**Scoil Naisiunta Cill Damhain**

# Critical Incident Policy

**Introduction**

This plan outlines the preparation that Kildavin N.S. will take in order to ensure an effective response to a crisis situation/critical incident. It will enable the school to cope effectively in the event of a crisis and will enable staff to react quickly and to maintain a sense of control. The plan may also ensure that normality returns as soon as possible and that the effects on students and staff are limited.

Kildavin N.S. is characterised by a warm and caring ethos, nurtured and sustained by our anti-bullying policy, our ongoing focus on health and safety issues, and the SPHE programme.

This caring and supportive environment will contribute to the successful implementation of this plan in the event of a critical incident.

The school also has a plan for evacuation (for instance, in the event of a fire) which all pupils and staff are aware of and as outlined in our Health and Safety Policy, a fire drill is undertaken each school term and all exits are highlighted.

In the event of a critical incident the staff will endeavour to maintain normal routines as far as possible particularly for classes not immediately involved or affected by the incident.

**Definition of a Critical Incident:**

In general, a critical incident refers to “any incident or sequence of events which overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of the school. This may include the sudden death/accident/suicide of a member of the school community, an accident involving pupils/staff on the school premises, a physical attack on a staff member or pupil or serious damage to the school building. The disappearance of a member of the school community and an accident/tragedy in the wider community are also regarded as critical incidents.

**The Critical Incident Management Team**

* Gillian Murphy, Blāithín Cowman, Sarah Whelan, Stephanie Corcoran,

Louise Kinsella, Donna Jordan, Kathy Comerford, Lorna O’Neill and Bernie Cassidy

1. To ensure that communication between the school and relevant personnel is speedy and effective in the event of a critical incident, the Critical Incident Management Team will:

Establish and maintain an up-to-date list of contact numbers for

* Pupils, parents/guardians
* Staff Members
* Emergency support services – This will be displayed in the staff room and the Principal’s office.

**2.** Compile emergency information for school trips to include:

* a list of all pupils/staff involved and the teacher in charge
* a list of mobile phone numbers for accompanying teachers
* up to date medical information on pupils – allergies, epilepsy etc.

1. Assign roles and responsibilities to each of the team members (and/or other staff) in the event of a critical incident.

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| **Task** | **Name** |
| Overall management of response | Gillian Murphy |
| External Liaison (outside support agencies; parents; distressed visitors; the media) | Gillian Murphy |
| Internal care and communication (with staff, pupils immediately involved/affected and pupils in general) | Gillian Murphy  Blāithín Cowman |
| Administration Tasks (answering telephone, organising room(s) for debriefing, letters, log of events etc.) | Blāithín Cowman  Sarah Whelan |

**Procedures to be followed in the event of a critical incident:**

**Short Term Action Plan (1st Day)**

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| **Task** | | **Name** |
| Gather accurate information (who, what, where…) | | Gillian Murphy |
| Contact appropriate agencies (details in staff room and Principal’s office) | | Gillian Murphy |
| Convene Meeting of Critical Management Team | | Gillian Murphy |
| Arrange Supervision of Students | Sarah Whelan  Louise Kinsella | |
| Informing Parents and Guardians (including contact with bereaved parents and reuniting children with parents where applicable) | Gillian Murphy  Blāithín Cowman | |
| Inform Students | Class Teachers | |
| Dealing with the Media | Gillian Murphy | |

**Medium Term Action Plan (24 – 72 hours)**

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| --- | --- |
| Review events of first 24hours   * + Reconvene key staff   + Check how team is coping   + Decide on mechanism for feedback   + Update media if necessary | Critical Incident Management Team |
| Arranging support for students and parents   * + Suitable Room   + Information   re support services | Gillian Murphy  Blāithín Cowman  Psychologist |
| Plan visits to the injured | Gillian Murphy |
| Liaising with family re funeral arrangements and attendance at same (may include organising school closures) | Gillian Murphy  Blāithín Cowman |

**Longer Term Action Plan**

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| --- | --- |
| Monitoring Students for Signs of continuing Distress | Critical Incident Management Team |
| Evaluating Response to Critical Incident | Critical Incident Management Team |
| Informing new staff and\or pupils where appropriate of Critical Incident | Gillian Murphy |
| Deciding on appropriate ways to deal with\mark anniversaries | Critical Incident Management Team |

**Dealing with the aftermath of a suicide or suspected suicide**

**Family**

* A staff member should contact the family to establish the exact facts and the family’s wishes about how the death should be described.
* Acknowledge their grief and loss.
* Organise a home visit by two staff members.
* Consult with the family regarding the appropriate support from the school e.g. at the funeral service.

**Staff**

* Convene a staff meeting to brief staff on the above details. It may be necessary to do this in two shifts therefore ensuring staff are available for support to students and for cover at all times. Remember to include ancillary staff
* Students need to be with people they know and trust. If possible, it is better if the teachers provide support for the students. The external “expert” visitor should therefore be primarily used to brief the teachers
* Help teachers to prepare for breaking the news to students. Close friends and relatives of the deceased in the school need to be told first. This needs to be done in a private location
* Outline the possible reactions (see resource documents which are available at all times in the office *Responding to Critical Incidents p17 - 26*)
* Give them information from the schools pack on dealing with the students in the classroom and on reactions to grief
* Identify high-risk students and what supports are available.
* Remind them of the school’s Critical Incident Plan
* Decide on the strategy to deal with queries from parents/guardians
* Prepare a letter setting out the facts, how the school is dealing with the events and how parents or guardians can support their child
* Ensure that a quiet place can be made available for students/staff
* Hold further staff briefings during the day to update information, to offer support and to further identify high- risk students.

**Students**

* Give the facts as they are known
* Create a safe and supportive space for the students where they can share their reactions and feelings
* Advise them on their possible reactions over the next few days (see resource document 4.5)
* Avoid glorifying the victim and sensationalising the suicide
* Advise the students of the support that is available to them
* Take any talk of suicide seriously and provide support or refer on immediately
* Students may wish to confide in and seek support from each other rather than adults. Facilitate this if appropriate and if it is possible
* However, information should be provided about how to get further help if they, or their friends, should need it.

**Indicators of high risk students**

* Close friends and relatives of the deceased.
* Pupils with a history of suicide attempts / self-harm.
* Pupils, who experienced a recent loss, death of a friend or relative, family divorce or separation, break-up with a boyfriend/girlfriend.
* Pupils who have been bereaved by a suicide in the past.
* Pupils with a psychiatric history.
* Pupils with a history of substance abuse.
* Pupils with a history of sexual abuse.
* Non-communicative pupils who have difficulty talking about their feelings.
* Pupils experiencing serious family difficulties, including serious mental or physical illness
* Less able students.

This policy was revised by staff on 1/5/2018.

It was brought to the attention of the BOM and ratified on 20-6-18 and communicated to the PA accordingly.

This policy will be reviewed every two years.