

# *Shountrade National School*



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*Roll No. 17068F*

*Principal: Mr Alan Kilcoyne*

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## *Critical Incident Policy*

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# Shountrade N.S.

## Adare

### Critical Incident Policy

#### Introduction:

In Shountrade N.S. we aim to protect the well being of our pupils and staff by providing a safe, tolerant and well catered for environment. Consequently, the Board of Management through the Principal, Alan Kilcoyne, has drawn up a critical incident management plan (CIMP) to deal with a critical incident should one occur. A Critical Incidents Management Team (CIMT) has been established to guide the development and implementation of this plan.

#### What is a Critical Incident?

The staff and management of Shountrade Nation School., recognise a 'critical incident' as *'any incident or sequence of events which overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school and disrupts the running of the school'* (DES 2008). Critical incidents can affect one or more members of our school organisation and could 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 assist 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:**

Examples of what the school is doing at this point include:

- Evacuation plans have been formulated and communicated to students and staff.
- Regular fire drills occur.
- Intruder alarms have been installed.
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked.
- External lighting has been installed.
- Pre-opening supervision in the school yard occurs from 8.50 am to 9.00 am, where the Special Needs Assistants and teachers supervise the yard.

#### **Psychological safety:**

The management and staff of Shountrade N.S. 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 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 school student are available.
- The school has developed links with a range of external agencies such as, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), Our Public Health Nurse, Relevant Social Workers, Relevant Childcare Workers,(CÉIS) The Early Intervention Team, The Paediatric Development Team, Relevant Play Therapists, Relevant Speech Therapists, Relevant Occupational Therapists, Adare Garda Station.
- 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.
- The school has a clear policy on bullying and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy.
- Students who are identified as being at risk are referred to the designated liaison person (DLP), where appropriate a referral is made to an appropriate agency and parents are informed.
- Staff are informed about how to access support for themselves.

### **Critical Incidents 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.

#### **1. Leadership Role and Garda Liaison: Alan Kilcoyne (Principal)/ Garda- Sinéad Walsh**

##### **Intervention**

- Confirm the event
- Activate the Critical Incident response team
- Liaise with the Gardaí/Emergency services
- Lead briefing meetings for staff on the facts as known, give staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions, outlines the routine for the day
- Express sympathy to family

- Clarify facts surrounding event
- Make contact with other relevant agencies
- Decide how news will be communicated to different groups (staff, pupils, outside school)

#### **Postvention**

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- Ensure provision of ongoing support to staff and students
- Facilitate any appropriate memorial events
- Review Plan

## **2. Staff and Community Communication Role: Staff-Pat O' Connell/ Community-Andrea Fitzgerald**

### **Intervention**

- With Team, prepare a public statement
- Organise a designated room to address media promptly
- Ensure telephone lines are free for outgoing and important incoming calls
- Designate mobile numbers for contact
- Liaise with relevant outside support agencies **Postvention**
- Review and evaluate effectiveness of communication response

## **3. Chaplaincy Role: Fr. Neenan**

### **Intervention**

- Visit home(s), if appropriate
- Assist with prayer services
- Make contact with other local clergy
- Be available as personal and spiritual support to staff **Postvention**
- Provide follow-up support to families.
- Work in partnership with Critical Incident team

## **4. Parent Liaison Role: Alan Kilcoyne/ Olive Ryan**

### **Intervention**

- Co-ordinate contact with families (following first contact by Principal)
- Consult with family around involvement of school in e.g. funeral service
- Assist with all communication dealing with parents of any student affected by critical incident

### **Postvention**

- 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

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### **Action plan**

#### **SHORT-TERM ACTIONS (Day 1)**

- Immediate contact with family/families  
Consult with the family regarding appropriate support from the school, e.g. funeral service  
Ensure that a quiet place can be made for students/staff

#### **Media Briefing (if appropriate)**

- Designate a spokesperson (Leader)
- Gather accurate information
- 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?
- Contact appropriate agencies
  1. Emergency services
  2. Medical services
  3. H.S.E. Psychology Departments/Community Care Services
  4. NEPS
  5. BOM
  6. DES/Schools Inspector
- Convene a meeting with Key Staff/Critical Management Team
- Organize a staff meeting, if appropriate
- Ensure any absent staff members are kept informed
- Organise timetable/routine for the day. (Adhering to the normal school routine is important, if this is possible)
- Class teachers to take note of any absentees who might need to be contacted, list of friends etc, or any other relevant information. (Member of the Team)
- Arrange supervision of students

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- Liaise with the family regarding funeral arrangements/memorial service
- The Chaplain/Principal will liaise with the family, to extend sympathy and clarify the family's wishes regarding the school's involvement in funeral/memorial service
- Arrange a home visit by two staff representatives within 24 hours, if appropriate. (Member of the Team + Class teacher)
- Have regard for different religious traditions and faiths

#### **MEDIUM-TERM ACTIONS (24-72 HOURS)**

- Preparation of students/staff attending funeral  
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.
- Ritual within the school
- Review the events of the first 24 hours
- Reconvene Key Staff/Critical Incident Management Team
- Decide arrangements for support meetings for parents/students/staff
- Decide on mechanism for feedback from teachers on vulnerable students
- Have review of Critical Incident Management Team meeting
- Establish contact with absent staff and pupils
- Arrange support for individual students, groups of students, and parents, if necessary
- Hold support/information meeting for parents/students, if necessary, in order to clarify what has happened
- Give any teacher who feels uncomfortable with involvement in support meetings the choice of opting out
- 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)
- Member of the Team to liaise with above on their return to school.
- Plan visits to injured
- Member of the Team + Class Teacher + Principal to visit home/hospital

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  - Attendance and participation at funeral/memorial service (To be decided)
  - Decide this in accordance with parent's wishes, school management decisions and in consultation with close school friends
  - School closure (if appropriate)
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- 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.

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

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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?

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 record

Drawn up by the Board of Management of Shountrade N.S. in the \_\_\_\_\_ academic school year.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Chairperson Board of Management**

**Principal**

## Student Contact Record

Name of staff member: \_\_\_\_\_

Date	Students name	Class/Year	Outcome (include need for follow up)

## Consent Letter - Individual or Group Support Session

Dear Parents/ Guardians;

You may already know that our teachers and staff have been providing support to our students following (specific reference to the incident).

Additional support is also being provided to our school by psychologist/s from the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS).

The psychologist will be available, where necessary, to meet with individuals or with groups of students to help them during this difficult time.

The aim of such sessions will be to:

- Provide information about dealing with grief and loss in a healthy way
- Allow students the opportunity to express their thoughts and feelings in a safe environment
- Allow students time to comfort and support each other, under the guidance of experienced staff from [Insert School Name]
- Help students resume their normal routines as soon as possible

If you would like for your child to participate in such a session and any follow-up meetings that might be scheduled, please give your consent by signing below.

You should return it to the school immediately. If you have any questions, please contact the Principal.

Yours Sincerely

\_\_\_\_\_

Alan Kilcoyne

Principal



I give my consent for \_\_\_\_\_ to participate in a Group/Individual Session

Parent or Legal Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Advance Parental Agreement to Child Being Seen

Dear Parent;

Shountrade N.S. has developed a plan for responding when a tragedy occurs.

When such an event happens, schools are offered psychologists from the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), an agency of the Department of Education and Science. If we feel it is necessary, we would like to be in a position to have your child seen by a psychologist who can offer advice and support.

Before any child is seen by a NEPS psychologist, parental consent is usually required. We will make every effort to obtain this. However, in the unlikely event of being unable to contact you, we are writing to seek your consent for your child to be seen by a member of NEPS as part of our schools immediate response. This is to allow us to support your child in the best way possible. Your child may be seen individually, in a small group or as part of a class group.

If you wish to discuss this, please contact me at your convenience.

Yours Sincerely

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Alan Kilcoyne

Principal



Please fill in the form below confirming that you have read this letter and stating whether **you wish or do not wish** to have your child seen by a NEPS psychologist. Please return to [Insert School Name].

☐ I wish to have \_\_\_\_\_ seen by the NEPS Psychologist.

☐ I do not wish to have \_\_\_\_\_ seen by the NEPS Psychologist.

Parents/Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Sudden Death/Accident Notification Letter

Dear Parents

The school has experienced (the sudden death, accidental injury, etc.) of student(s). We are deeply saddened by the deaths/events.

*(Brief details of the incident, and in the event of a death, perhaps some remembrances of the person lost).*

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 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 tearful, 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 general short-term reactions. Over the course of the days to come, please keep an eye on your child and allow her to express her 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 - List.

Yours Sincerely

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# **Critical Incident**

## **Management Team**

***Team Leader:*** Alan Kilcoyne (Principal) and (DLP)

***Garda Liaison:*** Sinéad Walsh

***Staff Liaison:*** Pat O'Connell (Deputy Principal)

***Community Liaison:*** Andrea Fitzgerald

***Chaplaincy:*** Fr. Neenan

***Parent Liaison:*** Alan Kilcoyne/ Olive Ryan (DDLDP)

***Media Liaison:*** Alan Kilcoyne

***Student Liaison:*** Alan Kilcoyne