



Scoil Náisiunta Phádraig Naofa,

Avoca,

Co, Wicklow

Roll No 18918A

Critical Incident Management Plan

Rationale

Avoca School prides itself in being a rural, village school that provides a caring, safe environment for its students, staff and school community. The school fulfils these criteria by providing a coping, supportive and caring ethos in the school. It does this through the implementation of particular school programmes and policies.

What is a Critical Incident?

“A critical incident is any incident or sequence of events which overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school and disrupts the running of the school” (NEPS)

Examples:

Sudden death-accident, murder, suicide An accident on/off school premises A physical attack on staff/student Serious damage to school Accident or tragedy in wider school community Disappearance of student from home or school Unauthorised removal of student from school or home.

The BoM through the Principal, the Staff and the Parents Association has drawn up a critical incident management plan. They have established a Critical Incidents Management Team to steer the development and implementation of the plan.

Critical Incidents Management Team:

Team Leader: Mary Cahill (Principal)

SPHE/Staff: Ms Kathy van Eesbeck, Ms. Clare Byrne and Ms. Lisa Corcoran Media

Liasion: Mary Cahill

Chaplain: Fr. Brian McKittrick

NEPS: Orla Dunne

Office L.P. –Liz O’ Byrne

Prevention:

Scoil N. Phadraig Naofa , Avoca promotes the health and well-being of students, teachers and the wider school community

The aim of the Critical Incident policy 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 policy and plan should also help ensure that the effects on the students and staff will be limited. It should enable us to ensure the return to normality as soon as possible.

Creation of a coping supportive and caring ethos in the school

Prevention:

Avoca School promotes the health and well-being of students, teachers and the wider school community. 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

The school has a documented health and safety policy. Additionally the following measures have been put in place:

- Evacuation plan formulated
- Regular fire drills occur
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
- Pre-opening supervision in the school yard by the principal and deputy principal from 9.00am on Mondays-Fridays.

Psychological safety

The management and staff of Scoil N. Phadraig Naofa, Avoca 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; bullying and decision making through the Stay Safe, Walk Tall and Friends for Life programmes.
- Scoil N. Phadraig Naofa is a Restorative Practice School.
- Staff have access to training for their role in SPHE
- Staff have access to *Responding to Critical Incidents Resource Materials for Schools*
- Staff are familiar with the Child Protection Procedures and are aware that Ms Mary Cahill is the designated liaison person.

Avoca School has a clear anti-bullying policy which is supported by students, teachers and parents. Students are encouraged to become involved in as wide a range of extra-curricular activities as is practical in the school

Avoca School has a clear, supportive substance misuse policy in place.

Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)

ACIMT 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. A copy will also be contained in the school dropbox.

Key Roles

Team Leader/ Garda Liaison: Mr. Mary Cahill (Principal)

- 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; SES
- Liaises with the bereaved family
- Liaises with the Gardaí
- Ensures that information about deaths or other developments is checked out for accuracy before being share
- 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 agency

Media liaison (Ms. Mary Cahill)

In advance of an incident she 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 SEC, relevant teacher unions etc.

Will draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews (as agreed by school management)

Staff liaison Kathy van Eesbeck

- 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 their 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 and gives them the contact number.

Student liaison Lisa Corcoran (/Other designated staff) Alerts

other staff to vulnerable students (appropriately)

Provides materials for students (from their critical incident folder) Maintains student contact records (R1).

Looks after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room where agreed

Parent liaison (Clare Byrne/Mary Cahill)

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 -Liz 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)

Community liaison Ms Liz Byrne

Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of - Emergency support services and other external contacts and resources. Ensures that sample letters are typed up, on the school's system and ready for adaptation –Liz
Passes on messages

Administrator - Ms. Liz Byrne/Mary Cahill

- 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

Chaplain: Fr. Brian McKittrick

Parent Representative: Alma Dickenson/ Jamie Dowling

BOM Representative- Ms Valerie Twomey

Record keeping

In the event of an incident each member of the team will keep records of phone calls made and received, letters emails and texts sent and received, meetings held, persons met, interventions used, material used etc. Ms Liz O' Byrne 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 N. Phádraig Naofa, Avoca 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.

Critical incident rooms

In the event of a critical incident:

- The staff room will be the main room used to meet the staff
- Individual classrooms for meetings with students
- Large learning support room for meeting parents
- The relax room for media
- The small learning support rooms for individual sessions with students
- Other visitors will be directed to the principal's office

Critical Incident Management Team Actions					
Role	Name	In Preparation for Incident	When incident occurs Day 1	Medium term actions	Longer term actions
Team Leader & Garda Liaison	Mary Cahill (Principal)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrange for team to meet in September to review plan. • Ensure all staff have access to <i>Responding to Critical Incidents</i>(available in the school drop box) • Prepare and keep updated, contingency plans for different supervision scenarios, including handover of pupils to parents/guardians as soon as it is safe to do so. • If there are a significant number of students from different ethnic and religious backgrounds, some consultation with parents about their beliefs and rituals is advisable so that the school is aware of issues that may arise,(see section 4.5) • Communicate any changes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather the facts – what has happened, when, how, where, and who is injured or dead. • Consult Responding to Critical Incidents: <i>Guidelines for Schools and Resource Materials for Schools</i> • Is it an incident requiring a NEPS Response at Level 1, 2 or 3? • Who do I need to call (see Emergency Contact List – R21 / Appendix 1) • Meet with the Critical Incident Management Team (Appendix 3) • Meet with other agencies, if involved, to agree on roles and procedures • Have administration staff photocopy appropriate literature • Arrange for the supervision of students • Address the staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review what has been done to date • Make a decision about school closure • List tasks for the day and assign roles – media; contact with bereaved family; attendance and participation in the funeral service • List items to be addressed by the principal at the staff meeting • Review the schedule for the day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet with appropriate staff to review the list of affected staff and students. • Identify who will be responsible for follow-up • Discuss referral procedures and when an onward referral may be indicated • Prepare for the return of bereaved student(s) (see R11) • Discuss what the school will do in memory of the student(s). A representative from the school should liaise with the deceased person's family/ies regarding the

		<p>in the plan to team</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaise with other principals. 	<p>meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform students • Draft a letter to parents (see R2, R3) • Meet with the CIMT to review the day and arrange an early morning meeting for the following day • Meet with the staff group and ensure absent staff members are kept informed • Make contact with the affected family/families within 24 hours 		<p>memorial.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remember that whatever policy or precedent the school sets at this time may need to apply to all future deaths • Discuss what to do with respect to events that the deceased student would have been part of • Return personal belongings to the family or families. • Bereaved parents often find it helpful to visit the school at a later date. • Mark the school's calendar in advance with the anniversary date. and link with the family on any proposed commemoration • Review and evaluate
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					effectiveness of communication response
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Staff Liaison Role	Ms. Kathy van Eesbeck	Keep a copy of materials for staff (in their critical incident folder)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Leads briefing meetings for staff on the facts as known, gives staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions, outline the routine for the day. <input type="checkbox"/> Advises staff on the procedures for identification of vulnerable students <input type="checkbox"/> Provides materials for staff (from their critical incident folder) <input type="checkbox"/> Keeps staff updated as the day progresses <input type="checkbox"/> Is alert to vulnerable staff members and makes contact with them individually <input type="checkbox"/> Advises them of the availability of the EAS and gives them the contact number. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go through the list of staff who may be vulnerable and review how they are doing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and evaluate plan
Student Liaison Role	Ms Lisa Corcoran	Be familiar with contents of plan Ensure up to date materials on identification of vulnerable pupils and materials for staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alert staff to vulnerable pupils • Organize quiet space for vulnerable pupils • Outline specific services available in the school • Put in place clear 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go through list of students who may be vulnerable and review how they are doing • Develop a plan for monitoring vulnerable pupils 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide ongoing support to vulnerable students • Monitor class most affected • Refer as appropriate

		are available in critical incident folder.	referral procedures	over the next few weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review and evaluate Plan
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Family Liaison Role	Ms. Clare Byrne	Ensure up to date materials for parents are available in critical incident folder.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Co-ordinate contact with families (following first contact by Principal) <input type="checkbox"/> Consult with family around involvement of school in e.g. funeral service <input type="checkbox"/> Assist with all communication dealing with parents of any student affected by critical incident 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide ongoing 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
BOM rep	Valerie Twomey	Be familiar with contents of plan			Review and evaluate plan
Parents rep	Alma Dickenson Jamie Dowling	Be familiar with contents of plan			Review and evaluate plan
Chaplaincy	Fr. Brian McKittrick	Be familiar with contents of plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit home(s), if appropriate • Assist with prayer services • Make contact with other local clergy • Be available as personal and spiritual support to staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide follow-up support to families • Work in partnership with Critical Incident team <input type="checkbox"/> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide follow-up support to families • Work in partnership with Critical Incident team • Review and Evaluate Plan
Community Liaison	Ms. Mary		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaises with agencies in the community for 		

	Cahill		<p>support and onward referral</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 		
Administrator	Ms. Liz Byrne/ Ms Mary Cahill	<p>Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of - Emergency support services and other external contacts and resources.</p> <p>Maintain up to date list of contact details for parents, staff and (a family member for each), emergency services and others listed across</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take telephone calls and notes those that need to be responded to • Prepare and sends out letters, emails and texts • Photocopy materials needed <input type="checkbox"/>		

		Prepare templates for letters to parents and templates for press releases. These should be 'ready-to-go' and on the school computer system so that they can be adapted quickly when an incident occurs			
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Drawn up by the Board of Management of Scoil N. Phadraig Naofa, Avoca. Most lately revised and ratified at a meeting of the BoM on September 28th 2021

Chairperson Valerie Twomey

Principal Mary Cahill

Appendix 1:

AGENCY CONTACT NUMBERS

<u>GARDA</u> Avoca Arklow	(0402) 35102 (0402) 26320
<u>HOSPITAL</u> Loughlinstown (St. Colmcille's) Dunlaoire (St. Michael's)..... Merrion Rd. (St. Vincent's).....	(01) 282 5800 (01) 280 6901 (01) 221 4000
<u>FIRE BRIGADE</u> Emergency Contact Wicklow Fire Service.....	999 or 112 (01) 286 1534/ (01) 2862929

LOCAL GPs Dr. Bentley Arklow..... Arklow Health Centre.....	(0402) 32418 (0402) 39624
HSE Wicklow.....	(0404) 68400

SCHOOL INSPECTOR Mr Leo Kilroy Ms Ursula Cotter.....	(087) 1329015
NEPS PSYCHOLOGIST Orla Dunne..... NEPS, Third Floor, Trident House, Blackrock ...	(087) 7097215 (0761) 108430
DES Marlborough Street Dublin.....	(01) 889 6400
INTO 35 Parnell Square Dublin.....	(01) 804 7700
PARISH PRIEST Fr. Brian McKittrick.....	0402 35156

Appendix 2: Contact numbers – Critical Incident Management Team. Appendix 2: Contact numbers – Critical Incident Management Team

Role	Name	Contact Number
Leadership/Communication	Mary Cahill (Principal)	087 –7911685
Staff Liaison	Ms. Kathy van Eesbeck	087-7619560
Student Liaison Role	Ms. Lisa Corcoran	086- 8225523
Family Liaison Role	Ms. Clare Byrne	087 9524894
BOM rep		087 3223334
Parents rep	Alma Dickenson Jamie Dowling	0877539164 0866503320
Chaplaincy	Fr. Brian McKittrick	0877690431
Caretaker	Mr Gerry O' Toole	087 7556150
Secretary	Ms. Liz O' Byrne	086 7962148

APPENDIX 3

AGENDA FOR FIRST MEETING WITH CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM/KEY STAFF

- Share full details of the event
- Agree on the facts. These will need to be relayed in a clear, appropriate and consistent manner by all staff to the students
- Discuss what agencies have been contacted and whether there are additional ones that should be informed (check Emergency Contact List R21)
- During major incidents phone lines may become jammed. Agree which phone line is to be kept open for outgoing and incoming emergency calls
- When a number of external agencies is involved in a response, co-ordination will be needed and procedures will need to be agreed. An agency such as NEPS may take on this role
- Plan procedures for the day
- Discuss issues relating to school routine, including school closure. Remember it is important to maintain a normal routine when at all possible. It is recommended that the school timetable runs as normal. This will provide a sense of safety and structure which is comforting for many students.
- Teachers should give students the opportunity to talk about what has happened and temporarily shelve all academic activities if necessary. See R5 for further information
- You may wish to consult students about what to do if there is an event scheduled such as a trip, concert, match. This should reduce the likelihood of students being angry later on as a result of any school action or in-action
- Discuss how to break the news to relatives and close friends and who should do this (Remember that they must always be told separately)
- Discuss how to break the news to the rest of the students. It is often best to do this with class groups, rather than large assemblies, (see R5)
- Discuss how to identify vulnerable students (see page 23) taken into consideration in organising prayer services, attendance at the funeral etc.
- Parents of different religious or national groups may need to be consulted
- Plan a whole staff briefing (including ancillary staff). This may need to be done in two groups depending on the arrangements for the supervision of students
- Agree the text of a letter to be sent to parents, (see R2 and R3)
- Discuss how to deal with the media. Prepare a media statement place it on the school's website, if appropriate (see Section 9 and R4). This can be emailed to media representatives who make contact with the school. It may also be used if an interview is requested
- Delegate responsibilities to the appropriate critical incident team member or key Personnel
- Discuss which room(s) will be available to external agencies
- Decide whether a quiet room should be made available for students. This is a place that students can go if they are having difficulty remaining composed in the classroom.
- Depending on the age of the students it should have tissues, a few stuffed toys, cushions, drawing and writing materials and appropriate information leaflets from Resource Materials for Schools. It is generally recommended that this is available for the

week following the incident and that its use is then reviewed. Students should sign out of their regular class and sign into the quiet room for a certain time. The room should be supervised to ensure student safety.

- A very distressed student may need individual support. This might be offered by the chaplain or other staff member.
- A similar room could be set up for staff
- A record should be kept of all students seen by school staff and agencies external to the schools, (see R1). One person should be appointed to collate the lists regularly
- Agree the next meeting time for the Critical Incident Management Team/key staff.
- Agree a time for a follow up staff meeting at the end of the day. This gives an opportunity for the principal to update staff on any developments. It also allows time for preparation
- for the following day. Lastly, it gives staff a chance to share their experience and to wind down after the day

Appendix 4: CHECKLIST FOR REVIEWING THE POLICY AND PLAN

- Has serious consideration been given to the school's approach to prevention?
- Has the school defined a critical incident and given examples?
- Have key roles been clearly identified and the assigned tasks outlined?
- Have staff members been nominated to each of the assigned roles/tasks?
- Are the personnel suitable?
- Has each member of the team compiled their emergency pack (photocopies of relevant handouts)?
- Has contact been made with external agencies?
- Is the Emergency Contact List (R21) appropriate and complete?
- Are letters and press releases readily available on school headed paper, for adaptation to suit the particular circumstances?
- Are telephone numbers on contact lists up-to-date?
- Have all the staff been consulted about the plan/policy?
- Has a date been set for a review of the plan?
- Who will be given copies of the plan?
- Where will copies of the plan be kept?
- Have parents been consulted about the plan?
- Have the students been consulted about the plan?

8. Ratified

Board of Management Meeting convened 28th of September 2021 and ratified the above policy

Signed by *Valerie Twomey* Valerie Twomey(Chairperson)

_____ *Mary Cahill* Mary Cahill(Principal)

This policy will be reviewed in the event of new guidelines being issued or if a change of team personnel occurs. If none of the above occurs the policy will be reviewed in 2022

APPENDIX 5 -SAMPLE LETTER TO PARENTS – SUDDEN DEATH/ACCIDENT

This letter can be used as a template for schools when they are informing parents of a tragedy, offering some advice and outlining what the schools response involves. (Brief details of the incident and, in the event of a death, perhaps some positive remembrances of the person lost). Where text / social media are used for communicating with parents this content will help with drafting

Dear Parents,

The school has experienced (the sudden death, accidental injury, etc.) of Name of student(s). We are deeply saddened by the deaths/events. Our thoughts are with (family name). We have support structures in place to help your child cope with this tragedy. (Elaborate). It is possible that your child may have some feelings and questions that he/she may like to discuss with you. It is important to give factual information that is appropriate to their age. You can help your child by taking time to listen and by encouraging him/herto express feelings. All children are different and will express their feelings in different ways. It is not uncommon for children to have difficulty concentrating or be fearful, anxious, or irritable. They may become withdrawn, cry, complain of physical aches and pains, have difficulty sleeping or have nightmares. Some may not want to eat. These are generally short term reaction. Over the course of the coming days, please keep an eye on your child and allow him/her to express their feelings without criticism. Although classes will continue as usual, I anticipate that the next few days will be difficult for everyone. (Optional) An information night for parents is planned for (date, time and place). At that time, further information about how to help children in grief will be given. We have enclosed some information which you may find useful in helping your child through this difficult time. If you would like advice you may contact the following people at the school. (Details)

Principal's signature

APPENDIX 5A- SAMPLE LETTER TO PARENTS

Dear Parents

I need to inform you about a very sad event that has happened. A child/young person from the neighbourhood, who is the brother of _____, a student here at school, was killed as a result of (a violent attack, violent incident in the street etc.) earlier this week. We are all profoundly saddened by his death. We have shared this information and have had discussions with all of our students so that they know what has happened. School staff members have been available for students on an ongoing basis today. Other support personnel (including psychologists etc, according to actual arrangements) are available to advise staff in their support of students. The death of any young person is tragic, but a violent death is even more difficult. It is hard to have to teach our children about the violence in our world and to accept that sometimes we do not have the power to prevent it. This death may cause a variety of reactions in your child. Some children/young people may be afraid for their own life and for the lives of those they love. Take time to listen to their fears and reassure them that what has happened is rare. We have enclosed some additional information that may be useful during this time. The media are in the vicinity of the school and may approach you or your children. You need not respond to their questions if you are approached. We will not allow the media to interview your child at school and our general advice is that you should not let your children be interviewed. They are not mature enough to judge what to say and may say something they will regret later. In these times, young people tend to turn to social media to see what others are saying, or to find out more. While social media can be of great consolation, we would urge you to reinforce the need to be extremely sensitive around what your son/daughter might post to others. Our thoughts are with (family name) and with each of you.

Sincerely

Principal's name

APPENDIX 6

SAMPLE ANNOUNCEMENT TO THE MEDIA

This can be used as a template by schools to be emailed, posted on the school social media site or given to the media. It may help to decrease the number of media calls and callers to the school. In some instances it is not appropriate to provide names or information that might identify individuals. This announcement will need to be changed based upon confidentiality issues, the wishes of the victim's family and the nature of the incident. My name is (Name) and I am the principal of (Name) School. We learned this morning of the death of (one of our students or Name of student). This is a terrible tragedy for ___ family(ies), our school and our community. We are deeply saddened by these events. Our sympathy and thoughts are with (Name) family and friends. Name of student/students was a (5th year boy) and will be greatly missed by all who knew him. We have been in contact with his/her parents and they have requested that we all understand their need for privacy at this difficult time. Offers of support have been pouring in and are greatly appreciated. Our school has implemented our Critical Incident Management Plan. Psychologists from the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) and (insert other information if relevant) have been with us all days supporting and advising teachers in their efforts to assist our students at this time. The teachers have been helping students to deal with the tragic event. The school has been open to parents to support them and to offer them advice and guidance. We would ask you to respect our privacy at this time. Thank you.

