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Association of Community and
Comprehensive Schools

*Risk Management in Community
and Comprehensive Schools*

Good Governance Guide

2013



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and Comprehensive Schools

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Foreword

The 2009 Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies was published in June 2009. This is a useful document in considering the governance responsibilities of Boards of Management of State schools, in this instance the Community and Comprehensive schools that are under the management remit of the Association of Community and Comprehensive schools, ACCS. Our schools do not strictly come under the remit of the Code as they are not State bodies. However, the Code recognises that State bodies may be constituted in different forms and that the provisions of the Code may have to be applied proportionately based on their nature, size and governing statutes. In the case of Community and Comprehensive schools agreement has been reached with the Department of Education and Skills (DES) to apply the governance principles for risk management applicable to State bodies in the manner outlined in this publication. We would like to thank the officials in the DES and the State Claims Agency (SCA) for their help in this work.

As an overriding principle the Code of Practice clarifies the functions and responsibilities of State Boards as follows: “The Board is collectively responsible for promoting the success of the State body by leading and directing the body’s activities. It should provide strategic guidance to the State body, and monitor the activities and effectiveness of management. Board members should act on a fully informed basis, in good faith, with due diligence and care, and in the best interest of the state body, subject to the objectives set by Government.” In this publication we set out a template which can guide Community and Comprehensive schools to comply with this principle of best practice in governance and the application of risk management.

Corporate governance comprises the systems and procedures by which enterprises are directed and controlled. It is important that Community and Comprehensive schools should operate to the highest standards of governance in the interests of transparency and accountability. This publication provides Community and Comprehensive schools with a governance best practice framework in order to achieve these aims.

Risk management maximises the ability to deliver on school objectives, sound decision making, works to safeguard child, student and employee wellbeing and contributes to meeting community and Government expectations for accountable and responsible use of public resources.

Chapter 1: Introduction

There is an increasing requirement for transparency and accountability in public bodies. This publication aims to provide the Boards of Community and Comprehensive schools with a model of best practice in risk management by the application of good governance principles. This model is supported by best practice models in the national and international context.

This Good Governance Guide will introduce the Boards of Community and Comprehensive schools to the concept of managing risk, it will identify how schools can establish an overall approach to this concept and it will give practical advice and useful templates to guide schools to systematically identify, evaluate and treat such risks.

The object of each Community and Comprehensive school is to provide appropriate educational opportunity to all its students, as set out in the Education Act 1998, Section 9 and to ensure the wellbeing of all its students and employees. These objectives are set out in greater detail in the School Plan, which is a requirement of each school. The requirement for a school plan and the nature of the plan is outlined in the Education Act, 1998, Section 21.

A risk can be defined as any adverse circumstance which can negatively affect a school's ability to carry out its objectives as outlined in the school plan. Risks can be external or internal and exist at a number of levels, for example, strategic, operational, financial and reputational.

Management of risk is everybody's responsibility in the school context. The Board of Management is responsible for:

- Identifying and managing risks which affect or may impact the delivery of objectives as detailed in the school plan
- Ensuring that risk strategies and processes are in place
- Promoting the application of risk management including providing appropriate risk management training
- Aligning resource allocation, decision making and corporate governance with risk management training
- Monitoring and reviewing identified risks in a systematic and timely manner
- Ensuring appropriate records of assessed risks are maintained

Boards of Management should inform the Department of Education and Skills of any known major risks to the effective implementation of the school plan.

Effective Risk Management:

A strong risk culture does not mean a culture of risk aversion. A critical element of delivering effective risk management is to apply the standard process in all areas. This will include such aspects as:

- Appropriate planning, implementation and review of the educational services and programmes being offered to students
- Occupational health and safety risk management for staff and students
- Emergency management planning and incident reporting
- Financial management planning including school account financial audits
- Reputation management

Chapter 2: Why manage Risk?

Managing risk successfully supports the school in carrying out its objectives as outlined in the school plan. It complements the planning and school self-evaluation process. It allows schools to successfully carry out its functions and manage its resources in an efficient, effective and prudent manner. Where risks are identified and successfully handled the school is empowered to take on other activities because the risks are well managed and there is greater confidence in delivering outcomes. Effective risk management leads to effective and dynamic decision making and gives confidence to Boards in the carrying out of their responsibilities.

The management of risk must be integrated into other aspects of the school's activity, principally the school planning and self-evaluation process. This Good Governance Guide supports schools in identifying, analysing, evaluating and treating risks in an integrated process consistent with the aims of the school outlined in the school plan. Successful management of risk ensures that the resources and energies in the school can be positively applied to the vision and mission of the school and are not diverted to activities which are high-risk or not directly related to the aims of the school.

This Good Governance Guide is consistent with good practice and policy in the national and international context. It relies on the following recognised sources:

Legislation:

- The Education Act, 1998
- The Education (Welfare) Act, 2000
- Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 2005

Governance Literature:

- The Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies (Department of Finance 2001 and updated 2009)
- Risk Management Guidance for Government Departments and Offices (Department of Finance, 2004)
- Ireland: Towards an Integrated Public Service (OECD Public Management Reviews, 2008)

Educational Risk Management:

- Guidelines on Managing Safety and Health in Post-Primary Schools 2012 (a joint project undertaken by the Department of Education and Skills, the Health and Safety Authority, the State Claims Agency and the School Development Planning Initiative)
- VEC Risk, Excellence in governance through best practice risk management. IPB 2009
- I.S ISO 31000:2009 – Risk management – Principles and guidelines
- Department of Education and Early Childhood Development of Victoria, Australia, Governance and Risk Management policy
- Review of Occupational Health and Safety in the Technologies in Post-Primary Schools

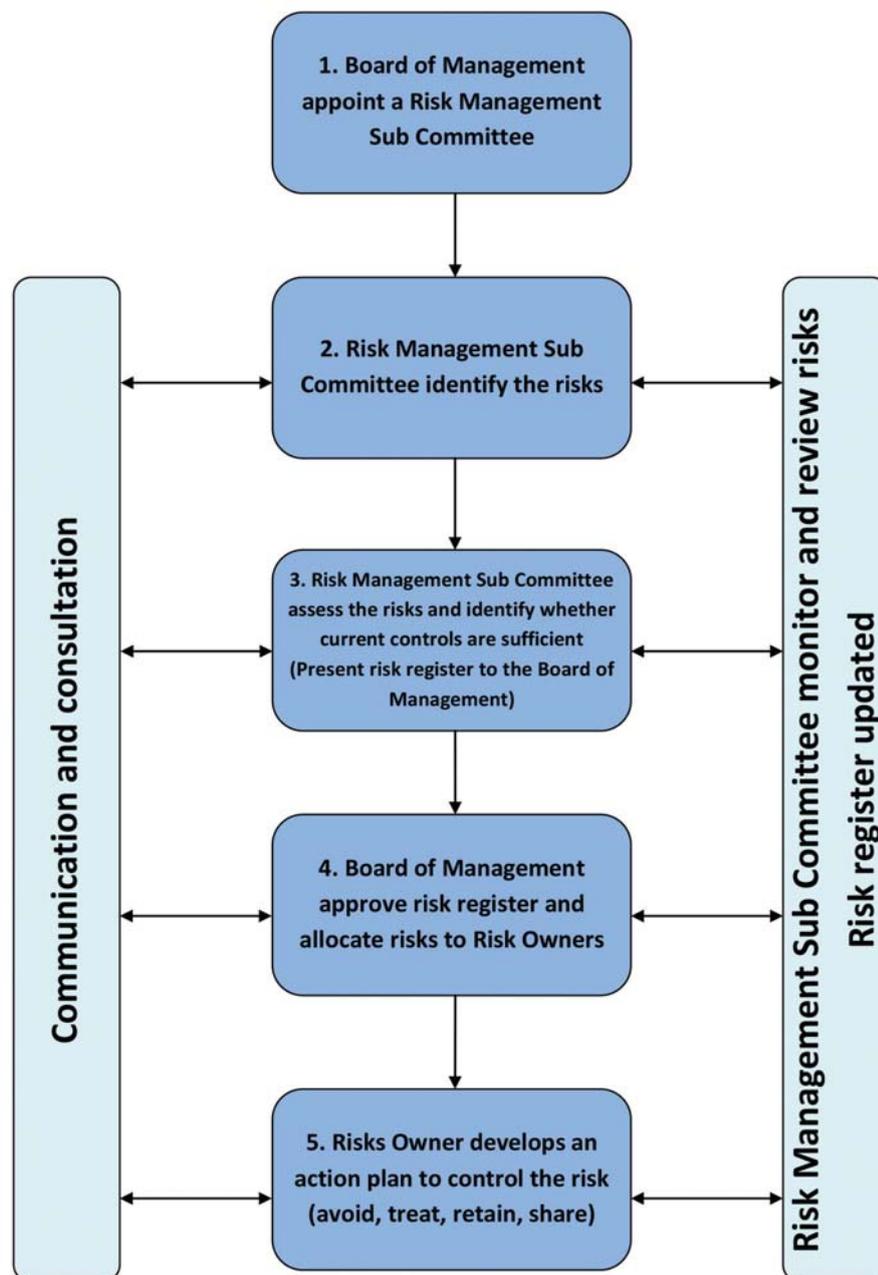
(Department of Education and Science and the State Claims Agency, 2004)

- School Risk Management and Insurance (Department of Education and Skills, UK, 2006)
- Code of Practice for dealing with Complaints of Bullying and Harassment (ACCS, ASTI & TUI, 2012)
- Code of Practice for dealing with Complaints of Sexual Harassment (ACCS, ASTI & TUI, 2012)

This model includes a risk register in Chapter 4 which will give practical examples and guidelines of the manner in which schools can approach risk management in the school context.

Chapter 3: Creating and Maintaining the Risk Register

A risk register is designed to enable schools, in a straightforward and simplified manner, to validate that all key risks within the school are being addressed. An example of a risk register is included in Chapter 4. The Risk register and other documentation relating to the process should be safely maintained as a matter of record by the Board of Management and may be made available for inspection by the appropriate authorities including the Audit Unit and Inspectorate of the DES and officers of the HSA.



1. Appoint a Risk Management Sub Committee:

The Board of Management of each school appoint a Risk Management Sub Committee. This Sub Committee may consist of deputy principals, senior teachers, safety representatives, caretakers, IT personnel, members of the Board of Management who have the necessary expertise etc. Once appointed, the Risk Management Sub Committee is tasked with:

- Identifying the main risks to which the school is exposed to.
- Assessing the current controls in place to mitigate the risks and deciding whether the risks are currently sufficiently controlled or not i.e. developing a risk register.
- Presenting the risk register to the Board of Management for their review and approval.

2. Risk Management Sub Committee identify the risks:

This is a high level process where the Risk Management Sub Committee simply identify the risks that may prevent the school from achieving its objectives. It is easiest to identify the risks over two or three brainstorming sessions. These sessions involve Risk Management Sub Committee members listing the risks to which the school may be exposed to. This is best done by using the school plan objectives as a prompt, i.e. what are the main risks to each objective not being achieved. The Risk Management Sub Committee are not responsible for finding solutions to the risks. The Board of Management pass the risks to Risk Owners who are responsible for ensuring the risks are treated.

Example: The Risk Management Sub Committee may identify that student numbers are due to increase significantly next year and the school do not currently have the necessary resources to deal with the increase. The Risk Management Sub Committee do not have to find a solution to this risk. They simply record the risk in the risk register and notify the Board of Management. The Board of Management allocate the risk to a Risk Owner who is responsible for treating the risk.

The main risk categories and examples of risks are listed in the table below and should provide a useful starting point for the Risk Management Sub Committee to draw up an initial list of risks. The risk register in chapter 4 contains more examples of risks. It is not an exclusive list and other risk categories may affect an individual school in its own particular context:

Risk category	Risk example
Environmental	Oil leak from oil tank resulting in pollution of local river
Financial	Failure to manage budgets and control expenditure
Health and safety	Injury to staff or student
Human resource management	Excessive sick leave/absenteeism resulting in a shortage of personnel to provide key services

Risk category	Risk example
Legal and regulatory	School not up to date with recent legislation and regulations
School premises and infrastructure	School property is damaged, stolen or accessed by unauthorised persons
Strategic	School fails to compete with other schools resulting in lower student numbers
Student welfare and learning	Inadequate child protection system

3. Risk Management Sub Committee assess the risks:

The Risk Management Sub Committee assess the risks by multiplying the likelihood of the risk occurring by the impact of the risk using the scales below. It is important to assess the risks in order to:

- Decide whether the current controls in place are sufficient
- Distinguish between high, medium and low risks, i.e. Prioritise the risks for treatment

Likelihood Scale		
Score	Likelihood	The probability of the risk occurring
1	Rare	Would only occur in exceptional circumstances
2	Unlikely	Will probably not occur in the next 12 months
3	Possible	Could occur at least once in the next 12 months
4	Likely	Likely to occur in the next 12 months
5	Almost certain	Almost certain to occur in the next 12 months

Impact Scale		
Score	Impact	The level to which the risk, if it occurred, would affect the ability of the school to deliver its objectives
1	Insignificant	Little or no disruption to school operations/Near miss (no injury)
2	Minor	Slight disruption to school operations/Injury resulting in slight bruising or cuts/Minimal environmental harm
3	Moderate	Significant disruption to school operations/Injury requiring medical attention/Local media coverage/Slight environmental damage
4	Major	Closure of school for greater than 2 days/Disruption to State exams/Injury requiring hospitalisation/Prominent national media coverage/Major environmental damage/ Student needs not fulfilled
5	Catastrophic	Long term school closure/Serious injury or death/Long term environmental damage

Once the likelihood of the risk occurring has been multiplied by the impact of the risk, the score should be compared to the risk rating table below which will determine which risks need to be dealt with first. Risks with a high risk rating should be prioritised. The risk rating column on the risk register should be updated by the Risk Management Sub Committee.

Risk Rating		
Total Score (Likelihood v Impact)	Rating	Meaning
15+	High	Must be given highest priority and be handled with the greatest urgency.
8-14	Medium	Lower priority. Must be dealt with after the high priority risks have been addressed.
1-7	Low	Monitor and review periodically.

Example: It has been identified that some classrooms in the school do not comply with the relevant building standards. There is a risk that some of the ceilings may collapse. Using the scales on the previous page, the likelihood of occurrence is 'Possible (3)' and the impact would be 'Catastrophic (5)' as it could result in serious harm or death. The total risk rating for this risk is therefore 15 indicating that this is a high risk and must be prioritised.

4. Board of Management allocate the risks to Risk Owners:

The risk register is reviewed and approved by the Board of Management. Each risk is allocated to a Risk Owner by the Board of Management who will be responsible for managing that risk. The Risk Owner's name should be recorded on the risk register.

5. Risk Owners control the risks:

The Risk Owner must decide how to address the risks identified. Risks with the highest risk rating should be dealt with first. The risk can be avoided, treated, retained or shared:

- **Avoid:** It may be possible to avoid the risk altogether. However, this may involve either a reduction in the activity or the complete withdrawal from the activity. This would normally be seen as a very serious step and may not be in line with the objectives in the school plan. An example would be if the school were involved in high risk adventure sports. It might get to the stage where the school is monitoring and reviewing risk in this activity comes to the conclusion that the level of risk and the lack of ways to ameliorate the risk might mean suspension of the activity in its totality. This would be an example of avoidance.
- **Treat:** Another option is to treat the risk. It is likely that most risks encountered will be dealt with

in this way. This would mean continuing the activity but putting control measures to control the risks. This could be as simple as increasing the level of supervision associated with an activity.

- **Retain:** Some activities will always have associated risks but at the same time such risks can be at a level which is manageable. In such instance the school may wish to retain the activity while monitoring and reviewing the risks in the light of experience and practice. This can be supported by the use of risk assessment templates from the Guidelines on Managing Safety and Health in Post-Primary Schools (a joint project undertaken by the Department of Education and Skills, the Health and Safety Authority, the State Claims Agency and the School Development Planning Initiative) which are a management tool offering guidance and practical advice to schools. The guidelines can assist in planning, organising and managing a safe and healthy school environment for staff, pupils and visitors. They also help schools to benchmark current policies and practices against current legislative requirements.
- **Share:** Sharing a risk may not be a viable option for most risks which arise in the operation of our schools. Sharing the risk involves the transfer of a risk with a third party, for example the Department of Education and Skills. This has already happened where the DES has undertaken to take out separate insurance cover for students on their work experience on behalf of our schools. Another example of sharing would be where schools enter into other insurance agreements for school contents or organise personal cover for accidents involving students with commercial providers.

The risk register should be updated by the Risk Owner once the method(s) of control are selected. Details of the controls to be implemented, the reviewed risk rating and the target completion date should be entered on the risk register.

6. Risk Management Sub Committee monitor and review the risks:

New risks are likely to emerge and the existing risks may change. The Risk Management Sub Committee should undertake regular risk reviews (at least annually) of all activities. Reporting deadlines on the risk register should be notified to the Board of Management when they occur. The nature and number of associated risks change constantly and the process must be able to comprehend such changes and respond appropriately to them.

Chapter 4: Risk Register Example

1. Environmental									
No	Risk Name	Current Management Controls in place	Current RR		Additional controls required	RR after additional controls		Risk Owner	Target date
			L	RR		L	RR		
E1	Oil spill and pollution of local river	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oil tank is built to international standards and is serviced on a regular basis by a competent person Competent companies used to deliver oil to school premises 	1	4 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Caretaker to review each month 				

2. Financial									
No	Risk Name	Current Management Controls in place	Current RR		Additional controls required	RR after additional controls		Risk Owner	Target date
			L	RR		L	RR		
F1	Insufficient financial resources to support the achievement of strategic objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain regular contact with the relevant Government Departments to ensure budgets are sufficient 	3	3 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Further diversification of income sources being investigated 	2	3 6	Principal	31/7/13
F2	Failure to monitor budgets and control expenditure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Robust budget setting procedures in place Training and support provided to personnel responsible for budgeting Scheduled reviews undertaken to ensure actual spend is in line with budgeted spend Payment sign off procedures in place 	2	3 6					
F3	Failure to comply with procurement legislation (Irish and European)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing training for staff on procurement legislation 	2	3 6					

3. Health and Safety									
No	Risk Name	Current Management Controls in place	Current RR		Additional controls required	RR after additional controls		Risk Owner	Target date
			L	I RR		L	I RR		
HS1	Risk of serious injury/death involving employee, student or other persons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety statement in place and reviewed at least annually • Safety statement communicated to employees as part of induction process and when amendments are made • Staff receive training as required • Staff and students made aware of emergency procedures • Safety statement available on school website • Risk assessments and safety audits conducted on a regular basis 	1	5					

4. Human Resource Management									
No	Risk Name	Current Management Controls in place	Current RR		Additional controls required	RR after additional controls		Risk Owner	Target date
			L	I RR		L	I RR		
HRM1	Industrial action of any kind resulting in a shortage of personnel to provide key services		3	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Industrial action response plan being developed 	3	3	Principal	31/7/13
HRM2	Excessive sick leave/absenteeism resulting in a shortage of personnel to provide key services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management of sick leave circular implemented 	2	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School specific infectious disease and pandemic plan being developed to ensure key services can be delivered during periods of excessive absenteeism 	1	3	Principal	31/12/13
HRM3	Ban on recruitment of new staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing contact with the relevant Government Departments to ensure staff levels are sufficient 	2	3					
HRM4	Risk of breaching employer obligations under employment legislation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only highly competent staff employed • Key staff trained on HR best practice • Key staff kept up to date on employment legislation 	1	4					

5. Legal and Regulatory									
No	Risk Name	Current Management Controls in place	Current RR		Additional controls required	RR after additional controls		Risk Owner	Target date
			L	I RR		L	I RR		
LR1	Failure to comply with legislation/regulations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Competent staff employed and made aware of their statutory responsibilities Regular training provided to all staff Regular contact with SCA Safety statement in place Risk assessments carried out Child protection policy in place Key staff trained on HR best practice Principal ensures that all DES circulars are implemented 	2	4 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data protection and confidentiality policy being developed 	1	4 4	Principal	30/9/13
LR2	Failure to comply with DES circulars	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Principal reviews current legislation on a regular basis Regular contact with SCA 	2	3 6					
LR3	School not up to date with recent legislation and regulations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Principal reviews current legislation on a regular basis Regular contact with SCA 	2	4 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Subscribing to monthly legislation update service 	1	4 4	Principal	30/9/13

6. School Premises and Infrastructure									
No	Risk Name	Current Management Controls in place	Current RR		Additional controls required	RR after additional controls		Risk Owner	Target date
			L	I RR		L	I RR		
SPI1	Insufficient space for students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student numbers constantly monitored to ensure there is sufficient space Ongoing contact with the relevant Government Departments to ensure budgets are sufficient to allow for capital investment should student numbers increase significantly 	1	4 4					
SPI2	Major disaster e.g. Fire, flooding, explosion etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular audits and inspections carried out Maintenance schedules in place Fire emergency plan in place 	2	5 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New emergency plan being developed to incorporate controls for flooding, explosions etc. 	1	5 5	Principal	31/12/13
SPI3	Buildings do not conform to modern safety standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular inspections carried out Building regulations adhered to for new builds 	1	4 4					
SPI4	School property is damaged, stolen or accessed by unauthorised persons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical security measures in place CCTV in place Security contract in place with competent body Security measures in place for the protection of electronic systems 	2	3 6					
SPI5	Risk of serious incident or attack on school		1	5 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Being incorporated into new emergency response plan 	1	5 5	Principal	31/12/13
SPI6	Loss of IT systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fully resilient IT system in place Annual maintenance work carried out on IT systems 	1	3 3					

7. Strategic										
No	Risk Name	Current Management Controls in place	Current RR			Additional controls required	RR after additional controls			Target date
			L	I	RR		L	I	RR	
S1	Failure to achieve the objectives set out in the school plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performance reviewed at Board of Management meetings 	1	4	4					
S2	Significant rise in student numbers		2	3	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic plan being developed to deal with fluctuating student numbers 	1	3	3	31/12/13
S3	School fails to compete with other schools resulting in lower student numbers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performance reviewed regularly by BOM Comprehensive range of subjects maintained Open days held for all students in 5th and 6th class 	2	3	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic plan being developed to deal with fluctuating student numbers 	1	3	3	31/12/13

8. Student Welfare and Learning									
No	Risk Name	Current Management Controls in place	Current RR		Additional controls required	RR after additional controls		Risk Owner	Target date
			L	I RR		L	I RR		
SWL1	Failure to deliver curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adequate staffing levels in place to ensure curriculum is delivered 	2	4 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan being developed to ensure that the curriculum can be delivered in the event of excessive absenteeism 	1	4 4	Principal	31/12/13
SWL2	Teaching not reaching the required standard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rigorous recruitment procedures in place to ensure that only competent staff are employed Ongoing training provided to staff Performance reviews carried out regularly by Board of Management Exam results monitored 	1	4 4					
SWL3	Inadequate child protection system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child protection policy in place DLP and Deputy DLP in place Child protection training provided as part of induction procedures All teaching staff Garda vetted Child protection risk assessments carried out Child protection procedures communicated to students as part of SPHE 	2	5 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Garda vet non teaching staff 	1	5 5	Principal	31/12/13
SWL4	Inadequate anti bullying policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anti bullying policy in place and communicated to all staff and students 	2	5 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anti bullying policy to be updated to include risks associated with social networking and cyber bullying 	1	5 5	Principal	31/08/13
SWL5	Inadequate staff/pupil ratios	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing contact with the relevant Government Departments to ensure staff levels are sufficient 	2	3 6					
SWL6	Reduction in the number of counsellors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing contact with the relevant Government Departments to ensure counsellor numbers are not cut 	3	4 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate other options which could fill the void if counsellor numbers are cut 	3	3 9	Principal	31/12/13
SWL7	Student depression/suicide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student counselling service Regular class talks from suicide prevention organisations to ensure that students are aware of the services available should suffer from depression Mental health discussed with students as part of SPHE classes 	3	5 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suicide prevention programme to be designed and implemented Suicide response plan to be designed and implemented 	2	5 10	Principal	31/12/13



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