discuss and review key roles and responsibilities.

7.0 Consultation

All staff were consulted, and regard was given to their views in the preparation of this policy and plan. Students and parent 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.

8.0 Implementation and Review

8.1 Implementation

This plan was reviewed in September 2026.

8.2 Review

This policy was reviewed by staff in September 2026. The plan will be monitored and evaluated at regular Staff meetings. It will be reviewed in This plan will be reviewed in Term 1 in the 2028/2029 School Year unless and earlier review is warranted.

9. Communication and Ratification

9.1 Communication

Each member of the Critical Incident Team has access to a personal copy of the plan. All new and temporary staff will be informed of the details of the plan by a Principal, Staff Liaison member. This policy is made available as part of the whole school plan. The whole plan is also available in the school office for viewing. This policy will be communicated to the school community by the following means:

- Board of Management/Other Staff members via hardcopy in office, email and SharePoint
- Parents/Guardians on request.

9.2 Ratification

This policy was reviewed by the Board of Management on 7th September 2026

Signed _____ Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed _____ Principal/Secretary, Board of Management

Appendix 1: Short Term Actions – Day 1

Task	Name
Gather accurate information	Team leader
Who, what, when, where?	Team leader
Convene a CIMT meeting – specify time and place clearly	Team leader
Contact external agencies	Team leader
Arrange supervision for students	Team leader
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)	Team leader
Compile a list of vulnerable students	Student Liaison
Prepare and agree media statement and deal with media	CIMT and BOM
Inform parents	Team Leader
Hold end of day staff briefing	Team Leader and Staff

Appendix 2: Medium Term Actions - (Day 2 And Following Days)

Task	Name
Convene a CIMT meeting to review the events of day 1	Team leader
Meet external agencies	Team leader
Meet whole staff	Team leader
Arrange support for students, staff, parents	CIMT
Visit the injured	Team leader
Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements	Team leader
Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service	CIMT and BOM
Make decisions about school closure	BOM

Appendix 3: Follow-up – beyond 72 hours

Task	Name
Monitor students for signs of continuing distress	Class teachers
Liaise with agencies regarding referrals	Team Leader
Plan for return of bereaved student(s)	CIMT
Plan for giving of 'memory box' to bereaved family	CIMT
Decide on memorials and anniversaries	BOM/Staff, Parents, Guardians & Pupils
Review response to incident and amend plan	Staff/BOM