Critical Incident Policy

Scoil Mhuire aims to protect the well-being of its students and staff by providing and safe and nurturing environment at all times, as outlined in our School philosophy/mission statement.

The Board of Management, through the staff, has drawn up a critical incident management plan (CIMP). They have established a Critical Incident Management team to steer the development and implementation of this plan.

**Defining a Critical Incident**

The staff and management of Scoil Mhuire recognise a critical incident to be “an incident or sequence of event that overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school” (DES, 2007, p.9). Critical incidents may involve one or more students, 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 put into effect a return to normality as soon as possible.

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***

These are some specific examples of what the school is doing at this point.

* An Evacuation Plan has been formulated and is displayed in all rooms.
* Fire drills are held regularly.
* Fire exits and extinguishers are inspected on an annual basis.
* Parents are informed of the arrangements for entry to and egress from school.
* Visitors must sign visitors book and make contact with Secretary (or ring bell for Principal when Secretary unavailable) on entry.
* Front doors closed during class time
* Rules of the playground

***Psychological safety***

The management and staff of Scoil Mhuire provide programmes which address the personal and social development of students, enhance a sense of safety and security in the school and provide opportunities for reflection and discussion;

* Social Personal and Heath Education (SPHE) is integrated into the work of the school, through programmes such as Stay Safe, Walk Tall, and Relationship and Sexual Education (RSE). It is addressed in the curriculum by exploring 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 positive mental health is an integral part of this provision.
* As part of Continuous Professional Development, staff carry out training in SPHE.
* Staff are familiar with the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures, having undertaken CPD in relation to same.
* The school has developed links with a range of external agencies e.g. National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), Special Education Support Service (SESS).
* The school has a policy on bullying and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy.
* Students identified as being at risk are referred to the designated staff member (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.

**Critical Incident Management Team**

The first named person has the responsibility as defined.

The second named person assists and only assumes responsibility on the absence of the first-named.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Position | Name 1 | Name 2 |
| Team Leader | Maria | Eleanor |
| Staff Liaison | Maria | Eleanor |
| Student Liaison | Eleanor | Lelia / Fonda |
| Community / Agency Liaison | Lelia | Brid / Mary |
| Media Liaison | Harry Reid | Michael |
| Parent / Guardian Liaison | Anne / Paula | Teresa |
| Administrator | Anne Boyle | Caroline |
| Chaplaincy Role | Fr. Gerard Cunningham |  |

***Team Leader***

Intervention

* Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting
* Coordinates the tasks of the Critical Incident Response team
* Liaises with the Board of Management; DES; NEPS;
* Liaises with the family
* Liaises with the Gardaí/Emergency services
* Ensures that information about deaths or other developments is checked out for accuracy before being shared
* Lead briefing meetings for staff on the facts as known, give staff members an

opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions, outlines the routine for the

day

* Express sympathy to family
* Consult with family around involvement of school in e.g. funeral service
* Decide how news will be communicated to different groups (staff, pupils, outside school)

Postvention

* Ensure provision of on-going support to staff and students

***Staff & Student Liaison***

Intervention

* Keeps staff updated as the day progresses
* Advise the staff on the procedures for identification of vulnerable pupils
* Alert staff to vulnerable pupils
* Outline specific services available in the school
* Put in place clear referral procedures
* Address immediate needs of staff
* Provide materials for staff (from critical incident folder)
* Provide information on counselling

Postvention

* Provide on-going support to vulnerable students
* Monitor class most affected
* Refer as appropriate
* Review and evaluate Plan

***Communication Liaison***

Intervention

* With Team, prepare a public statement (to be made by Principal or Deputy Principal)
* Ensure telephone lines are free for outgoing and important incoming calls
* Their personal number may be used for incoming calls
* Designate mobile numbers for contact
* In conjunction with Team Leader, liaise with relevant outside support agencies
* Ensure communication letters are available for use (from critical incident folder)

Postvention

* Review and evaluate effectiveness of communication response

***Chaplaincy Role***

Intervention

* Visit home(s), if appropriate
* Assist with prayer services
* Make contact with other local clergy
* Be available as personal and spiritual support to staff

Postvention

* Provide follow-up support to families in conjunction with Parent Liaison
* Work in partnership with Critical Incident team
* Review and Evaluate Plan

***Parent Liaison***

Intervention

* Co-ordinate contact with other families
* Assist with all communication dealing with parents of any student affected by

critical incident

* May facilitate parents meeting, and manage ‘questions and answers’
* Maintain a record of parents seen
* Provides appropriate materials for parents (from critical incident folder)

Postvention

* Provide on-going support to families affected by the incident
* Involve as appropriate the family in school liturgies/memorial services
* Offer to link family with community support groups
* Review and evaluate plan

***Administrator***

* Maintenance of up to date telephone numbers of Parents/guardians / Teachers / Emergency services
* Takes telephone calls and notes those that need to be responded to
* Ensures that templates are on the school system in advance and ready for adaption
* Prepares and sends out letters/emails/faxes
* Photocopy materials needed
* Maintains records

**Record Keeping**

In the event of an incident each member of the team will keep records of phone call made and received, letters sent and received, meetings held, persons met, interventions used, material used etc.

Anne Boyle (Secretary) will have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters, photocopying materials, etc.

**Parental Consent**

On enrolment, the principal brings the critical incident policy to the attention of parents. Parents are asked to read the Consent Form and complete as they see fit. It is considered more appropriate to assume parents will wish to avail of the advice and support of NEPS for their child in school. Therefore parents who do not wish to avail of NEPS involvement with their child must sign the form and return. The school authorities assume parents who do not sign and return form are happy to have their child seen by NEPS psychologist

**Confidentiality and good name considerations**

The management and staff of Scoil Mhuire 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 statement. The members of 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 words ‘murder’ should not be used until it is legally established that a murder was committed. There term ‘violent death’ may be used instead.

**Critical incident rooms**

In the event of a critical incident, the following rooms will be used

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Staff Room | Critical Incident Team Meeting  Staff Meeting |
| GP Room | Meet Students (or split Juniors and Seniors into two groups and take in separate rooms)  Meet Parents |
| Learning Support Room | Meet Media |
| Library | ‘Quiet Room’ for students |
| Resource Room | Individual Sessions with Students |
| Principal’s Office | Meeting 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.

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.

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 the Principal.

This policy will be reviewed annually, or within three months of any critical Incident, whichever is the earlier.

Signed:

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(Board of Management Chairperson) (Principal)

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Date Date