



# CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT POLICY

Scoil Iosaef Naofa aims to protect the well-being of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. The Board of Management, through Mr Eoin Kennedy as Principal and staff of the school 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 on [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie) and [www.nosp.ie](http://www.nosp.ie) and the Principal attended a NEPS planning seminar on Critical Incident Planning along with:

- Responding to Critical Incidents Guidelines and Resources for Schools (NEPS 201 6)
- 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 201 5)

## **What is a critical incident**

The staff and management of Scoil Iosaef 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/ incident 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 effect a return to normality as soon as possible.

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### **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
- Pre-opening supervision in the school yard
- Front gate locked during school hours
- Visitors log in to the office
- School doors locked during class time
- Rules of the playground

#### **Psychological safety**

The management and staff of Scoil Iosaef 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.

- 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
- Books and resources on difficulties affecting the primary/post 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
- Staff are informed in the area of suicide awareness.
- The school has developed links with a range of external agencies – list of these agencies is attached
- 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) or 0023/2010 (Post-Primary)
- The school has a clear policy on bullying and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy

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- 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 2010 for post primary schools. See also Student Support Teams in Post Primary Schools (2014). These documents are available on [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie)
- Students who are identified as being at risk are referred to the designated staff member (e.g. guidance counsellor or support teacher), 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.
- Staff are informed about how to access support for themselves.

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

A CIMT 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.

**Team leader:** Eoin Kennedy (*Deputy principal in his absence*)

### **Role**

- 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; SEC
- Liaises with the bereaved family

**Garda liaison** Eoin Kennedy

### **Role**

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

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### **Staff liaison** Eoin Kennedy

#### **Role**

- 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: Eoin Kennedy**

#### **Role**

- Alerts other staff to vulnerable students (appropriately)
- Provides materials for students (from their critical incident folder)
- Maintains student contact records.
- Looks after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room where agreed

### **Community/agency liaison: Paula Power**

#### **Role**

- 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
- Reminds agency staff to wear name badges
- Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies

### **Parent liaison: Eoin Kennedy**

#### **Role**

- 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
- 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)

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## **Media liaison: Eoin Kennedy**

### **Role**

- 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 all stakeholders; relevant teacher unions etc.
- Will draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews (as agreed by school management)

## **Administrator: School Secretary**

### **Role**

- 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

## **Record keeping: School Secretary.**

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, material used etc.

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

## **Confidentiality and good name considerations**

Management and staff of Scoil Iosaef Naofa have a responsibility to protect the privacy and good name of people involved in any incident and will be sensitive to the consequences of public statements. Members of school staff will bear this in mind, and seek to ensure that students do so also, e.g. 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 word 'murder' should not be used until it is legally established that a murder was committed. The term 'violent death' may be used instead.

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### Critical Incident Rooms

In the event of a critical incident, the following rooms are designated for the indicated purposes

Room Name:	Designated Purpose:
staff room	Main room for meeting staff
Nurture room	Meetings with students
Principals Room	Meetings with parents
Principal's Office	Meetings with media
Nuture Room	Individual sessions with students
Nuture Room	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. Students and parent/guardian 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 APII postholders

The plan will be updated annually in June.

### Critical Incident Management Team

Role	Name	Phone
Team leader:	Eoin Kennedy	021-4812424
Garda liaison	Eoin Kennedy	
Staff liaison	Eoin Kennedy	
Student liaison	Paula Power	021-4812424
Community liaison	Eoin Kennedy	
Parent liaison	Eoin Kennedy	

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<b>Media liaison</b>	Eoin Kennedy	
<b>Administrator</b>	Amy Walsh	

<b>Critical Incident Management Team</b>		
<b>Role</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Phone</b>
<b>Team leader:</b>	Eoin Kennedy	0214812424
<b>Garda liaison</b>	Eoin Kennedy	
<b>Staff liaison</b>	Eoin Kennedy	
<b>Student liaison</b>	Paula Power	
<b>Community liaison</b>	Eoin Kennedy	
<b>Parent liaison</b>	Eoin Kennedy	
<b>Media liaison</b>	Eoin Kennedy	
<b>Administrator</b>	School Secretary	

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## Short term actions – Day 1

<b>Task</b>	<b>Name</b>
Gather accurate information	Principal Deputy Principal
Who, what, when, where?	Principal
Convene a CIMT meeting – specify time and place clearly	Principal
Contact external agencies	Principal
Arrange supervision for students	Principal
Hold staff meeting	All staff
Agree schedule for the day	Principal
Inform students – (close friends and students with learning difficulties may need to be told separately)	Principal Special Ed. Coordinator
Compile a list of vulnerable students	Special Ed. Coordinator
Prepare and agree media statement and deal with media	Eoin Kennedy
Inform parents	Principal
Hold end of day staff briefing	Principal





## Medium term actions - (Day 2 and following days)

Task	Name
Convene a CIMT meeting to review the events of day 1	Principal
Meet external agencies	Principal
Meet whole staff	Principal
Arrange support for students, staff, parents	Principal and Class Teacher
Visit the injured	Principal and Class Teacher
Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements	Principal and Class Teacher
Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service	Principal and Class Teacher
Make decisions about school closure	BOM

## Follow-up – beyond 72 hours

Task	Name
Monitor students for signs of continuing distress	Class teachers
Liaise with agencies regarding referrals	Special Ed. Coordinator
Plan for return of bereaved student(s)	Principal and Class Teacher
Plan for giving of 'memory box' to bereaved family	Principal and Class Teacher
Decide on memorials and anniversaries	Parents and students
Review response to incident and amend plan	Staff/BOM

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## EMERGENCY CONTACT LIST

AGENCY	CONTACT NUMBERS
Garda	4908530
Hospital	4546400 CUH, 4271971- Mercy
Fire Brigade	999
Local GPs	4814560 – Great island practice
HSE	4965511 – South lee
Child and Family Centre	48161033 – Cobh Family Resource
Child and Family Mental Health Service (CAMHS)	021 4927864
School Inspector	Michael Ryan
DES	090/6483600
Clergy	024-95133
Youth Health Services	4220490

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## Critical Incident: sample letter for 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.*

Dear Parents,

My name is *Eoin Kennedy* and I am the Principal of *Scoil Iosaef Naofa* School. We learned this morning of the death of (*\*EDIT\*one of our students or Name of student*). This is a terrible tragedy for the (*\*EDIT\* Family Name*) family(ies), our school and our community. We are deeply saddened by these events. Our sympathy and thoughts are with the (*\*EDIT\* Family Name*) family and friends.

(*\*EDIT\*Name*) was a (*\*EDIT\* e.g. 5th year boy*) and will be greatly missed by all who knew him/her.

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 have implemented our Critical Incident Management Plan. Psychologists from the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) and (*\*EDIT\*insert other information if relevant*) have been with us all day 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.

Le meas,

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Eoin Kennedy  
Principal  
Scoil Iosaef Naofa  
Cobh

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## **Critical Incident: sample letter for Parents in the event of a violent death**

Dear Parents,

I need to inform you about a very sad event that has happened. (*\*EDIT\*Give accurate information about the incident, but avoid using the word murder as this will not be established until the court case is completed*).

We have shared this information and had discussions with all of our students so that they know what has happened. School staff members have been available for students on an on-going basis today. Other support personnel (*\*EDIT\*including psychologists etc, according to actual arrangements*) are available to advise staff. This support will continue to be available to advise staff in their support of students (*\*EDIT\*if appropriate insert how long*).

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.

Young people frequently turn to social media to see what others are saying, or to find out more. At these times it is important that you monitor their use and engage with them about what they read.

We urge you to emphasise and reinforce the need to be extremely sensitive and careful about what they post. (If planned) A support meeting for parents is planned for (date, time and place). At that time we can talk further about how to help ourselves and our children.

Our thoughts are with (*\*EDIT\* family name*) and with each of you.

Le meas,

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Eoin Kennedy  
Principal  
Scoil Iosaef Naofa  
CobH

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## Critical Incident: sample letter for Parents in the event of a sudden death

Dear Parents

The school has experienced (\*EDIT\* the sudden death, accidental injury, etc.) of Name of student(s). We are deeply saddened by the deaths/events. (\*EDIT\* Brief details of the incident, and in the event of a death, perhaps some positive remembrances of the person lost). Our thoughts are with (\*EDIT\* family name). We have support structures in place to help your child cope with this tragedy. (\*EDIT\* 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 them to express their feelings. All children are different and will express their feelings in different ways. It is not uncommon for children to have difficulty concentrating or to 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 reactions. Over the course of the days to come, 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. (\*EDIT\* Optional) An information night for parents is planned for (\*EDIT\* 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. Young people frequently turn to social media to see what others are saying, or to find out more. At these times it is important that you monitor their use and engage with them about what they read. We urge you to emphasise and reinforce the need to be extremely sensitive and careful about what they post.

If you would like advice you may contact the following people at the school. (\*EDIT\* Details)

Le meas,

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Eoin Kennedy  
Principal  
Scoil Iosaef Naofa  
Cobh

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Signed

*Lerri Byrne*

Chairperson BOM

*Lerri Byrne*

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