



Scoil Bhríde, Milltown, Newbridge, Co. Kildare.

Principal: John Goff, Deputy Principal: Fiona Fay

Phone 045/433230

Charity No: 20205115

Email: scoilbhridemilltown@gmail.com

Website: www.scoilbhridemilltown.ie

Scoil Bhríde Milltown **Critical Incident Policy and Plan**

Scoil Bhríde Milltown aims to protect the well being of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times.

The staff has drawn up a critical incident management plan as one element of the school's policies and plans.

Our teaching staff, as a whole, has been established as a Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) to steer the development and implementation of the plan.

Review and Research

We have consulted resource documents provided to schools as well as publications listed in the resources section of this pack.

These include:

-*Responding to Critical Incidents: Guidelines for Schools* (NEPS 2016)

-*Well-Being in Primary Schools-Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion* (DES, DOH, HSE 2015)

Other useful documents may be found on websites listed on pages 95 and 96 in the *Responding to Critical Incidents: Guidelines for Schools* (NEPS 2016) publication.

Definition of a Critical Incident

The staff and management of Scoil Bhríde Milltown 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 may include:

- The death of a member of the school community through accident, violence, suicide or suspected suicide or other unexpected death
- Major illness/outbreak of disease
- An accident involving a member/members of the school community
- Major accident/tragedy in the wider community
- Sexual, physical and psychological abuse
- Civil unrest, war
- Fire, natural and technological disaster
- Disappearance of student from home or school
- Unauthorised removal of student from home or school
- A physical attack or an intrusion into the school

Aim

The aim of the Critical Incident Management Policy and Plan 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 the 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

- Evacuation plan formulated
- Regular fire drills occur
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
- Rules of the playground

Psychological Safety

The management and staff of Scoil Bhríde Milltown 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. 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 are addressed in the SPHE curriculum. 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, the names of the Designated Liaison Person and Deputy Designated Liaison Person and procedures and details of how to deal with suspicions or disclosures.
- 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 – Newbridge Garda Station; Kildare Youth Services; Public Health Nurse, NEPS Psychologists; Local Clergy
- 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 outlined in NEPS documents
- Staff are informed about how to access support for themselves through the Employee Assistance Service (Free Phone 1800 411057)

Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)

A CIMT has been established in line with best practice. The members of the team will meet periodically to review and update the policy and plan. Each member of the team has access to the 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. This Critical Incident policy is also available on our school website.

The key roles are as follows:

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

- 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
- Liaises with the bereaved family

- Garda Liaison

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

- Staff Liaison

- Leads briefing meetings for staff on the facts as known and 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 Employee Assistance Service (EAS) and gives them the contact number

- Student Liaison

- Alerts other staff to vulnerable students (appropriately)
- Provides materials for students (from their critical incident folder)
- Keeps records of students seen by external agency staff
- Looks after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room where agreed

- Community Liaison

- 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
- Coordinates the involvement of these agencies
- Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies

- Parent Liaison

- Visits the bereaved family with the team leader
- Arranges parents meetings, if held
- 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 their critical incident folder)

- 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 (as agreed by school management)

- Administrator

- Maintenance of up to date telephone numbers of
 1. Parents or guardians
 2. Teachers
 3. Emergency Staff
- 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

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, materials used etc. The school secretaries will have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters, photocopying materials, etc.

Confidentiality and good name considerations

The management and staff of Scoil Bhríde Milltown 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. The phrases 'tragic death' or 'sudden death' may be used. The word 'murder' should not be used.

Critical incident rooms

In the event of a critical incident,

- The staff room will be the main room used to meet the staff
- Classrooms will be used for meetings with students
- Resource rooms and the principal's office will be used for meetings with parents, media, individual sessions with students and for 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. Parent representatives were also 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 this plan.
All new and temporary staff will be informed of the details of the plan by the Board of Management Teachers Representative.
The plan will be updated periodically.

Ratification

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management at the meeting in December 2023.

Gavin O' Connor

Chairperson

John Goff

Principal

Critical Incident Management Team

Role	Name
Team Leader	John Goff
Garda Liaison	John Goff & Fiona Fay
Staff Liaison	Fiona Fay & Dermot O'Donovan
Student Liaison	Clodagh Meally & Marie Campbell
Parent Liaison	John Goff, Gavin O'Connor & Fiona Fay
Community Liaison	John Goff & Dermot O'Donovan
Media Liaison	John Goff, Fiona Fay & Gavin O'Connor
Administrator	Caroline Burke

Action Plan

SHORT-TERM ACTIONS (Day 1)

- Gather accurate information- who, what, where, when?
- Convene a CIMT meeting
- Contact appropriate agencies:
 1. Emergency services
 2. Medical services
 3. H.S.E. Psychology Departments/Community Care Services
 4. NEPS
- Hold staff meeting. Agree schedule for the day.
- Inform students (close friends and some students with additional needs may need to be told separately)
- Compile a list of vulnerable students
- Class teachers to take note of any absentees who might need to be contacted, list of friends etc, or any other relevant information. This is to be given to the Student Liaison person.
- Contact/visit the bereaved family
- Inform parents/guardians.
- Hold end of day staff briefing

Media Briefing (if appropriate)

- Designate a spokesperson (Leader)
- Prepare a brief statement (Team)
- Protect the family's privacy
- It is important to obtain accurate information about the incident
 1. What happened, where and when?
 2. What is the extent of the injuries?
 3. How many are involved and what are their names?
 4. Is there a risk of further injury?
 5. What agencies have been contacted already?

Social Media

A message may be placed on the school website, transmitted via text messaging or placed on any other school social media account along the following lines:

'You may be aware of a recent event within the school community. We ask you to respect the family's privacy and sensitivities by considering if you should post any comments, especially on social media. We will inform you through the normal channels of any relevant developments.'

The school may choose to use social media to provide up to date information for all concerned throughout the various stages of the incident. This might include the provision of positive messages and appropriate advice for children and parents/guardians.

MEDIUM-TERM ACTIONS (24-72 HOURS)

- Preparation of students/staff attending funeral
- Have review of Critical Incident Management Team meeting
- Involvement of students/staff in liturgy if agreed by bereaved family
- Facilitation of students/staffs responses, e.g. Sympathy cards, flowers, Book of Condolences, etc.
- Decide arrangements for support meetings for parents/students/staff
- Establish contact with absent staff and pupils
- Arrange, in consultation, with outside agencies, individual or group debriefings or support meetings with parental permission
- Plan for the re-integration of students and staff e.g. absentees, injured, siblings, close relative etc. Student Liaison person to liaise with these pupils on their return to school.
- Plan visits to injured - family Liaison person + Class Teacher + Principal to visit home/hospital
- Agree on attendance and participation at funeral/memorial service. Decide this in accordance with parent's wishes, school management decisions and in consultation with close school friends
- School closure (if appropriate)- request a decision on this from school management

LONGER TERM ACTIONS

Monitor students for signs of continuing distress

If over a prolonged period of time, a student continues to display the following, he/she may need assistance from the Health Board. Constant communication with family is essential. Watch out for signs such as;

- Uncharacteristic behaviour
- Deterioration in academic performance
- Physical symptoms — e.g. weight loss/gain, lack of attention to appearance, tiredness, restlessness
- Inappropriate emotional reactions
- Increased absenteeism

Evaluate response to incident and amend Critical Incident Management Plan appropriately

- What went well?
- Where were the gaps?
- What was most/least helpful?
- Have all necessary onward referrals to support services been made?
- Is there any unfinished business?

Formalise the Critical Incident Plan for the future

- Consult with NEPS Psychologist
- Inform new staff/new school pupils affected by Critical Incidents where appropriate
- Ensure that new staffs are aware of the school policy and procedures in this area
- Ensure they are aware of which pupils were affected in any recent incident and in what way
- When individual pupils or a class of pupils affected by an incident are transferring to a new school, the Principal should brief the Principal of the new school

Decide on appropriate ways to deal with anniversaries (Be sensitive to special days and events)

- Anniversaries may trigger emotional responses in students/staff and they may need additional support at this time
- Acknowledge the anniversary with the family
- Need to be sensitive to significant days like Birthdays, Christmas, Mother's Day, and Father's Day
- Plan a school memorial service
- Care of deceased person's possessions. What are the parent's wishes?
- Update and amend school records

Emergency Contact List

<u>Agency</u>	<u>Contact Number</u>
Newbridge Garda Station	045 440180 or 999 or 112
Naas Hospital	045 849500 or 999 or 112
Newbridge Fire Brigade	045 454800 or 999 or 112
Kildare Medical Centre	045 521361
HSE Primary Care Centre Newbridge CAMHS Portlaoise Resource Officer for Suicice Prevention	01 2408787 045 920900 057 8696152 045 986301
School Inspector – Pádraig Fahey	087 9628075
NEPS Psychologist	076 1108620
DES	01 8896400
INTO	01 8041100
Parish Office	045 450 501
Employee Assistance Service	1800 411 057