



## ***Scoil Naisiúnta Rónáin Naofa Cluain Lua***

*St. Ronan's N.S., Cloonloo, Boyle, Co. Sligo*

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*School Patron: Most Rev. Paul Dempsey, Bishop of Achonry*

# **CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT POLICY**

St. Ronan's N.S. 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 Principal, has drawn up a Critical Incident Management Plan as one element of the school's policies and plans.

### **Review and Research**

The CIMT have consulted resource documents available to schools on [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie) and [www.nosp.ie](http://www.nosp.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)

### **Define what you mean by the term 'critical incident'**

The staff and management of St. Ronan's N.S. 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**

- **Health and Safety Policy**
- Evacuation plan formulated
- Regular fire drills occur
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
- Pre-opening supervision in the school yard/classroom for 10 minutes before the school opens
- Front gate shut during school hours
- School doors locked during class time
- Rules of the playground – I stay in my own yard. I keep my hands and feet to myself. I play safely and fairly. I line up quietly as soon as the bell goes.

### **Psychological safety**

The management and staff of St. Ronan's N.S. 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 have access to training for their role in SPHE
- Staff are familiar with the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures
- Books and resources on difficulties affecting the primary school student are available
- The school has developed links with a range of external agencies: NEPS, NCSE, TUSLA, CAMHS, IPPN, CPSMA, DES etc.
- 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. See DES Circulars 0022/2010 (Primary)
- 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 which is outlined in the NEPS documents published in 2007 for primary schools.
- 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 are informed, and where appropriate, a referral is made to an

appropriate agency. (A summary of this support is set out in R 23 of the document 'Responding to Critical Incidents Guidelines and Resources for Schools')

- Staff 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 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 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:** Maria-Goretti Surlis

#### **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 - Deputy Principal - Ms. Michelle Jordan - will take the lead in the absence of the team leader. )*

**Garda liaison** Maria-Goretti Surlis

#### **Role**

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

**Staff liaison** Maria-Goretti Surlis

#### **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 the 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 (Employee Assistance Service - Spectrum Life - Wellbeing Together) and gives them the contact number. Freephone Helpline 1800 411 057 or text 'Hi' to 087 369 0010 to avail of EAS support on SMS & WhatsApp

**Student liaison** - Carol Ann Savage/Support Teacher

#### **Role**

- Alerts other staff to vulnerable students (appropriately)
- Provides materials for students (from the critical incident folder)
- Maintains student contact records (R1).
- Looks after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room where agreed

**Community/agency liaison** Maria-Goretti Surlis

#### **Role**

- Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of
  - Key parents, such as members of the Parents Association
  - 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** *Maria-Goretti Surlis*

**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 the critical incident folder)

**Media liaison** *Maria-Goretti Surlis*

**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 relevant teacher unions etc.
- Will draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews (as agreed by school management)

**Administrator** *Eileen McCormack*

**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** *Maria-Goretti Surlis/Support Teacher*

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.

*Eileen McCormack* 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 St. Ronan's N.S. 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.

<b>Critical Incident Rooms</b>	
In the event of a critical incident, the following rooms are designated for the indicated purposes	
<b>Room Name:</b>	<b>Designated Purpose:</b>
<i>Senior Room</i>	Main room for meeting staff
<i>Senior Room / Junior Room</i>	Meetings with students
<i>Senior Room</i>	Meetings with parents
<i>Senior Room</i>	Meetings with media
<i>SET Room</i>	Individual sessions with students
<i>SET Room</i>	Meetings with 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. All new and temporary staff will be informed of the details of the plan by Maria-Goretti Surlis. The plan will be updated annually in October.

**Ratified by the Board of Management on 2nd December 2020**

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
**Fr. Joseph Caulfied, Chairperson**

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
**Maria-Goretti Surlis, Principal**

<b>Critical Incident Management Team</b>		
<b>Role</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Phone</b>
<b>Team leader:</b>	<i>Maria-Goretti Surlis</i>	0852703682
<b>Garda liaison</b>	<i>Maria-Goretti Surlis</i>	0852703682
<b>Staff liaison</b>	<i>Maria-Goretti Surlis</i>	0852703682
<b>Student liaison</b>	<i>Maria-Goretti Surlis</i>	0852703682
<b>Community liaison</b>	<i>Maria-Goretti Surlis</i>	0852703682
<b>Parent liaison</b>	<i>Maria-Goretti Surlis</i>	0852703682
<b>Media liaison</b>	<i>Maria-Goretti Surlis</i>	0852703682
<b>Administrator</b>	<i>Eileen McCormack</i>	0719663684

### **Short term actions – Day 1**

<b>Task</b>	<b>Name</b>
<b>Gather accurate information</b>	Team Leader
<b>Who, what, when, where?</b>	Team Leader
<b>Convene a CIMT meeting – specify time and place clearly</b>	Team Leader
<b>Contact external agencies</b>	Team Leader
<b>Arrange supervision for students</b>	Team Leader
<b>Hold staff meeting</b>	<b>All staff</b>
<b>Agree schedule for the day</b>	Team Leader
<b>Inform students – (close friends and students with learning difficulties may need to be told separately)</b>	Team Leader
<b>Compile a list of vulnerable students</b>	Team Leader
<b>Prepare and agree media statement and deal with media</b>	Team Leader
<b>Inform parents</b>	Team Leader
<b>Hold end of day staff briefing</b>	Team Leader

## 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	Team Leader
Visit the injured	Team Leader
Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements	Team Leader
Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service	Team Leader
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	Team Leader
Plan for return of bereaved student(s)	Team Leader
Plan for giving of 'memory box' to bereaved family	Team Leader
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
Garda	Gurteen - 071 91 82002 Ballymote - 071 91 89500
Hospital	Sligo - 071 91 71111
Fire Brigade	999/911
Local GPs	Boyle Medical Centre - 071 96 63386 Loftus Medical Centre (Boyle) - 071 96 62230 Gurteen Family Practice - 071 91 82110
HSE	Child Protection Sligo - 071 91 55133
Community Care Team	Plunkett House (Boyle) 071 96 62026 Ballymote Primary Care and Mental Health Centre 071 91 91803
Child and Family Agency (Tusla)	Sligo - 071 91 55133 Tubbercurry - 071 91 20062 Carrick-on-Shannon - 071 96 50324
Child and Family Mental Health Service (CAMHS)	Sligo - 071 91 13960 Roscommon - 0906 63 03 50
School Inspector	Máire Ní Mháirtín Sligo - 076 11 08697 / 071 91 43218 Dublin - 01 889 6553
NEPS Psychologist	Laura Murtagh - 087 432 3853 Head Office - 01 8892700
DES	Athlone - 0906 483600
INT	01 804 7700
Clergy	Fr. Joseph Caulfield 087 2473234 071 91 82551
Employee Assistance Service	1800 411 057