

Scoil Mhuire Kanturk

Critical Incident Management Policy

SCOIL MHUIRE



KANTURK

Scoil Mhuire Kanturk is a Catholic co-educational secondary school under the Trusteeship of CEIST. We are committed to educating our students to their full potential in a spirit of equality and inclusiveness that welcomes and nurtures all of the diverse abilities and talents of the various communities we serve.

Ratified:	November 2019
Reviewed:	January 2023
Reviewed:	September 2023
Reviewed:	September 2024

Introduction

Scoil Mhuire Kanturk aims to protect the well-being of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. Our mission statement affirms Scoil Mhuire Kanturk's commitment to educating our students to their full potential while nurturing the diverse abilities and talents of the communities we serve. In light of this vision the Board of Management, through the Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT), has drawn up a Critical Incident Management Plan (CIMP) 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 and www.nosp.ie including:

- Responding to Critical Incidents Guidelines and Resources for Schools (NEPS 2016)
- 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)

Definition of the term 'critical incident'

The staff and management of Scoil Mhuire Kanturk 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 involving members of the school community, for example, a bus crash on a school trip or travelling to or from school where there are multiple injuries or deaths.
- An accident or tragedy in the wider community i.e. incidents external to the school which might affect pupils e.g. a local tragedy.
- Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism, etc.
- The disappearance of a member of the school community
- A physical assault of a member of the school community.
- A criminal incident occurring during school time.
- Unauthorised removal of a student from school or home.
- Health issues - e.g. meningitis, Asian flu.
- Outbreak of disease (Foot & Mouth).

Aim

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

With this Critical Incident Management Policy in place, we are providing a caring, safe and supportive environment showing respect to the whole school community, so that all those involved will emerge from any critical incident relating to the school knowing that there are structures in place that have and will continue to help them. A CIMP is necessary to put a set of procedures in place so that we can respond as a school community in a caring and supportive way in the event of a Critical Incident occurring.

To reinforce the creation of a supportive and caring ethos in our 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
- Back gate locked during school hours
- Rules of the school yard
- School Safety Statement
- A range of school policies including the Code of Discipline and Anti-Bullying

Psychological safety

The management and staff of Scoil Mhuire Kanturk aim to use available programmes and resources to address the personal and social development of our students, to enhance their 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 tackling 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 post primary school student are available including the JC Wellbeing Guidelines
- 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 – including NEPS, CAMHS, Pieta House, TUSLA, Gardaí, Enable Ireland as well as local and feeder schools.
- 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 as per DES Circular 0023/2010
- The school has a clear policy on bullying and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy
- There is a care system in place in the school using the "Continuum of Support" approach which is outlined in the NEPS documents published in 2010 for post primary schools.
- The school's care system and student Support Team is guided by the Whole School Guidance Framework from the NCGE published in 2017
- 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 Critical Incident Management Team should include the Principal, Deputy Principal, Guidance Counsellor, Programme Managers and Year Heads who wish to be involved, and members of the teaching staff who would like to be involved. The members of the team will meet annually to review and update the policy and plan. The team has a dedicated critical incident folder kept in the staffroom. This folder contains a copy of the policy and plan and materials particular to their role, to be used in the event of an incident. It also includes the NEPS Critical Incidents Guidelines and the DES Responding to Critical Incidents Guidelines. The Chairperson of the Board of Management will be notified of any critical incidents immediately.

Critical Incident Plan - Team Leader: Denis Keating.

Deputy Team Leader: Garvan Queeney.

Members: Noreen Buckley (Guidance Counsellor), Margaret Ahern (RE Department) and Programme Manager / Year Head

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

A Garda liaison – (Denis Keating / Garvan Queeney)

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

B Staff liaison – (Denis Keating & Garvan Queeney)

- 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 the critical incident folder)
- Keeps staff updated as the day progresses
- Is alert to vulnerable staff members and makes contact with them individually
- Advises all staff of the availability of the Employee Assistance and Wellbeing Service and gives them the contact number (1800 411057).

C Community/agency liaison – (Denis Keating / Garvan Queeney)

- 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

D Parent liaison – (Denis Keating supported by Garvan Queeney, Guidance Counsellor and appropriate Programme Manager / Year Head as required)

- Visits the bereaved family
- Arranges parent meetings, if held
- May facilitate such meetings, and manage ‘questions and answers’
- Manages the ‘consent’ issues in accordance with agreed school policy
- Sets up room for meetings with parents
- Provides appropriate materials for parents (from their critical incident folder)

E Media liaison – (Denis Keating / Garvan Queeney)

- 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)

F Student liaison – (Noreen Buckley (GC) and appropriate Programme Manager / Year Head supported by Denis Keating, Garvan Queeney and Margaret Ahern)

- Gathering and referring (where appropriate) information from teacher, tutors and year heads about students they are concerned about
- 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

School’s internal response to student’s needs

1. Set up a Critical Incident room in the school.
2. Outline services available to affected students during the first hours (access to counselling and pastoral support). Where it is considered necessary, additional counselling resources may be requested from the Guidance Counsellor from NEPS.
3. Deputy Principal to assist the Class teacher of the class affected in breaking the news.
4. Have guidelines for staff in dealing with students in distress: i.e. information on grief responses, identifying those in need of counselling and support.
5. Take time to support the most affected students.
6. Critical Incident members to organise a Year Group prayer service, if appropriate, once all students have been notified.
7. Office staff to contact parents where some students request to go home.
8. Class teachers encourage those who feel able to return to class.
9. Principal/ Deputy Principal to meet and support any distressed parents and staff.
10. In the case of a death, Principal and Deputy Principal to liaise with family re any possible school involvement in the funeral arrangements.
11. Principal to liaise with the Chairperson of the Board during the day regarding student and staff welfare.

Critical Incident Management Aftercare

- The aim of the school community should be to return to normality and routine as soon as possible.
- There should be on-going counselling and support for those who need it.
- They should be given a safe space to express their feelings of loss, anger, confusion etc.
- The counsellors and pastoral team will continue to support those deeply affected.

Record keeping

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 Mhuire Kanturk have a responsibility to protect the privacy and good name of people involved in any incident. All staff 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.

Review of Procedures Critical Incident

- Team meets to assess the Critical Incident Plan and check if adjustments need to be made.
- Staff feedback and observations will be requested from every member of staff.
- Principal to prepare documents on the event for the Board of Management.

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
Demo room	Meetings with students
Boardroom/Demo Room	Meetings with parents
Principal's office	Meetings with media
Guidance office /Boardroom	Individual sessions with students

Deputy Principal's office	Meetings with other visitors
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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 copy of the plan. All new and temporary staff will be informed of the details of the plan by Denis Keating or Garvan Queeney. The Critical Incident Plan will be reviewed and updated regularly.

In the event of a Critical Incident:

Short term actions – Day 1

Task	Name
Gather accurate information	Denis Keating / Garvan Queeney
Who, what, when, where?	Denis Keating / Garvan Queeney
Convene a CIMT meeting – specify time and place clearly	Denis Keating / Garvan Queeney
Contact external agencies	Denis Keating / Garvan Queeney
Arrange supervision for students	Denis Keating / Garvan Queeney
Hold staff meeting	All staff
Agree schedule for the day	Denis Keating and Garvan Queeney
Inform students – (close friends and students with learning difficulties may need to be told separately)	Appropriate Programme Manager / Year Head with the support of the Noreen Buckley, Denis Keating and Margaret Ahern
Compile a list of vulnerable students	N. Buckley, Margaret Ahern and Programme Managers / Year Heads
Prepare and agree media statement and deal with media	Denis Keating / Garvan Queeney
Inform parents	Denis Keating / Garvan Queeney
Hold end of day staff briefing	Denis Keating and Garvan Queeney

Medium term actions - (Day 2 and following days)

Task	Name
Convene a CIMT meeting to review the events of day 1	Denis Keating / Garvan Queeney
Meet external agencies	Denis Keating / Garvan Queeney
Meet whole staff	Denis Keating / Garvan Queeney
Arrange support for students, staff, parents	Denis Keating / Garvan Queeney, Noreen Buckley, Margaret Ahern and Programme Manager / Year Head
Visit the injured	Denis Keating / Garvan Queeney and appropriate Programme Manager/Year Head / Noreen Buckley
Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements	Denis Keating / Garvan Queeney
Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service	Denis Keating / Garvan Queeney
Make decisions about school closure	Board of Management

Follow-up – beyond 72 hours

Task	Name
Monitor students for signs of continuing distress	Subject / classroom teachers
Liaise with agencies regarding referrals	Denis Keating / Garvan Queeney
Plan for return of bereaved student(s)	Denis Keating / Garvan Queeney
Plan for giving of ‘memory box’ to bereaved family if appropriate	Noreen Buckley and Margaret Ahern
Decide on memorials and anniversaries	Board of Management / Staff, parents and students
Review response to incident and amend plan	Staff (CIM team) / Board of Management

EMERGENCY CONTACT LIST	
AGENCY	CONTACT NUMBERS
Garda	Kanturk 029 20680 Mallow 022 31457
Hospital	Mallow 022 21251 CUH 021 4922000 Mercy 021 4271971
Fire Brigade	112 / 999
Local GPs	Dr O’Riordan 029 50232 Dr O’Connell 029 50353 Ath Trasna 029 60636
HSE	Mallow 022 58700
Child and Family Centre (Le Cheile, Mallow)	022-42439
Child and Family Mental Health Service (CAMHS)	Mallow 022 44970
School Inspector	Dublin (Head office) 01 8896553
NEPS Psychologist	Dublin 01 8892700 Cork 0761 108450
DES	Dublin 01 8896400
ASTI/TUI	ASTI 1850 418400 TUI 01 4922588
Clergy	Fr. Bluitt 029 50192 Fr. Magner 029 50061 / 087 2301206
State Exams Commission	090 6442700
Employee Assistance Service	1800 411 057