

## Critical Incident Policy

Scoil Naomh Colmcille recognises a critical incident to be “an accident or sequence of events that overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of the school, and disrupts the normal running of the school”. Critical incidents may involve students, staff, the school or local community.

### Possible Critical Incidents

Examples of a critical incident may include;

- Family bereavements
- Death of a student, teacher or parent.
- School fire or explosion, flooding or severe weather
- Severe physical violence in the school
- Accident on a school trip, in a school building or outside on school grounds
- Accident/tragedy in the wider community
- Disappearance of a member of the school community

### Aim of the Plan

The aim of the Critical Incident Plan is that in the event of such an incident as outlined above, the plan will help staff and management to react quickly and effectively and to maintain control of the situation. The plan will also help the school to return to normality as soon as possible and limit the affects of the incident on staff and students.

### Crisis Response Team

Scoil Naomh Colmcille has established a Crisis Response Team to manage its response to the death of a student or teacher or to any of the critical incidents listed earlier. The team consists of those available from among the following:

*Board of Management:* Mary Daly (Chairperson)

Fr. Seán Heaney  
Frank Kelly  
Niall Larkin  
Paula Russell  
Riccardo Panza  
Joe Mullery  
Marian Minnock

**NEPS Psychologist** Aideen Corbett.

**G.P** Contact the G.P. of the family/families concerned. Numbers will be included in the Pupil Contact Numbers Folder.

Mairéad Cusack will act as Team Leader in the absence of Frank Kelly

### Response Plan

**1. Establish the Facts:**

The members of the team will gather as soon as possible to establish the facts regarding the crisis – this may involve contacting others such as hospitals, Gardaí, Parents & Guardians.

**2. An Outline Immediate Response:**

The team will need to agree an immediate plan of action which may involve:

- Agreeing on a common statement with regard to the crisis
- Deciding how the news will be communicated to staff, pupils, parents and other groups
- Informing students and staff
- Contacting parents
- Visiting the home of the student/teacher to agree on how to communicate details of the incident where applicable
- Organising a school assembly or Prayer service, in consultation with the Patron
- Alerting outside agencies such as NEPS, Samaritans, HSE.
- Communicating with other schools where necessary.

**3. Inform:**

It is vital that all those needing information receive it as soon as it is practicable. The team will agree on a common statement. Such a statement will reduce the spread of rumour. All staff will be alerted and informed in the first instance. Students will then be told as quickly as possible in no larger than normal class size groupings. In the case where an accident has occurred on a school trip, the family members directly involved will be contacted in person by a member of the Crisis Response Team.

In the case of a suspected suicide, great care should be taken not to use the term 'suicide' until it has been established categorically that the death was a result of suicide.

**4. Liaising with the Press:**

If there are enquiries from the press, Frank Kelly is the only person to act as a liaison. In preparing a press statement, the following priorities will apply:

- The sensitivities and needs of those affected directly by the crisis.
- The non-release of names, addresses and telephone numbers.
- The statement will only deal with known facts.
- Consider likely questions and a response to them.

**5. Others to be informed:**

Contact may also be made with the HSE Crisis Service and if appropriate, the school's insurance company and other concerned agencies will be informed.

**6. Arrangements:**

Whether the school will remain open or will close after a critical incident has occurred will depend on the judgement of the Principal and management following consultation with the school staff. If the decision is to close the school, it will only be done after informing the students and parents about the incident. Parents, students and staff will be kept updated of arrangements or changes in routines where necessary.

**7. Record Keeping:**

All team members will keep written records of phone calls, letters, meetings, interventions etc. Files will be kept in the School Office and each class teacher will have their own file on hand.

**8. Confidentiality:**

The school is conscious of its responsibility to protect the privacy and good name of people involved in any incident and will be sensitive to the consequences of any public statements.

**9. Follow up:**

The school will provide ongoing support to staff and pupils.

The students/class who are most affected and vulnerable will be referred to any relevant agencies (in consultation with the parents).

Monitor the students/class most affected, in conjunction with class teacher. Provide follow-up support to families (link to community support groups) if appropriate.

The school will decide on appropriate ways to deal with anniversaries and be sensitive to significant days i.e. Birthdays/Mother's Day /Father's Day etc.

Review the Response Plan on an annual basis.

This policy was first ratified by the Board of Management on the 27/04/2010.

(Last updated and ratified by the Board of Management on the October 2017.)

(The policy will be reviewed again in October 2018.)

Signed by and on behalf of BOM:

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
*Mary Daly (Chairperson)*

Signed by on behalf of Scoil Naomh Colmcille:

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
*Frank Kelly (Principal)*

**Emergency numbers:**

**112 or 999**

Tullamore Hospital **057 932 1501**

A & E Tullamore **057 935 8021**

Tullamore Garda Station **057 932 7600**

**Other Agencies:**

Nth-West /Nth. Midlands Region  
NEPS, Friars Mill Road,  
Mullingar, Co. Westmeath, N91 H568  
Tel: (0761) 108573