Scoil Seanáin Naofa

Critical Incident Policy

October 2026

Introduction

Scoil Seanáin Naofa aims to protect the well-being of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. The school aims to promote and adopt the characteristics set out in our mission statement in actions taken around dealing and managing critical incidents. The Board of Management, through the Principal Eoghan O'Byrne and with the input of its staff, parents and students, 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 through NEPS (National Educational Psychological Service; on www.education.ie and www.hse.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 Post-Primary Schools Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention (DES, DOH, HSE 2013)
- 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 Scoil Seanáin 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, 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 affect 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

As a means to support the development of a safe school environment, the school has the following in place as practical measures;

- *Child Protection Legislation adopted by BoM and staff training ongoing to ensure alertness to threats or signs of harm towards children in our care.*
- *Health & Safety audit to ensure physical building is safe and practices of staff are mindful of safety of all in our care.*
- *Evacuation plan formulated and practiced- regular fire drills occur*
- *Fire system, exits and extinguishers are regularly checked*
- *Pre-opening supervision in the school yard*
- *After school supervision of front gate (children passing from school to parents/buses)*
- *School doors (at front) locked during class time*
- *Rules of the playground that ensure safety - line up at bell/whistle;*
- *permission sought to go to front of school;*
- *two teachers and two SNA's on duty:*
- *ask permission to go to toilet;*
- *do not interact with people at the school wall/gate*
- *do not leave classroom without seeking permission of teacher*
- *do not leave school grounds without seeking permission of teacher*

Psychological safety

The management and staff of Scoil Seanáin Naofa 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. The school provides educational programmes of support in line with best practice set out by DES, Oide and NEPS. We reference guides such as *"Making the Links and Beyond"* as an instrument of developing safety for children both in school and beyond.

- *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. They have training available where necessary*
- *Books and resources on difficulties affecting the primary/post primary school students; transitions; drugs awareness; cyberbullying etc, are available*
- *Information is provided on mental health in general and such specific areas as signs and symptoms of depression and anxiety*
- *Staff are informed in the area of suicide awareness and some are trained in interventions for suicidal students*
- *The school has developed links with a range of external agencies e.g., An Garda Síochána; NEPS; CAMHS; HSE*
- *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 guidelines on bullying and deals with it in line with its Bí Cineálta 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 on 2007 for primary schools and detailed further in Circular 14/2017. These documents are available on* ***www.education.ie***
- *Students who are identified as being at risk are referred to the designated staff member (e.g. SET); 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. (See Appendix 7)*
- *Staff are informed about how to access support for themselves.*

Critical Incident Management Team
Scoil Seanáin Naofa

Role	Name
Team Leader	Eoghan O'Byrne
Deputy Team Leader	Siobhán Maguire
Reserve	Gráinne Burns
Garda Liaison	Siobhán Maguire
Deputy Garda Liaison	Eoghan O'Byrne
Reserve	Irene Fleming
Staff Liaison	Martina Deloughery
Deputy Staff Liaison	Sharon McMahon
Reserve	Eoghan O'Byrne
Student Liaison	Irene Fleming
Deputy Student Liaison	Gráinne Burns
Parent Liaison	Gráinne Smyth
Deputy Parent Liaison	Martina Deloughery
Community/Agency Liaison	Sharon McMahon
Deputy C/A Liaison	Siobhán Maguire
Media Liaison	Eoghan O'Byrne
Deputy Media Liaison	Siobhán Maguire
Administrator	School Secretary
	Tania Lynch

Roles and Responsibilities of the Team:

Team Leader:

- Alerts team members to the incident and convenes a meeting of the team.
- Clarifies the facts surrounding the incident.
- Co-ordinates and delegates tasks to the team members.
- Liaises with the Board of Management, with the Department of Education and Science and with any outside agencies involved as appropriate.
- In cases of bereavement liaises with the family.
- Acts as spokesperson to the media if necessary.
- Ensures provision of ongoing support to pupils and staff.
- Decides with team how news will be communicated to staff, pupils and parents.
- Ensuring telephone lines are available for important incoming and outgoing calls.
- Maintains contact with relevant outside agencies.
- Maintains up to date list of contact numbers for teachers, parents/guardians, external agencies and support services.

The D.P. will assume this role in the absence of the team leader.

Garda Liaison

- Liaise with the Gardaí
- Ensure that information about deaths or other developments is checked out for accuracy before being shared.

Staff Liaison Role:

It is very important that staff members are kept informed and feel secure in handling questions and comments from both pupils and parents.

- Briefing and advising staff on the facts as known and noting their feelings and concerns/questions.
- Keeping staff updated on developments.
- Noting which staff members are missing at update and passing on the information to them
- Provides resource material for staff from folder.
- Liaising with the school chaplain.
- Arranges supervision cover for class if necessary.
- Maintains a record of staff contact with external agencies.
- Agree with staff how and what information will be given to pupils.
- Maintain links with absent staff as necessary.

Student Liaison Role:

- Gathering information from class teacher regarding child's friends, any absentees and anyone who may need to be contacted.
- Disseminating information to pupils.
- Gathering information from class teacher / SET regarding the needs of the class or particular students as a result of the incident.
- Organise an assembly or opportunity (e.g. prayer service) for the school community to congregate.
- Alerting teachers other than class teachers to vulnerable students as appropriate.
- Keeping records of pupils seen by external agency staff. (e.g. NEPS)

Chaplaincy Role:

- Visiting the classroom and providing support to the class.
- Visiting the staff and providing support.
- Conducting the funeral service if appropriate.
- Conducting a prayer service with the school community.

Parent Liaison Role:

- Visiting the bereaved family with the team leader.
- Arranging meeting for parents if necessary.
- Maintaining a record of parents seen by external agencies as appropriate.
- Providing appropriate material for parents from the incident folder.
- Checking different religious beliefs about death and funeral services if relevant.

Community/Agency liaison

- Source contact numbers -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
- Update team members on the involvement of external agencies

Staff responsibilities

At all times teaching staff have a responsibility to

- Safeguard welfare of pupils and colleagues.
- Control flow of information by pupils with mobile phones.
- Liaise with other staff to ensure safety of pupils.
- Assist in gathering information.
- Supervising their own or colleagues classes.
- Assisting in identifying and supporting students at risk or in distress.
- Maintaining normal procedures.
- Maintaining confidentiality.

Ancillary staff will also have the responsibility to maintain normal procedures. In addition, the school secretary will ensure that the reception office is staffed at all times and that phone lines are available for important ingoing and outgoing calls.

Dealing with the Media

A critical incident may on occasion necessitate dealing with the media. Only the principal, deputy principal or chairperson of the Board of Management will communicate with the media.

Members of the media must report to the reception office, identify themselves and state their business in the school. Members of the media will not be allowed beyond the reception office except at the invitation of the Principal or Deputy Principal. The media will not be allowed to interview or photograph pupils on the school premises.

As necessary, the principal and deputy principal will prepare a brief media statement to include the following;

- Expressing sympathy for the affected /bereaved family.
- Stating that it is a difficult time for the school community.
- Positive information or comments about the deceased/ injured parties.
- The facts about the situation (following consultation with the families.)
- The term suicide will not be use. Instead the term 'tragic death' will be used.
- Outline what is being done to support pupils and staff.

Record Keeping

All team members will keep written records of phone calls made, meetings, and interventions. Records will be compiled and kept on file in the Principal's office. All phone calls will be logged by the school secretary.

Preventative Approaches:

Curriculum	*Support*	*Physical Environment*
• *Bí Cineálta Policy* • *Code of Behaviour Policy* • *Stay Safe Programme* • *SPHE Policy*	• *Middle Management Team* • *NEPS* • *Parish Priest* • *Child and Family Services* • *CAMHS*	• *Evacuation Drills* • *Safety Procedures* • *Supervision* • *Health & Safety Statement*

Emergency Contact List

Agency	**Contact Numbers**
Ardnacrusha Garda Station Community Garda	061-345136 Brian Begley 086-3205028
Hospitals	UHL 061-301111 St John's 061-462222 Ennis 065-6824464
Fire Brigade	999/112
Local GP – Castleconnell Medical Centre	061-377656
CAMHS	065-6706601

HSE Primary Care Psychology Service Castleconnell Health Centre Westbury Health Centre	 065-6867141 061-377656 061-356555
School Inspector Anne Fitzpatrick	087-1826728
NEPS Psychologist Richard Egan	087-2025096
DES	01-8896400
INTO	01-8047700
Parish Priest/Clergy	Fr. Jimmy Kennedy PP 087-2977500
Chairperson	Ronan O'Brien 087-7870270
Employee Assistance Service	1800 411 057
CPSMA	1850 407 200
Education Welfare Officer (TESS) Caroline O'Looney	087-2072997
Jennifer Folan Allianz Insurance	087-0376298

Scoil Seanáin Naofa CIMT Action Plan

Short-term Actions - Day 1

Task	Name
Gather accurate information	CIMT
Who, what, when, where?	The Team, in school convene together as soon as all members can be contacted.
Convene a CIMT meeting - specify time and place clearly	As soon as possible on school premises or nearby as appropriate
Contact external agencies	Gardaí, NEPS, Emergency Services Garda Liaison Officer, Agency Liaison Officer
Arrange supervision for students	Adjoining CT or appropriate member of staff to supervise other students if needed, Student Liaison Officer
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)	Student Liaison Officer, Class Teacher
Compile a list of vulnerable students	Principal, Class Teacher, Whole Staff
Contact/visit the bereaved family	Principal and Deputy Principal, Class Teacher where appropriate, Chairperson, BoM
Prepare and agree media statement and deal with media	Media Officer with CIMT and Chairperson statement
Inform parents	Principal, Parent Liaison, Chairperson
Hold end of day staff briefing	Principal, CIMT, whole staff

Immediate/Short Term Actions (please see Appendix A for briefing on first hour response)

Every incident will require a different response. A critical incident may occur on or off site and will consequently require a different response. However the following will serve as a guide to the types of response necessary. Evacuate the building if necessary.

- Inform emergency services.
- Take emergency action to ensure safety at onsite incidents.
- Limit further injury at on site incidents.
- Account for all pupils, personnel and visitors.
- Care for the injured parties.
- Gather accurate information
- Inform Chairperson of Board of Management
- Inform solicitors and insurance company as appropriate.
- Convene a meeting of the CIMT.
- Organise a timetable for the day.
- Inform staff and update on any arrangements as necessary.
- Contact appropriate agencies and organize support.
- Arrange for supervision of pupils.
- Inform pupils and parents.
- Make contact with the affected /bereaved family.
- Respond to the media.
- Report to the health and safety authority if necessary.
- Arrange visit to the affected /bereaved family.
- Identify high risk students.
- Designate particular areas for parents, media, friends etc to avoid large groups congregating in particular areas; blocking entrances …etc.

Medium-term Actions- Day 2 and Subsequent Days

Task	Name
Convene a CIMT meeting to review the events of day 1 before school	Team leader – Principal, staff
Meet external agencies	Agency Liaison Officer, Principal
Meet whole staff	With CIMT before school
Arrange support for students, staff, parents	NEPS, Employee Assistance, Parent Liaison, Student and staff Liaison Officers
Visit the injured	Principal, members of CIMT or Class Teacher, or members BoM
Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements	Staff, CT, Principal, DP, Chairperson, Parent Liaison

Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service	Staff
Make decisions about school closures	B.O.M.

Medium Term Actions (24-72 hours)

- Meeting of the CIMT to decide on the following
- Arrangements for support for staff /pupils.
- Decide on mechanism for getting feedback from teachers on vulnerable pupils.
- If relevant plan visits to the injured.
- School closure if appropriate following agreement from the Board of Management.
- If relevant, prepare staff/students for attending funeral.
- If appropriate and if agreed by the affected family, involve the pupils or staff in funeral.
- Maintain contact with absent staff and pupils.
- Plan for the re-integration of pupils and staff e.g. those injured, those who were directly affected, absentees … etc.
- Hold a prayer service for the pupils and staff.
- Arrange for pupil and staff response to those affected. e.g. cards, flowers etc.
- Maintain the normal timetables/school day to make sure pupils are unsettled as little as possible.
- Organise support for staff
- Provide information to families on the kind of support available to them and to their children.

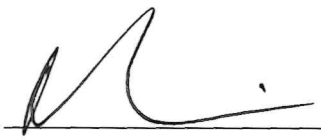
Follow-up-beyond 72 hours

Long Term Actions

- Monitor pupils for signs of anxiety.
- Liaise with parents re vulnerable pupils.
- Liaise with external agencies regarding referrals.
- Arrange for school memorial service/Anniversary if relevant.
- Review plan in light of incident.
- Update and amend school records.
- Ensure new staff are aware of policy and which pupils/staff affected by an incident.
- Evaluate legal and insurance consequences.
- Written report for the DES and the Board of Management.

Ratification and Review

This policy has been ratified by the Board of Management and will be reviewed every two years.

Signed: 

Chairperson Board of Management

Date: 21/10/26

Appendix A

SCOIL SEANÁIN NAOFA – CRITICAL INCIDENT
IMMEDIATE ACTION SHEET (FIRST 60 MINUTES)

1. ENSURE SAFETY FIRST
- Assess situation – is anyone in immediate danger?
- Call emergency services: 999 / 112
- Administer First Aid if required
- Do not leave pupils unsupervised

2. CONFIRM THE FACTS
- What happened?
- Who is involved?
- When / where did it occur?
- Do not share unverified information

3. **ACTIVATE CIMT (CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM)**
- Inform Team Leader (Eoghan O'Byrne) immediately
- Convene meeting
- Assign roles:
· Team Leader
· Garda Liaison
· Staff Liaison
· Student Liaison
· Parent Liaison
· Community/Agency Liaison
· Media Liaison
· Adminsistrator

4. KEY CONTACTS
- Emergency Services: 999 / 112
- Gardaí: Ardnacrusha (061-345136)
- NEPS: Richard Egan (087-2025096)
- HSE / CAMHS: 065-6706601

5. AGREE INITIAL PLAN
- What happens in the next hour?
- Who needs to be told first? (Staff → Pupils → Parents)
- Identify vulnerable pupils/staff
- Arrange supervision cover if needed

6. COMMUNICATION (STRICT GUIDELINES)
- Staff meeting before speaking to pupils
- Share facts only – no speculation
- Use agreed wording
- No staff member speaks to media (unless approved by Principal)
- No posting/commenting on social media

7. CONTACT FAMILY
- Principal (or nominated person) contacts family
- Express sympathy and gather agreed information
- Do not release details without family consent

8. INFORM STAFF & PUPILS
- Deliver information in small, controlled settings
- Use clear, age-appropriate language
- Allow time for questions and reactions
- Provide reassurance and routine where possible

9. IDENTIFY & SUPPORT AT-RISK PUPILS
- Close friends / siblings
- Pupils with additional needs
- Pupils previously bereaved or vulnerable
- Refer to support (SET/NEPS/external agencies)

10. RECORD KEEPING
- Log:
· Key events
· Decisions made
· Contacts with parents/agencies
· Store securely in Principal's office