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# **SCOIL BHRÍDE BUACHAILLÍ**

# **CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY**

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## **1. Introduction**

This policy was drafted by the staff of the school and ratified by the Board of Management, with reference to “*When Tragedy Strikes*” (Irish National Teachers’ Organisation (INTO), 2000) and “*Responding to Critical Incidents*” (National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)). A review of the policy will take place as and when necessary. It is envisaged that the outcomes will lead to a revision of the policy and changes to specific practices as appropriate.

## **2. Characteristic Spirit & General Objectives of the School**

Scoil Bhríde Buachailí is a Catholic all-boys primary school situated in Blanchardstown Parish, Dublin 15 with a Catholic ethos under the Patronage of the Archbishop of Dublin.

In the context of a Catholic primary school, ‘Catholic Ethos’ refers to the ethos and characteristic spirit of the Roman Catholic Church, which aims to promote:

- the full and harmonious development of all aspects of the person of the student, including the intellectual, physical, cultural, moral and spiritual aspects
- a living relationship with God and with other people
- a philosophy of life inspired by belief in God and in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus and
- the formation of the students in the Catholic faith

and provide religious education for the pupils in accordance with the doctrines, practices and traditions of the Roman Catholic Church, and/or such ethos and/or characteristic spirit as may be determined or interpreted from time to time by the Irish Episcopal Conference.

In accordance with S. 15 (2) (b) of the Education Act, 1998 the Board of Management of Scoil Bhríde Buachailí shall uphold, and be accountable to the Patron for so upholding, the characteristic spirit of the school as determined by the cultural, educational, moral, religious, social, linguistic and spiritual values and traditions which inform and are characteristic of the objectives and conduct of the school.

This policy reinforces the characteristic spirit and general objectives of Scoil Bhríde Buachailí which supports and advocates providing a happy, safe, learning environment for each member of the school community.

## **3. Rationale**

The need for the school to devise a critical incident policy is primarily to ensure the welfare of the children and staff during and following a critical incident.

## **4. Aims and Objectives**

"A critical incident is any incident or sequence of events which overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school and disrupts the running of the school." (NEPS)

The aims and objectives of this policy are to provide guidelines for critical incident management in school, which enable staff to respond quickly and effectively (while at the same time maintaining a sense of control) and ensure that normality returns as soon as possible so that the effects on the children and staff are minimised.

## **5. Critical Incident Management Team**

The Critical Incident Management Team will consist of all members of the Board of Management, the Principal, Deputy Principal and Assistant Principals. The main functions of the Management Team are in the areas of leadership, communication, the provision of counselling services, pastoral care and family liaison. Staff will be advised regarding response, i.e. no comment to media groups. Relevant details for contacting members of team will be kept on display in the principal’s office and meeting room.

## **5.1 Leadership**

- ✓ Confirm the event. (Principal/Deputy Principal)
- ✓ Inform the Board of Management. (Principal/Deputy Principal)
- ✓ Convene the Critical Incident Management Team. (Principal/Deputy Principal)
- ✓ Contact the relevant parties. (Critical Incident Management Team)
- ✓ Clarify facts surrounding the event. (Critical Incident Management Team)
- ✓ Decide how news will be communicated to different groups (staff, children, outside agencies and bodies, media etc.). (Critical Incident Management Team)
- ✓ Make contact with relevant agencies. (Critical Incident Management Team)
- ✓ Ensure provision of ongoing support to staff and children. (Critical Incident Management Team)
- ✓ Facilitate any appropriate memorial events. (Critical Incident Management Team)
- ✓ Review and evaluate plan (Principal/Deputy Principal & Board of Management)

## **5.2 Communication**

- ✓ Prepare a public statement.
- ✓ Organise a designated room to address the media promptly, if necessary.
- ✓ Ensure the telephone lines are free for outgoing and important incoming calls.
- ✓ Review and evaluate effectiveness of communication response.

## **5.3 Student Liaison/Counselling**

- ✓ Address the immediate needs of the children and staff.
- ✓ Outline specific services available in school.
- ✓ Put in place clear referral procedures.
- ✓ Provide information and counselling.
- ✓ Provide ongoing support to vulnerable children and staff.
- ✓ Monitor the children/class most affected.
- ✓ Review and evaluate the Critical Incident Plan.

## **5.4 Pastoral Role**

- ✓ Visit the home(s), if appropriate.
- ✓ Assist with prayer services, if appropriate.
- ✓ Make contact with local clergy, if appropriate.
- ✓ Arrange for the provision of spiritual support to children and staff, if appropriate.
- ✓ Provide follow-up support to family.
- ✓ Review and evaluate the Critical Incident Plan.

## **5.5 Family Liaison Role**

- ✓ Coordinate contact with the family, following initial contact by the Principal.
- ✓ Consult with the family around the involvement of the school in, e.g. the funeral service.
- ✓ Assist with all communication in relation to parents/guardians of any child affected by the critical incident.
- ✓ Provide ongoing support to bereaved family.
- ✓ Involve, as appropriate, the family in school liturgies/memorial services.
- ✓ Facilitate a link between family and support agencies/bodies.
- ✓ Review and evaluate the Critical Incident Plan.

## **6. Action Plan**

### **6.1 Short-Term Actions**

- ✓ Convene a meeting of the Critical Incident Management Team and allocate roles and responsibilities.
- ✓ Initiate immediate contact with the family/families.
- ✓ Establish the facts and compile an accurate account of what happened.
- ✓ Designate a media spokesperson from the school.
- ✓ Designate, as required, a quiet place for children and staff, e.g. a Reflection Room and a Meeting Room.
- ✓ Consult with outside bodies/agencies.
- ✓ Visit the family/families.
- ✓ Consult with the family regarding appropriate support from the school, e.g. funeral service.

## 6.2 Medium-Term Actions

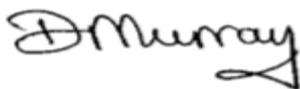
- ✓ Prepare children and staff for religious service, if appropriate.
- ✓ Facilitate school's responses, e.g. sympathy cards, flowers, book of condolence etc.
- ✓ Arrange on-going support for individual children, groups of children and parents, if necessary.
- ✓ Plan for the re-integration of children and staff, e.g. absentees, injured, siblings, close relatives etc.

## 6.3 Long-Term Actions

- ✓ Monitor children and staff for signs of continuing distress.
- ✓ Evaluate the school's response to the incident and amend the Critical Incident Plan appropriately.
- ✓ Review and modify (if required) the Critical Incident Plan for the future.
- ✓ Inform new staff/new school pupils of incident, on a need-to-know basis.
- ✓ Plan a school memorial service.
- ✓ Decide on appropriate ways to mark anniversaries.

## 7. Ratification and Review

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on the 4<sup>th</sup> of February 2019 and reviewed on the date below and communicated to all thereafter. It is applicable from the date below and subject to regular review by the Board of Management, particularly following each occasion on which it is used, in consultation with parents and members of staff. Revised copies/updates of the policy are available on-line and issued in hard copy on request to parents/guardians.



Signed:

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Chairperson, Board of Management

Date: 20<sup>th</sup> December 2021