



## SN Tulach Uí Chadhain

### Critical Incident Policy & Management Plan

#### **Introduction & Rationale**

SN Tulach Uí Chadhain aims to protect the wellbeing of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. The Board of Management has drawn up a critical incident management plan as one element of the school's policies and plans.

A critical incident may occur at the school or offsite at another location. In some cases emergency services may have responsibility for dealing with and managing the situation. In others, the incident may be more localized. The Board of Management places no obligation on any staff member to intervene in a critical incident situation if by so doing she/he is placing her/himself or others at risk.

Each situation will require a different response. We are mindful that people respond to a critical incident in different ways according to their attitudes, experiences and beliefs.

This policy was formulated by the staff of SN Tulach Uí Chadhain to help respond to a critical incident, in conjunction with best practice as outlined in Responding to Critical Incidents- NEPS Guidelines and Resource Materials for Schools 2016.

#### **Aim:**

The aim of the Critical Incident Management Plan is to help the 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 ensure that the impact in students and staff will be limited. It should enable us to affect a return to normality as soon as possible.

#### **Definition & examples of Critical Incidents:**

The staff and management of SN Tulach Uí Chadhain 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. Examples may include:

- The death of a member of the school community through accident, violence or other unexpected death
- An accident involving members of the school community resulting in serious injury or death on or off the school premises.
- A major accident/tragedy in the wider community.
- Serious damage to the school building through fire, flooding, vandalism etc.
- A physical attack on staff member(s) or pupil(s) or intrusion into the school
- The disappearance of a member of the school community
- Unexpected evacuation of the school.
- Unauthorised removal of pupil from school or home.

- Closure of the school because of infectious diseases

A critical incident may occur on or off site and different incidents will require different responses. However the following will serve as a guide to the types of response necessary.

<b>Response Level 1:</b>	The death of a student or staff member who was terminally ill; the death of parent/sibling; a fire in school not resulting in serious injury; serious damage to school property
<b>Response Level 2:</b>	The sudden death of a student or staff member
<b>Response Level 3:</b>	An accident/event involving a number of students; a violent death; an accident with a high media profile or involving a number of schools

*As each Critical Incident will require the school to respond in a manner appropriate to that particular incident at that time, the CIMP is intended to serve as a general outline of procedures to be followed in the event of a critical incident*

### **Creation of a coping, supportive and caring ethos in the school**

We have put systems in place to help build resilience in both staff and students, thus preparing them to cope with a range of life events. These include measures to address both physical and psychological safety of the school community.

#### **Physical Safety**

- Evacuation plan formulated
- Regular fire drills occur
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
- Front gate closed during school hours
- Rules of the playground clearly established and communicated
- Clear supervision procedures established

#### **Psychological Safety**

The management and staff of SN Tulach Uí Chadhain 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 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 Child Protection Procedures and name of the Designated Liaison Person
- Books and resources on difficulties affecting the primary school student are available
- The school has developed links with outside agencies such as CAMHS and NEPS
- Inputs to students by external providers are carefully considered in light of

criteria about students safety, the appropriateness of the content and the expertise and suitability of the providers

- The school has a clear anti-bullying policy and deals with incidents of bullying in accordance with this policy
- There is a care system in place in the school using the “Continuum of Support” approach.
- 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. Parent/guardians are informed, and where appropriate, a referral is made to an appropriate agency.
- Staff are informed about how to access support for themselves.

### **Critical Incident Management Team (CMIT)**

A CMIT has been established in line with best practice. 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.

#### **CMIT to include:**

- Board of Management Chairperson: Professor Peter Dockery
- Principal & Garda Liaison: Brian MacLochlainn
- Deputy Principal & Staff Liaison: Majella Ní Fhathaigh
- Teacher Representatives and Student liaison: Maura Cotter & Christopher O’Neill
- Chaplaincy Role/Parent Liaison: Fr. Martin Whelan
- NEPS: Fran Doolin
- Board of Management as a whole

### **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
- Coordinates and delegates tasks to the team members
- Liaises with the Board of Management, with the Department of Education and Skills and with any outside agencies involved as appropriate
- Contacts the Trustees in the event of damage to the building
- 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
- Ensures telephone lines are available for important incoming and outgoing calls
- Maintains contact with relevant outside agencies (see Appendix 2)
- Maintains up to date list of contact numbers for teachers, parents/guardians, external agencies and support services

#### **Staff Liaison Role:**

- It is very important that staff is 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
- Providing resource material for staff from folder
- Liaising with the school chaplain
- Arranging supervision cover for class if necessary
- Maintaining a record of staff contact with external agencies
- Agreeing with staff how and what information will be given to pupils
- Maintaining links with absent staff as necessary

### **Pupil Liaison Role:**

- Gathering information regarding child's friends, absentees and anyone who may need to be contacted.
- Disseminating *agreed* information to pupils
- Gathering information regarding the needs of the class or particular students as a result of the incident
- Organizing an assembly/ prayer service or Mass 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/mass with the school community

### **Family 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

### **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.

## **Contact Details for Pupils and Staff**

Contact details for parents and guardians of all pupils are kept on the school's DataBiz administration system

The principal and deputy keep contact details for all staff members. A copy is also held on file in the principal's office. Details for parents, guardians and staff are updated annually. Parents are asked to inform the school office should their contact details change. A list of emergency numbers is on display in both the principal's room and in the staff room.

## **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.

## **Confidentiality and good name considerations**

The management and staff of SN Tulach Uí Chadhain 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 also.

## **Critical Incident Rooms**

In the event of a critical incident,

**Staff Room** will be the main room used to meet with staff

**Múinteoir Maura's Room** will be the main room used to meet with students and parents

**Múinteoir Brian's Room** will be the main room used for individual meetings with students, media, outside agencies and any other visitors.

## **Procedures to be followed in the event of critical incidents**

The Principal should be contacted first. (If not available, the Deputy-Principal)

On notification of a critical incident the Principal will convene the Critical Incident Management Team to:

- Ascertain the facts
- Make contact with the family/families concerned
- Contact appropriate agencies (e.g. N.E.P.S., D.E.S)
- Inform Staff
- Agree on a statement of the facts for staff, pupils, parents/guardians and the media and inform these parties as appropriate
- Appoint one person to deal with phone calls

- Organise timetable/supervision rota for the day
- Organise support and rooms for counselling/assistance where appropriate
- Endeavour to maintain the regular school routine, if possible
- When appropriate arrange for representatives from the school to visit the home(s) of the person(s) concerned

### **In the event of death:**

- Inform staff and pupils re funeral arrangements
- Arrange involvement in liturgy if agreed with bereaved family
- Facilitate staff and pupils' response e.g. book of condolence, flowers etc
- Support distressed pupils and staff
- Ensure counselling service is available
- Care of deceased person's possessions in keeping with parental/guardians' wishes
- Facilitate return to school of siblings and close friends
- Monitor siblings and friends of the deceased
- Update and amend school records and inform DES
- The Principal will gather accurate information about the incident (Check list Appendix 1)
- Contact appropriate agencies eg NEPS, DES, HSE
- Inform Staff, Emergency services, Medical services, Health Board Psychology Departments/Community Care Services, NEPS, DES/School Inspector

### **Immediate/Short term Actions (0-24hrs)**

- 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.
- Organize 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 and blocking entrances etc

In the case of an incident requiring a level 2 or level 3 response, make contact with NEPS.

### **Medium Term Actions (24-72 hours)**

- Review the events of the first 24 hours.
- Reconvene key staff/Critical Incident Management Team
- Briefly check out how each person on this team is coping
- Decide arrangements for support meetings for parents/pupils/ staff.
- Decide on mechanism for feedback from teachers re vulnerable pupils
- Have review staff meeting with all staff if necessary. Ensure all staff is kept up to date on any developments.
- Be sensitive as to how all staff is coping on a personal and professional level.
- Establish contact with absent staff and pupils.
- Update media, if necessary.
- Arrange support for individual pupils, groups of pupils and parents, if necessary.
- This support will be provided in a designated SEN room
- Hold support/information meeting for parents/pupils in order to clarify what has happened.
- Offer advice and reassurance. Inform them about support services and provide relevant hand-outs.
- Give any teacher who feels uncomfortable with involvement in support meetings the choice of opting out.
- Arrange, in consultation with the outside agencies, individual or group debriefings or support meetings with parental permission.
- Plan for the reintegration of pupils and staff. (e.g. absentees, injured, siblings, close relatives etc.)
- Plan visits to pupils / staff.
- Liaise with the family regarding funeral arrangements/memorial service.
- Organise attendance and participation at funeral/memorial service.
- Make decisions with regard to school closure.

### **Long Term Actions (72 hours +)**

- Monitor pupils for signs of continuing distress. (Class teachers)
- 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 is aware of policy and which pupils/staff are affected by an incident.
- Evaluate legal and insurance consequences.
- Written report for the DES and the Board of Management.

If, over a prolonged period of time, a pupil continues to display the following, he/she may need assistance from the Health Board:

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

What to do if this is the case:

- (Liaise with agencies regarding referrals)
- Plan for return of bereaved pupil/s

- Evaluate response to incident and amend the Critical Incident Management Plan appropriately.
- Anticipate events/ anniversaries/reminders that may be difficult or upsetting in the future and plan to support staff and pupils

### **Consultation and Communication**

All staff were consulted and their views canvassed in the preparation of this policy and plan. This policy and plan was approved by the Board of Management of SN Tulach Uí Chadhain. Our school's final policy in relation to critical incidents has been presented to all staff and made available to all parents/guardians.

All new and temporary staff will be informed of the details of the Critical Incident Plan.

The plan will be updated annually.

### **Ratification and Communication**

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management in 2019/2020 school year. It was reviewed by the Board of Management on 11<sup>th</sup> September 2024.

**Ratified by Board of Management on**

Signed

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
**Chairperson, Board of Management**

**11/09/2024**



**HELPLINES:**

- Barnardos 01-4530355
- Samaritans 1850-609090
- Irish Society for the prevention of cruelty to children 01-6767960/01-6794944
- Rainbow Counselling Ireland 01-4734175
- Childline 1800-666666
- Parentline 1890-927277
- Aware 01-6766166 1890 303302
- National Suicide Bereavement
- Support Network 024-95561
- The Bereavement Counselling
- Service – Dublin 01-8391766 Bereavement Counselling Service 01-6767727