Critical Incident Management Policy



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School Mission

Scoil Pól is committed to the provision of an inclusive broadly based education, within a Christian community, where mutual trust and respect facilitate personal, social, vocational, academic and spiritual development.
'Omnibus Omnia' - all things to everyone

Aim & Rationale

Scoil Pól, Kilfinane 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 the principal and teaching staff, has drawn up a Critical Incident Management Policy (CIMP) as one element of the school's policies and plans.
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.

Review & Research

The Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) have consulted resource documents available to schools on www.gov.ie (Department of Education and Youth / NEPS) and www.hse.ie (National Office for Suicide Prevention), 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) – retained for background; see Connecting for Life 2026–2035 below for current national policy
- 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)
- Connecting for Life: Ireland's Strategy to Reduce Suicide and Self-harm 2026–2035 (Department of Health 2026)
- Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice (Department of Education 2018, revised 2019)
- NEPS resources for Student Support Teams in Post-Primary Schools
- Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2017, revised 2023)
- Bí Cinealta: Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2024)

What is a Critical Incident?

The staff and management of Scoil Pól, Kilfinane, 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 may 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
- A serious injury to, or physical attack on, a student or member of staff
- A critical incident occurring during a school tour, trip or activity off-site, including abroad
- An incident originating or spreading online (e.g. harmful social media content, online threats, circulation of images)
- The death of a former student or a recent past pupil with close ties to current students

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

Measures to address the physical safety of the school community include the following:

- An Evacuation Plan has been formulated and is displayed in the school. This plan is brought to the attention of all staff and students during the school year.
- Fire drills are held at least twice a year.
- Teacher First Aid training
- Visitor sign in – supervised visits
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly inspected.

- Expectations of general student behaviour, as laid out in the Code of Behaviour which encourage positive relations and promote the wellbeing of the whole school community and prohibit bullying in any form.

Psychological safety

The management and staff of school 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. This is further strengthened through the use of teams across the school i.e. SPHE, SST etc.

For example:

- 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 and decision making. Promotion of mental health is an integral part of this provision.
- Staff have received training for the teaching of SPHE and SPHE is timetabled for as per DEY requirements
- RSE training provided to relevant staff.
- Staff receive annual training on the Child Safeguarding Procedures. The Designated Liaison Person (DLP) is Mairéad Finucane and the Deputy Designated Liaison Person (DDLP) is Eoin Walsh
- The school has a clear policy on bullying and deals with bullying in accordance with our Bí Cinealta policy.
- Staff members accept their role in the pastoral care of pupils and colleagues.
- There is a care system in place in the school using the "Continuum of Support" approach which is outlined by NEPS.
- This care system is reinforced through the use of Pastoral Care time, two mornings per week.
- 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. In consultation with the principal and deputy, parents are informed, and where appropriate, a referral is made to an appropriate agency.
- The school works with these external agencies where appropriate, and the relevant school team liaises with the agency.
- Staff are informed about how to access support for themselves.

Critical Incident Management Team

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.

Each role has a named lead and a named alternate, who acts if the lead is absent, unavailable or personally affected by the incident. The names of role holders are set out in the school's Critical Incident Management Plan, which is updated each school year. The roles are described below.

It is acknowledged that every Critical Incident will be different in nature and that flexibility will be required within the plan/strategy. "Responding to Critical Incidents: NEPS Guidelines and Resource Materials for Schools" will be used by the CIMT to determine in each case how to proceed.

Team Leader:

- Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting
- Coordinates the tasks of the team
- Liaises with the Board of Management; Department of Education and Youth (DEY); NEPS; SEC
- Liaises with the bereaved/affected family
- Ensures that CIMT members are themselves supported and debriefed after the incident

Garda Liaison:

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

Staff Liaison:

- 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 Employee Assistance Service (EAS) and gives them the contact number.

Student Liaison:

- Co-ordinate information from teachers 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 (R1).
- Looks after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room where agreed

Community/Agency Liaison:

- Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of- 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
- Keeps the Emergency Contact List in the Critical Incident Management Plan dated and up to date

Parent Liaison:

- Arranges parent meetings, where appropriate/ Visits bereaved and affected family with team leader.
- Liaise with key members of the Parents Association, if appropriate, the Parent Liaison 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
- Meets with individual parents and maintains a record of parents seen
- Provides appropriate materials for parents (from their critical incident folder)

Student Support (SEN) Liaison:

- Identifies students with special educational needs who may need information shared in an adapted way
- Works with the Student Liaison to identify vulnerable students and plan support
- Briefs SNAs and support staff on how to respond to students
- Monitors students with SEN in the days and weeks after the incident

Media Liaison

- 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.)
- Will inform staff as to how to respond to the media
- In the event of an incident, will liaise where necessary with the SEC; relevant teacher unions etc.
- Will draw up a press statement with regard to media briefings and interviews
- Monitors social media and agrees with the Team Leader how the school will respond

Administrator:

- Maintains 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 school's system in advance and ready for adaptation
- Prepares and sends out letters, emails and texts
- Photocopies materials needed
- Maintains records

Critical Incident Management Plan

This policy is put into practice through the school's Critical Incident Management Plan. The Plan is an internal document held by CIMT members and is not published. It sets out:

- the names of the CIMT role holders and their alternates
- the short-, medium- and longer-term actions to be taken, and who leads each one
- the rooms to be used in the event of an incident
- procedures for record keeping, confidentiality, media, funerals, school tours and the State Examinations
- the Emergency Contact List

The Plan is version controlled. Only the most recent version is valid.

Development and Communication of the Policy

This policy was developed by the CIMT in consultation with the staff, the Board of Management, the Parents' Association and the Student Council. All staff are briefed on the policy and plan at the start of each school year, and new and substitute staff are briefed as part of their induction. This policy is available to parents on the school website.

Review and Evaluation

The CIMT will review this policy and the Critical Incident Management Plan annually, and after any critical incident, to evaluate their effectiveness. Any amendments will be brought to the Board of Management for ratification.

The policy is available on the school website and from the school office on request.

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management (BOM) on **15th October 2026**

Next review date: **October 2027**

Signed: _____ Date: 15th October 2026

Chairperson of BOM

Signed: _____ Date: 15th October 2026

Principal